NUS Student Experience Report

n u s

national union of students

NUS Introduction

Welcome to the first NUS Student Experience Report. This document provides an overview of students' experiences across the UK, looking at all areas of their lives, from the quality of their courses and accommodation, to their financial situations and experience of employment.

I particularly want to thank HSBC for funding the research and working so closely with us to make this report a reality. We believe that this research provides a real insight into the daily experiences of students.

This report looks at full-time undergraduate home students and provides some interesting analysis and evidence, which reinforces many of NUS' key arguments and concerns. For example, those students who undertake paid employment work on average 14 hours a week during term-time and many students significantly under-estimate their basic living costs. It is however pleasing that 75% of students say they are enjoying their experience and 85% of students rate their teaching and learning experience as either good or excellent.

One of the key objectives within NUS' Strategic Plan is enabling students to shape their learning experience and so whilst it is heartening that 57% of students wanted to be involved in shaping the content, curriculum or design it is disappointing that only 23% of students currently feel involved. It is important that this student engagement and representation is based on evidence and we believe that this report will play a key role in this and exploring in greater depth some of the issues raised by the National Student Survey.

I would also like to thank GfK Financial for carrying out the research and bringing together the final report. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all of the sector agencies that contributed to shaping the original survey questions to ensure that we were both looking at genuinely new information and making a useful contribution to the debate in the sector.

I hope that this report will make a useful contribution on behalf of students towards the Secretary of State's debate on the future of higher education.

Wes Streeting
National President, NUS

HSBC Introduction

HSBC is very pleased to be working with the National Union of Students in conducting this ongoing research into the lives and experiences of students at university.

We know that it is very important for us to understand students' financial requirements, but it is just as important for us to understand the whole spectrum of a student's life at university, so that we can adjust the products we provide to suit their needs and more importantly so that we can provide a service that they will benefit from.

HSBC has been working with the NUS as part of its ongoing financial literacy programme to improve financial education in schools and higher education and looks forward to working with the NUS in the years to come.

Lucy Payne
HSBC Youth, Students and Graduates Manager

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Executive summary

- **Motivation for going to university** - the research suggests that many students see university as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, with only 29 per cent of students saying that their main reason for wanting to go to university was "for the experience".

- **Choosing their university** - 31 per cent of students choose their university because it is close to home. However, looking at this by socio-economic group, only 22 per cent of socio-economic group A gave this reason compared with 53 per cent from socio-economic group DE.

- **Key influences for wanting to go to university** - the key influences cited by students are also affected by socio-economic group: 27 per cent of students in socio-economic group A cite their parents, grandparents or guardian as their key influence in wanting to go to university, compared with only six per cent of students in socio-economic group DE. Conversely, only two per cent of students in socio-economic group A cite their teachers as the key influence, compared with 13 per cent of those in socio-economic group DE.

- **The main reasons for choosing a university** - 45 per cent of students at Russell Group universities (an association of 20 of the UK's leading research-intensive universities) say that one of the top three reasons for choosing their university was because it "had the subject/course I wanted", this compares with 71 per cent at Post-1992 universities (institutions that achieved university status after the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act). Some 81 per cent of students at Russell Group universities say that one of the top three reasons for choosing their university was the "academic reputation of the university", compared with 58 per cent at Pre-1992 universities and 24 per cent at Post-1992 universities.

- **Quality and quantity of teaching** - 85 per cent of students rate the quality of teaching and learning as good or excellent. Students receive 15 contact hours a week on average, although this varies by institution and subject. In addition, students spend 16 hours a

week on private study. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of students believe that their contact hours are sufficient. There are some interesting differences in contact hours for subjects when looked at by type of institution - students studying physical sciences and related subjects receive 20 contact hours a week in Pre-1992 universities and 15 hours a week in Post-1992 universities. In addition, students studying mass communications and documentation subjects receive seven contact hours a week in Russell Group universities, compared with 14 hours a week in Post-1992 universities.

- **Personalisation** - 92 per cent of students are given the opportunity to provide feedback about their course, yet only 51 per cent of these students believe this feedback is acted on. While only 23 per cent of students feel involved in shaping the content, curriculum or design of their course, 57 per cent would welcome such involvement.

- **Coursework and feedback** - only 25 per cent of students receive individual verbal feedback on their assessments, compared with 71 per cent who want individual verbal feedback. A quarter (25 per cent) of students have to wait more than five weeks for feedback on their coursework.

- **Accommodation** - 84 per cent of students are happy with their accommodation. A small majority of students - 55 per cent - are happy with the choice of accommodation offered by their institution, however this is significantly affected by type of university. Around 19 per cent of students say that they live at their parents' home.

- **Facilities and resources** - students are least satisfied by the facilities available for practical work, with only 54 per cent saying that these type of facilities meet their needs.

- **Student welfare services** - 81 per cent of students say that the academic support at their university partly or fully meets their needs.

- **Bullying, sexual harassment and safety** - seven per cent of students say that they have experienced

bullying but 71 per cent did not report it to the university, usually because they did not know who to report it to. Some 12 per cent of students have experienced crime while at university.

• **Finance, debt and the cost of living** - students significantly underestimate their basic living costs, by 39 per cent for their groceries and 35 per cent for routine travel. Just over a third (34 per cent) of students are "more than somewhat concerned" about their current levels of debt.

• **Student employment** - 75 per cent of students undertake paid employment while at university, either during term time (35 per cent) or during the holidays (51 per cent). Almost half (46 per cent) of working students are reliant on paid employment to fund their basic living expenses. The more hours a student works during term time, the greater the negative impact on their academic study.

• **Post-course plans** - 46 per cent of students plan to enter permanent full-time employment and 34 per cent plan look for work. Only six per cent say that they have no idea what their plans are after studying. Among final-year students, 40 per cent say that the careers advice provided by their university has met their needs, with 21 per cent saying it hasn't. Overall, 71 per cent of students feel that their studies enhance their career prospects.

• **Overall feelings about university** - 74 per cent of students say that they are enjoying university. Among those who aren't, the two key reasons given are: the quality of teaching and the level of debt/concerns about the cost of university. The large majority (85 per cent) of students are pleased that they decided to go to university - 56 per cent saying they are "extremely pleased". If students had additional funding to allocate at their university, 37 per cent say they would spend this on teaching or learning facilities.

1   Introduction and methodology

This report discusses the findings from a programme of research, carried out between May and November 2008, into UK 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 within the findings. The quantitative research consisted of an online questionnaire, which ran between 2-24 June 2008. A total of 3,135 students from 146 higher education institutions took part in the survey, fulfilling a variety of quotas including gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and course type to ensure the results were representative. This was followed up with a small-scale online survey of 250 school leavers who had been offered a place at a higher education institution. This second survey ran between 17-28 July 2008.

The qualitative research consisted of two phases. In the first phase, six focus groups were conducted in June 2008 in four universities - Winchester, Reading, Leeds and Coventry - selected to represent the different types of institution within the UK system. Focus group participants covered all years of study, and incorporated a range of course types. The focus groups were complemented by the second phase, a set of 12 in-depth interviews using an ethnographic approach carried out in November 2008. These also covered all years of study and a range of course types.

GfK Financial Introduction

GfK Financial is part of the GfK Group, one of the top five market research companies worldwide. Based in London, GfK Financial works closely with HSBC - the sponsor of this report - across many different research projects.

We are delighted to be working with HSBC as it sponsors this investigation into the lives and experiences of students at universities.

Nick Watkins
Managing Director, GfK Financial

2   Choosing a university and course

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When students were asked for the main reasons they wanted to go to university, the most popular responses were: "to gain qualifications" (68 per cent), "to improve my chances of getting a job" (53 per cent), and "to improve my earning potential" (44 per cent).

The research suggests that students can fit into one of four basic segments that relate to their motivations for choosing to attend university. These segments are not mutually exclusive - there tends to be a degree of overlap:

• **Academics:** focus on learning and gaining academic skills, likely to go on to do a postgraduate degree. Main reasons for wanting to go to university were "to stretch me intellectually" or "to learn critically".

• **Next steppers:** have a clear career goal and choose a degree with that in mind. In the survey, they typically chose their course "as course is required for my intended career".

• **Option openers:** do not necessarily have a clear goal, although they may have a vague idea of an industry that interests them. Option openers tend to select a course they believe they will enjoy and are

more likely to be good at. This group typically wanted to attend university to "learn about interesting subjects".

• **Toe dippers:** primarily attracted to university for the lifestyle/living experience but, similar to Option openers, hope to have more opportunities presented to them afterwards by having obtained a degree. This group, when asked in the survey about reasons for university selection, answered either "to have a good social life", "to participate in sport/societies", or "all my friends were going".

The research also indicates that many students see university as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. For example, only 29 per cent of students say that one of the main reasons for them wanting to go to university is "for the experience". This valuable living experience includes: moving away from home; living independently; meeting new people; and building new relationships and networks to potentially support, share and enhance their learning experience. There were similar responses when school leavers were asked for their main reasons for wanting to go to university; the most popular responses were again: "to gain qualifications" (68 per cent), "to improve my chances of getting a job" (44 per cent), and "to improve my earning potential" (45 per cent).

Motivations for attending university

Academics 22% (141)

Option openers 19% (121)

Next steppers 60% (379)

Toe dippers 9% (57)

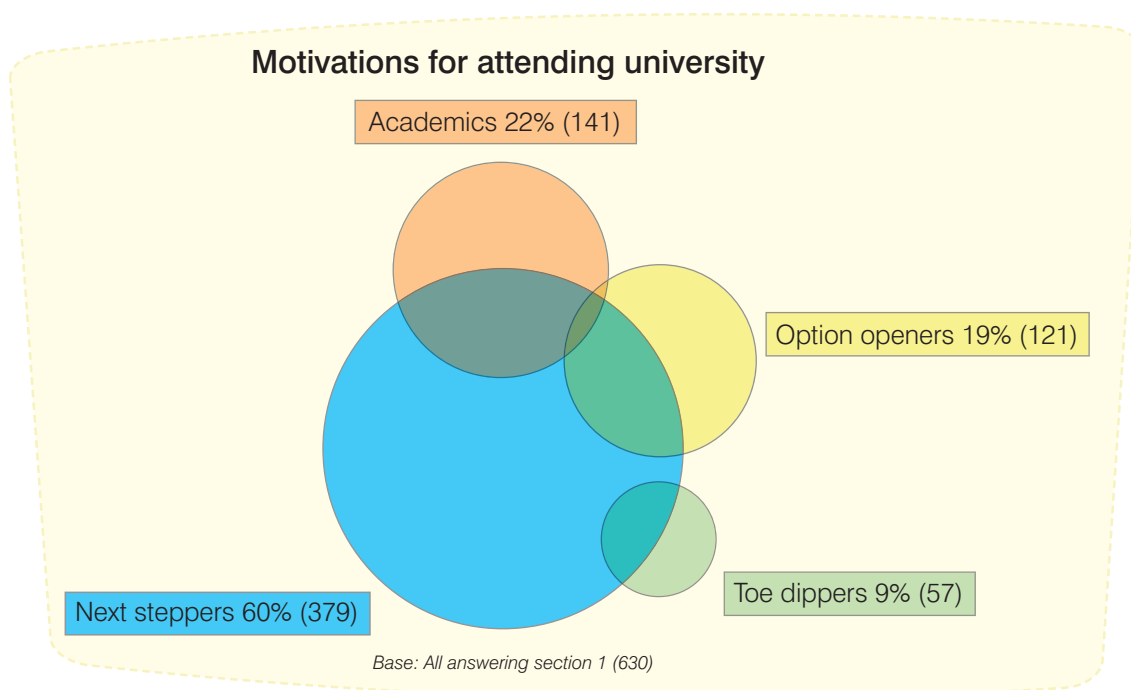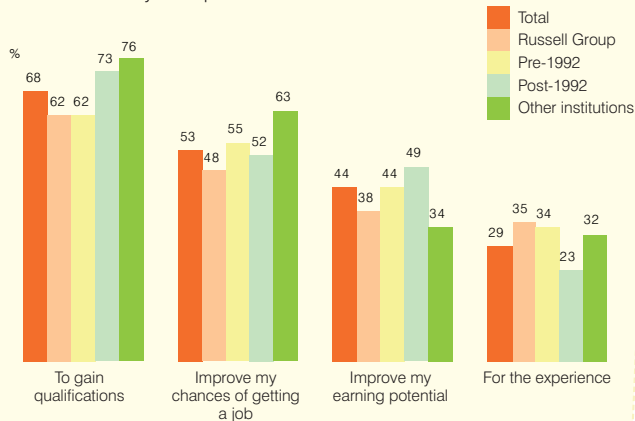*Base: All answering section 1 (630)*

Chart 1: Reasons for wanting to go to university

Q1: What were the main reasons for wanting to go to univeristy? Please indicate your top three reasons.

Legend:
- Total
- Russell Group
- Pre-1992
- Post-1992
- Other institutions

%

To gain qualifications: Total 68, Russell Group 62, Pre-1992 62, Post-1992 73, Other institutions 76

Improve my chances of getting a job: Total 53, Russell Group 48, Pre-1992 55, Post-1992 52, Other institutions 63

Improve my earning potential: Total 44, Russell Group 38, Pre-1992 44, Post-1992 49, Other institutions 34

For the experience: Total 29, Russell Group 35, Pre-1992 34, Post-1992 23, Other institutions 32
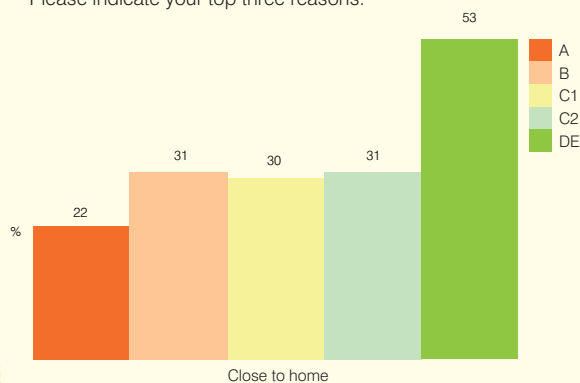
Base: All first-year students (630), Russell Group (143), Pre-1992 (161), Post-1992 (287), Other institutions (38) *small base.*

However, these results are significantly influenced by institution type. Interestingly, students who attend Post-1992 institutions are much more likely to be motivated to go to university to gain a qualification, or improve their earning potential, than those attending either Russell Group or Pre-1992 institutions - see chart 1. In addition, students attending either Russell Group or Pre-1992 institutions are significantly more likely to want to go to university "for the experience". In part this may be explained by differences in socio-economic status, as students who attend Pre-1992, and particularly Russell Group institutions, are significantly more likely to be from higher socio-economic groups.

Chart 2: Socio-economic group of students choosing a university close to home

Q3: What were the main reasons for choosing your university? Please indicate your top three reasons.

Legend:
- A
- B
- C1
- C2
- DE

%

Close to home: A 22, B 31, C1 30, C2 31, DE 53

Base: All first-year students (630), A (100), B (157), C1 (132), C2 (68), DE (68*) *small base*

Across all segments, students' university selection is generally driven by "the course I wanted" (63 per cent). The academic reputation of the university is also a key influence (47 per cent). Next steppers are usually more likely to select an institution that is well regarded in their particular subject of interest, hoping that attendance will reflect well on their CV and impress potential employers.

A large number of students (31 per cent) were motivated to choose their university because it was close to home. This is influenced by socio-economic status; students in the lowest socio-economic grouping, DE, were significantly more likely to choose a university based on the geographical proximity to home than students in all other socioeconomic groups - see chart 2.

Institution type can also be seen to have a significant impact on the reasons students choose their university. As can be seen in chart 3, students who attend Russell Group institutions were more likely to have been motivated by the academic reputation of the university. In contrast, students who attend either Post-1992 or other institutions were more likely to have chosen their university because it had the course they wanted.

Course selection is often decided at an early stage, during sixth form. When students were asked for the main reasons for choosing their course the most popular responses were: "course content matches my interests" (89 per cent), "course leads to my intended career" (60 per cent), and "course is well regarded by potential employers" (41 per cent). Again, there were similar responses when school leavers were asked the same question. The vast majority (90 per cent) of school leavers say that the main reason for choosing their course was that "the course content matched their interests", and 54 per cent say that the "course leads to my intended career". There would therefore seem to be a slight change in emphasis when comparing the reasons for students and school leavers wanting to go to university with their reasons for choosing their course. When choosing their course, students and school leavers seem more

Chart 3: Reasons for choosing specific university

Q3: What were the main reasons for choosing your university? Please indicate your top three reasons.

Legend: Russell Group, Pre-1992, Post-1992, Other institutions

- Had the subject/course I wanted: 45, 61, 71, 79
- Academic reputation of the university: 81, 58, 24, 39
- Close to home: 19, 24, 41, 39
- Suitable entry requirements: 9, 17, 28, 26
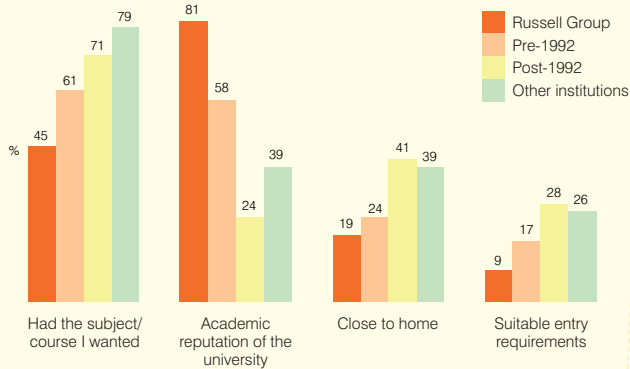
Base: All first-year students (630), Russell Group (143), Pre-1992 (161), Post-1992 (287), Other institutions (38) *small base.*

motivated by personal interests, and not just how well a course will prepare them for future employment.

Students and school leavers get information about going to university from a variety of places. By far the most popular information sources are universities' websites, which 78 per cent of students and 85 per cent of school leavers used, and UCAS, which 70 per cent of students and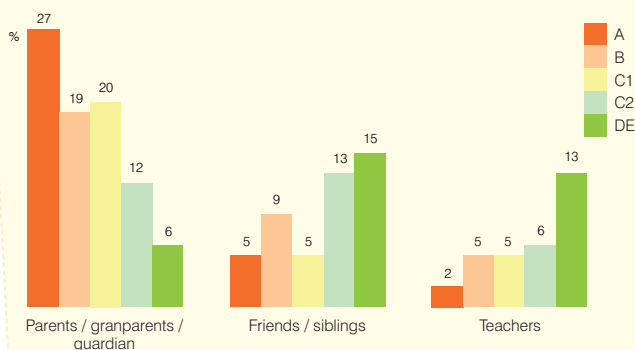 72 per cent of school leavers used. Some 44 per cent of students say they used their teachers to get information, which could be seen as quite low. Interestingly, this number is much higher among school leavers, with 62 per cent saying that they got information from teachers.

Chart 4: Key influence on deciding to go to university

Q7: Who or what was the key influence on your decision to go to university? Please select one answer only.

Legend: A, B, C1, C2, DE

- Parents / granparents / guardian: 27, 19, 20, 12, 6
- Friends / siblings: 5, 9, 5, 13, 15
- Teachers: 2, 5, 5, 6, 13

Base: All first-year students (630), A (100), B (157), C1 (132), C2 (68), DE (68*) *small base*

There is also an interesting contrast between the proportion of students stating that they got information about going to university from friends and siblings (32 per cent), and those who got information from parents or guardians (22 per cent). This indicates that friends are a more valuable resource than might be expected, and certainly appear to be more important than parents. This is however affected by socio-economic group; when asked who or what was the key influence on their decision to go to university, those in higher socio-economic groups were significantly more likely to cite their parents as the key influence, while those in lower socio-economic groups were more likely to state their teachers or friends and siblings - see chart 4.

Key information sources used by students going through the university selection process can be said to be either 'objective' or 'subjective'. Although both are used equally, students regard the 'objective' sources, namely internet and web-based forums (set up to rate universities) and broadsheet newspapers as more reliable. Other sources such as teachers, family, peers, open days, university brochures and prospectuses while regarded as 'subjective' and having bias, still exert a significant influence over the selection process.

University paper and web-based brochures and prospectuses, while heavily relied upon, can be viewed with some suspicion for being subjective and very 'sales and marketing' focused. They can be seen as promoting the more favourable aspects of the university, courses and local area and hiding the less favourable aspects (eg the high cost of rented accommodation in the local area).

"It [the prospectus] just touched on the course you wanted to do and it only gave [a] biased view of what it was actually like."

Third-year BSc

Students appear to receive a vast quantity of information relating to their choice of university. This information appears heavily weighted towards practical and general subjects, such as accommodation and financial support. However, this information is not as tailored as it could be - students
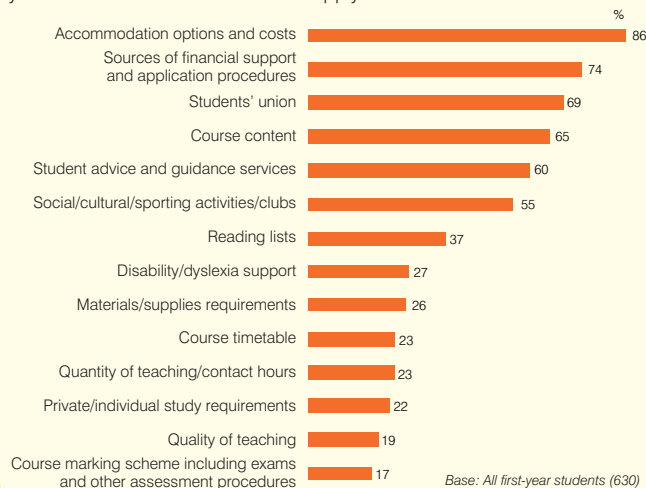
3 Quality and quantity of teaching

often feel they spend a lot of time sifting through less useful information to source the information they want. Course-specific information like timetables or contact hours is also less commonly received - see chart 5 - but actually desired by students.

interest in receiving more practical and living-based information before starting university. However, there is a danger of overloading students with far too much information, and any advice or assistance relating to finance should be engaging and easy to digest. Hearing about other students' experiences living away from home and how they plan their finances is considered the easiest and most relevant form of communicating these messages.

Open days are particularly useful for giving students a flavour of what to expect in terms of their learning and living experiences, but inevitably students tend to agree that it is difficult to envisage what university life will be like until they experience it for themselves. Where students have seen older siblings or friends live through the experience, unsurprisingly their expectations tend to be more closely linked to their actual experiences. They are also more likely to feel better prepared and have made more realistic financial plans and provisions.

Chart 5: Information received before starting course

Q8: What information did you receive from your university before starting your course? Please select all that apply.

Category	%
Accommodation options and costs	86
Sources of financial support and application procedures	74
Students' union	69
Course content	65
Student advice and guidance services	60
Social/cultural/sporting activities/clubs	55
Reading lists	37
Disability/dyslexia support	27
Materials/supplies requirements	26
Course timetable	23
Quantity of teaching/contact hours	23
Private/individual study requirements	22
Quality of teaching	19
Course marking scheme including exams and other assessment procedures	17

Base: All first-year students (630)

3 Quality and quantity of teaching

The vast majority of students (85 per cent) rated the quality of their teaching and learning experience as "good or excellent", however this is significantly affected by a number of factors. As can be seen in chart 6 below, first-year students are significantly more likely to rate the quality of teaching as "good to excellent" than final-year students.

When asked what additional information they would have liked to receive, some of the most popular responses related to course-specific information. For example, a course timetable was the most popular response (41 per cent), followed by a reading list (30 per cent). Having said this, 41 per cent of students responded "none, I received all the information I wanted", suggesting that a lack of information is not significant problem for students starting university. There were similar results among school leavers - 40 per cent say they would have liked to receive a timetable and 29 per cent a reading list. However the most popular answer was again "none, I received all the information I wanted", which was the response of 42 per cent of school leavers.

A minority of students within our sample, who have had a bad experience with accommodation or problems coping with living expenses, express an

Chart 6: How students in different years rate quality of teaching and learning experience

Q12: How would you rate the quality of the teaching and learning experience?

	%
First-year	88
Other year	85
Final year	83

Net proportion of respondents rating the quality of the teaching and learning experience as good to excellent.

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374), first-year (647), other year (1,176), final year (551).
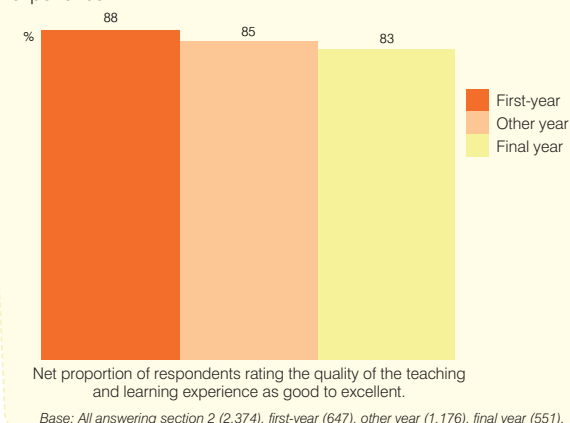
How students rate the quality of teaching is also significantly influenced by subject area, although there do not appear to be any trends between different disciplines. Historical and philosophical studies received the highest proportion of students rating the quality of teaching as "good to excellent" (93 per cent). Languages (89 per cent), medical and life sciences (88 per cent), physical sciences (88 per cent) and law (87 per cent) were also rated "good to excellent" by a high proportion of students. The subject that received the lowest proportion of students rating the quality of teaching as "good to excellent" was architecture (70 per cent).

When looked at by institution type, a significant difference appears; students at either Russell Group institutions or Pre-1992 institutions are much more likely to rate the quality of the teaching and the learning experience as "good to excellent", compared with students who attend Post-1992 institutions or other institutions - see chart 7.

Chart 8: Contact hours by subject area

Q15: On average, how many contact hours a week do you have at this stage of your course and how are these split into: lectures; interactive group teaching sessions/tutorials, individual teaching sessiosn/tutorials?

Average number of contact hours a week
Average lecture hours
Average interactive group teaching sessions/tutorial hours
Average individual teaching session hours
Contact hours with personal tutor
Other hours (such as drop-in sessions)
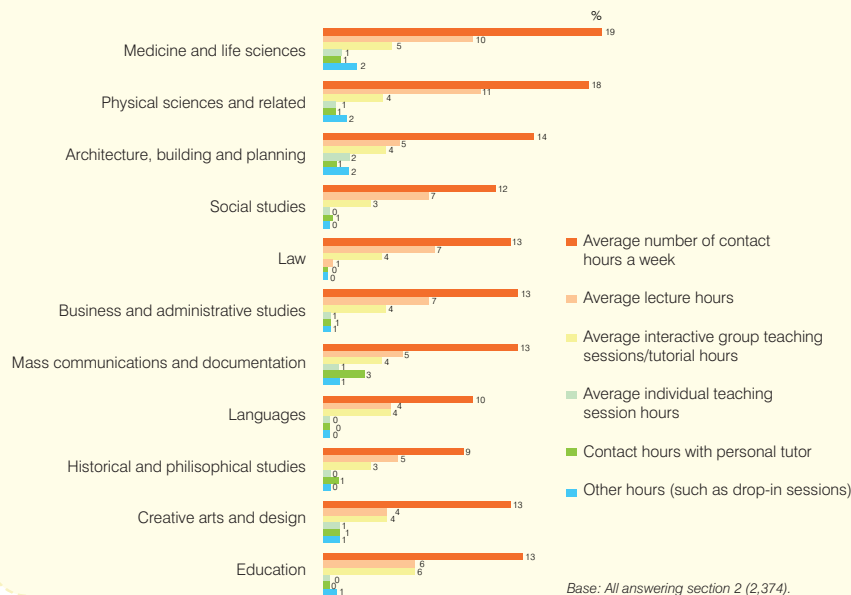
Base: All answering section 2 (2,374).

3.1   Contact hours

On average, university students receive a total of 15 contact hours a week. In addition to these contact hours, students spend an average of 16 hours a week on private study. The majority of contact hours are provided through lectures, which account for an average of eight hours per week.

The number of contact hours that students receive, as well as the number of hours spent on private study, are both significantly influenced by subject area, institution type and year of study. The most significant differences occur by subject area - students studying medical and life sciences and physical sciences have the most contact hours - see chart 8. At the other end of the scale, students studying languages or historical and philosophical studies get the least contact hours. Most of this difference appears to be explained by the average number of lecture hours that students receive.

The qualitative work found that those studying medical and physical sciences tend to have the lowest expectations in terms of contact hours. Students of these disciplines often have an expectation of more

Chart 7: How students rate the quality of teaching and the learning experience

Q12: How would you rate the quality of teaching and learning experience?

Russell Group
Pre-1992
Post-1992
Other institutions

Net proportion of respondents rating the quality of the teaching and learning experience as good to excellent

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374), Russell Group (597), Pre-1992 (598), Post-1992 (1,018), Other institutions (160).

Extracts from colleges on learning expectations – 1 and 2 from BSc students, 3 and 4 from BA students.

effectively during this private time. Indeed, most look to existing structured learning to find cues for their private study, by looking at reading lists or references from lecture materials. Virtual learning environments have become a particularly useful tool for students looking for cues in private study. This is less true of the Academics, who tend to look for their own material and are far more active in establishing their own private study routine.

The amount of time spent on private study differs for each of the four groups. Academics and Option openers are significantly more likely to spend more time on private study than both Next steppers and Toe dippers. While it is not surprising that Toe dippers are not the most diligent, the lower level of private study done by Next steppers may suggest that students using university as a means to an end may struggle a little to motivate themselves to study.

Interestingly, the number of contact hours that students receive a week, as well as the number of hours they spend on private study, are significantly influenced by their year of study. First-year students,

autonomous and text-based learning, and a far more distanced relationship from the lecturers themselves. These lower expectations lead to a far more satisfying student experience.

When we compare the number of contact hours by subject area with the number of private study hours, not surprisingly a trend appears whereby students studying a discipline with more contact hours are likely to spend less time on private study, and visa versa. This association is particularly strong for students taking languages, law, architecture, historical and philosophical studies or creative arts and design - see chart 9.

Students generally accept the role of private study, and while they find the process of autonomous learning difficult they do find it satisfying. This said, most students express a need for a form of structure or deadline to ensure they work

Chart 9: Average weekly contact and private study hours

Q15: On average, how many contact hours a week do you have at this stage of your course and how are these split into: lectures; interactive group teaching sessions/tutorials, individual teaching sessiosn/tutorials?
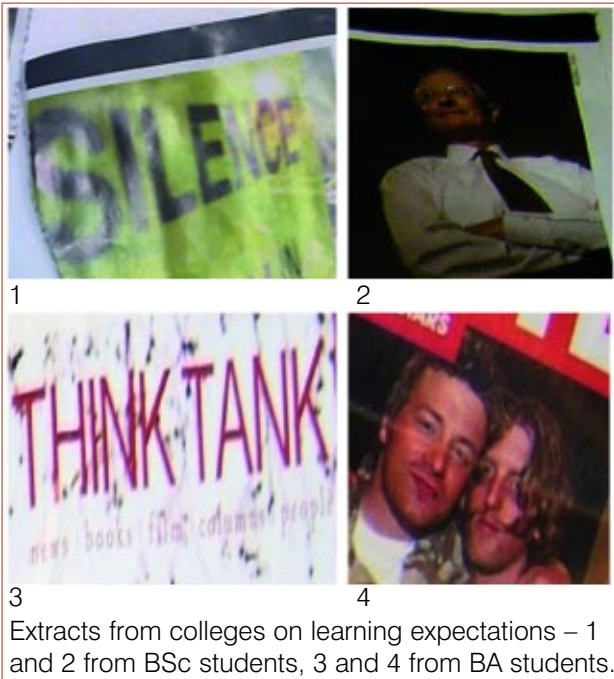
Q18: In addition to contact hours, how many hours a week do you spend on private study?

Subject	Average number of contact hours a week	Number of hours a week spent on private study
Medicine and life sciences	19	15
Physical sciences and related	18	15
Architecture, building and planning	14	20
Social studies	12	14
Law	13	19
Business and administrative studies	13	14
Mass communications and documentation	13	11
Languages	10	17
Historical and philisophical studies	9	18
Creative arts and design	13	18
Education	13	13

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374).

3.1   Contact hours

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374), first-year (647), other year (1,176), final year (551).

institutions. This would seem to indicate that differences in contact hours are not just about the actual quantity, but also the type of contact offered by different institutions. Students at Russell Group institutions are significantly more likely to spend longer on private study than students who attend either Pre-1992 or Post-1992 institutions.

When the data on contact hours is split by subject area, a number of significant differences appear - see chart 12. However, it is difficult to discern any overall trend between the contact hours and subject areas among different types of institution.

When looking at the different forms of contact, students have clear ideas of what makes these hours more or less effective. In lectures, active and informal experiences are favoured, with students being encouraged to interact with the material through incomplete handouts and problem sheets.

"Today I had a lecture from 9am to 11am. The first half was merely sitting listening to the lecturer read off slideshows ... a different lecturer for the second half, who was much better, involved the students and paused so people had time to note down important things."

Extract from a student blog First-year BSc

or those in a year other than their first or final year, are significantly more likely to receive more contact hours a week than final-year students - see chart 10. When this is broken down by the type of contact, it is clear that the main influence is the difference in the average number of lecture hours received by students in different years of study. First-year students, and students in their intermediate years, also receive more contact hours through interactive teaching sessions than final-year students. In contrast, the reverse is true of private study hours; final-year students are significantly more likely to spend longer on private study than first-year students.

Institution type can also be seen to influence both contact hours and private study hours significantly - see chart 11. Students who attend Russell Group institutions or Pre-1992 institutions are significantly more likely to receive more contact hours than those attending Post-1992 institutions or other institutions. Again, this appears to be driven by the average number of lecture hours received by students. Despite this, students who attend a Post-1992 institution are likely to receive significantly more interactive group/tutorial hours than students who attend either Pre-1992 or Russell Group

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374), Russell Group (597), Pre-1992 (598), Post-1992 (1,018), Other institutions (160).

3.2   Who provides contact?

Chart 12: Average weekly contact hours by subject area

Q15: On average, how many contact hours a week do you have at this stage of your course and how are these split into: lectures; interactive group teaching sessions/tutorials, individual teaching sessiosn/tutorials?

Medicine and life sciences: Russell Group 21, Pre-1992 19, Post-1992 17, Other institution 18

Physical sciences and related: Russell Group 18, Pre-1992 20, Post-1992 15, Other institution 12

Architecture, building and planning: Russell Group 16, Post-1992 12, Other institution 14, 8

Social studies: Russell Group 11, Pre-1992 12, Post-1992 12, Other institution 9

Law: Russell Group 12, Pre-1992 14, Post-1992 12, Other institution 10

Business and administrative studies: Russell Group 17, Pre-1992 13, Post-1992 13, Other institution 14

Mass communications and documentation: Russell Group 7, Pre-1992 8, Post-1992 14

Languages: Russell Group 10, Pre-1992 9, Post-1992 10, Other institution 9

Historical and philisophical studies: Russell Group 9, Pre-1992 9, Post-1992 11, Other institution 9

Creative arts and design: Russell Group 11, Pre-1992 13, Post-1992 13, Other institution 13

Education: Russell Group 16, Pre-1992 12, Post-1992 13, Other institution 14

Russell Group, Pre-1992, Post-1992, Other institution

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374).

More rigid lectures, where information is conveyed in a less interactive manner, are seen as far less effective. Students view them as an ineffective use of time, as their recall of the subject matter is poor following the lecture. Students also feel they could achieve a similar level of learning from the lecture materials. Beyond the pedagogical effectiveness, students are particularly positive about lecturers who manage to convey their enthusiasm for a subject area, captivating and engaging the students, and inspiring them to discuss and research the topic area.

Seminars and workshops are more universally well received, mainly due to their inherently interactive nature. Students find them particularly effective when they immediately follow a lecture - the seminar/workshop being based on the lecture content. These provide a timetabled environment in which students are able to have interactive contact with staff, when any queries or concerns about the content are in the front of their mind.
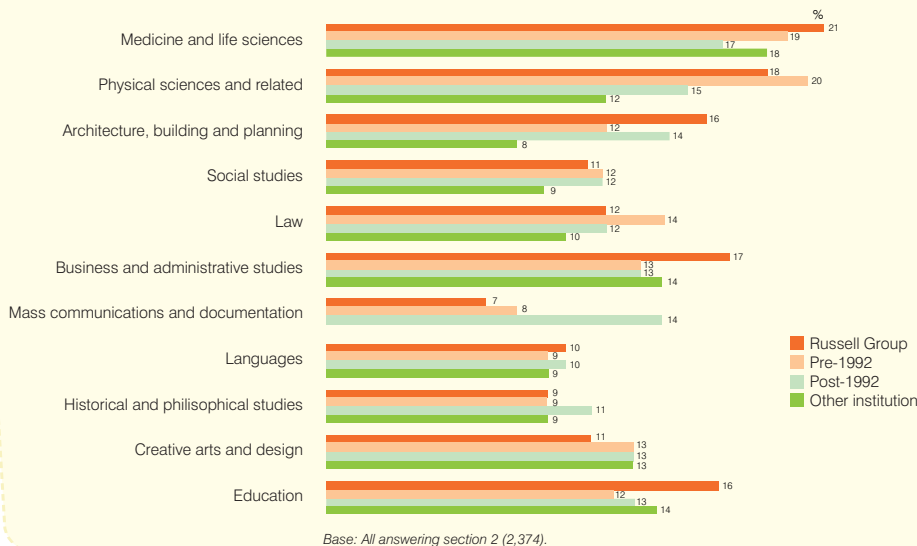
It often appears that students expect to have a similar teaching environment to that which they encountered in secondary school and sixth form, but the findings suggest this is not necessarily the case. Students seem to expect the teaching style to be different at

university, and demonstrate an awareness of the changes they will have to make to their learning style. However, this awareness does not necessarily translate into coping with these changes easily, and students find the new style of learning noticeably more difficult.

When asked, the vast majority of students (75 per cent) believe that the number of contact hours they receive is sufficient. Interestingly, this is not significantly affected by year of study despite the difference in contact hours. This suggests that as students progress through university they are happy to receive fewer contact hours.

3.2   Who provides contact?

Students were asked what percentage of their contact hours were provided by the following groups: professors, senior lecturers, researchers and postgraduate students. In all institutions most contact hours are provided by professors or senior lecturers, who provide an average of 85 per cent of contact hours - see chart 13. However this is significantly affected by institution type, with students who attend Russell Group institutions or Pre-1992 institutions more likely to have contact time with a professor than students who attend Post-1992 institutions or other institutions. This trend is reversed when looking at contact time with senior lecturers - students attending Post-1992 or other institutions are likely to have more of this type of contact than students attending either Russell Group institutions or Pre-1992 institutions. Again, this indicates that variations in contact time exceed differences in the actual number of hours.

Throughout the research it became clear that students are more likely to speak to staff who are viewed as approachable and available. Students rarely express

Chart 13: Percentage of weekly contact hours with different groups

Q19: What percentage of your weekly contact time is with each of the following: professors, senior lecturers, researchers, postgraduates?
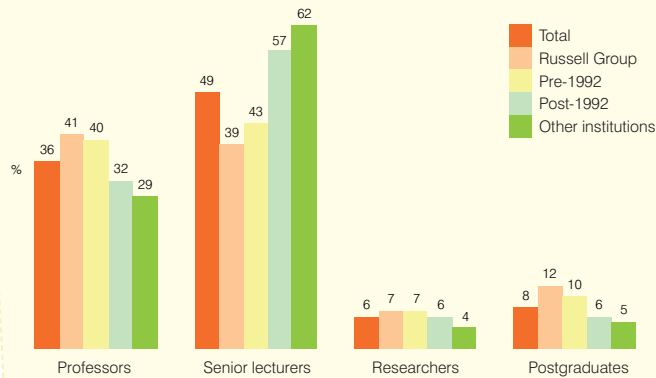
Legend: Total, Russell Group, Pre-1992, Post-1992, Other institutions

Professors: 36, 41, 40, 32, 29
Senior lecturers: 49, 39, 43, 57, 62
Researchers: 6, 7, 7, 6, 4
Postgraduates: 8, 12, 10, 6, 5

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374), Russell Group (597), Pre-1992 (598), Post-1992 (1,018), Other institutions (160).

concern about staff seniority - their initial point of contact is a staff member they feel comfortable speaking to, and who is easily available. In some cases, this makes technicians rather than academic staff a preferred point of contact.

"I don't think seniority matters at all." First-year BSc
"Younger tutors are easier to talk to." Third-year BSc
Extracts from tudent groups.

When asked about the quality of interaction, senior lecturers and professors were scored the most highly - see chart 14. This would seem to indicate a high

Chart 14: Quality of contact hours with different groups

Q20: How would you rate the quality of the interaction with each of the following: professors, senior lecturers, researchers, postgraduates?

Legend: Total, Russell Group, Pre-1992, Post-1992, Other institutions

Professors (good/excellent net): 53, 65, 62, 43, 38
Senior lecturers (good/excellent net): 68, 66, 68, 69, 67
Researchers (good/excellent net): 20, 25, 22, 17, 16
Postgraduates (good/excellent net): 24, 38, 30, 14, 14

Base: All answering section 2 (2,374), Russell Group (597), Pre-1992 (598), Post-1992 (1,018), Other institutions (160).

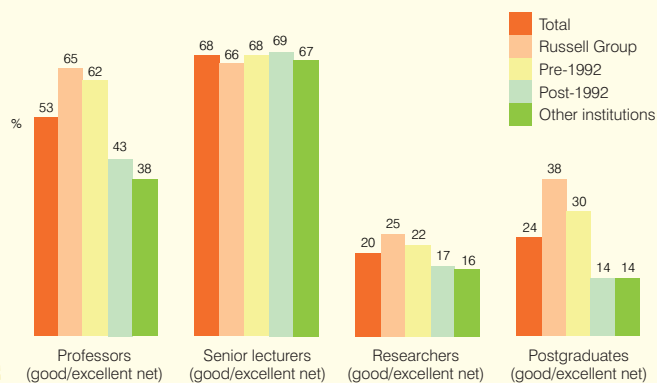level of correlation between the percentage of contact hours received and the perceived quality of the interaction.

Interestingly, the contact which students often value particularly highly is the time they spend with their peers. When asked "what motivates you to learn?" the second most popular response, after an inspirational lecturer, was "collaborating with other students" (57 per cent). In most cases when students encounter academic and non-academic difficulties, friends are the first and often the only points of contact, because they more approachable, available and they can communicate on a common level.

"If it's a social problem, i'll go to my friends probably ... If it's an academic problem, depends. I'm living with [a fellow student] on my course so I'll probably go to them or my other friends on my course."
Extract from interview Second-year BA.

Students' networks of course-mates are an extremely valuable learning resource, both in terms of dealing with any concerns and also for autonomous learning and discussion. This often occurs outside of timetabled hours, in a variety of locations including cafes, library areas and student accommodation. An unexpected benefit of short amounts of time between lectures (1-2 hours) is fostering this valuable horizontal (peer-to-peer) learning. During this time students use both university-provided and improvised social spaces to discuss the previous lecture's content, raise any concerns or queries, and discuss non-academic pursuits.

"A course mate just texted me asking questions about work. I was wondering when this would start happening. Because my course mates know I start work early, when deadlines creep up they know I'll understand things and so they start asking me about it." Third-year BSc

"A few of us have talked about making our own study group where we can meet up weekly and discuss the material covered in the lecture and see if we can help each other make our own sense of it. I think that this is a really good idea and we have discussed putting something up on facebook to see if anyone's interested in joining us." Third-year BA

Extracts from student blogs.

4 Personalisation

4 Personalisation

The most common information that students received when choosing their modules was: module content (74 per cent), coursework requirements (55 per cent), assessment criteria (48 per cent) and exams (46 per cent) - see chart 15. The focus therefore seems to be very much on the technical requirements of modules - student-specific advice, such as the opportunity to discuss choices with a personal tutor, is much less common.

Chart 15: Information received when choosing modules

Q24: What information and support do you receive when choosing which modules/options to study? Please select all that apply.

%

Module/option content	74
Coursework requirements	55
Assessment criteria and procedures	48
Exams	46
Timing of lectures, tutorials, etc	36
Optional reading lists	33
Compulsory reading lists	32
Opportunity to discuss choices with my personal tutor	28
Opportunity to discuss choices with the module lecturer/tutor	27
Information about the tutor/lecturer	21
None of these/not applicable	17
Follow-on modules	16
Opportunity to discuss choices with a careers advisor	11
Opportunity to discuss choices with a member of central student services	6
Other - please specify	1

Base: All answering section 3 (2,404)

Chart 16: Involvement of students in shaping course content

Q25: How involved do you believe you are in shaping the content, curriculum or design of your course?

Q26: How involved do you want to be in shaping the content, curriculum or design of your course?

Legend:
- How involved students are in shaping content of their course
- How involved students want to be in shaping the content of their course

%

	Are	Want to be
1 Not at all involved	21	5
2	14	4
3	13	6
4 Somewhat involved	28	28
5	11	17
6	7	19
7 Very involved	5	21

Base: All answering section 3 (2,404).
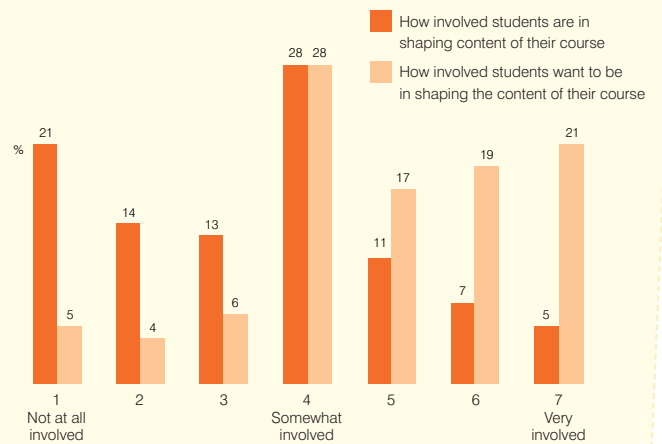
There is a clear divergence between how involved students feel they are in shaping course content and how involved they want to be, indicating that students would like to be more involved than they currently believe they are - see chart 16.

This disconnect may be a result of the difference between students who have the opportunity to provide feedback about their course and those that believe this feedback is acted on - see chart 17 opposite. The point here seems to be that while the vast majority of students (92 per cent) have the opportunity to provide feedback, a much smaller proportion (51 per cent) feel that it is acted on.

Chart 17: Student feedback on courses, given and acted upon

Q25: How involved do you believe you are in shaping the content, curriculum or design of your course?

Q26: How involved do you want to be in shaping the content, curriculum or design of your course?

Legend:
- Opportunity to provide feedback on course
- Do you feel that the feedback is acted on

	Opportunity to provide feedback	Feedback acted on
Yes	92	51
No	2	21

Base: Q28 all answering section3 (2,404), Q29 who have provided feedback (2,223).
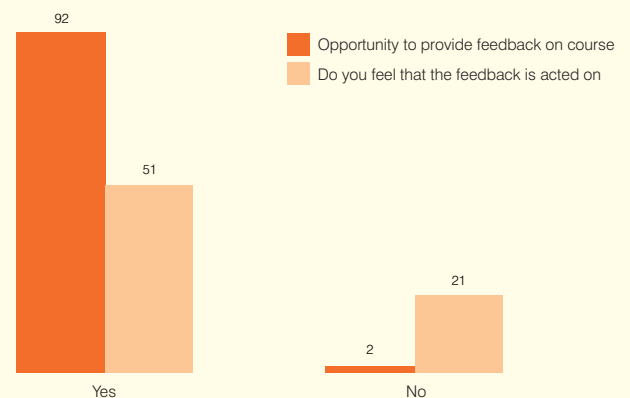
5 Coursework and feedback
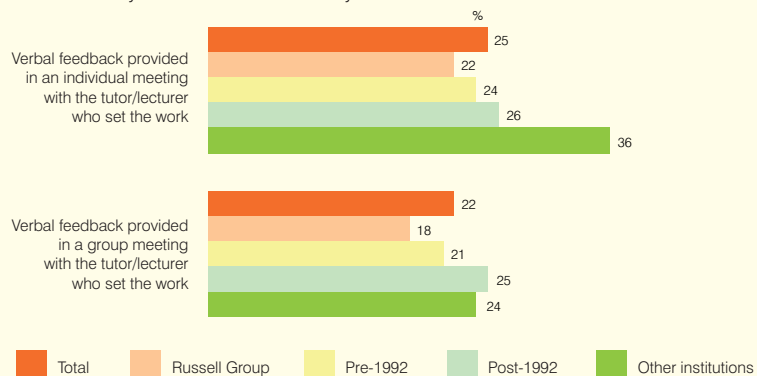
5 Coursework and feedback

5.1 How students receive feedback on their coursework

Written marks and grades are received by 90 per cent of students, and written comments received by 85 per cent. Verbal feedback (in an individual meeting) is received by 25 per cent, while verbal feedback (in a group meeting) is received by 22 per cent of students. Interestingly, only one per cent of students say that they receive feedback through the internet, either online or by email.

When these results are crossed by year of study it appears that students are more likely to receive verbal feedback (either in an individual meeting or a group meeting) if they are at an earlier stage in their studies - see chart 18 below. Interestingly, this is potentially at odds with student needs, as the final year is usually where students become the most concerned about their studies and require the most reassurance and feedback. Students who attend a Post-1992 institution are most likely to receive verbal feedback, with students who attend Pre-1992 institutions next likely - see chart 19 below. Surprisingly, students who attend Russell Group institutions are the least likely to receive verbal feedback, either through an individual meeting or a group meeting.

Chart 18: Receipt of verbal feedback by year of study

Q30: How do you receive feedback on your coursework?

Verbal feedback provided in an individual meeting with the tutor/lecturer who set the work
- Total: 25
- First-year: 29
- Intermediate year: 25
- Final year: 22

Verbal feedback provided in a group meeting with the tutor/lecturer who set the work
- Total: 22
- First-year: 30
- Intermediate year: 21
- Final year: 17

Legend: Total | First-year | Intermediate year | Final year

Base: All students (2,430), first-year (670), other year (1,182), final year (578).

Chart 19: Receipt of verbal feedback by institution

Q30: How do you receive feedback on your coursework?

Verbal feedback provided in an individual meeting with the tutor/lecturer who set the work
- Total: 25
- Russell Group: 22
- Pre-1992: 24
- Post-1992: 26
- Other institutions: 36

Verbal feedback provided in a group meeting with the tutor/lecturer who set the work
- Total: 22
- Russell Group: 18
- Pre-1992: 21
- Post-1992: 25
- Other institutions: 24

Legend: Total | Russell Group | Pre-1992 | Post-1992 | Other institutions

Base: All students (2,430), Russell Group (582), Pre-1992 (647), Post-1992 (1,038), Other institutions (161).

Receiving verbal feedback through an individual meeting also appears to be affected by subject area. Students studying science subjects are least likely to receive individual verbal feedback, with only 18 per cent of those interviewed stating that they receive feedback in this way. This compares with 30 per cent of those studying arts and humanities subjects. This experience would appear to reflect the expectations of students, with arts and humanities students expecting far more individual contact than science students. However, within arts and humanities there is a large degree of variation, and the numbers receiving individual verbal feedback gets as low as 12 per cent in education subjects, and as high as 50 per cent in art and design subjects.

When we compare how students receive feedback on their coursework with how they would like to receive feedback, there is a large disconnect between the number of people who receive feedback through an individual meeting and the number who would like to receive feedback in this way - see the table below. Some 71 per cent of those interviewed would like to receive feedback through an individual meeting with their tutor/lecturer, however only 25 per cent of those surveyed currently receive feedback in this way. When this is broken down by gender, female students appear most keen to receive feedback through individual meetings. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of female students interviewed say they would like to
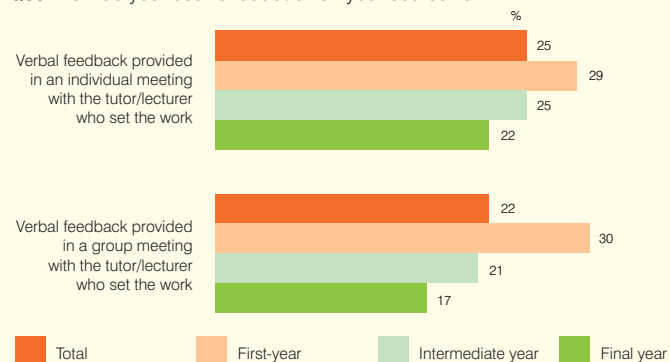
Disconnect between verbal feedback and expectations

	Q30: How do you receive feedback on your coursework?	Q32: How would you like to receive feedback on your coursework?
Written grades/marks	90%	72%
Written comments	85%	81%
Verbal feedback provided in an individual meeting with the tutor/lecturer who set the work	25%	71%
Verbal feedback provided in a group meeting with the tutor/lecturer who set the work	22%	29%
Internet/online/email	1%	-

receive feedback in individual meetings, compared with 66 per cent of male students.

> *"Unless you've done substantially worse than you thought, you're not going to gain much from it [feedback]."*
> First-year BSc

Some of these issues also came out in the qualitative work, where it was found that there is a need for staff to make themselves more available and approachable to students, and to encourage students to take up the verbal feedback they seem to require.

Indeed, students often commented that their ability to get verbal feedback was dependent on a good relationship with the tutor; good relationships where they feel comfortable to go and ask for verbal feedback are rare, according to students.

In addition, how performance measures up against individual expectations can affect how satisfied students are with the feedback they receive. If there is a disparity between expectations and results, students are likely to want not just more feedback, but different feedback. Because of this, the qualitative work found that students only tend to seek feedback on essays/assignments proactively when they have performed less well than anticipated, as illustrated in the quote above. However there are

notable exceptions to this, in terms of particularly engaged students.

5.2   Student attitudes towards coursework feedback

There is a high level of agreement with the statement that "feedback made it clear how well you had performed" (78 per cent), however there is much less agreement that "feedback made it clear how to improve performance" (56 per cent), or "motivated you to study" (54 per cent) - see chart 20. None of these statements receive significantly different responses when cross-referred with either year of study or institution type.

It also emerged that the content of feedback varies greatly, and certain forms of feedback are better

Chart 20: Level of agreement with coursework feedback

Q31: To what extent do you agree with the following statements and feedback you received?

Makes it clear how well I have performed on the coursework assignment/task: 2, 4, 7, 9, 23, 31, 24

Makes it clear how to improve my performance on future coursework assignment/task: 6, 9, 15, 14, 24, 20, 12

Motivates me to study: 4, 6, 10, 24, 22, 19, 13

1 - Totally disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 - Neither agree nor disagree | 5 | 6 | 7 - Totally agree

Base: All students (2,398).

> *"They use riddles, 'there's something missing here', 'I liked it, but it lacked in something' ... [They should] tell you why you've lost the marks."*
> Extract from student group
> Third-year BSc

received than others. Students comment that some feedback can be very general and therefore difficult to act on - feedback may tell people how they had performed, but not how to improve this or why they had not performed better. Many students comment on 'cryptic' feedback, which often poses questions to them but gives no indication of where they went wrong in their work. Students acknowledge that it may have been intended to make them think about areas, but in fact it only served to confuse and frustrate them as they had reached the limit of their understanding without assistance.

5.3   Length of time taken to receive coursework feedback

The majority of students (55 per cent) receive feedback on their coursework within three to four weeks, with 25 per cent saying that it takes five weeks or more to receive feedback. In addition, variability appears to be a significant issue, as 18 per cent of students state that it is impossible to say how long it takes to receive feedback as it varies so much.

When these answers are cross-referred with year of study there appears a trend whereby the more advanced in their study the student is, the longer it is

likely to take to receive feedback from coursework - see chart 21. A possible explanation for this may be that coursework becomes longer or more complex as university study advances.

In addition, the length of time taken to receive coursework feedback appears to be influenced by institution type. Students who attend a Russell Group institution are likely to receive their coursework feedback earlier, whereas feedback takes longer at Pre-1992 institutions. Students who attend Post-1992 institutions have to wait the longest for feedback - see chart 22.

When asked if this timing met their expectations, the majority of students (62 per cent) answer "yes". However, the timing of feedback is less likely to meet expectations if students are more advanced in their studies, if they attend a Pre-1992 institution, or even less so if they attend a Post-1992 institutions. These findings obviously relate to the tendency (identified above) for feedback to take longer for those more advanced in their studies or attending a Pre-1992 institution, and longer still if for those attending a Post-1992 institution.

Students who said that the timing of feedback did not meet their expectations were then asked how long they would expect feedback to take. As can be seen in chart 23 on the next page, expectations are heavily

Chart 21: Average feedback timing by year of study

Q33: How long on average does it take for you to receive feedback on your coursework?

Response	Total	First-year	Intermediate year	Final year
Less than a week (%)	5	9	3	5
One or two weeks	18	24	18	14
Three to four weeks	32	34	31	32
Five to six weeks	18	14	19	21
Seven weeks or more	7	4	9	8
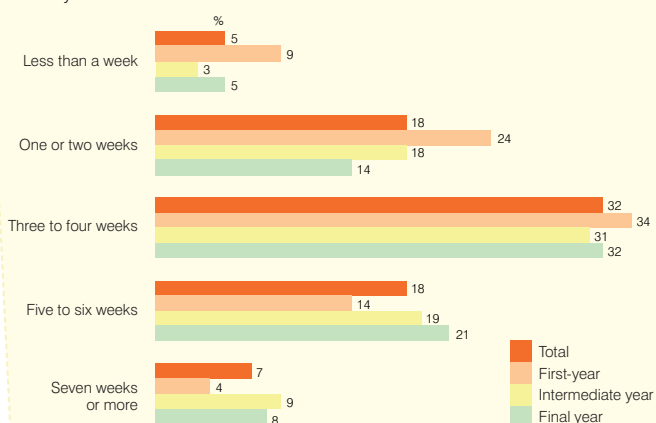
Base: All students (2,398), First-year (665), Intermediate year (1,166), Final year (567).

Chart 22: Average feedback timing by institution type

Q33: How long on average does it take for you to receive feedback on your coursework?

Response	Total	Russell Group	Pre-1992	Post-1992	Other institutions
Less than a week (%)	5	11	5	2	4
One or two weeks	18	24	22	14	13
Three to four weeks	32	26	36	34	22
Five to six weeks	18	14	15	21	25
Seven weeks or more	7	7	5	8	10
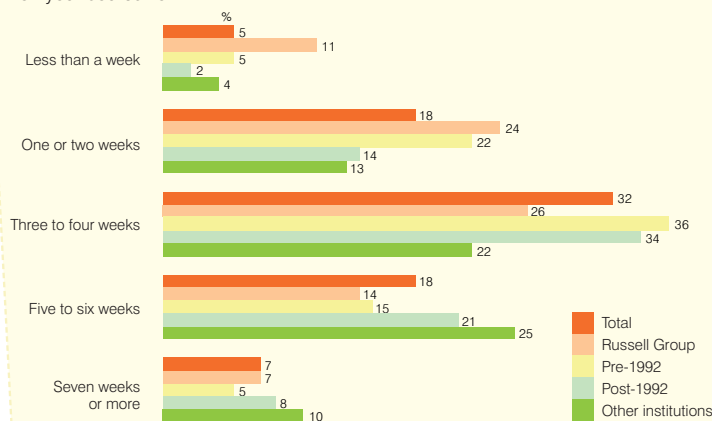
Base: All students (2,398), Russell Group (571), Pre-1992 (640), Post-1992 (1,027), Other institution (158).

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6 Accommodation

Chart 23: Actual and expected average feedback time

	%
Less than a week	5 / 5
One or two weeks	18 / 57
Three to four weeks	32 / 37
Five to six weeks	18 / 1
Seven weeks or more	7

Q33: How long on average does it take for you to receive feedback on your coursework?

Q35: How long would you reasonably expect it to take to receive feedback on your coursework?

Q33 Base: All answering section 4 (2,398).
Q35 Base: All where feedback timing did not meet expectations (734).

skewed towards feedback being received sooner, with the majority (57 per cent) expecting feedback within 1-2 weeks.

Study abroad

When asked if they are planning to study abroad as part of their course, 16 per cent of students said "yes". However this is significantly influenced by subject area, with students studying either medicine and life sciences or languages significantly more likely to say "yes". It is also significantly influenced by institution type, with students attending either a Russell Group institution or a Post-1992 institution more likely to say "yes". When asked what they hope to gain from this experience, the most popular answers were: "greater confidence" (76 per cent), "better employment prospects" (72 per cent), to "become more self-reliant" (66 per cent), and "better language skills" (61 per cent). When students not planning to study abroad were asked for their reasons the main reasons were: that it is "not relevant to my course" (55 per cent), and a "concern about finance" (33 per cent).

6 Accommodation

As is to be expected, the type of accommodation that students live in is significantly influenced by year of study. First-year students are significantly more likely to live in university halls of residence, and other and final-year students are more likely to live in private rented accommodation - see chart 24.

Within this there is also some difference by institution type, as students who attend either Russell Group institutions or Pre-1992 institutions are significantly more likely to live in university halls of residence than students attending either Post-1992 institutions or other institutions. In contrast, students attending Post-1992 institutions are more likely to live in privately-owned halls of residence.

When asked if they are happy with their accommodation, the vast majority of students (84 per cent) said they were. Interestingly, this is not affected by year of study, which suggests that students accept the changes in accommodation that are likely to occur as they progress through university. There is however some difference when cross-referred with type of accommodation; those in university-owned halls of residence are more likely to be happy with their accommodation than students in privately-owned halls of residence.

First-year students are generally very satisfied with halls provided by the university. Crucial for many is the fact that they share their accommodation with a large number of students, allowing them to meet people and make friends. This allows them to secure housemates for their second-year accommodation, and seek support for a wide variety of areas including

Chart 24: Accommodation type by year of study
Q42: What type of accommodation do you currently live in?

	%
Privately rented accommodation	19 / 50 / 51
My parents' home	19 / 19 / 20
University-owned hall of residence – self-catered	32 / 7 / 7
My own home	8 / 7 / 6
University-owned hall of residence – partly/fully catered	10 / 3 / 3
Privately-owned hall of residence	7 / 5 / 4
Flat/house owned by the univesity	2 / 2 / 2
Property rented from the council/housing association	2 / 2 / 1
Other property owned by me or my family	1 / 2 / 3

First-year
Other year
Final year

Base: All answering section 5 (2,388), First-year (629), Other year (1,210), Final year (549).

> *"I should use the day to do work. I seem to have so much to do already! [I] need to make an effort to keep on top of it, it's so easy to get distracted living in halls though, there's always something going on."*
> Extract from student blog, First-year BA
>
> *"I didn't really feel that I was included because I wasn't living on campus"*
> Extract from student interview, First-year BSc

their course, sports and social clubs, and non-academic concerns. While inevitably there are some clashes with other students in halls of residence, and they can be a distracting environment, these are seen as small prices to pay for the benefits. This said, some students do express a desire for the university to make it easier to move within or between halls if they wish to, by ensuring that there are free rooms and space available.

For most, halls offer a protected environment and a valuable first step into independence. The lack of utility costs is seen as a particularly positive aspect, particularly in retrospect by those who have since left halls. This protection allows them to focus on building networks and acclimatising to their independence.

Typical study area
First-year BSc

From a practical point of view, most students attach a fair amount of importance to having a study area in their room. This usually consists of a desk, with room for a desktop computer and printer, an internet connection and a shelf to store textbooks and ring-binders. While students may not use this area extensively, they expect it and consider it important to have.

Aside from this, university halls tend to fulfill all student requirements in terms of sleeping, relaxation, entertaining and personal hygiene. Students are happy with the space provided and with the facilities available. Security is also seen as particularly high within halls of residence.

Privately-owned halls are seen as particularly expensive, both by those who live in them and those who do not. However, having seen other university accommodation, those who pay a premium for privately-owned halls consider it to be worth the extra money. This said, the extra expense of living in self-catering accommodation, and the fact that new students have comparatively little knowledge about how to budget for food, results in some students in private accommodation having more financial concerns than those in university-owned, catered accommodation.

One aspect of halls that is not necessarily seen as a benefit by students is the presence of a hall bar. While these are useful areas for socialisation and building networks, first-years acknowledge that they provide a constant temptation to spend money, one which is often compounded by peer pressure from their hallmates.

When students were asked if they were happy with the choice of accommodation offered to them by their university, the majority (55 per cent) said "yes". However this is significantly influenced by institution type, with students who attend Russell Group institutions the most likely to be happy and the least likely to have not been offered accommodation - see chart 25. At the other end of the scale, students who attend either Post-1992 institutions or other institutions are significantly more likely not to be happy with the accommodation offered, as well as more likely not to be offered accommodation.

Once students move past the first year, the majority enter into private, rented accommodation. For most second-years, the process of finding a house is seen as an exciting and enjoyable process. University lists are used, but not relied upon; most have an ideal that

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Chart 25: Happiness with accommodation by institution type
Q44: Were you happy with the choice of accommodation offered to you by the university?
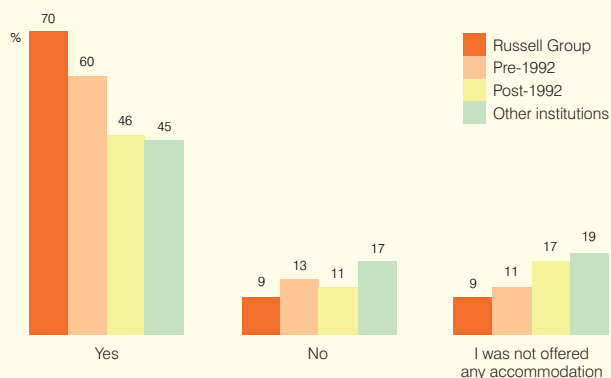
Legend:
- Russell Group
- Pre-1992
- Post-1992
- Other institutions

Yes: 70, 60, 46, 45
No: 9, 13, 11, 17
I was not offered any accommodation: 9, 11, 17, 19

Base: All answering section 5 (2,388), Russell Group (601), Pre-1992 (594), Post-1992 (1,026), Other institutions (165).

they are attempting to fulfill and feel that by restricting themselves to university lists they are unlikely to find the right place.

Example of a system in a second-year household – using jars and a whiteboard to deal with utility bills.

Second-year BA

Most students find the move a slight shock; the introduction of utility payments, food bills and house maintenance can cause some concern in the second year. This often requires the establishment of systems within houses to prevent any arguments around these areas; indeed households where these systems are not introduced are often characterised by disputes and financial arguments. This seems to be an area where guidance could be provided to ensure students are able to avoid conflicts.

Occasionally serious issues can arise with housemates, and some students comment that it would be useful if the university could provide an option to move back into halls if issues become severe.

Within the third year comparatively little changes; the shock of utility bills and food has been dealt with, although in many cases third years have taken drastic steps to curb these expenses (see finance section on page 27). In this year the importance of students having a good relationship with their housemates increases as their studies become more critical. Housemates are depended upon to respect third-year students' need for quiet, and in many cases to provide support and assistance with their academic work. Again, peer relationships emerge as a critical area within the student experience.

Looking at the type of social spaces that students are offered in university accommodation reveals more significant differences by institution type. As can be seen in chart 26, students who attend Russell Group institutions and, to a lesser degree, students who attend Pre-1992 and other institutions are more likely to be provided with a range of social spaces than students attending Post-1992 institutions. This difference is particularly evident when looking at computer rooms, cafés/restaurants, licensed bars and eating areas.

However the social spaces provided by universities and students' unions show much less difference by institution than those provided in university accommodation - see charts 26 and 27. Indeed, with the exception of common rooms and club meeting rooms, it appears that different institutions provide very similar social spaces.

When asked "to what extent do social spaces meet your needs?", the majority of students (61 per cent) think that existing social spaces meet their needs. As could be expected, this is influenced by institution type, with students who attend Russell Group institutions the most likely to feel their needs are met (73 per cent) and students who attend Post-1992 institutions (57 per cent) and other institutions (42 per cent) less likely to believe this. Interestingly, it is also

Chart 26: Social spaces at university accommodation by institution type

Q46: Which of the following social spaces are provided at your university? Please select all that are provided.

%

	Russell Group	Pre-1992	Post-1992	Other institutions
Shared living room	45	31	32	35
Café/restaurant	26	28	19	32
Shared kitchen/eating area	60	60	43	49
Licensed bar	37	30	13	27
TV room	41	32	16	22
Laundry facilities	62	61	43	52
Outdoor area – garden, BBQ area	48	40	23	38
Football/rugby pitches	18	23	12	19
Computer room	34	32	18	31
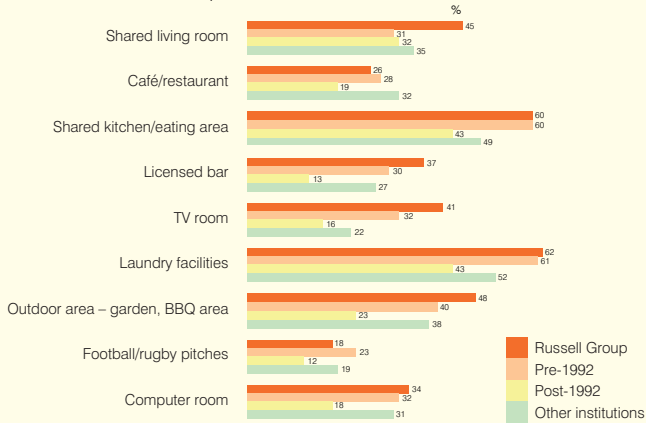
Base: All answering section 5 (2,388), Russell Group (601), Pre-1992 (594), Post-1992 (1,026), Other institutions (165).

significantly influenced by ethnicity - with white students more likely to feel that the social spaces provided meet their needs than either black or Asian students. When ethnicity is cross-referenced by institution type there are no significant differences, so this finding is unlikely to result from a higher proportion of white students going to institutions where students are mo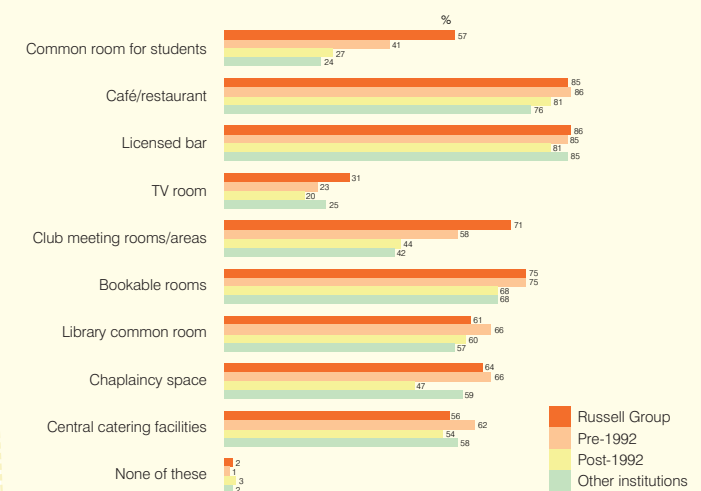re likely to feel their needs are met. Therefore this finding is likely to result from different cultural needs that are not being accommodated.

Chart 27: Social spaces provided by universities and students' unions

Q46: Which of the following social spaces are provided at your university? Please select all that are provided.

%

	Russell Group	Pre-1992	Post-1992	Other institutions
Common room for students	57	41	27	24
Café/restaurant	85	86	81	76
Licensed bar	86	85	81	85
TV room	31	23	20	25
Club meeting rooms/areas	71	58	44	42
Bookable rooms	75	75	68	68
Library common room	61	66	60	57
Chaplaincy space	64	66	47	59
Central catering facilities	56	62	54	58
None of these	2	1	3	2

Base: All answering section 5 (2,388), Russell Group (601), Pre-1992 (594), Post-1992 (1,026), Other institutions (165).

There are very few differences between the social spaces provided to students at their accommodation and their university/students' union and the social spaces they would like - see charts 28 and 29. The biggest difference appears between the number of students who have access to a common room and the number who would like to be provided with one - see chart 29. There are very few differences by

Chart 28: Social spaces provided/desired at university accommodation

Q46: Which of the following social spaces are provided at your university? Please select all that are provided.

Q48: Which kinds of social space would you like provided at your university? Please select all that are provided.

%

	Social spaces provided at university accommodation	Social spaces desired at university accommodation
Shared living room	35	32
Café/restaurant	24	24
Shared kitchen/eating area	52	24
Licensed bar	24	23
TV room	27	29
Laundry facilities	53	23
Outdoor area – garden, BBQ area	34	32
Football/rugby pitches	16	18
Computer room	26	23

Base: All answering section 5 (2,388).

Chart 29: Social spaces provided/desired by universities and students' unions

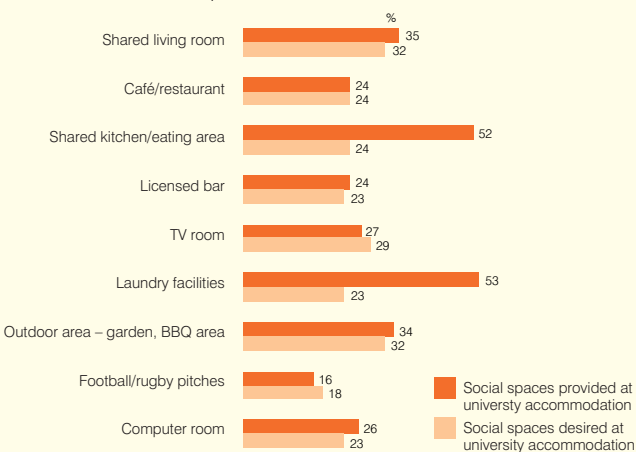Q46: Which of the following social spaces are provided at your university? Please select all that are provided.

Q48: Which kinds of social space would you like provided at your university? Please select all that are provided.

%

	Social spaces provided at university accommodation	Social spaces desired at university accommodation
Common room for students	38	52
Café/restaurant	83	37
Licensed bar	83	34
TV room	24	34
Club meeting rooms/areas	54	35
Bookable rooms	71	35
Library common room	62	34
Chaplaincy space	57	18
Central catering facilities	57	30
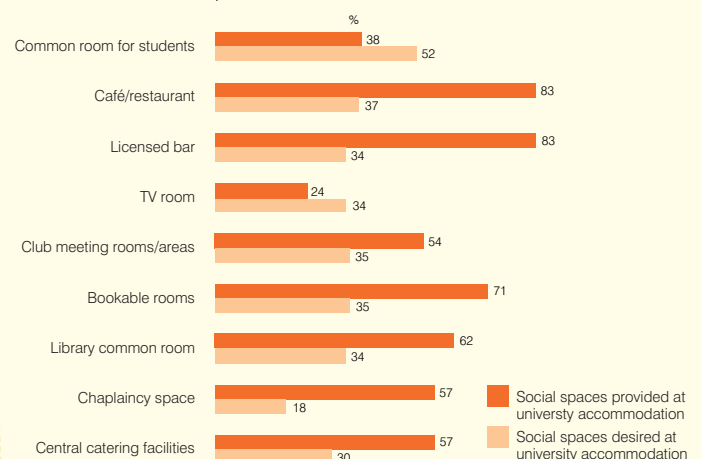
Base: All answering section 5 (2,388).

ethnicity, which makes it very difficult to discern why black and Asian students don't feel that the existing social spaces meet their needs.

Students frequently comment that many of the social spaces provided by universities encourage them to spend money. The presence of cafés, restaurants and bars tend to result in students overspending, particularly in the second and third years when their accommodation is usually further away from university sites. Indeed, a desire was expressed for more areas within the university that are comfortable and don't encourage spending. Further evidence for this comes from students' use of the library as a social space. Areas within the library where they are able to talk and use IT resources are often used for socialising as well as learning. This does have a knock-on effect of discouraging some students who want to use the library for work purposes, as the environment is seen as too much of a distraction. As such, it would seem that social areas near the library, but not necessarily within the library, would be more effective at providing areas for socialising without spending money, without interfering with the library's purpose as a study area.

7   Facilities and resources

Examining the extent to which a range of academic facilities provided by universities meet students' needs shows that in general the majority of students feel that their needs are being met - see chart 30. Interestingly, no significant differences appear when these results are cross-referenced with institution type, which suggests there is much less disparity between institutions in providing learning based-facilities. The facilities needs that the fewest number of students are happy with relate to practical work, where only 54 per cent of students feel their needs are met. However this may be partly explained by the responses of students taking subjects that do not require facilities for practical work - the majority of students taking subjects that require practical work, such as science subjects, say that their needs are met.

Chart 30: Adequacy of facilities by year of study

Q49: To what extent do the following learning facilities/resources provided by your university meet your needs?
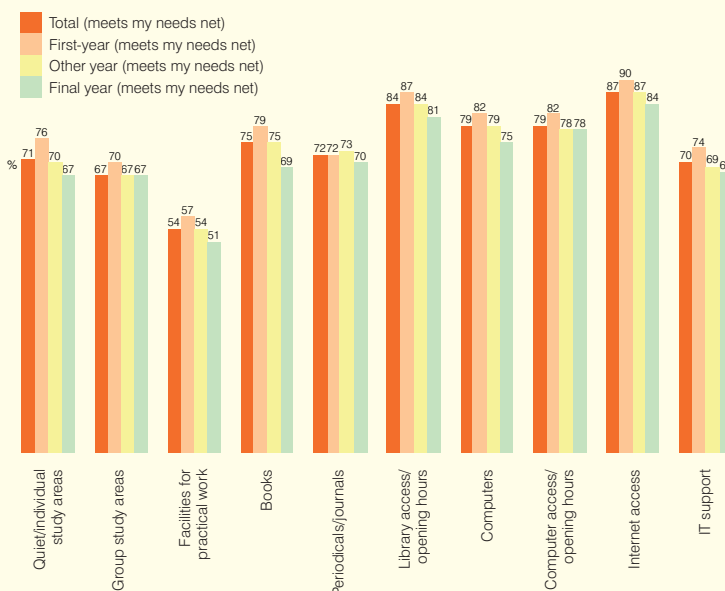
Base: All answering section 6 (2,373), First-year (600), Other year (1,206), Final year (567).

The finding that most students feel that their needs are being met was also supported when students were asked what other learning facilities/resources they would like their university to provide. Here, the most popular response by far was "none" or "nothing" (80 per cent), indicating that the vast majority of

Chart 31: Social facilities provided by university/students' union

Q51: Which of the following are available to you through your university/students' union? Please select all that are provided.
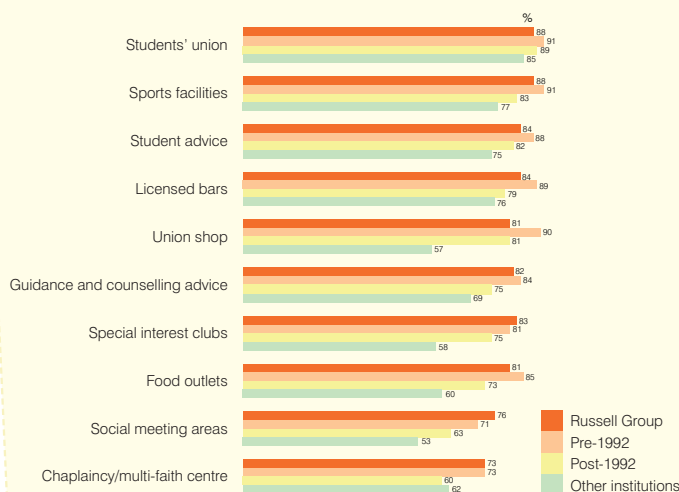
Base: All answering section 6 (2,373), Russell Group (592), Pre-1992 (609), Post-1992 (1,013), Other institutions (158).

Chart 32: Learning facilities provided by university/students' union

Q51: Which of the following are available to you through your university/students' union? Please select all that are provided.

%

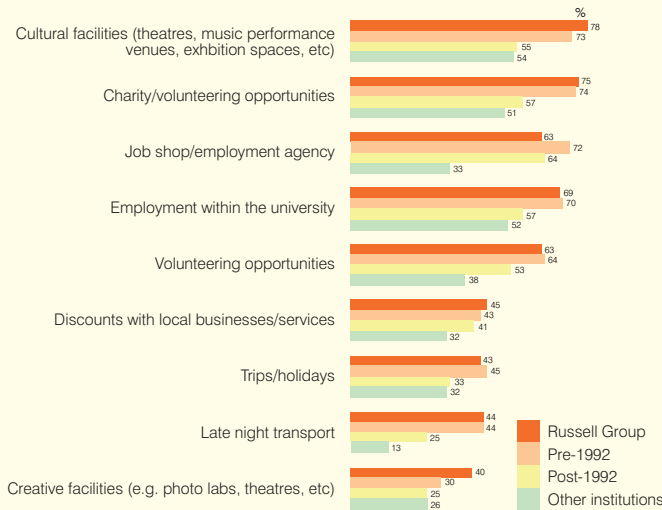| Facility	Russell Group	Pre-1992	Post-1992	Other institutions
Cultural facilities (theatres, music performance venues, exhbition spaces, etc)	78	73	55	54
Charity/volunteering opportunities	75	74	57	51
Job shop/employment agency	63	72	64	33
Employment within the university	69	70	57	52
Volunteering opportunities	63	64	53	38
Discounts with local businesses/services	45	43	41	32
Trips/holidays	43	45	33	32
Late night transport	44	44	25	13
Creative facilities (e.g. photo labs, theatres, etc)	40	30	25	26

Russell Group
Pre-1992
Post-1992
Other institutions

Base: All answering section 6 (2,373), Russell Group (592), Pre-1992 (609), Post-1992 (1,013), Other institutions (158).

students are satisfied with the facilities on offer. When students were ask about the more social and recreational facilities provided by their university, institution type can be seen to be more influential - see charts 31 and 32. In particular, cultural facilities including theatres and music venues, trips and holidays and late night transport are significantly more likely to be provided by either Russell Group or Pre-1992 institutions than Post-1992 or other institutions.

Attending a rural-based institution can have a slightly negative impact on socialising and networking, with students claiming to have more restrictions placed on them when it comes to choice in the socialising and networking venues available to them. Students describe there being a social divide between those who are more able to travel to the nearest city and
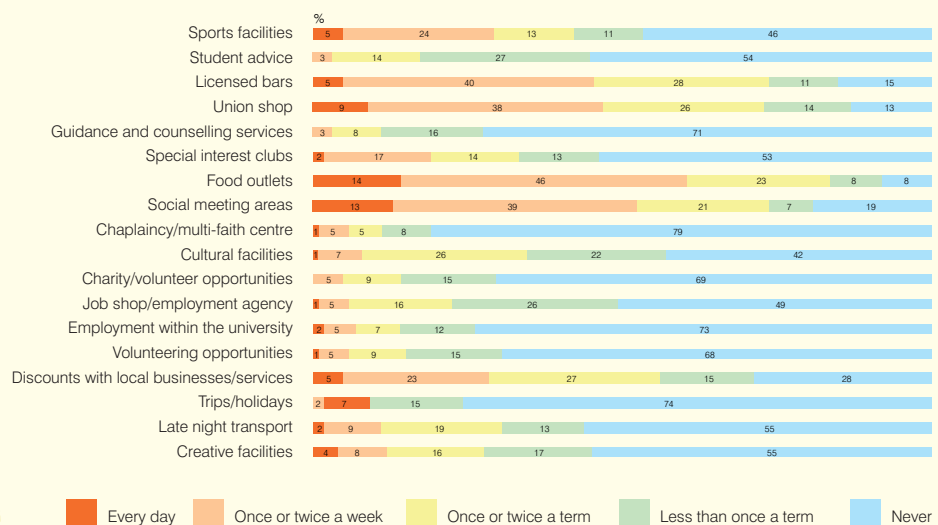
socialize, and those who can't. Some students feel more able to do this because they have less restrictive timetables or more financial freedoms, whereas others may be restricted to staying on campus and may feel they are missing out on important social opportunities. Having a smaller number of students clustered at venues in and around rural universities can offer fewer opportunities to socialise and network with a large number of students than at universities in central, city-based locations.

Students attending rural-based institutions tend to have greater expectations of, and rely more heavily on, university social facilities and resources such as student union bars. These high expectations are met to a large degree, but rural-based universities are more likely to receive criticism from students.

Chart 33 details the frequency with which these social facilities are used. This shows that social areas such as bars and meeting areas are the most frequently used services, ahead of services including counselling and multi-faith centres. There are some differences by socio-economic group, as students from lower socio-economic groups are likely to use sports facilities and special interest clubs less often than those from

Chart 33: Frequency of use of different facilities

Q52: How often do you use these during term time?

%

Facility	Every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a term	Less than once a term	Never
Sports facilities	5	24	13	11	46
Student advice	3	14	27		54
Licensed bars	5	40	28	11	15
Union shop	9	38	26	14	13
Guidance and counselling services	3	8	16		71
Special interest clubs	2	17	14	13	53
Food outlets	14	46	23	8	8
Social meeting areas	13	39	21	7	19
Chaplaincy/multi-faith centre	1	5	5	8	79
Cultural facilities	1	7	26	22	42
Charity/volunteer opportunities	5	9	15		69
Job shop/employment agency	1	5	16	26	49
Employment within the university	2	5	7	12	73
Volunteering opportunities	1	5	9	15	68
Discounts with local businesses/services	5	23	27	15	28
Trips/holidays	2	7	15		74
Late night transport	2	9	19	13	55
Creative facilities	4	8	16	17	55

Every day   Once or twice a week   Once or twice a term   Less than once a term   Never

Base: All using facilities

higher socio-economic groups. This suggests that for a number of students availability is not the only barrier to use.

Students are aware of careers advice services at their place of study but tend to rely more heavily on guidance from their peers and tutors, who have a more holistic view of their skills, interests and strengths. Careers advice is expected to be more useful for those with a clear end goal in mind than for those who are less sure about their future plans, such as Option openers and Toe dippers.

8   Student welfare services

As is to be expected, the welfare services that students feel most meet their needs are general services such as academic support, advice and guidance and study skills support - see chart 34. However, the overall proportion of students who believe welfare services do not meet their needs is fairly small for all the services under discussion. There is very little difference in results for different types of institution.

As can be seen in chart 35, there is very little difference in student perceptions of the information provided by university welfare services and students' union welfare services. In both cases the information is seen to be broadly helpful.

9   Bullying, sexual harassment and safety

9.1   Bullying

When asked if they had personally experienced any bullying during their time at university, only a small minority of students (7 per cent) said yes. However this was significantly influenced by gender, with

women more likely to say they have experienced bullying. Of those who have experienced bullying, the majority (79 per cent) say that the bullying was carried out by another student, and 24 per cent say it was carried out by a member of staff. The majority of students who have experienced bullying did not report the bullying to the university - see chart 36.

Chart 34: Extent to which welfare services meet student needs

Q54: To what extent do the folowing student welfare services provided by the university/students' union meet your needs?
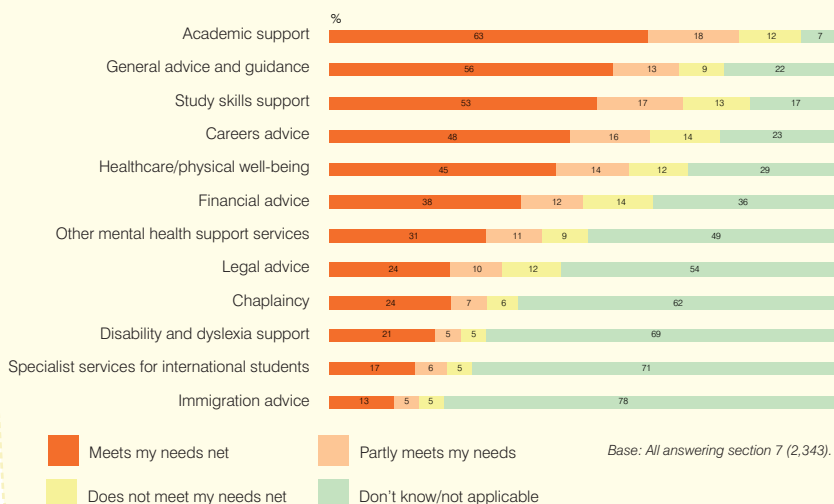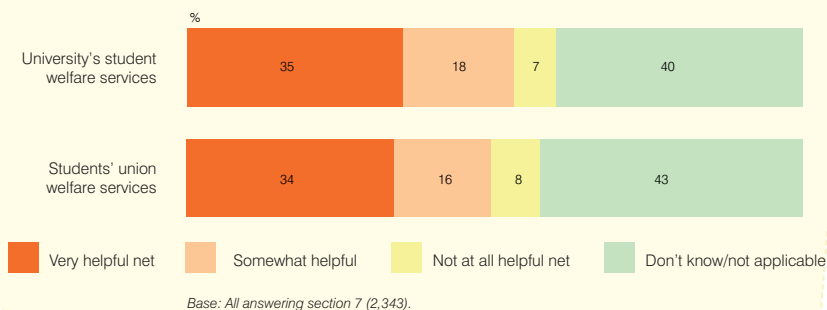
	Meets my needs net	Partly meets my needs	Does not meet my needs net	Don't know/not applicable
Academic support	63	18	12	7
General advice and guidance	56	13	9	22
Study skills support	53	17	13	17
Careers advice	48	16	14	23
Healthcare/physical well-being	45	14	12	29
Financial advice	38	12	14	36
Other mental health support services	31	11	9	49
Legal advice	24	10	12	54
Chaplaincy	24	7	6	62
Disability and dyslexia support	21	5	5	69
Specialist services for international students	17	6	5	71
Immigration advice	13	5	5	78

Base: All answering section 7 (2,343).

Chart 35: Helpfulness of information and advice

Q55: How helpful is the information and advice offered by the welfare services?

	Very helpful net	Somewhat helpful	Not at all helpful net	Don't know/not applicable
University's student welfare services	35	18	7	40
Students' union welfare services	34	16	8	43

Base: All answering section 7 (2,343).

Chart 36: Proportion of bullying reported to university

Q59: Did you report the bullying to the university?

	%
Yes	29
No	71

Base: All experiencing bullying (180).
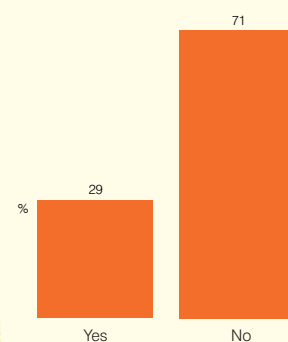
By far the most popular response when students were asked why they did not report bullying was that they did not know who in the university to report it to. When bullying occurs, students who are more socially successful and have larger networks of friends to rely on are more likely to cope with and overcome these problems more effectively. Students usually prefer to go to friends when seeking advice related to bullying or conflict, and go to the university as a last resort.

Of those who did report bullying to their university, only 38 per cent say that the university provided adequate support to resolve the bullying or that the university provided excellent advice and support. Another 38 per cent say that the university provided some advice and assistance but it was inadequate to resolve the bullying, and 23 per cent say that the university did not provide any support.

9.2   Sexual harassment

The proportion of students who say they have experienced sexual harassment while at university is much lower - only 2 per cent. However this was again influenced by gender, with women students significantly more likely to have experienced such harassment. Among those who have experienced sexual harassment, again the majority (64 per cent) say the harassment was carried out by another student, and 23 per cent say it was carried out by a member of staff. Worryingly, a larger proportion of students who have experienced sexual harassment say that they did not report it to the university - see chart 37.

Chart 37: Proportion of sexual harassment reported to university
Q64: Did you report the sexual harassment to the university?

81

19

%

Yes   No

Base: All experiencing sexual harassment (53).

Of those who reported sexual harassment to their university, half (50 per cent) say that although they received some advice and support it was insufficient to resolve the harassment. A fifth (20 per cent) say that they did not receive any support, and 30 per cent

say that they received sufficient support to resolve the harassment or excellent support.

9.3   Safety

When asked if they have experienced any crime while at university, 12 per cent of students say that they have. Again, this was significantly influenced by gender. However, in contrast to findings relating to bullying and sexual harassment, men are more likely to be the victims of crime. Chart 38 below details people who carried out the crimes - perhaps surprisingly, the most common perpetrators are other students.

Chart 38: Perpetrators of crime
Q67: Was the crime carried out by a member of staff or by another student or someone else?

%

Another student   34

Member of public   26

Don't know   11

Burglary   7
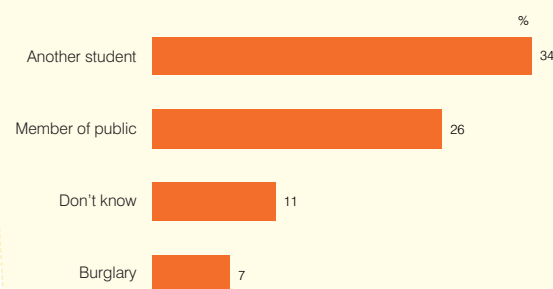
Base: All experiencing crime (300).

Of those who said they had experienced crime at university, 37 per cent say they reported it to the university. While this is a higher proportion than for bullying and sexual harassment, the majority of students (63 per cent) still did not report the crime to the university. Having reported crime to the university, 64 per cent of students say that the university did not provide any support or that it provided insufficient support to resolve the crime. In contrast, 34 per cent say that the university provided excellent support or that it provided enough support to resolve the crime.

Looking at the security measures provided by universities demonstrates that a number of measures are influenced by institution type. Night buses, police liaison officers, awareness campaigns and bike registration services are all significantly more likely to be provided by Pre-1992 or Russell Group institutions than either Post-1992 or other institutions - see chart 39. Comparing the security measures currently
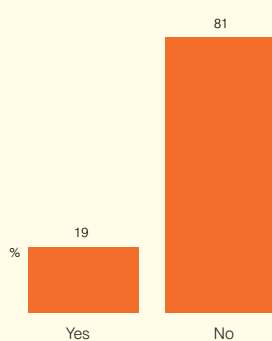
10 Finances, debt and cost of living

provided by universities with measures that students would like to see provided or improved shows that night buses are the most popular measure that universities could introduce or improve on.

Chart 39: Campus security measures by institution type

Q70: Which, if any, of the following measures does your university/students' union provide to improve safety on campus?
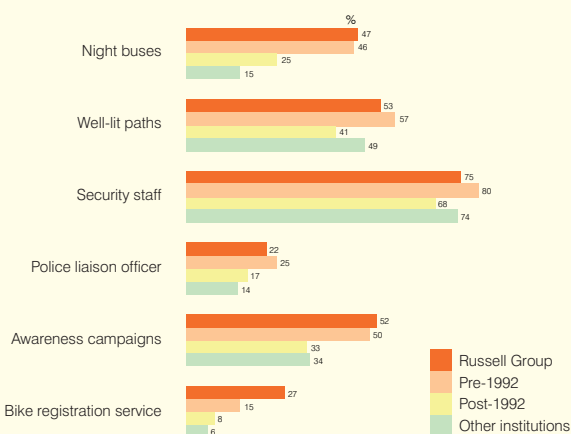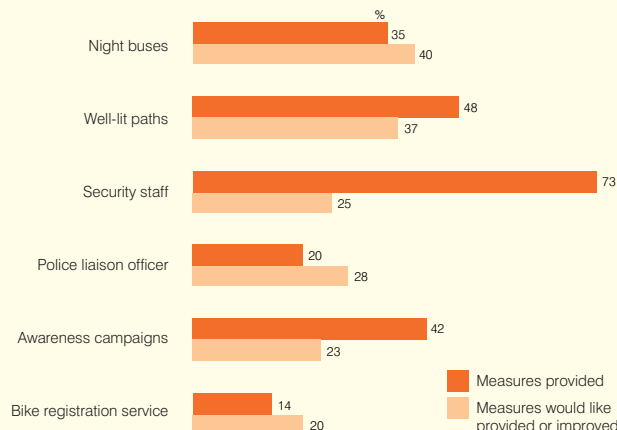
Base: All answering section 8 (2,426), Russell Group (578), Pre-1992 (620), Post-1992 (1,057), Other institutions (170).

Chart 40: Actual and desired campus security measures

Q70: Which, if any, of the following measures does your university/students' union provide to improve safety on campus?

Q71: And which, if any, of these measures would you like your university/students' union to introduce or improve?

Base: All answering section 8 (2,426).

10   Finances, debt and cost of living

10.1   Cost of living

Looking at the various elements of the cost of living, prospective students seem to have fairly accurate insights into what they would be spending. Students currently at university were asked how much they spend each week on the following areas: books, equipment, field trips, groceries, rent, other bills (eg utilities), socialising and routine travel. Prospective students were asked what they thought they would spend on the same items, and the results show some significant differences - see the table below.

In most cases, respondents slightly under-predicted the amount they would spend. There was a larger underestimation of future spending on travel and groceries. The latter may be surprising given that respondents tend to think that the cost of specific

Average weekly expenditure

Q12/Q83: How much, approximately, do you (expect to) spend each week on...

Item	Current students (actual weekly spend)	School leavers (predicted weekly spend)	Actual annual spend*	Predicted annual spend*	Annual shortfall in prediction*	Shortfall as % of prediction
Books	£9.40	£8.77	£225.60	£210.48	£15.12	7.2%
Equipment	£8.04	£8.34	£192.96	£200.16	-£7.20	-3.6%
Field trips	£6.74	£7.93	£161.76	£190.32	-£28.56	15.0%
Groceries	£29.52	£21.24	£708.48	£509.76	£198.72	39.0%
Rent	£75.47	£79.25	£1,811.28	£1,902.00	-£90.72	-4.8%
Other bills	£30.82	£24.32	£739.68	£583.68	£156.00	26.7%
Socialising	£28.15	£23.92	£675.60	£574.08	£101.52	17.7%
Daily/routine travel	£16.04	£11.85	£384.96	£284.40	£100.56	35.4%
Total	£204.18	£185.62	£4,900.32	£4,454.88	£445.44	10.0%

Base: All students (2,393), all school leavers (250).   *Based on 24 weeks: HESA minimum definition of a full-time student

food items are higher than they actually are. This might be explained by the fact that although respondents may overestimate the cost of individual items, they underestimate the volume (amount/frequency) of food they will buy each week. This is backed up by findings within the qualitative research, indicating that in many cases students underestimate the volume and types of food they will need to buy.

There was no consistent variation by region. However, prospective students from the Midlands predict spending the most each week on groceries (£26.43), and those from the South predict spending the least (£18.63). The most marked variation in predicted expenditure relates to rent: students coming from the South expect rent to cost £90.15 a week, compared to just £64.10 for those coming from the North. Perhaps confirming their reputation for being the friendliest region in the country, prospective students from the North plan to spend the most - £27.04 - on socialising each week, with those from the Midlands planning to spend just £21.87.

Several areas emerged as unexpected, hidden costs. Travel was one of these areas, particularly at second and third-year levels. As students move further away from the university site, the cost of getting to and from teaching sessions and resources begins to become an issue. Until this cost begins to affect them, most students display little awareness of its presence and very little budgeting towards meeting this cost. Another example of hidden costs is the impact of buying food on site. Students frequently spend large amounts on meals bought from shops, restaurants and bars on the university site, and feel that they have little or no option but to spend this money. Again, this is particularly prominent among second- and third-year

students, as they are further away from their accommodation and the ability to make their own, cheaper food.

One particularly interesting area of spending is the money spent on course materials. For many students, this is at its highest in the first year, when they buy a particularly large amount of textbooks, stationery and other items to set them up for their study. As students move through the university experience they find strategies to reduce their course spend year by year, by using more library books, buying them second-hand and recycling old stationery. Arts students are often an exception to this, spending more in their later years on materials for their coursework.

Across all areas of spending, the total underestimation of weekly spending amounts to a little under £20, which is a sizeable amount on a student budget, and suggests that prospective students may find they struggle to make ends meet when they commence studies.

10.2 Groceries

Despite, or perhaps even because of, the well-publicised increases in the cost of living essentials over recent months, students tend to be overly pessimistic in estimating the cost of various grocery staples, as shown in table below.

Estimated cost of staple groceries
Q14: Please estimate what the following items would cost to buy in a normal shop today.

Item	Estimated price	Actual supermarket price*
1 kilo dry spaghetti	£1.55	£1.15
1 pint semi-skimmed milk	£0.78	£0.42
1 loaf of sliced white bread	£1.00	£0.72
1 tin baked beans	£0.52	£0.31
200g cheddar cheese	£1.71	£1.17
500g plain rice	£1.56	£0.90
6 sausages	£2.03	£1.99

*Base: All school leavers (250). *based on supermarket own-label or mainstream brand.*

Prospective students overestimate what it would actually cost to buy six of the seven food items (all except sausages) in a supermarket. Given that a high proportion of these students are still living in the parental home and are not therefore responsible for the weekly household shop, this may not be surprising. It is also possible that extensive media coverage of the rise in the cost of living (food, gas, electricity, petrol, mortgage payments etc) may have coloured respondents' perceptions of the real picture. So in this respect at least, students starting university in autumn 2008 may have been pleasantly surprised.

There were no marked differences between regions in the cost of groceries, and no region was consistently cheaper or more expensive than any other. This may seem to confound expectations that the cost of living is cheaper in the north than the south, but this should not be a surprise given the fact that supermarkets tend to maintain uniform pricing across the country.

10.3 Level of concern about financial situation at university

Those yet to commence their studies are less likely to express a firm opinion about the state of their likely financial situation than those already at university, which is to be expected. Chart 41 shows how current and future students rate their level of concern about their actual or anticipated financial situation.

While 16 per cent of current students are not at all worried about their financial situation, only six per cent of prospective students expect to feel the same way. At the other end of the spectrum, while only eight per cent of prospective students say they are extremely worried about student finances, this rises to 13 per cent among current students. This indicates that, unsurprisingly, future students feel less qualified to express a strong opinion, as there is a large amount of uncertainty about what the future holds.

From the qualitative research we know that this uncertainty seems to be the result of several factors: those who have had some advice or

> *"We had a meeting at school at some point, she talked roughly around it but I didn't understand a word of it."*
>
> *"There's no point worrying about it, if you've got to do it, you've got to do it"*
>
> *"I'm sure the websites give you all the information."*
>
> Extracts from student groups
> Second-Year BSc, First-Year BSc

information about the financial aspect of university life usually received it in a class or lecture. In most cases, they had extremely poor recall of the information, usually because they found it unclear or thought it lacked useful, practical advice.

However, most prospective students are simply not motivated to seek out information on their financial outlook while at university. Most believe that financial concerns are an inevitable part of university, but not one they wish to dwell on.

Many current students have almost blind faith that if they need anything, it can be obtained. Within the qualitative research, students often disregard potential problems by assuming the answer can be found somewhere, and with relative ease.

Results indicate that future students from the north are most polarised in their opinions, with a

Chart 41: Level of concern about financial situation

Q15/Q80: How worried are you about your financial situation/what your financial situation at university will be?

Measured on 7-point scale: 7 = extremely worried, 4 = somewhat worried, 1 = not at all worried

Don't know | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1
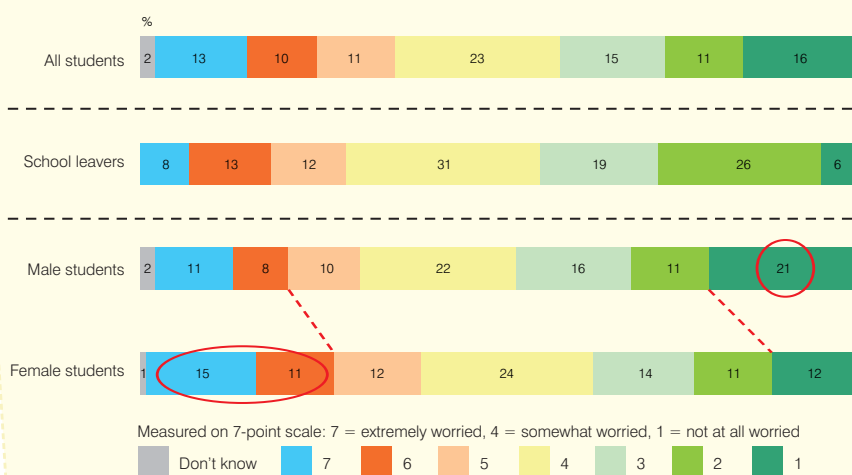
Base: All students (2,393), Male students (1,037), Female students (1,354), School leavers (250).

higher proportion claiming to be both unworried (21 per cent scored 1-2, compared with eight per cent in the Midlands and 18 per cent in the south), and worried (28 per cent scored 6-7, compared with 21 per cent in the Midlands and 20 per cent in the south).

Results suggest that first-year students are the most relaxed about their financial situation, with 30 per cent giving a score of 1-2 (lowest level of worry), compared with 25 per cent of intermediate and final-year students (although this is not a statistically significant difference). This is reflected in the qualitative research, which illustrates that in the early years of study, students tend to take a fairly carefree attitude to their finances. This attitude is usually the result of several factors; the protected environment of halls, along with money saved from working before going to university. However, reality kicks in by the final year, with students often having to cut back on expenditure and becoming more conscious about the size of their overdrafts.

The qualitative research indicates that although students approaching the end of their studies are concerned about their finances, their attitude is one of resignation to their situation, rather than outright worry, and that most students do not regret their actions. Having said this, final-year students are taking fairly drastic steps to try and curb their spending and prevent them from getting into any more debt. These strategies are often knee-jerk reactions rather than carefully considered strategies to save money, resulting in students making cuts to basic amenities such as heating and electricity, while spending large amounts on a daily basis on food.

Among current students, we can see that men feel much more comfortable about their

financial situation than women; a fifth (21 per cent) of men express no worry at all about their finances, compared with just 12 per cent of women. Similarly, a fifth (19 per cent) of men give a score of 6-7 for their level of worry, compared with a quarter (26 per cent) of women. This is perhaps indicative of differing attitudes to finance between men and women, with men more likely to express confidence and take risks, and women inclined to take a more cautious and conservative approach, and hence more likely to express concern about their situation.

This may also be related to how actual levels of debt match up against expected debt levels. When asked, half (49 per cent) of current students say their debt levels are as expected. This varies by gender - women are significantly more likely to say their debt is higher than expected (33 per cent) than men (28 per cent). Again, this may be down to differing perceptions and expectations, rather than actual levels of debt. Overall, only six per cent say the size of their debt is lower than expected.

"It was so cold today that we actually put the heating on for a bit. I personally was fine with a few extra layers of clothes and not putting the heating on…"

Extract from Student Blog Third-Year BSc

Further differences between men and women become apparent when examining levels of concern about debt levels: 28 per cent of men are unconcerned, giving a score of 1-2, compared to just 18 per cent of women - a significant difference. At the other extreme the situation was reversed: 20

Chart 42: Level of concern about current debt levels
Q79: How concerned are you about your current levels of debt?

	%							
All students	6	14	10	10	24	12	8	15
Male students	5	12	8	10	23	13	10	18
Female students	6	16	12	11	25	12	6	12

Measured on 7-point scale: 7 = extremely worried, 4 = somewhat worried, 1 = not at all worried

Don't know | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1

Base: All students (2,393), Male students (1,037), Female students (1,354).

per cent of men give a score of 6-7 for level of concern, as opposed to 28 per cent of women - another significant difference. This is shown in chart 42 on the previous page.

Students in their intermediate and final years of study are significantly more likely than first-year students to have higher than expected levels of debt: 34 per cent of non first-year students place themselves in this category, with just 23 per cent of first-year students doing so.

10.4   Sources of funding while at university

The primary source of funding is, not surprisingly, the student loan. Two-thirds of current students possess a student loan to cover their living expenses, and three in four prospective students plan to take out such a loan. Taking out the student loan is an almost universal step for students as a result of its favourable conditions, encouragement from teachers and careers advisors, and in many cases because taking the loan has

"There wasn't really any thought to it: I want to go to uni, so I get a loan."

"It feels like easy money when it only takes five minutes and you get 10 grand."

Extracts from student groups First-Year BSc, Second-Year BSc

almost become part of the university experience.

Indeed, for most the student loan is not seen as true 'debt', partly due to its favourable repayment conditions, and partly because of the speed and ease of obtaining the funds. Obtaining a student loan is in fact becoming a social norm, and a part of the student experience which students feel should be obtained regardless of their financial situation. For many, the loan 'cycle' dictates the way they behave financially throughout the academic year; spending an abnormally large amount at the start of the year and reducing their spend drastically later on in the year.

Chart 43: Sources of funding

Q11/Q72: Which of the following sources of funding do (plan to) you use/receive?

%

	Current students	School leavers
Student loan to cover living expenses	67	74
Student loan to cover tuition fees	58	66
Money from family/friends	41	44
Maintenance/special support grant	36	56
Income from paid employment	33	46
Existing savings	32	46
Bursary from university*	28	42
Scholarship etc based on results	5	3

* Based on all except final-year students, due to a change in the bursary system at beginning of academic year 2006/7 (1,834).

Base: All answering (2,393), School oeavers (250).

A slightly smaller percentage have taken, or will take out, a loan to cover tuition fees. Among current students, these sources of funding are far more prevalent than any others.

Future students from the north are the most likely to plan taking out student loans: 89 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively, for living expense loans and tuition fee loans. This compares with 71 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively, for those living in the south (for those in the Midlands, the figures were 73 per cent and 74 per cent, respectively).

As can be seen in chart 43, there are some striking differences between what funding sources prospective students anticipate they will use, and what students

"Because I had no lectures I finally got round to spending my student loan today, it's been in my account a few weeks, but I've been so busy working every minute I'm not in lectures, I haven't had the chance to go shopping.

So I went to New Look and got some new clothes… we went to HMV and chose some DVDs… We also managed to get the digibox we'd seen in the Argos catalogue."

Extract from student blog, Second-Year BA

actually use. Whereas nearly half (46 per cent) of future students think they will use existing savings, in fact only a third (32 per cent) actually do so. Prospective students in the north appear to be the most optimistic regarding their ability to use savings (59 per cent), with those in the south perhaps taking a more realistic view (36 per cent). Nearly twice as many future students as current students plan to make use of a university bursary (42 per cent versus 23 per cent), perhaps a sign of unrealistic or overoptimistic expectations (the qualitative research indicates that there is a degree of confusion over how such bursaries operate). A similar pattern exists for maintenance or special support grants, with 56 per cent of prospective students planning to access this source of funding and 36 per cent of current students doing so, although this may reflect the increased eligibility for students from autumn 2008.

11   Student employment

The overwhelming majority of students, three out of four, take on paid employment to help make ends meet, either during term time or during the holidays. Holiday work is more popular than term time work, with 51 per cent of students planning to work during the holidays, as opposed to 35 per cent during term time - see chart 44 opposite.

Interestingly, the number of students who work during term time is not significantly influenced by year of study. This is surprising as the qualitative interviews show that student attitudes towards the first year of university can be quite dismissive, with a number of students commenting on how little work they had to do.

However this attitude towards the first year of university might be offset by first-year students being in a better financial situation - a point made by a number of students

"In the first year, you can pass without going to lectures."

"All you need is a 40 per cent to pass, first year is a foundation year, so it doesn't count as much as the third year."

Extracts from student groups First-Year BSc

during the qualitative interviews. While first-year students might have more time to undertake paid employment, they have less financial need.

In contrast, the number of students who work during the holidays is significantly affected by year of study, with final-year students being significantly less likely to work during the holidays compared to first-year and intermediate year students - see chart 44 below.

Chart 44: Percentage of students working

Q87: Do you currently have any form of paid employment or intend to arrange any in the current financial year, including the summer holidays?

Yes – during term time: All students 35, First-year 34, Intermediate year 36, Final year 33

Yes – during holidays: All students 51, First-year 58, Intermediate year 56, Final year 32

No: All students 22, First-year 23, Intermediate year 23, Final year 17

Legend: All students, First-year, Intermediate year, Final year
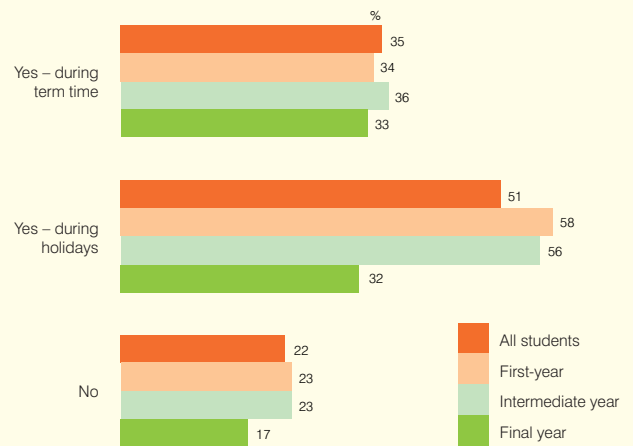
Base: All students (2,372), First-year (622), Intermediate year (1,174), Final year (576).

Interestingly, when these results are checked against whether students have dependent children, those with dependent children are significantly less likely to have paid employment. Some 54 per cent of students with dependent children say they do not have, or intend to arrange, any form of paid employment, while only 20 per cent of students without dependent children say they don't have paid employment. This may be a result of time pressure making it difficult to balance paid work with studies as well as looking after children.

Work taken on by students is typically unskilled, hourly-paid work such as bar work, which is viewed as a relatively sociable form of work, the shift hours usually fall outside of teaching hours - see chart 45 on next page. However, more than a quarter of students (27 per cent) gain employment related to their intended career.

Chart 45: Most common type of paid work
Q90: What type(s) of paid work do you do?

%

Unskilled or hourly paid work (eg in a bar, shop, cleaning, promotions)	70
Work related to my intended career	27
Work related to my career before I became a student	11
Work linked to course/part of course	6
Academic research/teaching/lecturing	3
Administration/clerical work/office work	1
Other	5

Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1,614).

When looked at by institution type, students who attend Post-1992 institutions can be seen to be significantly more likely to work during term time than students who attend both Pre-1992 institutions and Russell Group institutions. Some 40 per cent of students who attend Post-1992 institutions say they work during term time, compared to 32 per cent of students who attend Pre-1992 institutions and 30 per cent of students who attend Russell Group institutions.

On average students work 14 hours a week during term time. However, while the majority of students work less than 16 hours a week, a significant proportion (29 per cent) work 17 or more hours per
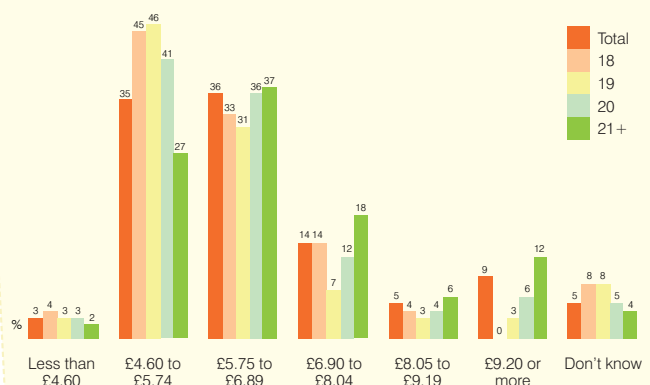
Chart 46: Holiday versus term time work
Q88: How many hours a week do you work during term time?
Q89: How many hours a week do you intend to work during the holidays?

Legend: All work during term time / All work during holidays

	All work during term time	All work during holidays
0 – 8 hours	24	3
9 – 16 hours	47	12
17 – 24 hours	21	19
25 – 32 hours	5	19
33 – 40 hours	2	35
more than 40 hours	1	12
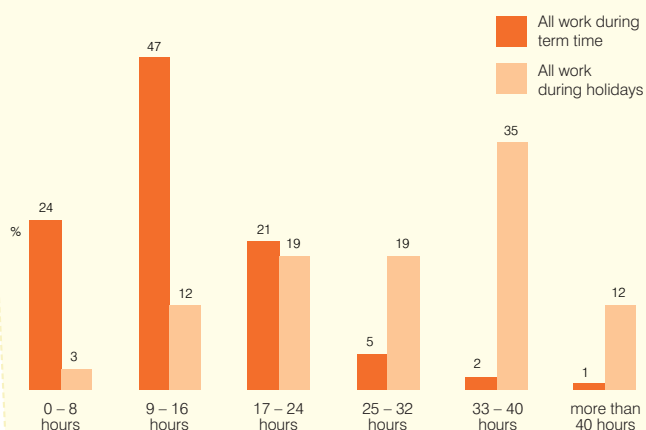
Base: Q88 All working during term time (830), Q89 All working/planning to work during holidays (1,199).

week. During the holidays students work - or intend to work - much longer, averaging 29 hours a week - see chart 46 in the previous column.

11.1 Student earnings

On average students earn £6.45 per hour, which is significantly above the development rate minimum wage of £4.60 per hour (for workers aged 18-21), and slightly above the £5.52 hourly minimum wage for workers aged 22 years or older. Only three per cent of students say that they earn less than the minimum wage. However, among this group, non-EU international students are significantly more likely to be earning below the minimum wage, with 11 per cent

Chart 47: Student earnings by age
Q91: Approximately how much do you get paid per hour?

Legend: Total / 18 / 19 / 20 / 21+

	Total	18	19	20	21+
Less than £4.60	3	4	3	3	2
£4.60 to £5.74	35	45	46	41	27
£5.75 to £6.89	36	33	31	36	37
£6.90 to £8.04	14	14	7	12	18
£8.05 to £9.19	5	4	3	4	6
£9.20 or more	9	0	3	6	12
Don't know	5	8	8	5	4

Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1,614), 18 (49), 19 (286), 20 (394), 21+ (882).
small base

saying that they earn less than £4.60 per hour. As can be seen in chart 47 above, student earnings are significantly affected by age, with older students more likely to receive higher wages, no doubt a result of the two-tier minimum wage framework. Interestingly, there are no significant differences when looking at regional student wage rates.

11.2 Motivations for working

The most common motivations students cite for working are: to pay for extras such as clothes and holidays (62 per cent), and to pay for socialising (62 per cent). This seems to indicate that for a large proportion of students, paid employment is optional and geared to improving their quality of life. Having said this, a large minority of students (46 per cent)

Chart 48: Student motivation for paid work
Q92: Why do you work?

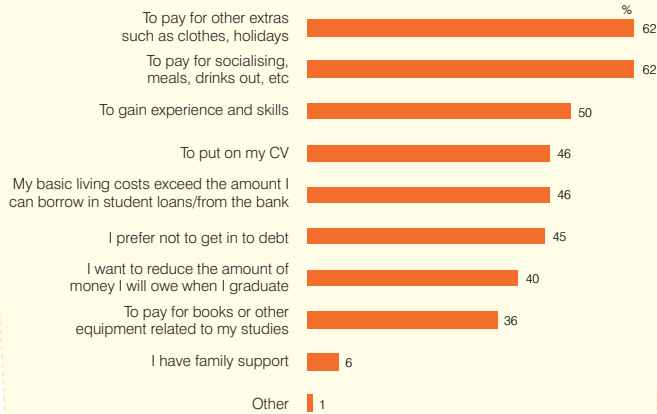| Reason	%
To pay for other extras such as clothes, holidays	62
To pay for socialising, meals, drinks out, etc	62
To gain experience and skills	50
To put on my CV	46
My basic living costs exceed the amount I can borrow in student loans/from the bank	46
I prefer not to get in to debt	45
I want to reduce the amount of money I will owe when I graduate	40
To pay for books or other equipment related to my studies	36
I have family support	6
Other	1

Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1,614).

Chart 49: Longer hours worked to meet basic living costs and study items
Q92: Why do you work?

My basic living costs exceed the amount I can borrow in student loans/from the bank:
- 0 – 8 hours: 41
- 9 – 16 hours: 55
- 17 – 24 hours: 51
- 25 – 32 hours: 63
- 33 – 40 hours: 65
- 40+ hours: 50

To pay for books or other equipment related to my studies:
- 0 – 8 hours: 29
- 9 – 16 hours: 41
- 17 – 24 hours: 46
- 25 – 32 hours: 55
- 33 – 40 hours: 25
- 40+ hours: 17

Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 – 8 hours (196), 9 – 16 hours (394), 17 – 24 hours (174), 25 – 32 hours (40), 33 – 40 hours (20**), 40+ hours (6**). *small base **very small base ineligible for sig. testing.*

are still reliant on paid employment to fund their basic living expenses, with 36 per cent relying on paid work to pay for books and other study aids - see chart 48 above. Interestingly, there are no significant differences in motivations for working by socio-economic group.

When this is cross-referenced against the number of hours worked during term time, a trend appears whereby students who work more than eight hours a week are significantly more likely to say that their basic living costs exceed the amount they can borrow (with the exception of those who work 17-24 hours a week, where the difference is not significant). In addition, students who work more than eight hours a week are more likely to cite paying for books and other study equipment as a reason for working - see chart 49 above.
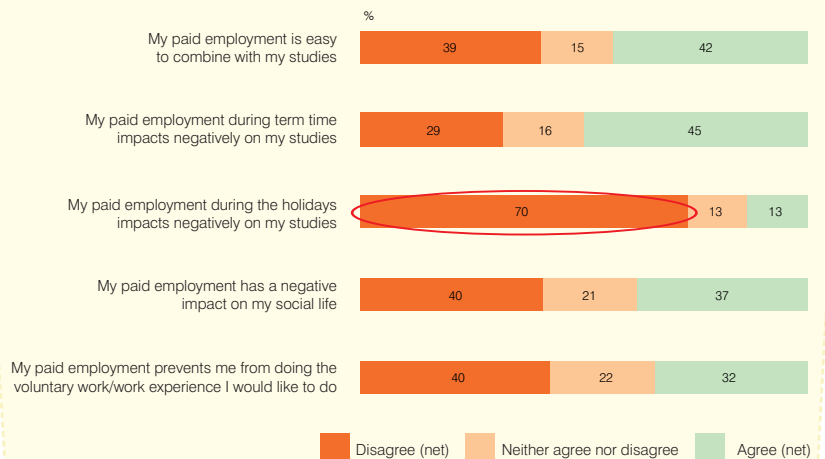
In addition, institution type has an effect on motivations to work. A significantly higher proportion of students attending a Post-1992 institution - 49 per cent - rely on work to pay for basic living costs, compared to 42 per cent of students at Pre-1992 institutions, and 43 per cent at Russell Group institutions.

11.3 Impact of paid employment

There is a fairly even split between students who feel that paid employment
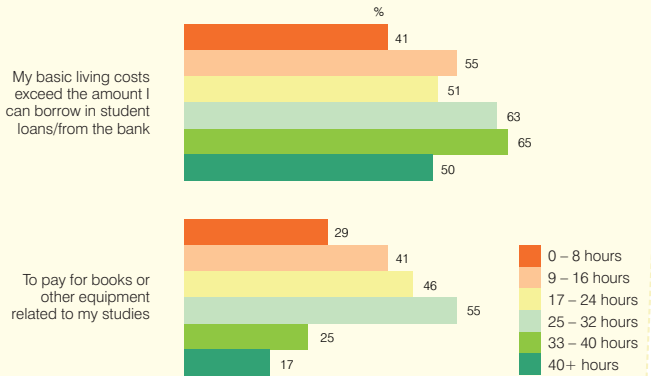
has a negative impact on studying, social life and voluntary work and those who don't - see chart 50 below. Those who do not work generally feel that it would have a detrimental effect on both academic and social areas of their lives - indeed for many this is a reason to avoid paid employment. However, those who do work generally find the flexible nature of their work, and careful timetabling of their work and studies, means it has little impact on either area. In fact, those who work cite its positive aspects, such as the chance to meet new people and gain experience for their later careers.

Chart 50: Impact of paid employment
Q93: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?

Statement	Disagree (net)	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree (net)
My paid employment is easy to combine with my studies	39	15	42
My paid employment during term time impacts negatively on my studies	29	16	45
My paid employment during the holidays impacts negatively on my studies	70	13	13
My paid employment has a negative impact on my social life	40	21	37
My paid employment prevents me from doing the voluntary work/work experience I would like to do	40	22	32

Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1,614).

12 Post-course plans

Extracts from student groups & interviews
First-Year BSc, First-Year BA

Chart 51: Hours worked and perceived ease of combining work and study

Q93: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?

My paid employment is easy to combine with my studies.

Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 – 8 hours (196), 9 – 16 hours (394), 17 – 24 hours (174), 25 – 32 hours (40*), 33 – 40 hours (20**), 40+ hours (6**). *small base **very small base ineligible for sig. testing.

Chart 52: Hours worked and perceived ease of combining work and study

Q93: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?

My paid employment is easy to combine with my studies.
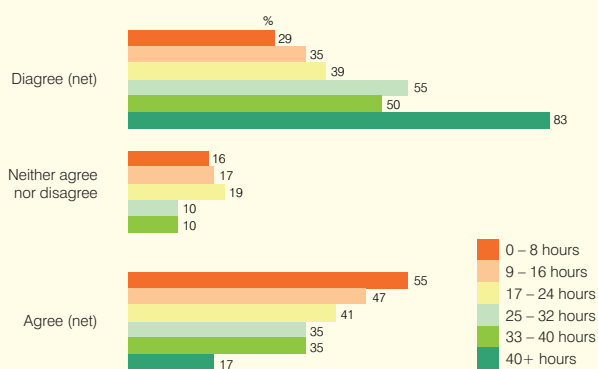
Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 – 8 hours (196), 9 – 16 hours (394), 17 – 24 hours (174), 25 – 32 hours (40*), 33 – 40 hours (20**), 40+ hours (6**). *small base **very small base ineligible for sig. testing.

A significant departure from this trend occurs when students were asked whether they think paid employment during the holidays has a negative impact on studies. The vast majority of students (70 per cent) do not think such work has a negative impact on studies. This work is seen as crucial to reduce debts incurred during the academic year, and as such holidays are periods when spending is reduced and more saving occurs.

While these results do not change significantly when cross-referenced with either year of study or institution type, they are influenced by the number of hours worked during term time. Unsurprisingly, students who work longer hours are significantly less likely to say that paid work is easy to combine with their studies, and significantly more likely to say that paid employment has a negative impact on their studies and social life - see charts 51 and 52 opposite. Therefore, students motivated to work because they cannot meet their basic living costs, or to pay for books and study equipment, are not only likely work longer hours, but also more likely feel that working has a negative impact on their studying and social life.

12   Post-course plans

12.1   Final-year students' post-course plans

The most common responses, when final-year students were asked about their plans after studying, were "permanent full-time employment", identified by 46 per cent of respondents, and "looking for work", identified by 34 per cent. However, while these are the most popular responses it is a little surprising that more students are not planning to either look for work or enter permanent full-time employment. "Further study" was also a popular option, with over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) planning to do this after their current course. Interestingly, only six per cent of students said that they have no idea what their plans are after studying.

Both gender and institution type can be seen to influence students' plans after studying.

Chart 53: Post-course plans by gender

Q94: Which of the following best describes your plans after your current course of study?

Plan	Male	Female
Permanent full-time employment	51	42
Looking for work	36	33
Further study	21	32
Travel	15	15
Temporary employment	9	12
Unpaid voluntary work/work experience	5	9
Permanent part-time employment	5	4
Self-employment	5	1
I have no idea	7	5
Other	1	2

*Base: All final-year students (540), male students *243) , female students (297).*

Chart 54: Post-course plans by institution type

Q94: Which of the following best describes your plans after your current course of study?

Plan	Russell Group	Pre-1992	Post-1992	Other institution
Permanent full-time employment	35	41	54	48
Looking for work	29	32	39	32
Further study	34	30	21	32
Travel	18	18	13	13
Temporary employment	10	12	10	13
Unpaid voluntary work/work experience	12	6	4	23
Permanent part-time employment	3	5	5	6
Self-employment	4	1	3	3
I have no idea	7	6	6	
Other	3		1	

Base: All final-year students (540), Russell Group (119), Pre-1992 (136), Post-1992 (254), Other institutions (31).

Chart 55: How far careers advice meets student needs

Q95: To what extent does the advice provided by your university about careers and future study meet your needs?

Extent careers advice meets students needs
9	5	7	28	16	16	9

- 1 – Does not meet my needs at all
- 2
- 3
- 4 – Partly meets my needs
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Meets my needs completely

Base: All final year students (540).

Chart 53 on the left gives a breakdown of students' post-course plans by gender. This shows that male respondents are more likely to be planning either to look for work or go into permanent full-time employment, while female respondents are more likely to be planning further study.

Chart 54 shows that students who attend a Post-1992 institution are the most likely to be planning either to look for work after studying or to enter permanent full-time employment, with those who attend Pre-1992 institutions next likely to do so, and students who attend Russell group institutions the least likely to do so. Conversely, students who are attending Russell group institutions are the most likely to be considering further study, with those who attend Pre-1992 institutions the next likely to consider further study and students attending Post-1992 institutions the least likely.

12.2   Does careers advice meet needs?

Some 41 per cent of final-year students say that the careers advice provided by their university does meet their needs, with only 21 per cent saying that it does not.

Students generally consider universities to provide a good service in terms of career advice. Most are aware of and willing to use the university facilities, and in general they prove useful for most students who have an idea of which career they are looking for, and aim to take the next step. Where careers advice appears to fare less well is in dealing with students who have little or no idea of which career they want to pursue after university. These students are generally looking for more general advice, providing options based on their interests; in most cases the careers advice facility fails to

> *"After this a bunch of us headed down to the careers fair for various reasons. It turned out to be pretty useful this year as I have a plan of what I want to do next summer."*
>
> Extract from student blog Second-Year BSc

Chart 56: How far careers advice meets students needs, by institution type

Q95: To what extent does the advice provided by your university about careers and future study meet your needs?

%

Does not meet my needs (1-3)
- Russell Group: 12
- Pre-1992: 20
- Post-1992: 24
- Other institutions: 26

Partly meets my needs (4)
- Russell Group: 31
- Pre-1992: 21
- Post-1992: 30
- Other institutions: 32

meets my needs (5-7)
- Russell Group: 50
- Pre-1992: 47
- Post-1992: 33
- Other institutions: 35

Legend: Russell Group | Pre-1992 | Post-1992 | Other institutions

Base: All final year students (540), Russell Group (119), Pre-1992 (136), Post-1992 (254), Other institutions (31).

There is a large difference between the number of students who think that their studies have given them the necessary skills to enter the labour market (49 per cent) and those who feel that their studies have enhanced their career prospects (71 per cent).

When this is looked at by subject area, a broad trend can be seen – students studying scientific subjects or vocational degrees (eg law, education or business) are more likely to feel both equipped to enter the labour market and that their studies have enhanced their career prospects than students studying arts or humanities subjects (particularly languages, historical and philosophical studies and creative arts and design) – see chart 58.

address this need. Another particularly interesting group of students that is not entirely satisfied with the careers advice facilities are the Academics. In some cases, they find the system to be too heavily biased towards graduate schemes, with little or no provision for those who want to carry on in academia. However, these students are highly self-motivated and tend to seek the information out themselves through journals and speaking to university staff.

While these results do not appear to change much when broken down by gender, they do appear to be influenced by institution type – see chart 56 above. Students' careers advice needs are most likely to be met if they attend a Russell Group institution, with Pre-1992 institutions next likely to meet careers advice needs and Post-1992 and other institutions the least likely to do so.
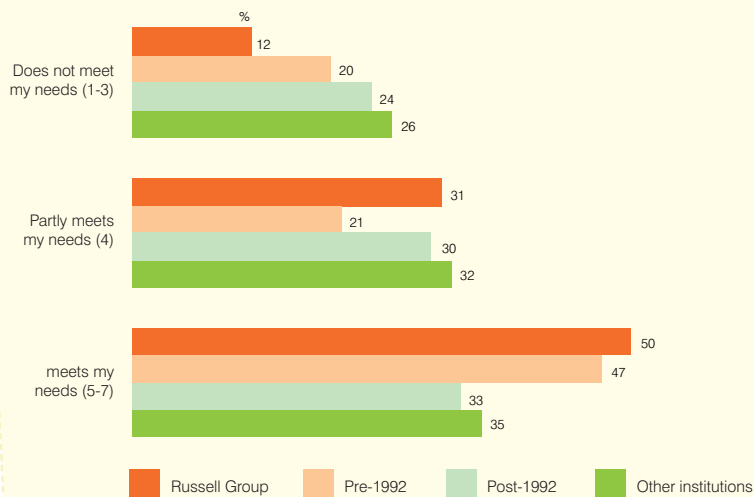
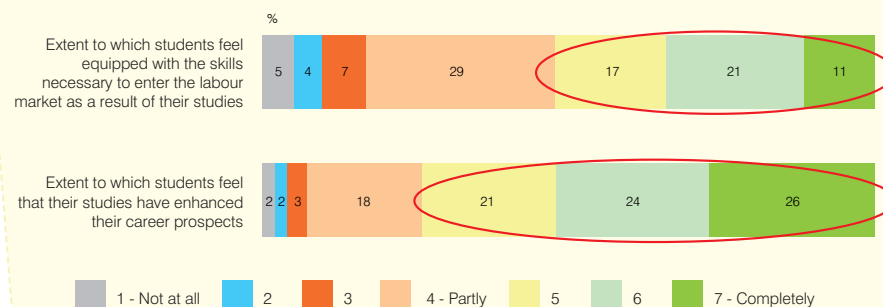## 12.3 How students feel their studies have affected future employment.

12.4 How have studies improved students' skills?

When looking at the particular skills that students feel they have improved through their studies, independent study skills (80 per cent) and communication skills (74 per cent) score highest. Numeracy scores much lower, with only 41 per cent of students feeling that their numeracy skills have improved -see the table below.

While these results are not significantly influenced by institution type, a number are influenced by subject area. Both numeracy skills and information technology

Chart 57: Students who feel they have market-ready skills/enhanced career prospects

Q96: Do you feel equipped with the skills necessary to enter the labour market as a result of your studies?
Q97: To what extent do you feel that your studies have enhanced your career prospects?

%

Extent to which students feel equipped with the skills necessary to enter the labour market as a result of their studies: 5, 4, 7, 29, 17, 21, 11

Extent to which students feel that their studies have enhanced their career prospects: 2, 2, 3, 18, 21, 24, 26

Legend: 1 - Not at all | 2 | 3 | 4 - Partly | 5 | 6 | 7 - Completely

Base: All final year students (540).

Chart 58: Market-ready skills/enhanced career prospects by degree subject

Q96: Do you feel equipped with the skills necessary to enter the labour market as a result of your studies?

Q97: To what extent do you feel that your studies have enhanced your career prospects?

%

Subject	Feel equipped	Enhanced career prospects
Medicine and life sciences	49	69
Physical sciences and related	52	74
Social studies	52	79
Law	64	81
Business and administrative studies	62	73
Mass communications and documentation	60	70
Languages	31	69
Historical and philisophical studies	29	53
Creative arts and design	38	56
Education	61	78

- ■ Students who feel equipped with the necessary skills to enter the labour market
- ■ Students who feel that their studies have enhanced their career prospects

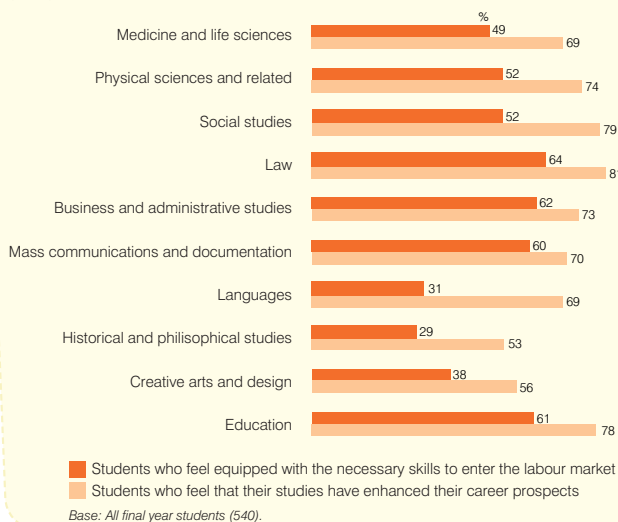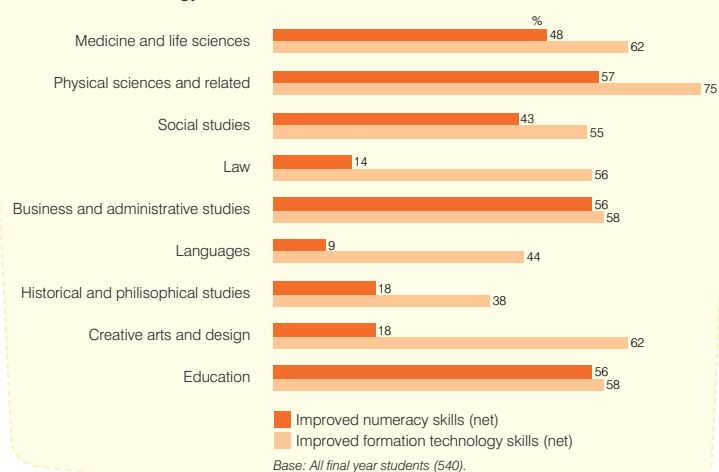*Base: All final year students (540).*

Chart 59: Perceived improvements in numeracy and IT skills by degree subject

Q98: To what extent do you feel that your studies have improved your numeracy and information technology skills?

%

Subject	Improved numeracy	Improved IT
Medicine and life sciences	48	62
Physical sciences and related	57	75
Social studies	43	55
Law	14	56
Business and administrative studies	56	58
Languages	9	44
Historical and philisophical studies	18	38
Creative arts and design	18	62
Education	56	58

- ■ Improved numeracy skills (net)
- ■ Improved formation technology skills (net)

Base: All final year students (540).

Skills improved by university studies

	Communication skills	Numeracy	Use of information technology	Independent study skills
Improved (net)	74%	41%	61%	80%
Not improved (net)	9%	34%	16%	8%

skills are influenced by subject area – see chart 58 below. Students are more likely to feel that their numeracy skills have improved if they are studying either a science subject, social studies, education or business and administration. However, even in the subject area where most students feel that their numeracy skills have improved, physical sciences, the proportion only reaches 57 per cent, which is still lower than other skills (see table above). Unsurprisingly, students studying an arts or humanities subject (particularly languages, historical and philosophical studies and creative arts and design) are the least likely to feel that their numeracy skills have improved.

The number of students who feel that their information technology skills have improved is less significantly influenced by subject area. Perhaps not surprisingly, students studying physical sciences are the most

likely to feel that their information technology skills have improved and students studying either languages or historical and philosophical studies are less likely to think this.

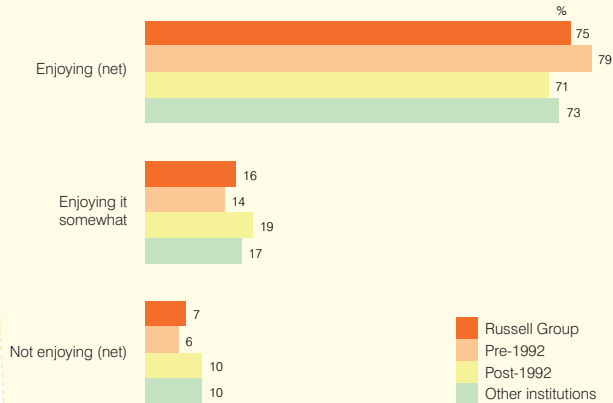## 13 Overall feelings about university

Looking at the university experience as a whole, the vast majority of students (74 per cent) say that they are enjoying it. However this is significantly affected by year of study, ethnicity and institution type. Students in their first year of study are significantly more likely to say they are enjoying the experience than those in either the final or other years. White students are also significantly more likely than either black or Asian students to say that they are enjoying university. In part, this may be related to the degree to which students from different ethnic background feel their needs are being met. As highlighted in section 5, this is also influenced by ethnicity and may influence levels of enjoyment.

When looking at overall feelings split by institution type a number of differences become apparent – see chart 60. However, considering the significant differences by institution type across a whole range of experiences and services detailed throughout this report, it is perhaps surprising that the effect on overall enjoyment is not greater.

Chart 60: Overall enjoyment by institution type

Q100: Taking in to consideration all aspects of your University experience to date, how much are you enjoying it?

%

Enjoying (net)
- Russell Group: 75
- Pre-1992: 79
- Post-1992: 71
- Other institutions: 73

Enjoying it somewhat
- Russell Group: 16
- Pre-1992: 14
- Post-1992: 19
- Other institutions: 17

Not enjoying (net)
- Russell Group: 7
- Pre-1992: 6
- Post-1992: 10
- Other institutions: 10

■ Russell Group
■ Pre-1992
■ Post-1992
■ Other institutions

Base: All answering section 12 (2,407), Russell Group (599), Pre-1992 (617), Post-1992 (1,021), Other institutions (169).

Chart 61: Happiness with decision to go to university, by institution type

Q103: Overall how pleased are you that you decided to go to university?

%

Pleased (net)
- Russell Group: 86
- Pre-1992: 88
- Post-1992: 81
- Other institutions: 86

Somewhat pleased
- Russell Group: 10
- Pre-1992: 9
- Post-1992: 12
- Other institutions: 10

Not pleased (net)
- Russell Group: 3
- Pre-1992: 2
- Post-1992: 6
- Other institutions: 4

■ Russell Group
■ Pre-1992
■ Post-1992
■ Other institutions

Base: All answering section 12 (2,407), Russell Group (599), Pre-1992 (617), Post-1992 (1,021), Other institutions (169).
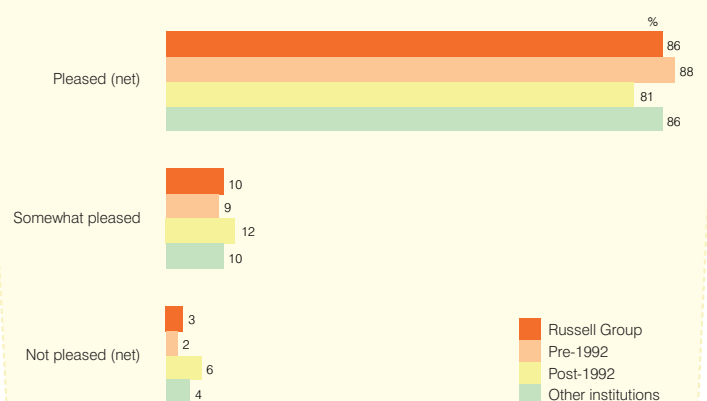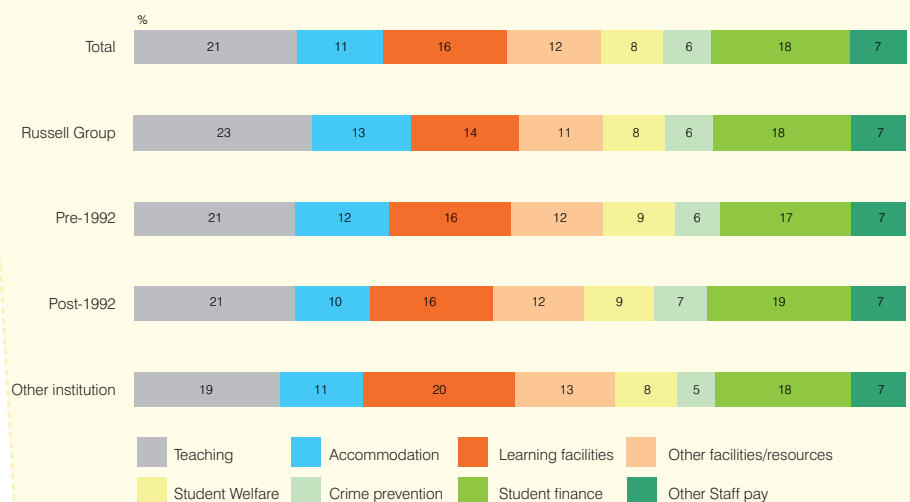
Students who say they are enjoying their university experience were asked what they enjoyed most about university. The main theme to come out of this is university social life and meeting new people, although the learning experience and course content are also often raised. There are no significant differences between different institution types.

In addition, students who say that they are not enjoying their university experience, were then asked why this was the case. Two main themes emerged from this. Firstly, concerns about the quality of teaching and the lack of support from tutors, though this is not significantly influenced by institution type. Secondly, concerns about the cost of university and the level of debt that students get into. This indicates that finance is not just a concern for students from lower socio-economic groups, but for all students.

When asked how pleased they are that they had decided to go to university, the vast majority of students (85 per cent) say they are pleased, and most of these (56 per cent) saying that they are

extremely pleased. When this is split by institution type there are some differences, but the overall trend is maintained – see chart 61.

Finally, when students were asked how they would allocate funding to improve different aspects of their university three areas were favoured: teaching, which included more contact hours and a wider range of/better qualified lecturers; learning facilities and student finance – see chart 62. This would seem to reiterate two of the key concerns of students: teaching and finance.

Chart 62: Allocation of university funding

Q104: Please imagine you have a pot of money to use to improve your university. How would you allocate it? Please indicate what % you would allocate to each area/aspect of your university?

%

	Teaching	Accommodation	Learning facilities	Other facilities/resources	Student Welfare	Crime prevention	Student finance	Other Staff pay
Total	21	11	16	12	8	6	18	7
Russell Group	23	13	14	11	8	6	18	7
Pre-1992	21	12	16	12	9	6	17	7
Post-1992	21	10	16	12	9	7	19	7
Other institution	19	11	20	13	8	5	18	7

■ Teaching   ■ Accommodation   ■ Learning facilities   ■ Other facilities/resources
■ Student Welfare   ■ Crime prevention   ■ Student finance   ■ Other Staff pay

Base: All answering section 12 (2,407).

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