



NUS Student Experience Report 2008

Funded and conducted in association with:



national union of students





An introduction from the NUS

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.

NUS will be examining the results closely to identify new areas of work to undertake in order to improve the experience of all students.

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

GfK Financial

GfK Financial is part of the GfK Group, one of the top 5 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 programme into the lives and experiences of students at universities.

Nick Watkins

Managing Director, GfK Financial



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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% of students saying that the main reason for them wanting to go to university was “for the experience”.
- **Choosing their university** - 31% of students are motivated to choose their university because it was close to home, however looking at this by socio-economic group, only 22% of socio-economic group A gave this reason compared with 53% from socio-economic group DE.
- **Key influences for wanting to go to university** - the key influences that students cite for wanting to go to university are also affected by socio-economic group: 27% of socio-economic group A cite their parents, grandparents or guardian as the key influence for wanting to go to university, compared with only 6% of socio-economic group DE. Conversely, only 2% of socio-economic group A cite their teachers as the key influence, compared with 13% of socio-economic group DE.
- **What were the main reasons for choosing your university** - 45% of students at Russell Group universities said that the main reason for choosing their university was because it “had the subject/ course I wanted”, this compares with 71% at Post 1992 universities. 81% of students at Russell Group universities said that the main reason for choosing their university was the “academic reputation of the university”, compared with 58% at Pre 1992 universities and 24% at Post 1992 universities.
- **Quality and quantity of teaching** - 85% of students rate the quality of teaching and learning as good or excellent. Students receive on average 15 contact hours a week, although this varied by institution and subject. In addition, students spend 16 hours a week on private study. 75% of students believe that the contact hours were 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 received 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 received 7 contact hours a week in Russell Group universities compared with 14 hours a week in Post 1992 universities.



- **Personalisation** – while 92% of students were given the opportunity to provide feedback about their course, only 51% of these students believe that it is acted on. 23% of students feel involved in shaping the content, curriculum or design of their course compared with 57% that wanted such involvement.
- **Coursework and Feedback** – only 25% of students received individual verbal feedback on their assessments, compared with 71% that would want individual verbal feedback. 25% of students had to wait more than five weeks for feedback on their coursework.
- **Accommodation** - 84% of students are happy with their accommodation. 55% were happy with the choice of accommodation offered by their institution however this was significantly affected by type of university. Around 19% of students said that they lived at their parents' home.
- **Facilities and resources** - students are least satisfied by the facilities available for practical work with only 54% saying that it meets their needs.
- **Student Welfare services** - 81% of students say that academic support partly or fully meets their needs.
- **Bullying, sexual harassment and safety** - 7% of students responded that they had experienced bullying although 71% said that they had not reported it to the university, usually because they did not know who to report it to. 12% of students had experienced crime whilst at university.
- **Finance, debt and the cost of living** - students significantly underestimate their basic living costs, by 39% for their groceries and 35% for routine travel. 34% of students were more than somewhat concerned about their current levels of debt.
- **Student employment** - 75% of students undertake paid employment while at university, either during term-time, 35%, or during the holidays, 51%. 46% 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 is on their academic study.



- **Post-course plans** - 46% of students responded that they would be doing permanent full-time employment and 34% would be looking for work. Only 6% said that they had no idea what their plans were after studying. 40% of final-year students said that the careers advice provided by their university met their needs, with 21% saying it didn't. 71% of students feel that their studies enhanced their career prospects.

- **Overall feelings about university** - 74% of students say that they were enjoying university. Among those not, the two key reasons given were: the quality of teaching and the level of debt/concerns about the cost of university. 85% of students were pleased that they had decided to go to university - 56% saying extremely pleased. If students had additional funding to allocate at their university 37% said they would spend this on teaching or learning facilities.



1 Introduction & Methodology

This report discusses the findings from a programme of research, carried out between May and November 2008 into students' expectations and experiences of university. The research looked at a variety of areas, including accommodation, finances, assessment, teaching and resources.

The research programme comprised both quantitative and qualitative approaches, which were combined to ensure both depth and breadth within the findings. The quantitative phase consisted of an online questionnaire, which ran between 2nd and the 24th of June 2008. A total of 3135 students took part in the survey, from 146 higher education institutions, 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 survey of 250 school leavers who had been offered a place at a higher education institution. This ran between 17th July 2008 and 28th July 2008.

The qualitative phase 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 differing types of institution within the British system. These covered all years of study, and incorporated a range of course types. These were complemented by the second phase, within which a set of 12 depth interviews utilising an ethnographic approach were carried out in November 2008. These also covered all years of study, and a range of course types.

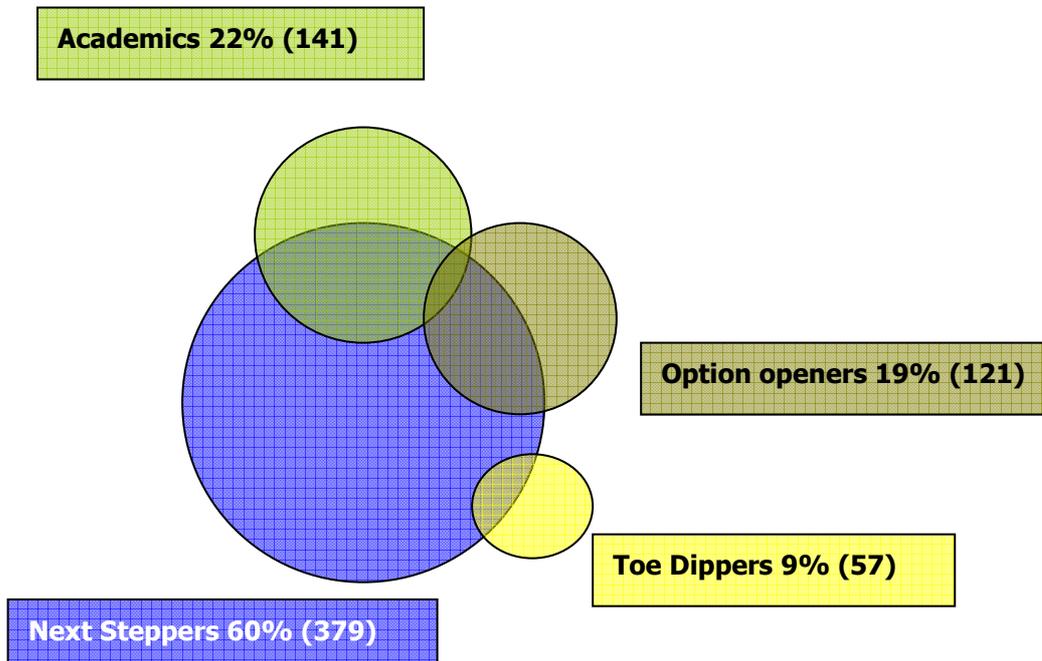


2 Choosing university and course

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

Within this, 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 does tend 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 might have a vague idea of an industry that interests them, but 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 simply having obtained a degree. In the survey, this group, when asked about reasons for university selection, answered either "to have a good social life" or "to participate in sport/societies" or "all my friends were going".



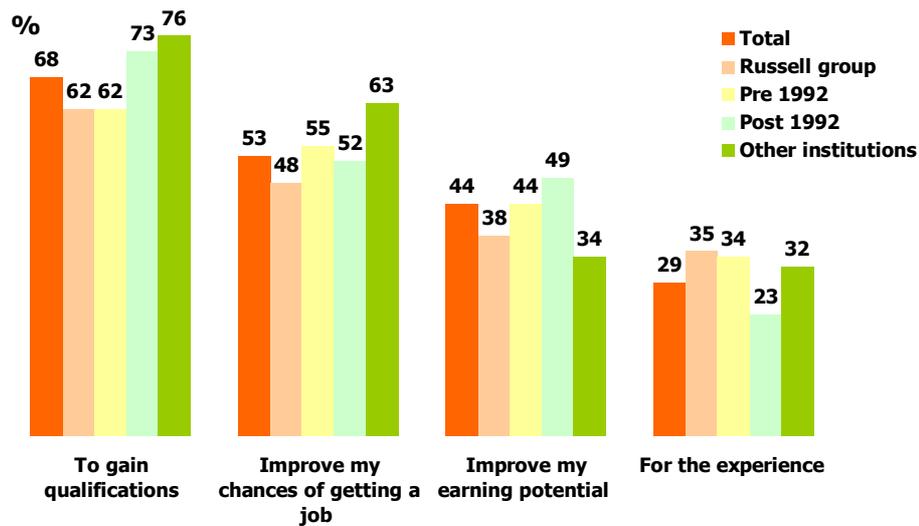
Base: All answering section 1 (630)

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% of students said that one of the main reasons for them wanting to go to university was “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 the same question; the most popular responses were again: “to gain qualifications” 68%, “to improve my chances of getting a job” 44%, and “to improve my earning potential” 45%.

These results are however significantly influenced by institution type. Interestingly, students that attend Post 1992 institutions are significantly 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 or 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 that attend Pre 1992, and particularly Russell Group institutions, are significantly more likely to be from higher socio-economic groups.

Chart 1: Reasons for wanting to go to university influenced by institution type

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



Base: All first year students (630), Russell Group (143), Pre 1992 (161), Post 1992 (287), Other institutions (38*)
 * small base

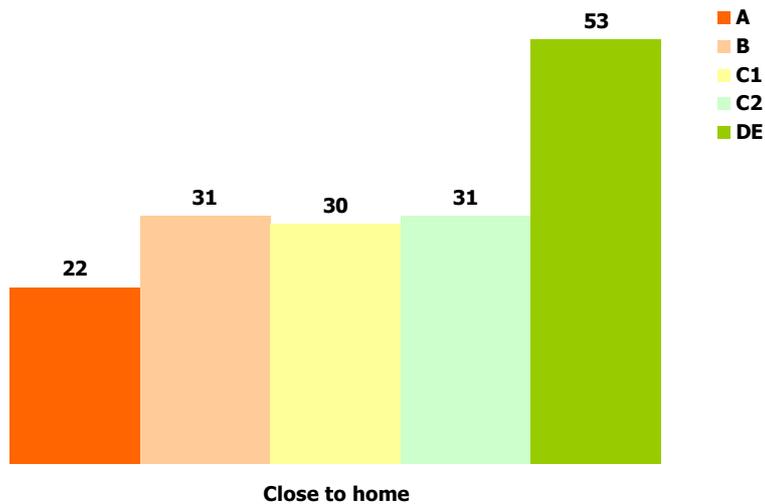
Generally, across segments, university selection is driven by 'the course I wanted' - 63%. The academic reputation of the university is also a key influence – 47%. Next Steppers are usually more likely to select an institution that is well regarded in their particular subject of interest, hoping that attendance will reflect well on their CV and impress potential employers.

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

Chart 2: Students that fall into the lowest socio-economic group most likely to be motivated to choose a university that is close to home

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

%

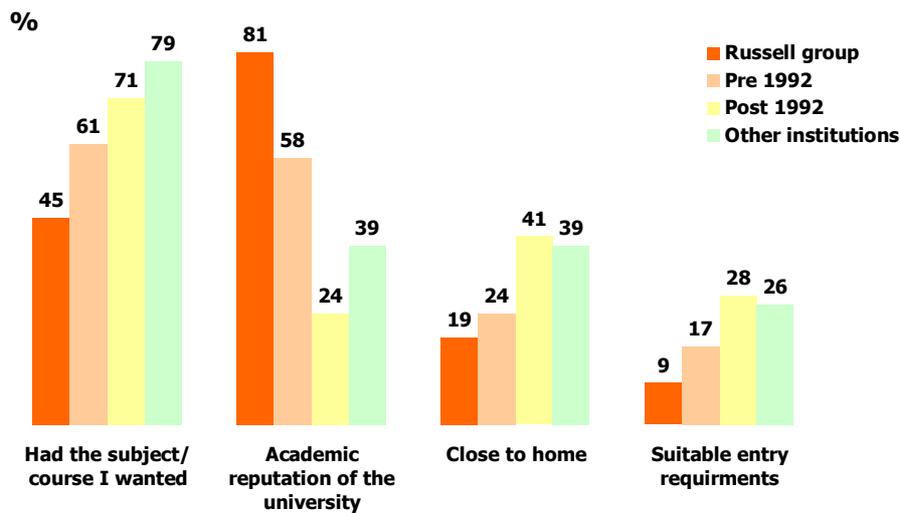


Base: All first year students (630), A (100), B (157), C1 (132), C2 (68*) DE (68*)
 *small base

Institution type can also be seen to significantly affect the reasons students choose their university. As can be seen in chart 3, students that attended Russell Group institutions were more likely to be motivated by the academic reputation of the university. In contrast, students that attended either Post 1992 or other institutions were more likely to choose their university because it had the course they wanted.

Chart 3: Reasons for choosing university influenced by institution type

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



Base: All first year students (630), Russell Group (143), Pre 1992 (161), Post 1992 (287), Other institutions (38*)
 * small base

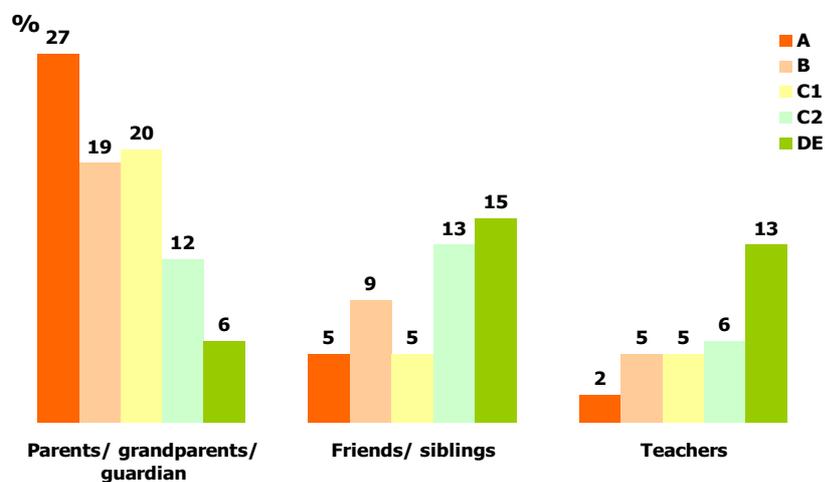
Course selection is often decided at an early stage, during 6th form. When students were asked for the main reasons for choosing their course the most popular responses were: “course content matches my interests” 89%, “course leads to my intended career” 60%, and, “course is well regarded by potential employers” 41%. Again, there were similar responses when school leavers were asked the same question. 90% of school leavers said that the main reason for choosing their course was that “the course content matched their interests”, and 54% saying that the “course leads to my intended career”. There would therefore seem to be a slight change in emphasis when comparing the reasons students and school leavers wanted to go to university with the reasons for choosing their course. With regards to choosing their course, students and school leavers seem more motivated by personal interests, and not just how well a course will prepare them for future employment.

Students and school leavers got information about going to university from a variety of places. By far the most popular were the universities' websites, which 78% of students and 85% of school leavers used, and UCAS, which 70% of students and 72% of school leavers used. Some 44% of students said that 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% saying that they got information from teachers. There is also an interesting contrast between the proportion of students that said that they got information about going to university from friends and siblings, 32%, and those that got information from parents or guardians, 22%. 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 the 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 more likely to state their teachers or friends and siblings, see chart 4.

Key information sources used when going through the university selection process can be said to be either

Chart 4: Key influence on deciding to go to university significantly influenced by socio-economic group

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



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

'objective' or 'subjective'. Although both are used equally within the process, the 'objective' sources, namely internet and web-based forums (set up to rate universities), and broadsheets are better regarded for being more reliable. Other sources such as teachers, family, peers, open days, university brochures and prospectuses whilst being regarded as 'subjective' and having bias, still exert a significant influence over the selection process.



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

Third Year BSc

University paper and web-based brochures and prospectuses, whilst being 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 (e.g. high cost of rented accommodation in the local area).

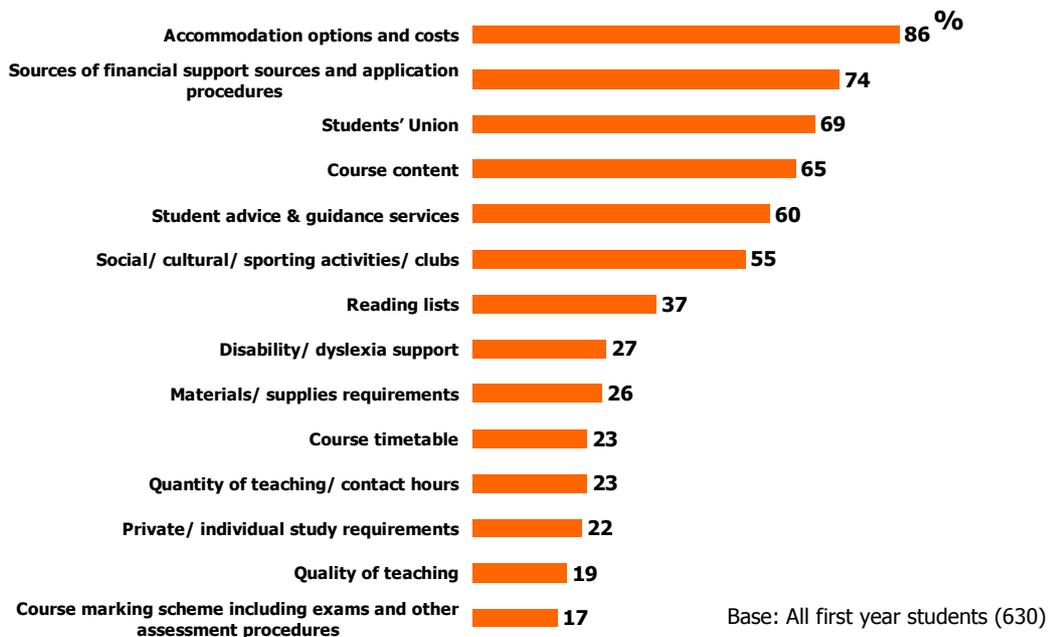
Students appear to receive a vast quantity of information with regards to their choice of university. The information that students receive appears heavily weighted towards more practical and general subjects such as accommodation and financial support. However, this is not as tailored as it could be and there is often a feeling that although there is always useful information to be found, a lot of time is spent sifting through less useful information to source it. Course-specific information like timetables or contact hours is also less common - see chart 5 - but actually desired. When asked what additional information they would have liked to receive, some of the most popular responses were course specific information. For example, a course timetable was the most popular response, 41%, as was a reading list, 30%. Having said this, 41% 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 amongst school leavers where 40% said that they would have liked to receive a timetable and 29% a reading list. However the most popular answer was again "none, I received all the information I wanted" which was the response of 42% of school leavers.

"The Times and the Guardian always have a little supplement...it has negative points as well as positive points which the prospectus doesn't have."

First Year BA

Chart 5: Information students received before starting course

*Q 8. What information did you receive from your university before starting your course?
Please select all that apply*



A minority of students within our sample who have had a bad experience with accommodation, or problems coping with living expenses often express an interest in receiving more practical and living-based information in advance of starting university. However, there is a danger of overloading students with far too much information and any advice or assistance which relates to finance should be easy to digest and engaging. Hearing about other students' experiences with 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 have actually experienced it for themselves. Where students have seen older siblings or friends live through the experience, unsurprisingly their expectations are likely to be more closely linked to their actual experiences. They are also more likely to feel more prepared and have made more realistic financial plans and provisions.



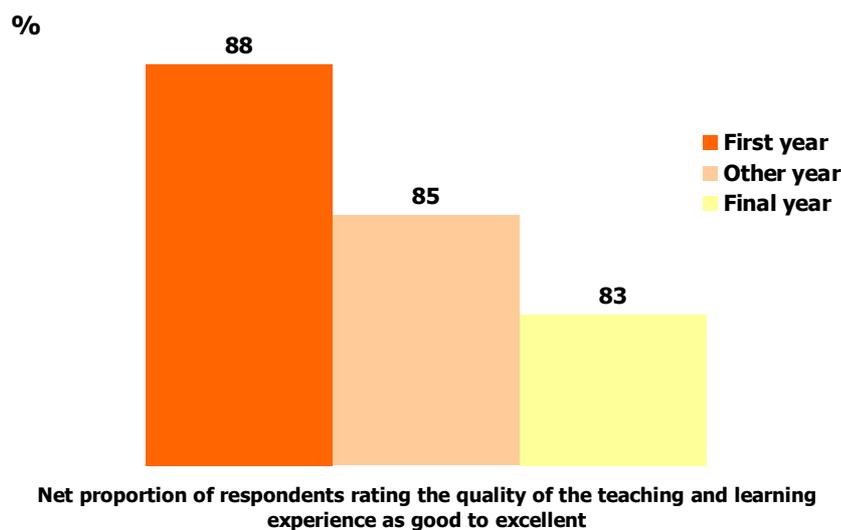
3 Quality and Quantity of Teaching

The vast majority of students, 85%, rated the quality of the 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.

How students rate the quality of teaching is also significantly influenced by subject area, however there do

Chart 6: How students rate the quality of teaching and the learning experience is significantly affected by year of study

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



Base: All answering section 2 (2374), first year (647), other year (1176), final year (551)

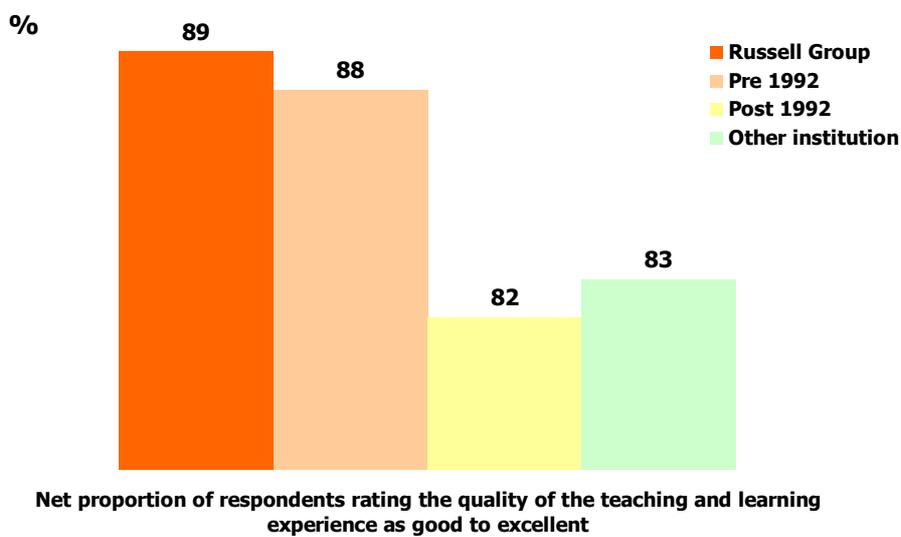
not appear to be any trends between different disciplines. Historical and philosophical studies received the highest proportion of students rating the quality of teaching as good to excellent (93%). Languages (89%), medical and life sciences (88%), physical sciences (88%) and law (87%) were also rated 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%).

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 those students that attend Post 1992 institutions or other institutions - see chart 7.

Chart 7: How students rate the quality of teaching and the learning experience is significantly affected by institution type
Q12. How would you rate the quality of the teaching and learning experience?



Base: All answering section 2 (2374), Russell Group (597), Pre 1992 (598), Post 1992 (1018), Other institutions (160)

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 the contact hours are provided through lectures, which account for an average of 8 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. Looking at contact hours, the most significant differences occur by subject area, where 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. 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. Often there is an expectation of more autonomous and text based learning, and a far more distanced relationship from the lecturers themselves. The result of which was the experience was far more satisfying due to the lower expectations.

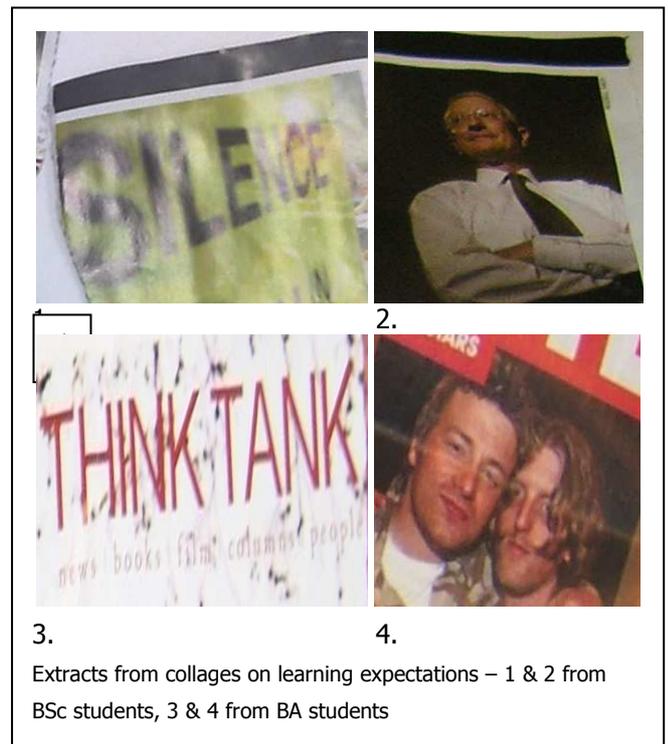
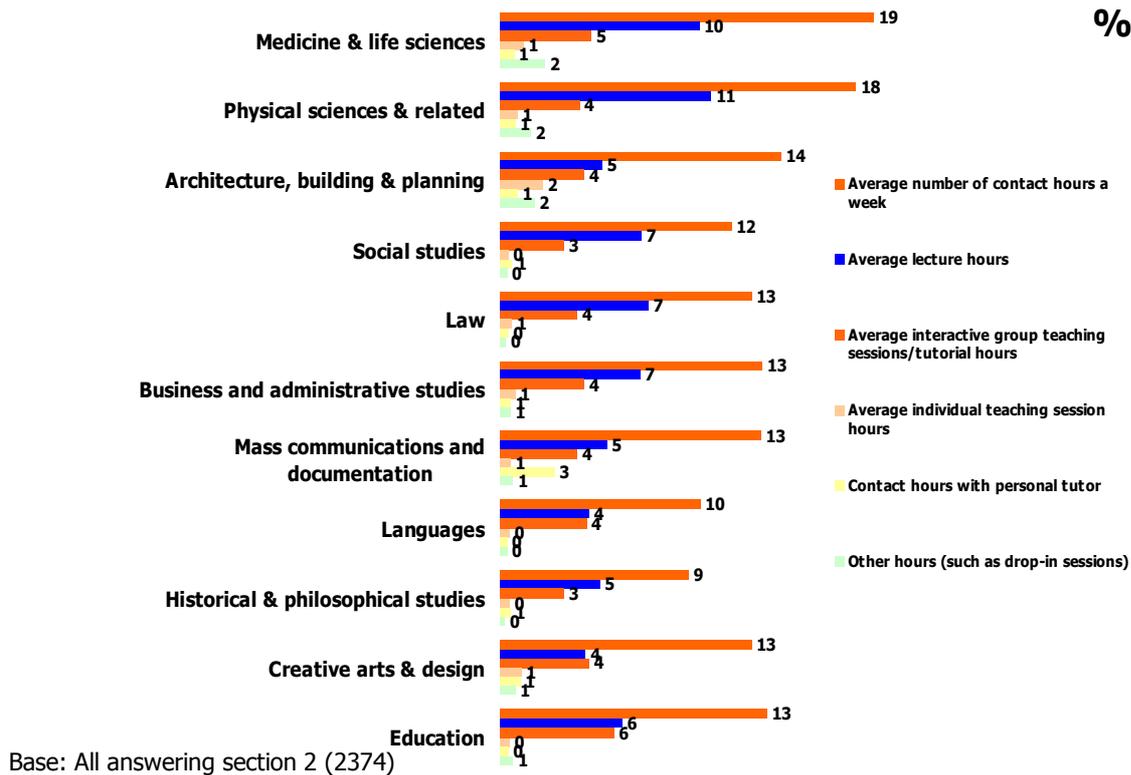




Chart 8: Contact hours influenced by subject area

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 sessions/tutorials



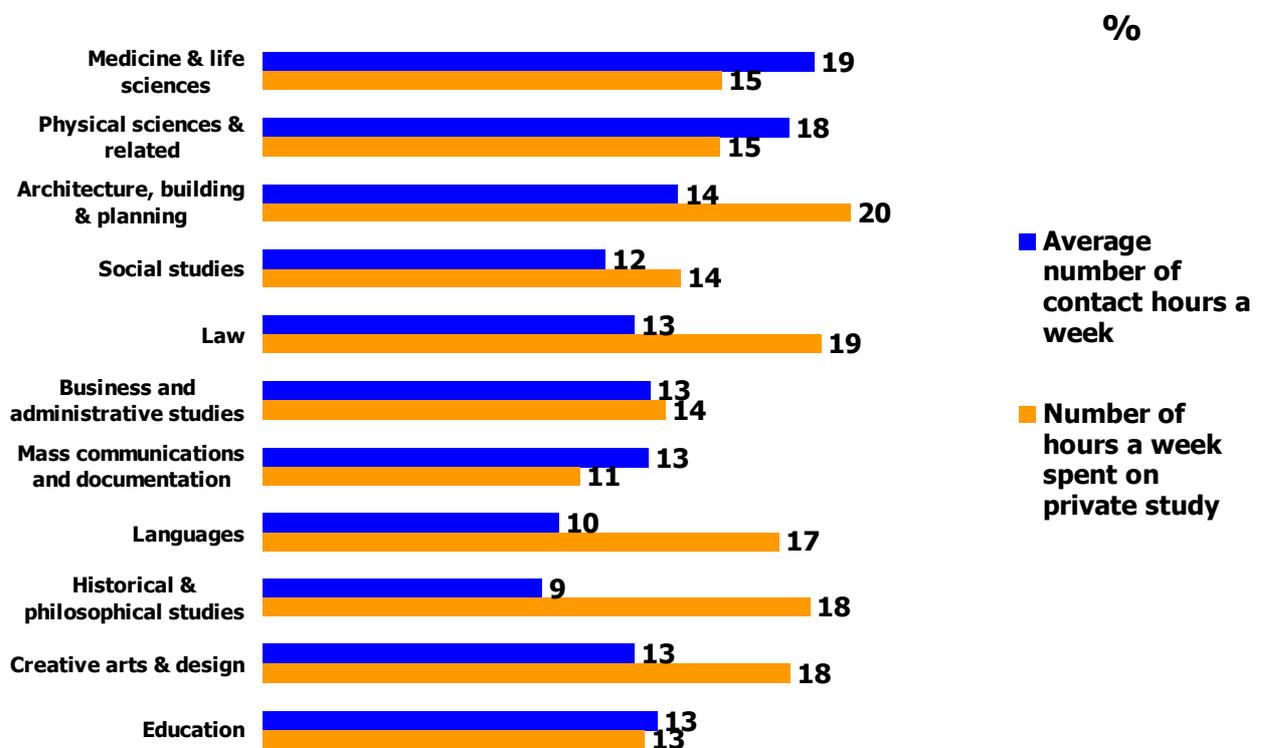
When we compare the number of contact hours by subject area with the number of private study hours, not surprisingly a trend appears whereby students studying a discipline with more contact hours are likely to spend less time on private study and visa versa. This is particularly strong for students taking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



Chart 9: Average number of contact hours and hours a week spent on private study

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 sessions/ tutorials

Q18. In addition to contact hours, how many hours a week do you spend on private study?



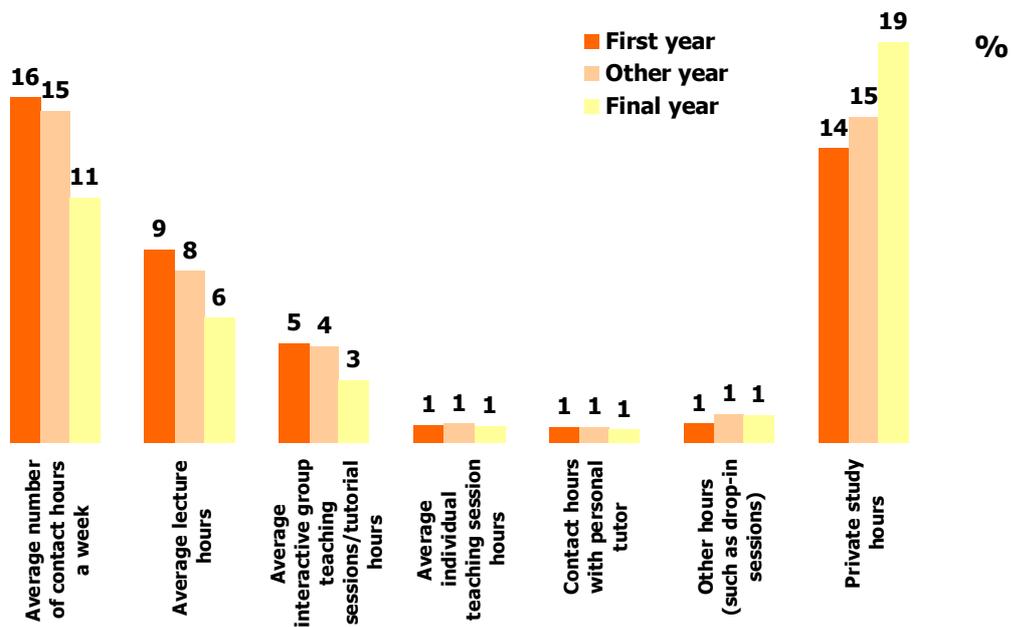
Base: All answering section 2 (2374)

Generally, students are accepting of the role of private study and while they find the process of autonomous learning difficult they do find it satisfying. This said, most express a need for a form of structure or deadline to ensure they work 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. With the introduction of virtual learning environments, these have become a particularly useful tool for students looking for cues in terms of 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 by the four groups. 'Academics' and 'Option Openers' are significantly more likely to spend longer 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.

Chart 10: Contact hours influenced by year of study

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 sessions/ tutorials



Base: All answering section 2 (2374), first year (647), other year (1176), final year (551)

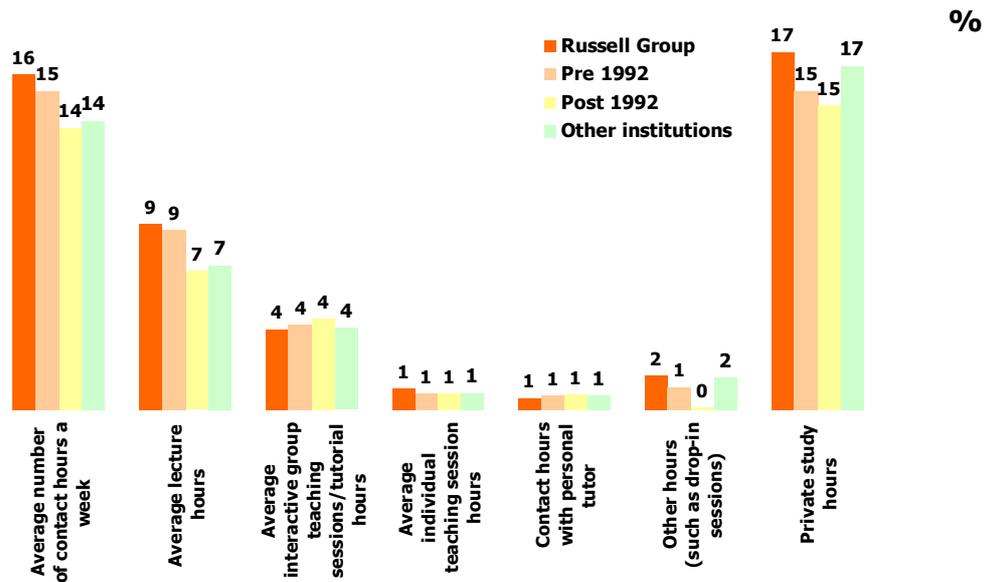


Interestingly, the number of contact hours that students receive a week, as well as the number of hours they spend on private study, are significantly influenced by year of study. First-year students, or those in a year other than their first or final year, are significantly more likely to receive more 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 major influence is the difference in the average number of lecture hours that students receive 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, when we look at private study hours the reverse is true; final-year students are significantly more likely to spend longer on private study than first year students.

Institution type can also be seen to significantly influence both contact hours and private study hours – see chart 11. Students that 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 that are received by students. Despite this, students that attend a Post 1992 institution are likely to receive significantly more interactive group/tutorial hours than students that attend either Pre 1992 or Russell Group institutions. With regards to contact hours, this would seem to indicate that differences are not just about the actual quantity, but also the type of contact that the different institutions offer. Looking at private study hours, students at Russell Group institution are significantly more likely to spend longer on private study than students that attend either Pre 1992 or Post 1992 institutions.

Chart 11: Contact hours influenced by institution type

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 sessions/ tutorials

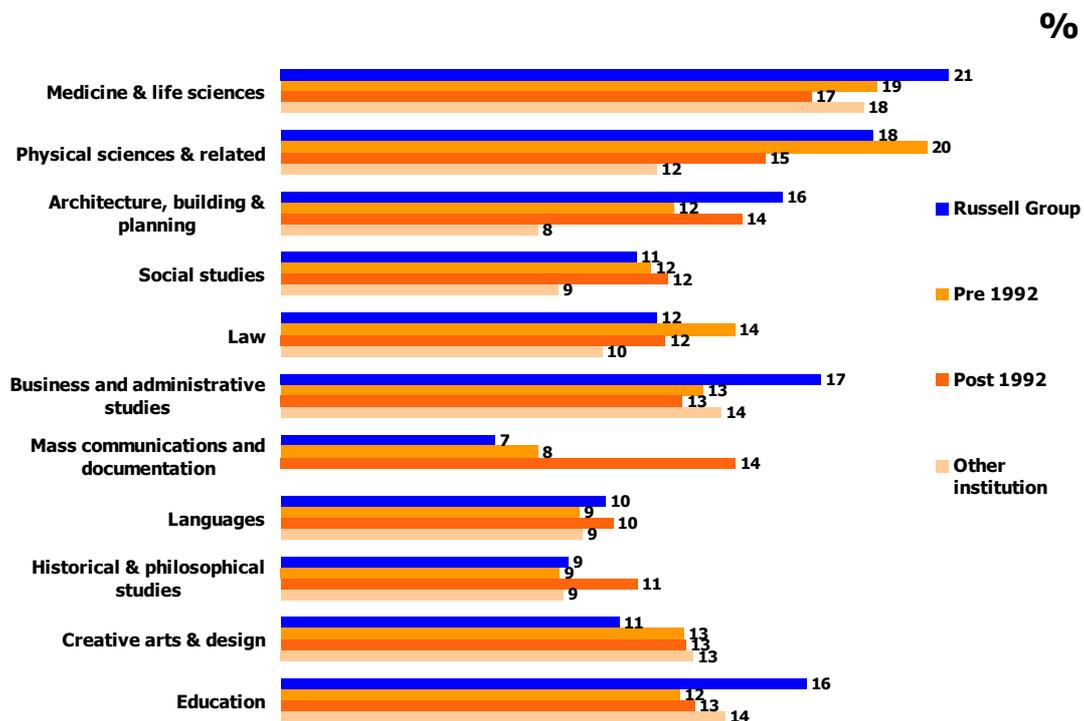


Base: All answering section 2 (2374), Russell Group (597), Pre 1992 (598), Post 1992 (1018), Other institution (160)

When this is split by subject area a number of significant differences appear – see chart 12. However, it is difficult to discern any overall trend between contact hours and subject area when looked at by institution type.

Chart 12: Average number of contact hours by subject area influenced by institution type

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 sessions/tutorials



Base: All answering section 2 (2374)

When looking at the different forms of contact, students had clear ideas of what made these hours more or less effective. In **lectures**, active and informal experiences are favoured, with students being encouraged

"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)

to interact with the material through incomplete handouts and problem sheets. More rigid lectures, where information is conveyed in a less interactive manner, are seen as being far less effective. Often these are viewed as an ineffective use of time, as their recall of the subject matter is poor following the lecture. They also felt they could have achieved a similar level of learning from the lecture materials. Beyond the pedagogical effectiveness, students are particularly positive about lecturers who managed 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 found them particularly effective when they immediately followed a lecture – the seminar/workshop being based on the content from the lecture. These provided a timetabled environment in which they were able to have interactive contact with the staff, while any queries or concerns about the content were top of mind.

Often it appears that the students are expecting to have a similar teaching environment to that which they encountered within secondary school and sixth form; however 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 easily coping with these changes, and they find the new style of learning noticeably more difficult.

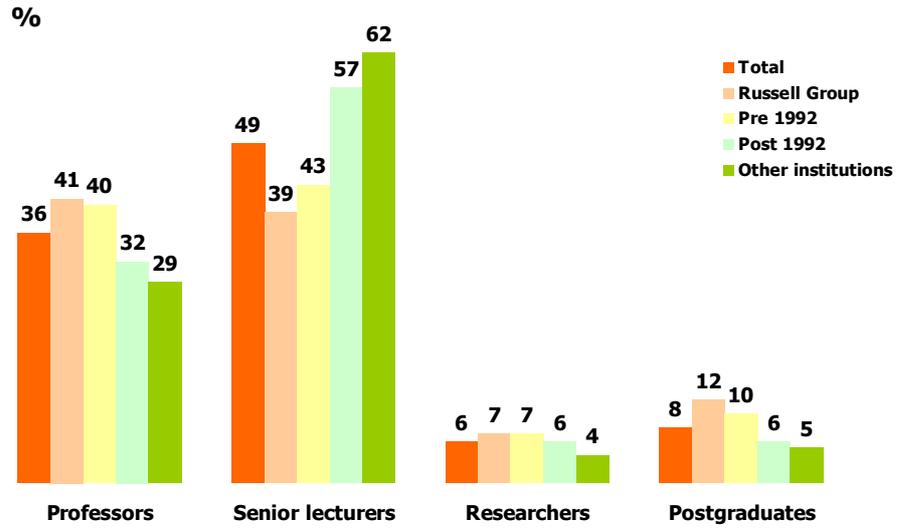
When asked, the vast majority of students, 75%, believe that the number of contact hours they receive is sufficient. Interestingly, this is not significantly affected by year of study despite the difference in contact hours. This suggests that as students progress through university they are happy to 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 postgraduates. The majority of contact hours in all institutions are provided by professors or senior lecturers who provide an average of 85% of contact hours – see chart 13. This is however significantly affected by institution type, with students that attend Russell Group institutions or Pre 1992 institutions more likely to have contact time with a professor than students that attend Post 1992 institutions or other institutions. This trend however is reversed when looking at contact time with senior lecturers where students attending Post 1992 or other institutions are likely to have more contact time than students attending either Russell Group institutions or Pre 1992 institutions. Again this would indicate differences that exist around contact are not simply about the actual number of hours.

Chart 13: Percentage of weekly contact hours with different groups influenced by institution type

Q19. What percentage of your weekly contact time is with each of the following professors, senior lecturers, researchers, postgraduates



Base: All answering section 2 (2374), Russell Group (597), Pre 1992 (598), Post 1992 (1018), Other institution (160)

Throughout the research it became clear that students were more likely to speak to staff who were viewed as being approachable and available. Students rarely express concern about staff seniority; rather their initial point of contact would be a staff member they felt comfortable speaking to and who is easily available. In some cases, this made technicians a preferable point of contact, rather than academic staff.

"I don't think seniority matters at all"

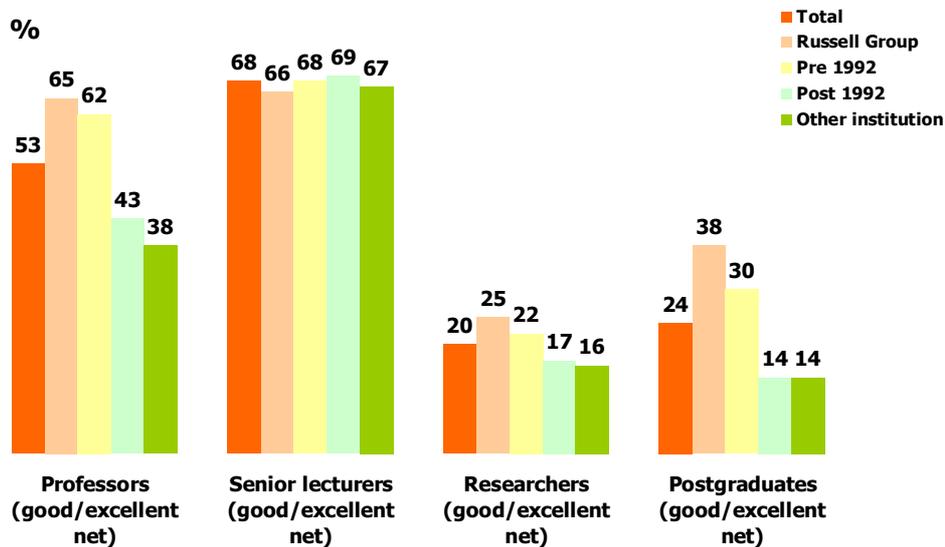
"Younger tutors are easier to talk to"

Extracts from student groups (First & Third Years, BSc)

When asked about the quality of interaction, senior lecturers and professors came out the best – see chart 14. This would seem to indicate a high level of correlation between the percentage of contact hours received and how the quality of the interaction is perceived.

Chart 14: Quality of contact hours with different groups influenced by institution type

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



Base: All answering section 2 (2374), Russell Group (597), Pre 1992 (598), Post 1992 (1018), Other institution (160)

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", which 57% of respondents said motivated



them. In most cases, when they encountered difficulties both in terms of academic and non-academic concerns, friends are the first and often the only points of contact, as not only are they more approachable, and the most available, they can also communicate on a common level.

Students' network of course-mates is an extremely valuable learning resource, both in terms of dealing with any concerns, but also for autonomous learning and discussion. Often this 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.

*"If it's a social problem, I'll go to my friends probably...if it's an academic problem, depends I'm living with ***** on my course so I'll probably go to them or my other friends on my course"*

Extract from interview
(Second Year, BA)

"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."

"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"

Extract from student blog
(Third Year BSc, Third Year BA)

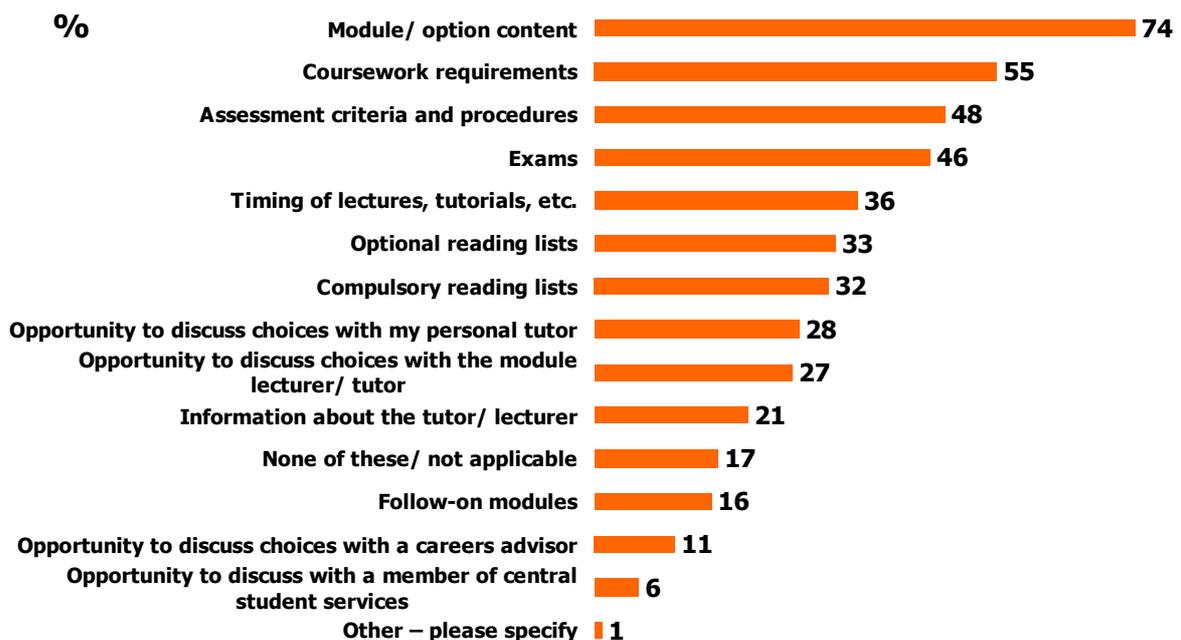


4 Personalisation

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

Chart 15: Information students received when choosing modules

*Q 24. What information and support do you receive when choosing which modules/ options to study?
Please select all that apply*



Base: All answering section 3 (2404)

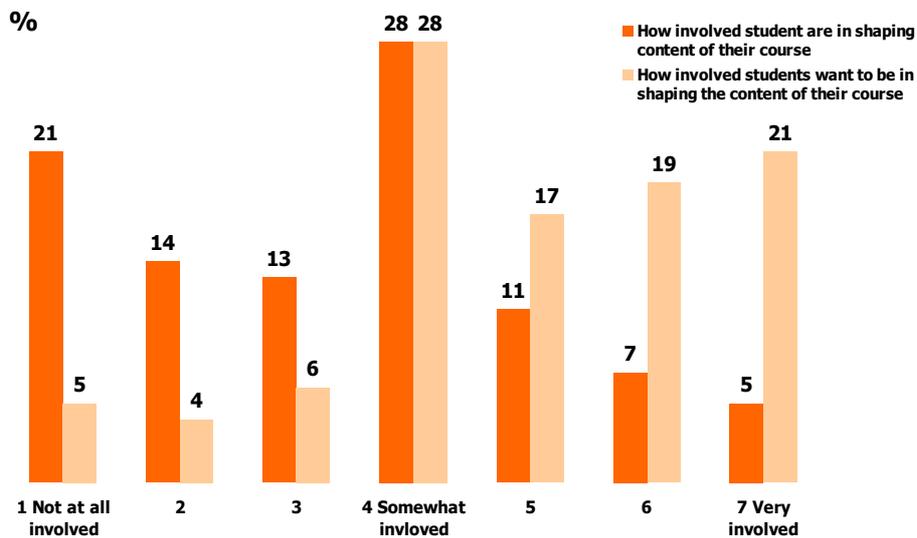


When looking at how involved students feel they are in shaping course content, compared with how involved they want to be, there is a clear divergence, indicating that students would like to be more involved than they currently believe they are – see chart 16.

Chart 16: Divergence between how involved students are, and how involved they want to be, 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?



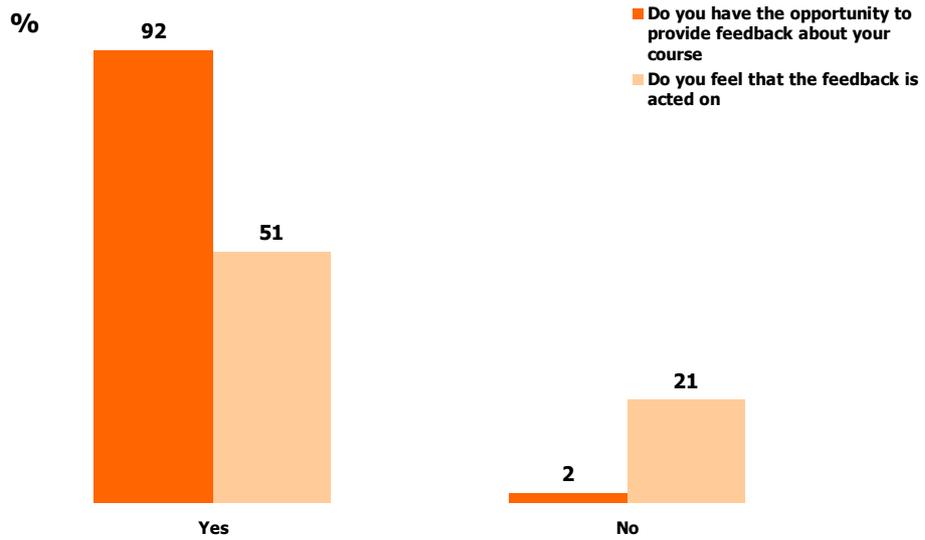
Base: All answering section 3 (2404)

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

Chart 17: Difference between the proportion of students that provide feedback on their course and those that feel it is acted on

Q28. Do you have an opportunity to provide feedback to your university/ faculty/ department about your course?

Q29. Do you believe that the feedback you provide is acted upon?



Base: Q28 all answering section 3 (2404), Q29 who have provided feedback (2223)



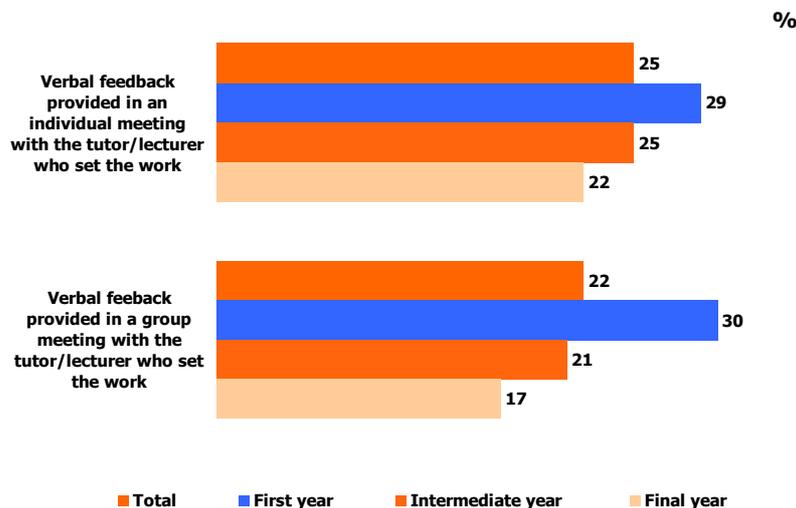
5 Coursework and Feedback

5.1 How students receive feedback on their coursework

Written marks and grades are received by 90% of respondents, and written comments by 85% of respondents. Verbal feedback (provided in an individual meeting) was received by 25% of respondents,

Chart 18: Receiving verbal feedback influenced by year of study

Q 30 How do you receive feedback on your coursework?



Base: All students (2430), first year (670), other year (1182), final year (578)

while verbal feedback (provided in a group meeting) was identified by 22% of respondents. Interestingly, only 1% of respondents said that they received feedback through the internet, 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 that



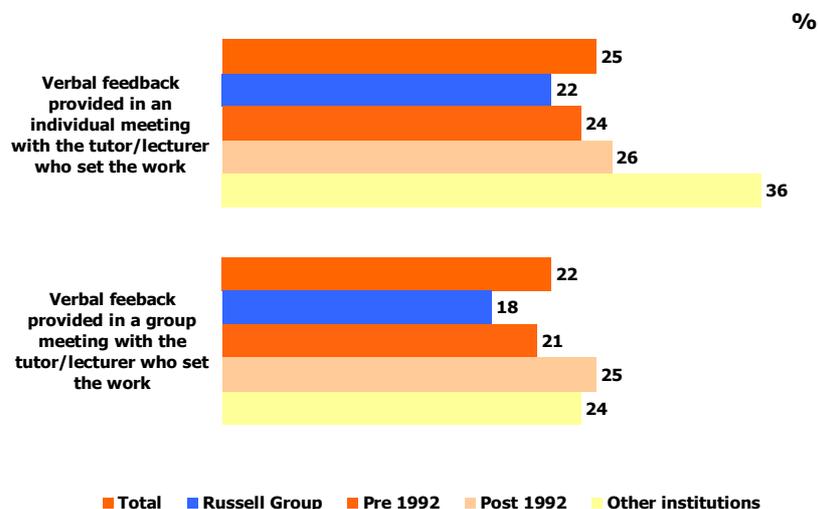
attend Russell Group institutions are the least likely to receive verbal feedback, either through an individual meeting or a group meeting.

Receiving verbal feedback through an individual meeting also appears to be affected by subject area. Students that studied science subjects are least likely to receive individual verbal feedback, with only 18% of those interviewed saying that they received feedback in this way. This compares with 30% in 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. This said, within arts and humanities however there is a large degree of variability, and the numbers receiving individual verbal feedback gets as low as 12% in education subjects, and as high as 50% in art and design subjects.

When we compare how students receive feedback from their coursework with how they would like to receive feedback, there appears to be 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 table below. 71% of those interviewed would like to receive feedback through an individual meeting with their tutor/lecturer, however only 25% 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. 75% of female students interviewed said that they would like to receive feedback in this way, compared with 66% of male students.

Chart 19: Receiving verbal feedback influenced by institution type

Q 30 How do you receive feedback on your coursework?



Base: All students (2430), Russell Group (582), Pre 1992 (647), Post 1992 (1038)
Other institutions (161)



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%	-

Some of these issues also came out in the qualitative work, where it was found that there was a need for staff to make themselves more available and approachable to students, and to encourage the 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; such good relationships where they felt comfortable to go and ask for verbal feedback were rare.

"Unless you've done substantially worse than you thought, you're not going to gain much from it (feedback)."

First Year BSc

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

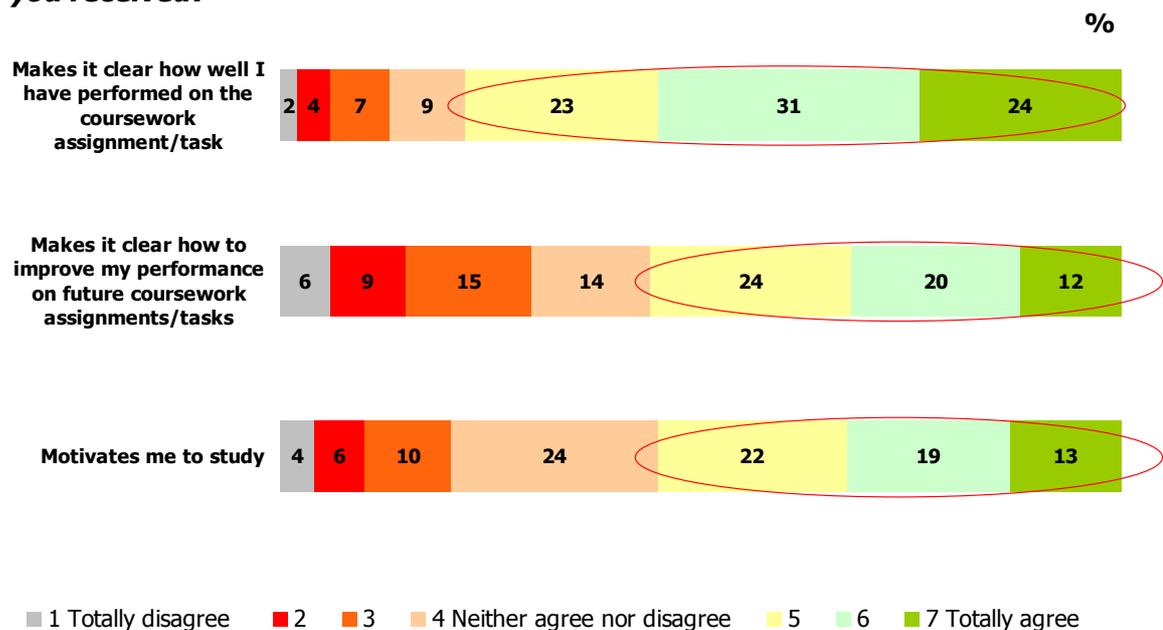
As such, whilst students may often show a desire for verbal feedback, they are likely to not pro-actively seek out the verbal feedback unless they feel that they have done worse than their expectations, although there are notable exceptions to this in terms of particularly engaged students.



5.2 Student attitudes towards coursework feedback

When looking at attitudes towards coursework feedback there was a high level of agreement with the statement that “feedback made it clear how well you had performed”, 78%, however there was much less agreement that “feedback made it clear how to improve performance”, 56%, or “motivated you to study”, 54% - see chart 20. None of these statements received significantly different responses when crossed with either year of study or institution type.

Chart 20: Level of agreement with coursework feedback
Q 31. To what extent do you agree with the following statements and feedback you received?



Base: All students (2398)



Within this it also emerged that the content of feedback varies greatly, and certain forms of feedback are better received than others. The point was made that some feedback can be very general and therefore difficult to act on; feedback may have told people how they had performed, but not how to improve this or

"they use riddles, 'there's something missing here', 'I liked it, but it lacked in something'...(what should they do?) tell you why you've lost the marks."

Extract from student group
Third Year BSc

why they had not performed better. Many students commented on 'cryptic' feedback which often posed questions to them but gave 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.

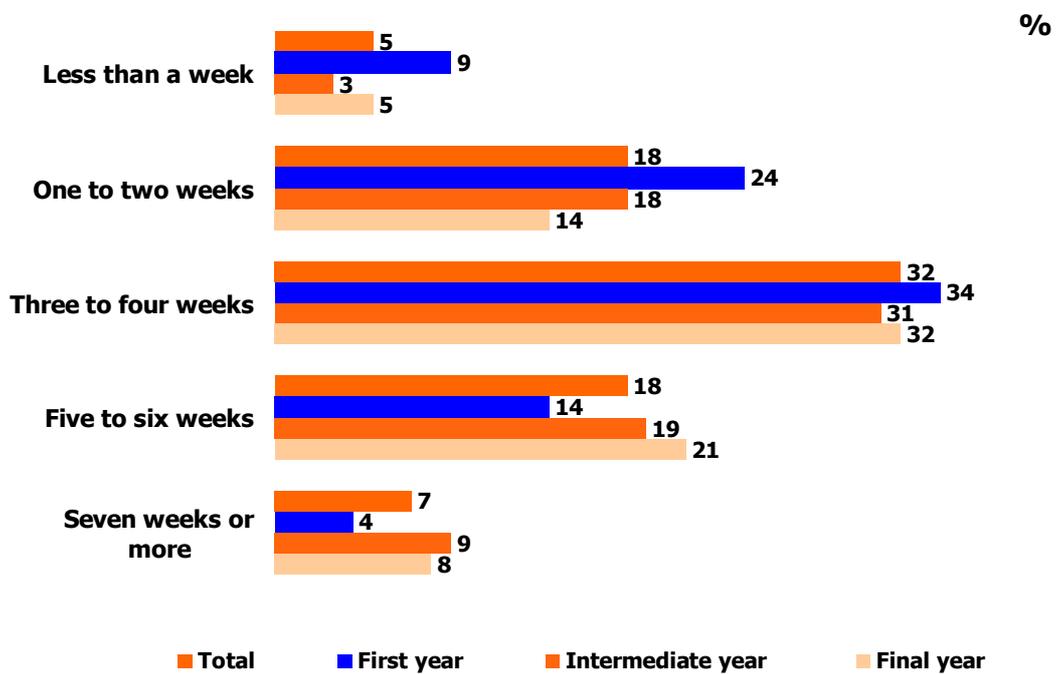
5.3 Length of time taken to receive coursework feedback

Looking at the length of time taken to receive feedback from coursework, the majority of students, 55%, receive feedback within three to four weeks, with 25% saying that it takes five weeks or more to receive feedback from coursework. In addition, variability appears to be a significant issue, as 18% of students answered that it was impossible to say as it varies so much.

When these answers are crossed by 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 the coursework - see chart 21. A possible explanation for this maybe that coursework becomes longer or more complicated as university study advances.

Chart 21: Average length of time taken to receive feedback influenced by year of study

Q 33 How long on average does it take for you to receive feedback on your coursework?

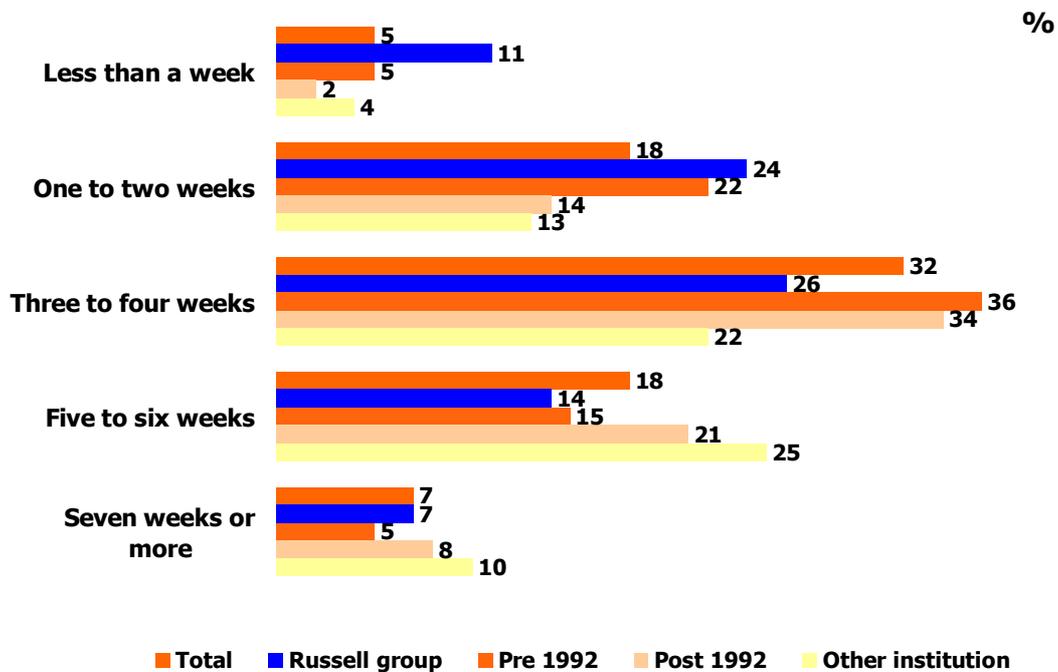


Base: All students (2398), first year (665), intermediate year (1166), final year (567)

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

Chart 22: Average length of time taken to receive feedback influenced by institution type

Q 33 How long on average does it take for you to receive feedback on your coursework?

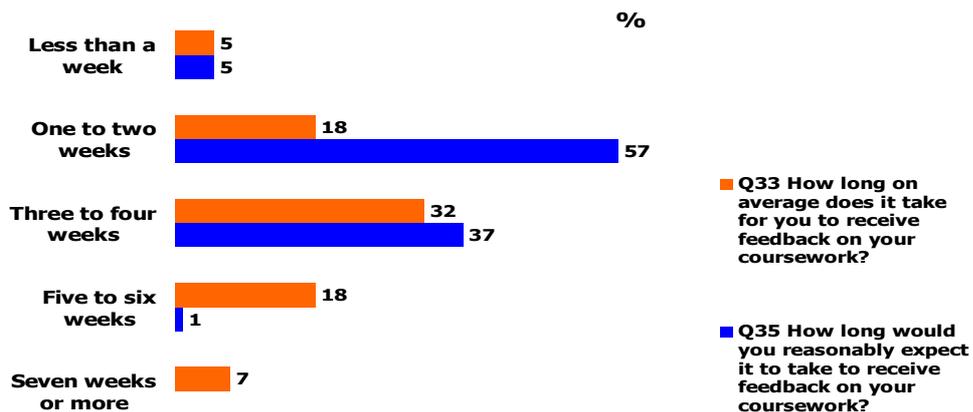


Base: All students (2398), Russell Group (571), Pre 1992 (640), Post 1992 (1027), Other institution (158)

When respondents were asked if this timing met their expectations, the majority, 62%, answered yes. However timing is less likely to meet expectations if students are more advanced in their studies, or if they attend a Pre 1992 institution, and less so again if they attend a Post 1992 institutions. These findings obviously relate to the tendency (identified above) for feedback to take longer if you are more advanced in your studies or if you attend a Pre 1992 institution, and longer still if you attend a Post 1992 institution.

Those people that said that timing did not meet their expectations were then asked how long they would expect it to take to receive feedback on their coursework. As can be seen in chart 23 below, the expectations are heavily skewed towards feedback being received sooner, with the majority, 57%, expecting feedback within 1-2 weeks.

Chart 23: Length of time taken to receive feedback set against expectations



Q33 Base: All answering section 4 (2398)

Q35 Base: All where feedback timing did not meet expectations (734)

Students were asked if they were planning to study abroad as part of their course, to which 16% said yes. This is, however, significantly influenced by subject area with students studying either medicine and life sciences or languages significantly more likely to say yes. It was also significantly influenced by institution type with students attending either a Russell Group institution or a Post 1992 institution more likely to say yes too. When students were asked what they hoped to gain from this experience, the most popular answers were: "greater confidence", 76%, "better employment prospects", 72%, to "become more self-reliant", 66%, and "better language skills", 61%. 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%, and a "concern about finance", 33%.

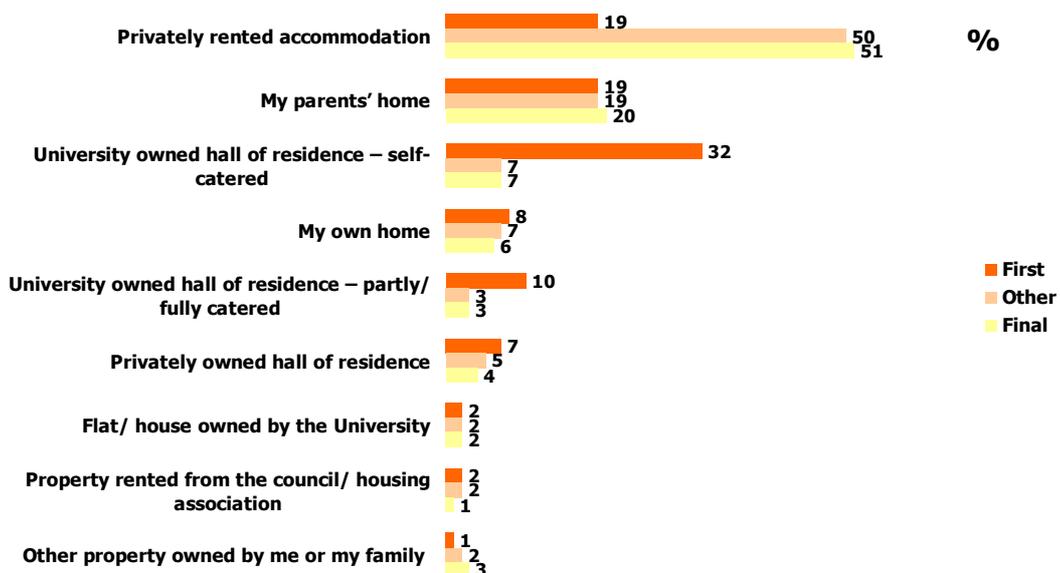


6 Accommodation

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.

Chart 24: Accommodation split by year of study

Q 42. What type of accommodation do you currently live in?



Base: All answering section 5 (2388), first year (629), other year (1210), final year (549)

Within this there was also some difference by institution type as students that attended 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 students were asked if they are happy with their accommodation, the vast majority of students, 84%, said yes. 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 was however some difference when crossed 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 years were generally very satisfied with halls provided by the university. Crucial for many was the fact that they shared their accommodation with a large number of students, allowing them to meet people, make friends and build networks. This allowed them to secure housemates for their second-year accommodation, and seek support for a wide variety of areas including their course, sports and social clubs, and non-academic concerns. Whilst inevitably there would be some clash with other students within this environment, and also it can be a distracting environment, these are seen as small prices to pay for the benefits. This said, some do express a desire for the university to make it easier for them to move within or between halls if they wish to, by ensuring there are free rooms and space for them to do so.

"I should use the day to do work. I seem to have so much to do already! 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 Blog/interview
First Year BA, First Year BSc

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.

From a practical point of view, most students attach a fair amount of importance to having a study area within their room. This will usually consist of a desk, with room for a desktop computer and printer, an



Typical Study Area
First Year BSc

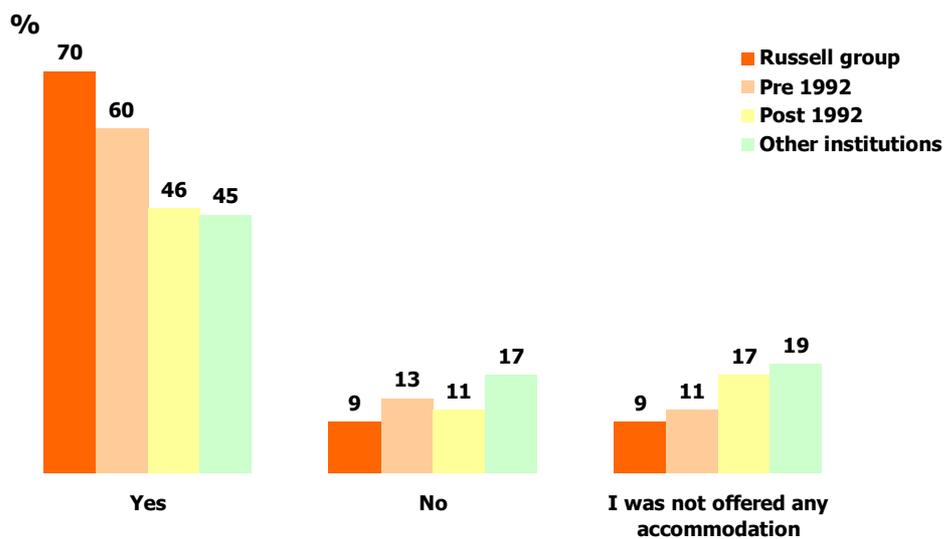
internet connection and a shelf to store textbooks and ring-binders. Whilst the students may not extensively use this, they expect and consider it important to have this area set up.

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

Privately-owned halls were seen as particularly expensive, both by those who lived in them and those who did not. However, for those who had paid the expense they considered it to be worth the extra money, having seen other university accommodation. This said, the extra expense of these being self catered, and new students having comparatively little knowledge about how to budget for food, had resulted in some students having more financial concerns than those in university-owned, catered accommodation.

Chart 25: Happiness with choice of accommodation influenced by institution type

Q44. Were you happy with the choice of accommodation offered to you by the university?



Base: All answering section 5 (2388), Russell Group (601), pre 1992 (594), post 1992 (1026), other institutions (165)

One aspect of halls which is not necessarily seen as a benefit is the presence of hall bars. Whilst these are useful areas for socialisation, first years acknowledge that they provide a constant temptation to spend money, one which is often compounded by peer pressure from their hall-mates. This is acknowledged as an important phase in building their networks, but the close proximity has led to a higher spend than they expected.

When students were asked if they were happy with the choice of accommodation offered to them by their university, the majority, 55%, said yes. However this is significantly influenced by institution type with students that 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 were students that attended

either Post 1992 institutions or other institutions, here students were significantly more likely to not be happy with the accommodation offered as well as more likely to not have been offered accommodation

Once students move past the first year, for the majority they 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 utilised, but not relied upon; most have an ideal which they are attempting to fulfill and feel that by restricting themselves to university lists they are unlikely to find the right place.

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 the 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 would appear to be an area where guidance could be provided to ensure students have a system to avoid conflicts.

There can be some serious issues (on occasion) with housemates, and some students commented that it would be useful if the university provided 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). In this year the importance of having a good relationship with their housemates increases as their studies become more critical, and housemates are depended upon to respect their 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 at university accommodation again reveals significant differences by institution type. As can be seen in chart 26, students that attend Russell Group institutions and, to a lesser degree, students that 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, café/restaurants, licensed bars and eating areas.

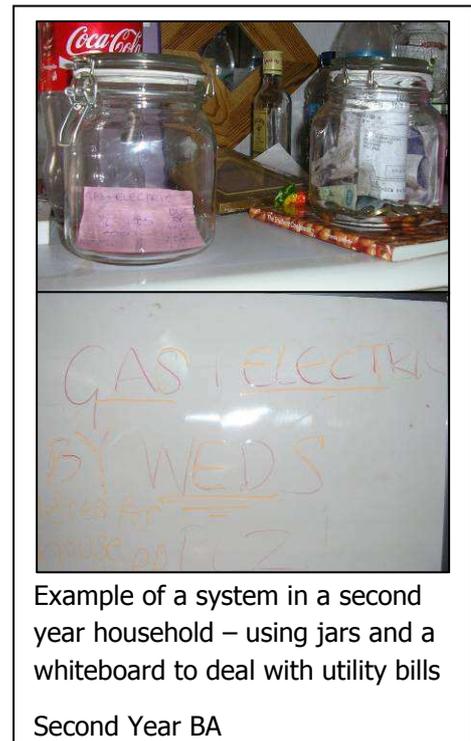
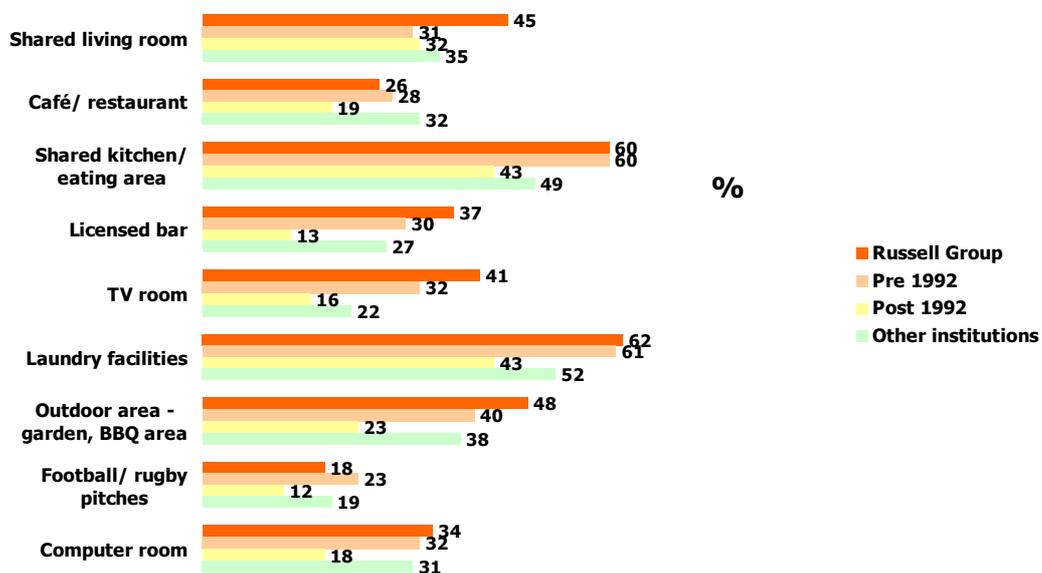


Chart 26: Social spaces provided at university accommodation influenced by institution type

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



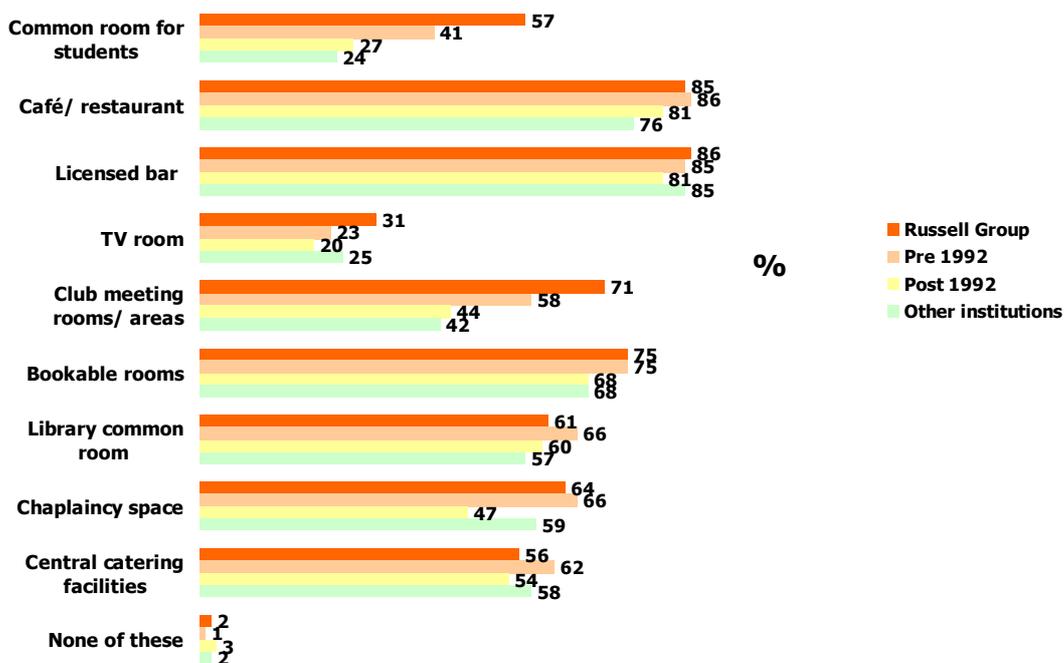
Base: All answering section 5 (2388), Russell Group (601), pre 1992 (594), post 1992 (1026), other institutions (165)



Looking at the social spaces that are provided by universities and students' unions shows much less difference by institution than social spaces provided by accommodation – see chart 26 and 27. Indeed, with the exception of common rooms and club meeting rooms, it appears that different institutions provide very similar social spaces.

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



Base: All answering section 5 (2388), Russell Group (601), pre 1992 (594), post 1992 (1026), other institutions (165)



When students were asked “to what extent do social spaces meet your needs?” the majority of students, 61%, thought they meet their needs. As could be expected this was influenced by institution type, with students that attend Russell Group institutions the most likely to feel that their needs were met (73%) and students that attend Post 1992 institutions (57%) and other institutions (42%) less likely. Interestingly, it was also significantly influenced by ethnicity; with white students more likely to feel that the social spaces provided met their needs than either black or Asian students. When ethnicity is crossed 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 were more likely to feel their needs had been met, and therefore is much more likely to result from different cultural needs that are not accommodated.

When comparing the social spaces provided to students at their accommodation their university/ students union, with the social spaces they would like provided, this shows very few differences – see charts 28 and 29. The biggest difference appears between the number of students that are provided a common room and the number that would like to be provided with one – see chart 29. Interestingly, there are very few differences by ethnicity which makes it very difficult to discern why black and Asian students don’t feel that the social spaces provided meet their needs.

Chart 28: Social spaces provided at university accommodation and social spaces desired

Q46. Which of the following social spaces are provided at your university? Please select all that are provided
Q48. What kinds of social space would you like provided at your university? Please select all that apply

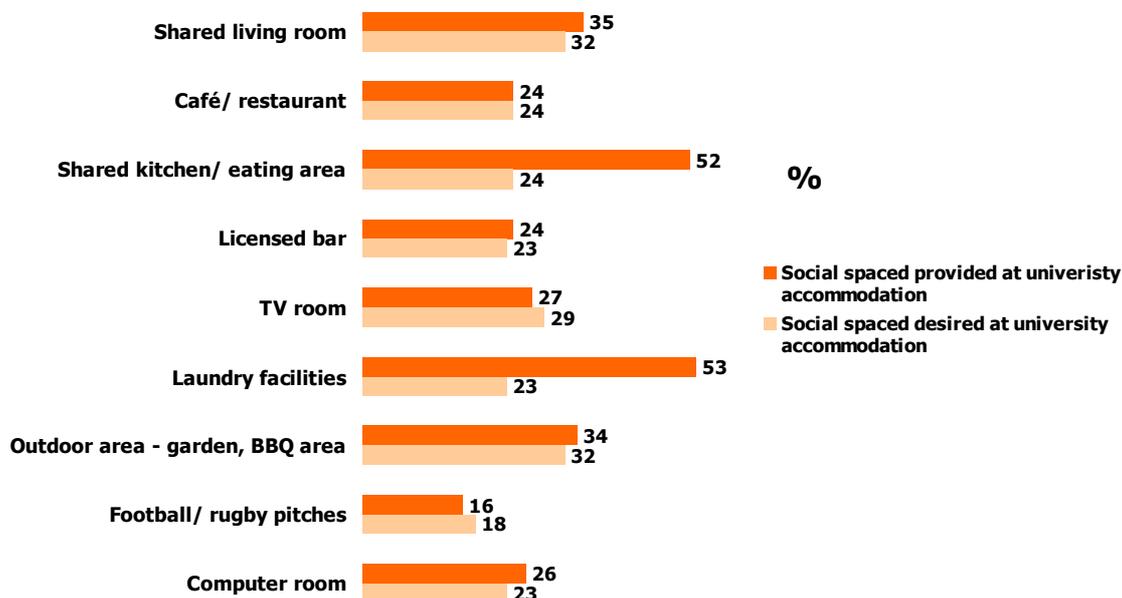
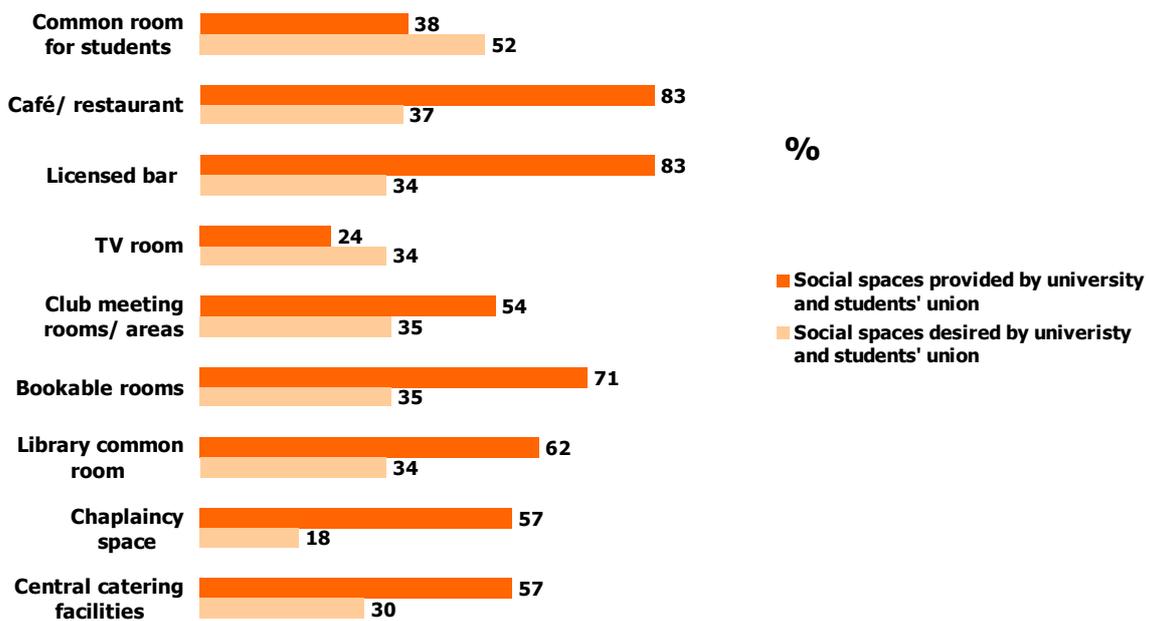




Chart 29: Social spaces provided by universities and students' unions and social spaces desired

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

Q48. What kinds of social space would you like provided at your university? Please select all that apply



Base: All answering section 5 (2388)

Students frequently commented that many of the social spaces provided by universities encouraged them to spend money. The presence of cafes, restaurants and bars tended to result in them overspending; particularly in the second and third years where their accommodation is usually further away from the university sites. Indeed, a desire was expressed for more areas within the university which were comfortable and didn't encourage spending. Further evidence for this comes from students' use of the library as a social space. Areas within the library where they were able to talk and use IT resources were often used for socialising as well as an area for learning. This did have a knock-on effect of discouraging some students who wanted to use the library for work purposes, as the environment was 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 the students to socialise without spending money, but not interfere with the library's purpose of an area for study.



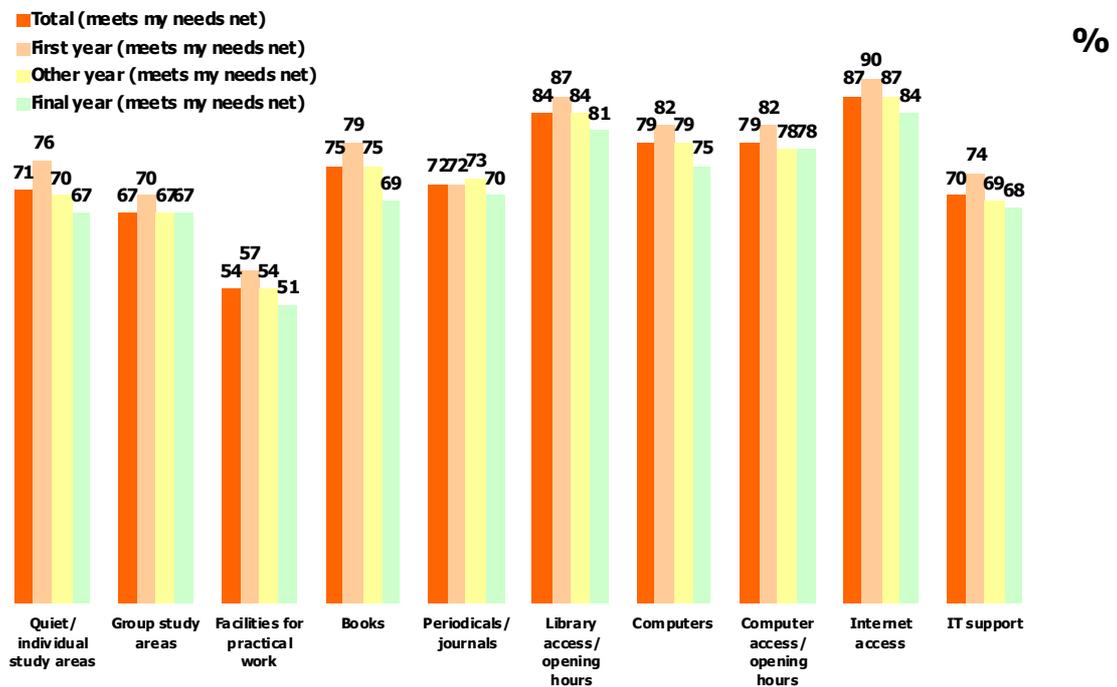
7 Facilities and Resources

Looking at 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 crossed with institution type, which would suggest that there is much less disparity between institutions in providing these learning based facilities. The needs that the fewest students feel are met relate to practical work, where only 54% of students feel their needs are met. However this may in part be explained by the responses of students taking subjects that do not require facilities for practical work, as the majority of students taking subjects that do require practical work, such as science subjects, say that their needs are met.

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” which 80% of students said. When students were asked about the more social and recreational facilities that are provided by their university, institution type can be seen to be more influential – see charts 31 and 32. Particularly, cultural facilities including theatres and music venues, trips and holidays and late night transport were significantly more likely to be provided by either Russell Group or Pre 1992 institutions than Post 1992 or other institutions.

Chart 30: Extent to which facilities meets students needs influenced by year of study

Q49. To what extent do the following learning facilities/ resources provided by your university meet your needs?

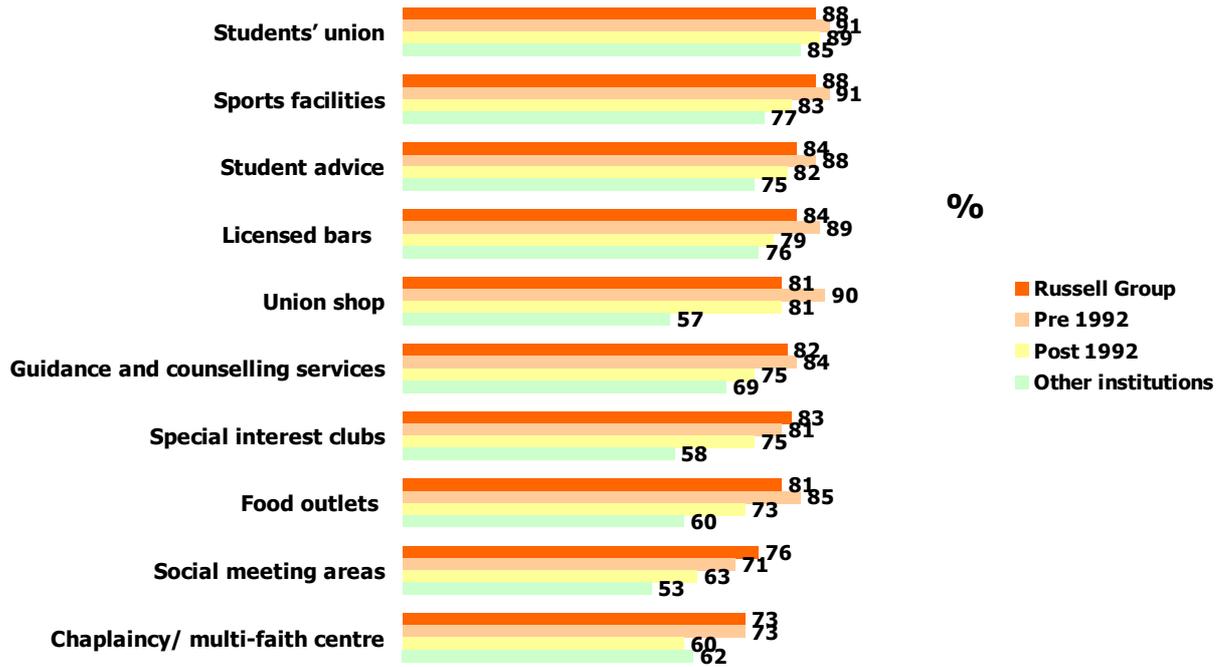


Base: All answering section 6 (2373), first year (600), other year (1206), final year (567)



Chart 31: Facilities provided by university/ students' union

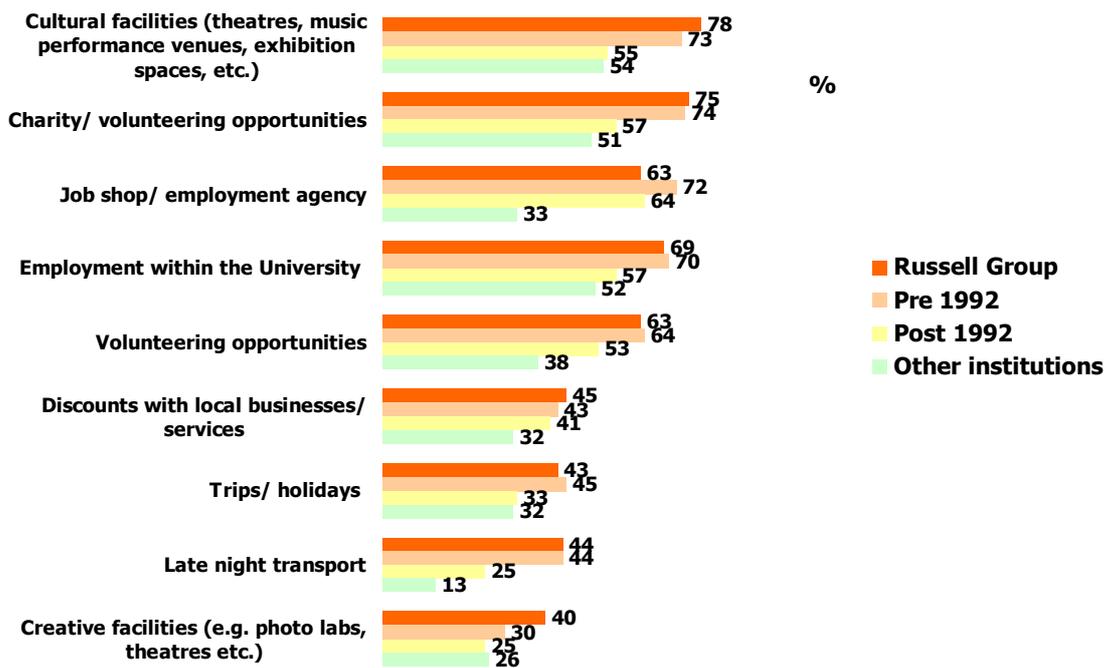
Q51. Which of the following are available to you through your university/ students' union? Please select all that apply



Base: All answering section 6 (2373) Russell Group (592), Pre 1992 (609), Post 1992 (1013) Other institutions (158)

Chart 32: Facilities provided by university/ students' union

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



Base: All answering section 6 (2373) Russell Group (592), Pre 1992 (609), Post 1992 (1013) Other institutions (158)



There can be a slightly negative impact on socialising and networking when attending a rural-based institution, with students claiming to have more restrictions placed on them when it comes to choice in relation to socialising and networking venues available to them. Students describe there being more of a social divide between those who are more able to travel to the nearest city and socialise. Some feel more able to do this due to having more time in their timetable or having more financial freedoms. Whereas others may feel more restricted to staying on campus and may feel they are missing out on important social opportunities. Having less students clustered at venues in and around the university means there can be fewer opportunities to socialise and network with as many students as possible when compared to those opportunities available to those who attend universities in central, city-based locations.

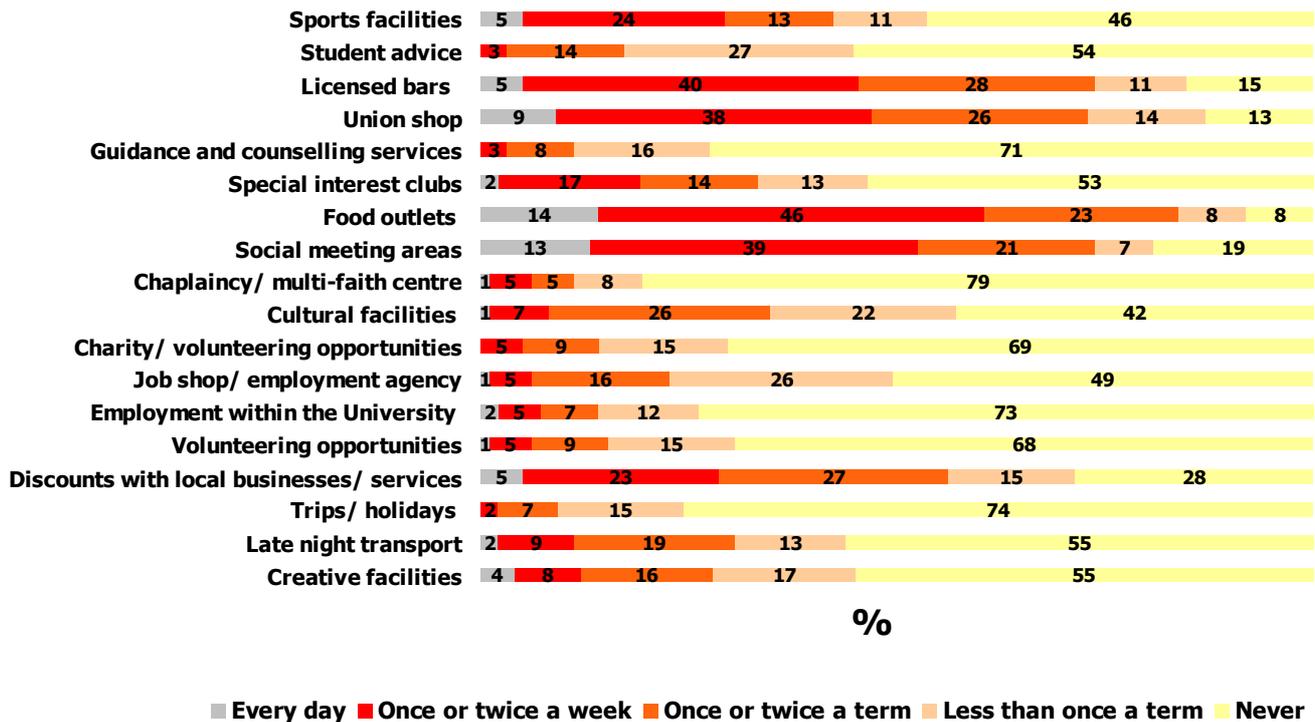
Students tend to have greater expectations and rely more heavily on university social facilities and resources such as the student union bars when attending rural-based institutions. These high expectations are met to a large degree but universities are more likely to receive criticism at these locations.

Chart 33 details the frequency that these facilities are used. This shows that social areas like bars and meeting areas are the most frequented services ahead of services like counselling or multi-faith centres. Within this there are some differences by socio-economic group as students from lower socio-economic groups were likely to use sports facilities as well as special interest clubs less often than students from higher socio-economic groups. This would suggest that for a number of students availability is not the only barrier to use.



Chart 33: Frequency of use of different facilities

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



Base: All using facilities

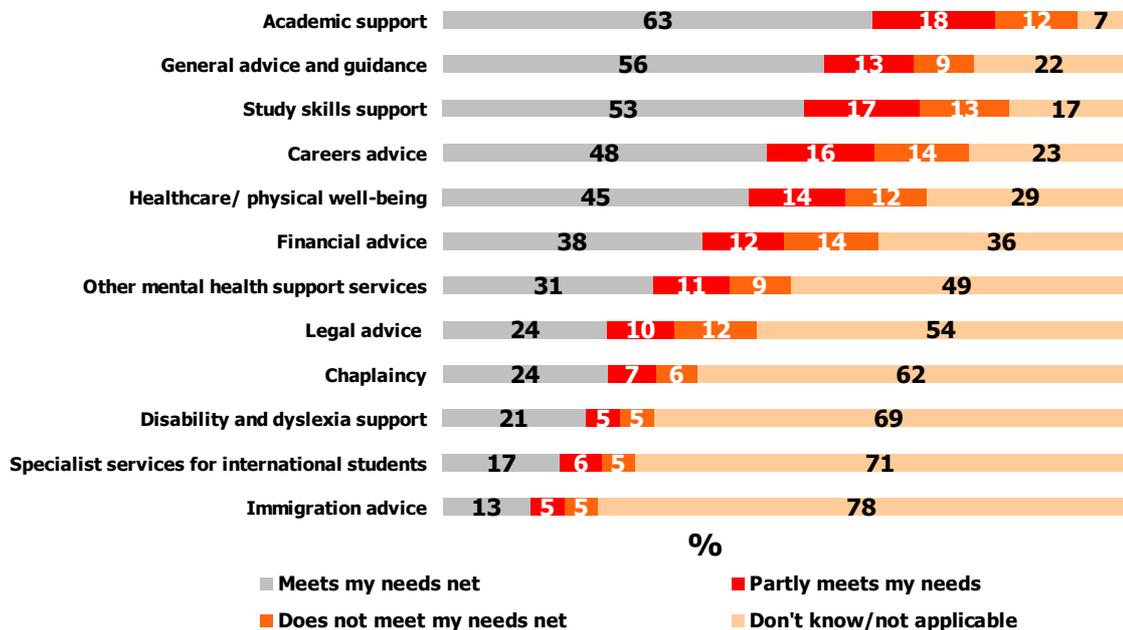
Respondents were aware of careers advice services at their place of study but tend to rely more heavily on guidance from their peers and tutors, who have a more holistic view of their skills, interests and strengths. The careers advice was expected to be more useful for those with a clear end goal in mind and less useful for those who are less clear 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 the proportion of students that believe welfare services do not meet their needs is fairly small for all the services highlighted. When looking by institution type there is very little difference.

Chart 34: Extent to which welfare services meet student needs

Q54. To what extent do the following student welfare services provided by the university/ students' union meet your needs?



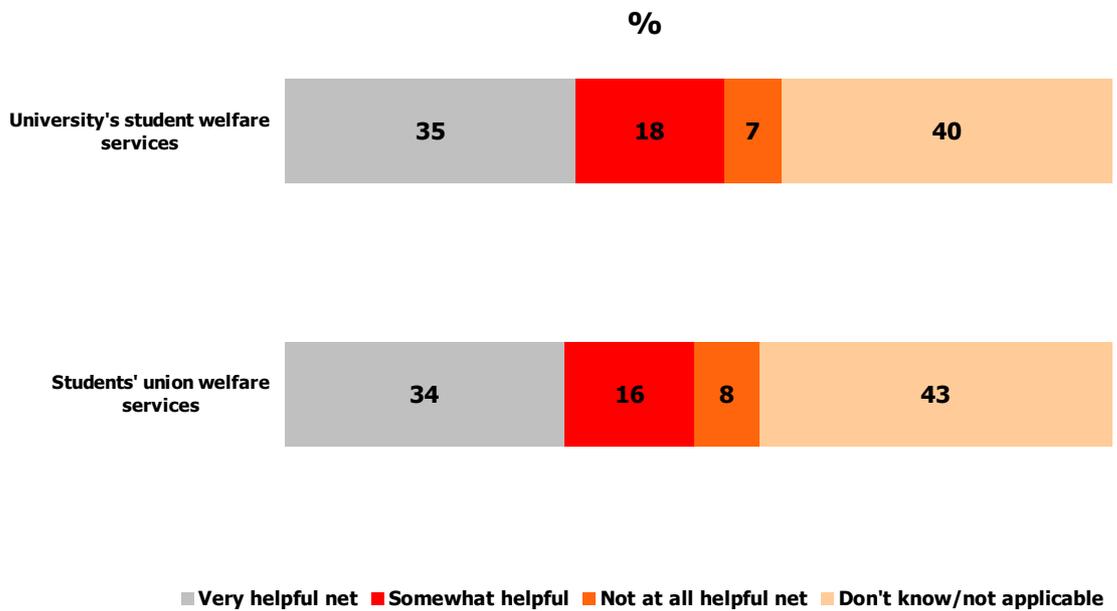
Base: All answering section 7 (2343)



As can be seen in chart 35, there is very little difference between how the information provided by either the university's welfare services, or the students' union welfare services, is perceived. In both cases the information can be seen to broadly helpful.

Chart 35: Helpfulness of information and advice

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



Base: All answering section 7 (2343)



9 Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Safety

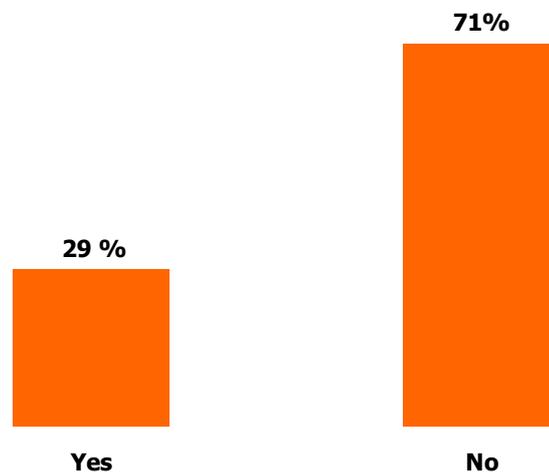
9.1 Bullying

When students were asked if they had personally experienced any bullying during their time at university, only a small minority, 7%, said yes. This was however significantly influenced by gender with females more likely to have experienced bullying. Of those that had experienced bullying, the majority, 79%, said that it was carried out by another student with 24% saying it was carried out by a member of staff. As can be seen in chart 36, the majority of students that experienced bullying did not report the bullying to the university.

When students were asked why they did not report the bullying the most popular response by far was that

Chart 36: Majority of students that experience bullying do not report it to their university

Q59. Did you report the bullying to the university?



Base: All experiencing bullying (180)

they did not know who in the university to report it to. When bullying occurs, those who are more socially successful and have built up larger networks of friends to rely on are more likely to cope with these problems more effectively and overcome them. The students concerned would usually prefer to go to friends instead when seeking advice related to bullying or conflict and go to the university as a last resort.



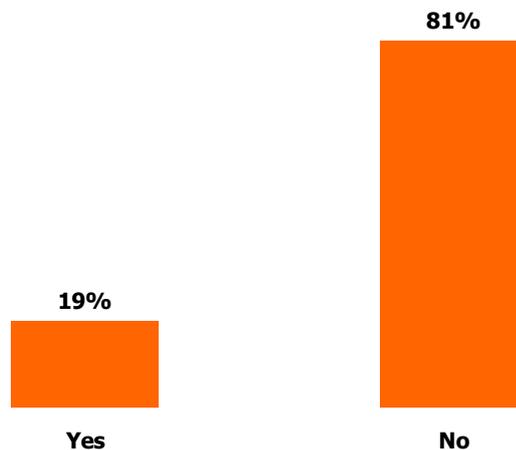
Of those that did report the bullying to their university only 38% said either that the university provided adequate support to resolve the bullying or that the university provided excellent advice and support. 38% said that the university provided some advice and assistance but it was inadequate to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

9.2 Sexual Harassment

The proportion of students that had experienced sexual harassment while at university was much lower, with only 2% saying that they had. However this was again influenced by gender, with female students significantly more likely to have experienced such harassment. Of those that had experienced it, again the majority, 64%, said that it was carried out by another student with 23% saying it was carried out by a member of staff. Worryingly, a larger proportion of those that said they had experienced sexual harassment said that they did not report it to the university - see chart 37.

Chart 37: Majority of students that experienced sexual harassment did not report it to their university

Q64. Did you report the sexual harassment to the university?



Base: All experiencing sexual harassment (53)

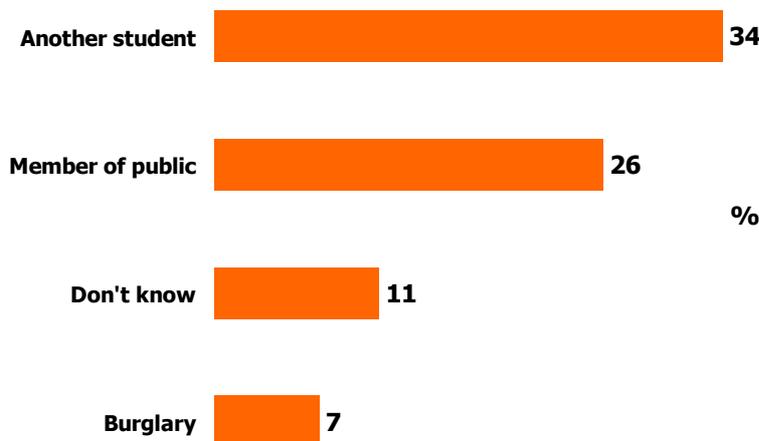
Of those that did report the sexual harassment to their university half, 50%, said that although they received some advice and support it was insufficient to resolve the harassment. 20% said that they did not receive any support, with 30% either saying that they received sufficient support to resolve harassment or that they received excellent support.

9.3 Safety

When asked if they had experienced any crime while at university, 12% said that they had. Again this was significantly influenced by gender. However, in contrast to bullying and sexual harassment, males were more likely to be the victims of crime. Chart 38 below details the list of people that carried out the crimes, and perhaps surprisingly, the most common perpetrators were 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?



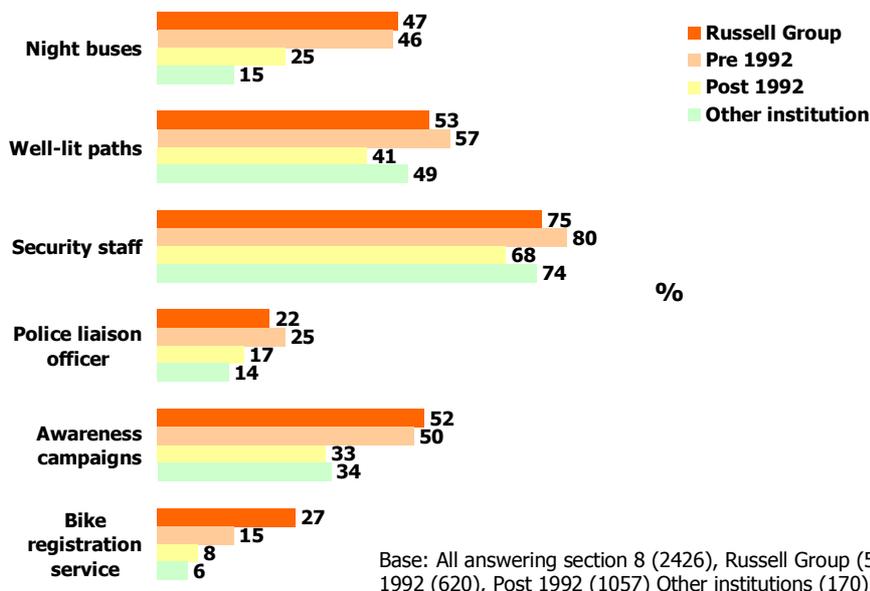
Base: All experiencing crime (300)

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

Looking at the security measures provided by universities shows 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.

Chart 39: Security measures provided by university influenced by institution type

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



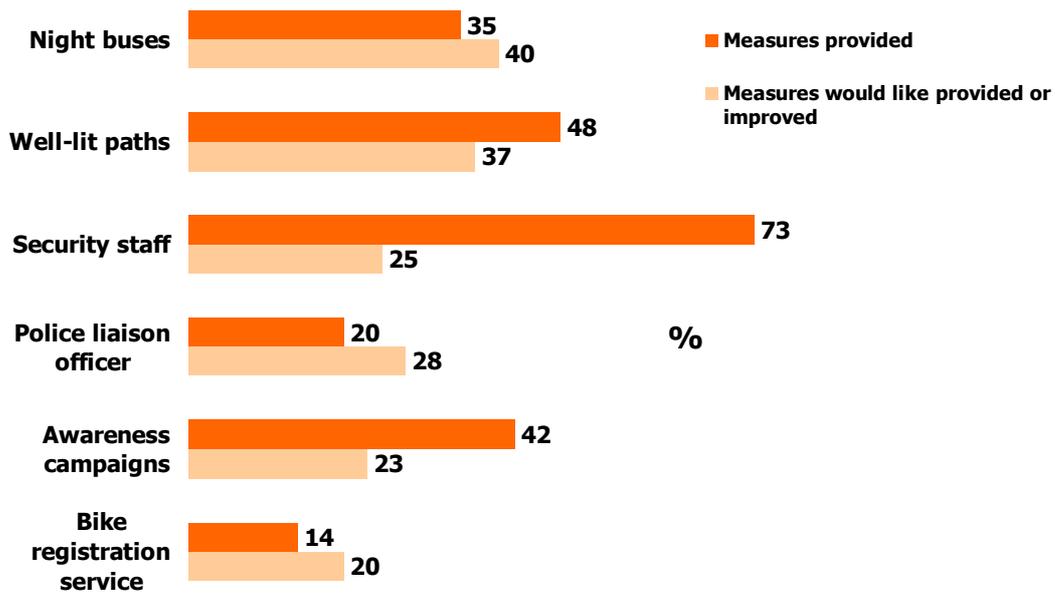
When looking at the security measures provided by universities compared with what students would like provided or improved shows that the most popular measure that universities could introduce or improve on is that of night buses.



Chart 40: Security measures provided by university compared with desired 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 (2426)



10 Finances, debt and cost of living

10.1 Cost of living

Looking at the various elements of the cost of living, prospective students seemed to have fairly accurate insight as to what they would be spending. We asked those currently at university what they actually spent each week on the following areas: books, equipment, field trips, groceries, rent, other bills (e.g. utilities), socialising, and routine travel. We also asked prospective students what they thought they would be spending on the same items, and the results show that there are some significant differences see table below:

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 (2393), all school leavers (250)

* Based on 24 weeks: HESA minimum definition of a full-time student



In most cases, respondents slightly under-predicted the amount they would be spending. Areas where there was a larger underestimation were travel and groceries. The latter may be surprising given that respondents tended to think that the cost of specific food items were higher than they actually are; however this might be explained by the fact that although respondents may over-estimate the cost of individual items, they under-estimate 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.

"I thought I'd need to buy one loaf of bread per week and that was all I'd need!"
Extract from student group
First Year BA

Again, there was no consistent variation by region. However future students from the Midlands predicted spending the most each week on groceries, £26.43, and those from the South the least, £18.63. The most marked variation was in predicted expenditure on rent: for those students coming from the South this was expected to be £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 planned spending the most each week on socialising, at £27.04, with those from the Midlands planning to spend just £21.87.



Several other 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 occurs to ensure they take account of its presence. Another example of these hidden costs is the impact of buying food on site. Students frequently spend large amounts on meals bought at shops, restaurants and bars on the university site, and feel that they have little or no option but to spend this money. Again, this was particularly prominent within the second and third years, 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, where they buy a particularly large amount of textbooks, stationary, and other purchases to set them up for their study. As students move through the university experience they find strategies to reduce this spend, by using more library books, buying them second hand and recycling old stationary; reducing their course spend year by year. This said, the exception to this is often arts students, who spend more in their later years on materials for their coursework.

"I went for lunch in the canteen"
"lunch and a drink in the bar"
"went for lunch in the canteen again. I really need to break this habit, it's expensive!"
Extracts from student blog
Second Year BA

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 slightly to make ends meet when they commence studies.



10.2 Groceries

Despite, or perhaps even because of, the well-publicised large increases in the cost of living essentials over the last few months, respondents tended 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 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

*: based on supermarket own-label or mainstream brand

Base: All school leavers (250)

For six of the seven food items (all except sausages), prospective students over-estimated what it would actually cost to buy in a supermarket. Given that a high proportion of these students will still be living in the parental home and would not therefore be responsible for the weekly household shop, it may not be surprising that this is the case. It is also possible that the 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, those starting at university in the autumn may have been pleasantly surprised.

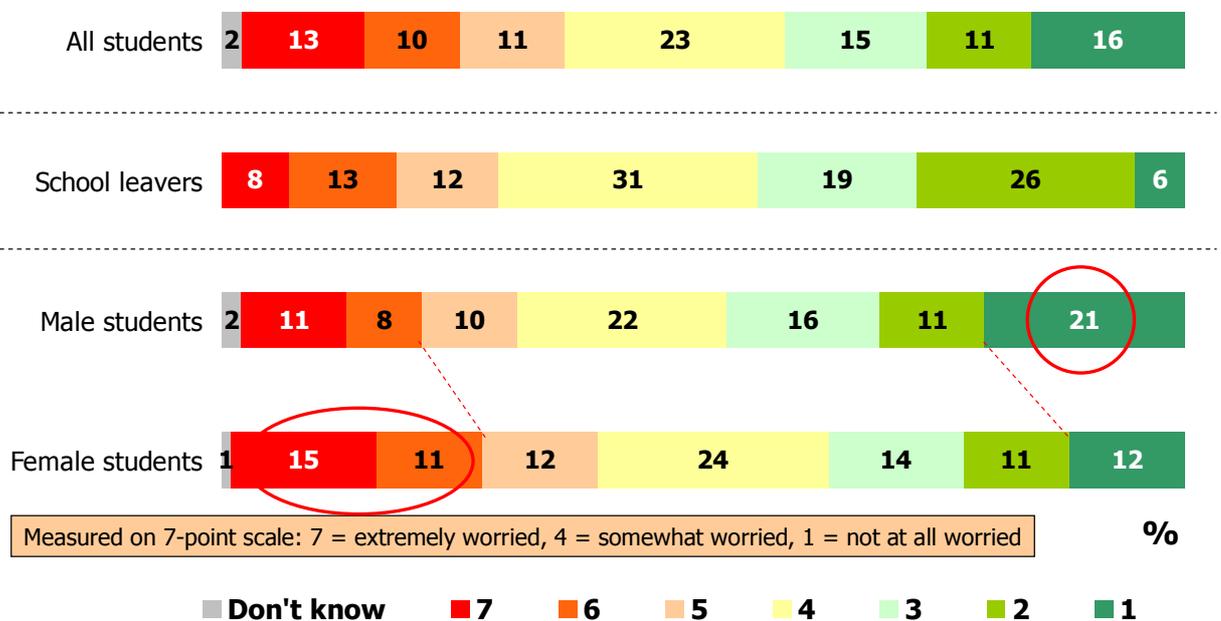
(There were no marked differences between regions, and no region was consistently cheaper or more expensive than any other, which may seem to confound expectations that the cost of living is cheaper in the North than the South: however given that supermarkets tend to maintain uniform pricing across the country, this should not be a surprise.)

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 rated their level of concern about their actual or anticipated financial situation.

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?



Base: All students (2393), male students (1037), female students (1354), school leavers (250)



Whereas 16% of current students are not at all worried about their financial situation, only 6% of prospective students expect to feel the same way. At the other extreme, while only 8% of prospective students say they are extremely worried, this rises to 13% of 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 information about the financial aspect of university life had usually received it in a class or lecture. In most cases, they had extremely poor recall of the content of the information, usually because they found the information unclear or thought it lacked useful, practical advice.

However, most prospective students are simply not motivated to seek out information on their financial outlook for university. For most, their opinion is that the financial aspect is an inevitable part of university, but not one they wish to dwell on.

For many they 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.

"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



Results indicate that future students from the North were most polarised in their opinions, with a higher proportion claiming to be both unworried (21% score of 1 or 2, compared with 8% in Midlands and 18% in South), and worried (28% score of 6 or 7, compared with 21% in Midlands and 20% in South).

Results suggest that first-year students are the most relaxed about their financial situation, with 30% giving a score of 1-2 (lowest level of worry), compared with 25% of intermediate and final year students (although this is not a statistically significant difference). This was reflected in the qualitative research, which illustrated 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 saved money 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 indicated that although students approaching the end of their studies were concerned about their finances, the attitude was more one of resignation to their situation, rather than outright worry, and that most students did not regret their actions. This said, final years were taking fairly drastic steps to try and curb their spending, and prevent them from getting into any more debt. Often these strategies are knee jerk reactions to their situation rather than carefully considered strategies to save money resulting in them making cuts to basic spends such as heating and electricity, while spending large amounts on a daily basis on food.

"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

Among current students, we can see that men feel much more comfortable about their financial situation than women; a fifth (21%) of men express no worry at all about their finances, compared with just 12% of women. Similarly, a fifth (19%) of men gave a score of 6 or 7 for their level of worry, compared with a quarter (26%) 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 be more likely to express concern about their situation.

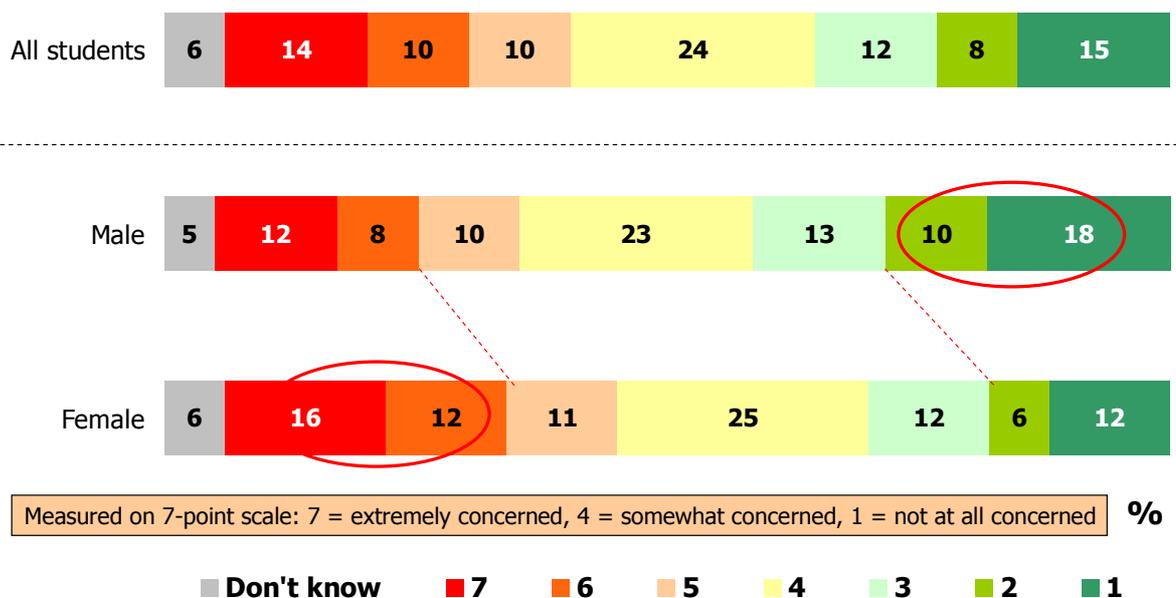
This may also be related to how *actual* levels of debt match up against *expected* debt levels. When asked, half (49%) of current students said their debt levels were as expected, and this did vary between men and women. Women were significantly more likely to say their debt was higher than expected (33%), than men were (28%). Again, this may be down to differing perceptions and expectations, rather than actual levels of debt. Overall, only 6% said the size of their debt was lower than expected.

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

Further differences between men and women became apparent when asked about level of concern about debt levels: 28% of men were unconcerned, giving a score of 1 or 2 out of 7, compared to just 18% of women, a significant difference. At the other extreme the situation was reversed: 20% of men gave a score of 6 or 7 for level of concern, as opposed to 28% of women, again a significant difference. This is shown in the chart 42 below:

Chart 42: Level of concern about current debt levels

Q79. How concerned are you about your current levels of debt?



Base: All students (2393), male (1037), female (1354)

10.4 Sources of funding whilst 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 almost become an implicit part of the university experience.

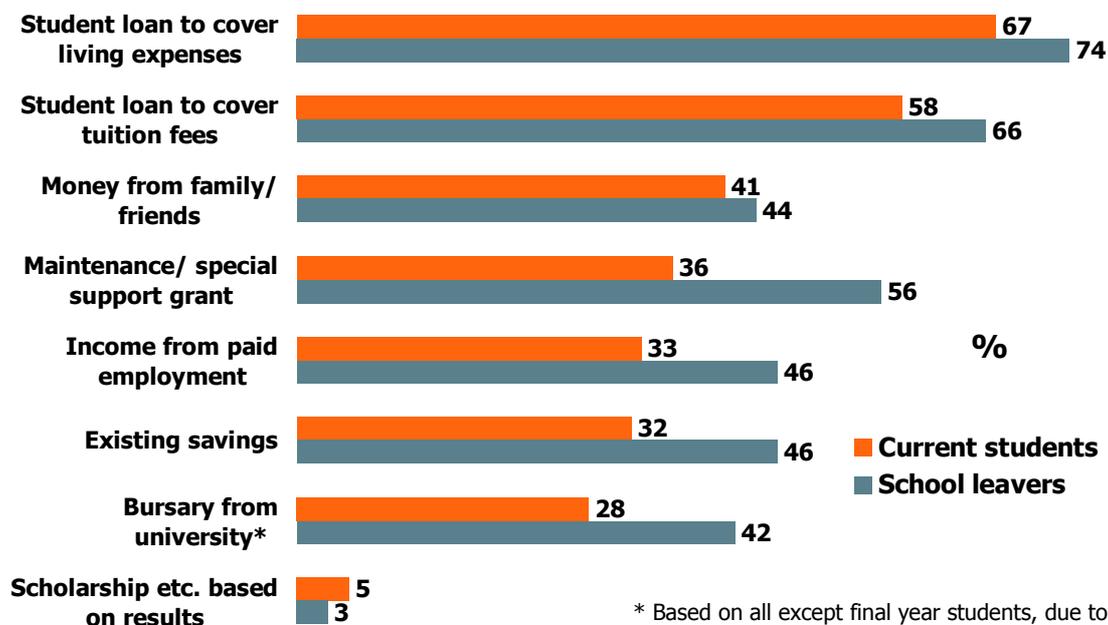
There wasn't really any thought to it: I want to go to uni, so I get a loan"

"It feels like easy money when it only takes 5 minutes and you get 10 grand"

Extracts from student groups
First Year BSc, Second Year BSc

Chart 43: Sources of funding

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



* Based on all except final year students, due to a change in the bursary system at beginning of academic year 2006/7 (1834)

Base: All students (2393), school leavers (250)



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 the student loan is in fact becoming a social norm, a part of the student experience, and a part which 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 further in.

"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

A slightly smaller percentage have, 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 were the most likely to plan taking out student loans: 89% and 80% respectively for living expense loans and tuition fee loans. This compares with 71% and 62% respectively for those living in the South (for those in the Midlands, the figures were respectively, 73% and 74%).

As can be seen from chart 43, there are some striking differences between what funding sources prospective students anticipate they will use, and what students actually do use. Whereas nearly half (46%) of future students think they will use existing savings, in fact only a third (32%) actually do so. Prospective students in the North appear to be the most optimistic regarding the ability to use savings (59%), with those in the South perhaps taking a more realistic view (36%). Nearly twice as many future as compared with current students plan to make use of a university bursary (42% vs. 23%), perhaps a sign of unrealistic or overoptimistic expectations (the qualitative research indicated that there is a degree of confusion over how such bursaries operate). A similar pattern exists for maintenance/ special support grants (56% vs. 36%), although this may reflect the increased eligibility for students from Autumn 08.



11 Student employment

The overwhelming majority of students, 3 out of 4, do take out paid employment to help make ends meet, either during term-time or during the holidays. Holiday work was more popular than term-time work with 51% of students planning to work during the holidays as opposed to 35% during term time (see chart 44 below).

Interestingly the number of students that work during term time is not significantly influenced by year of study. This is surprising as the qualitative interviews found 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, this point was made by a number of students during the qualitative interviews. Therefore, while first year students might have more time to undertake paid employment they have less financial need.

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

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

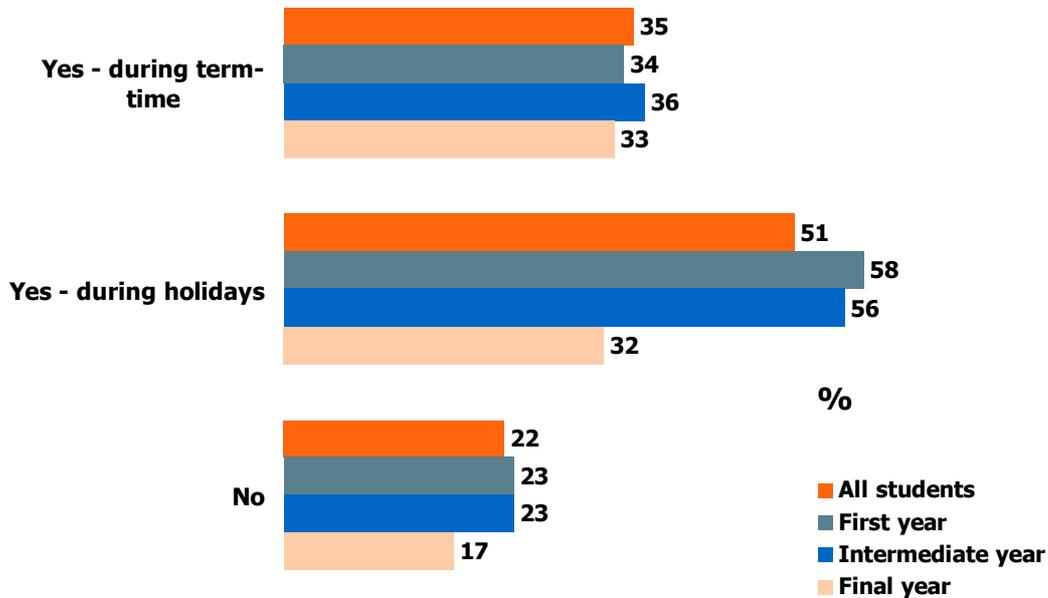
Extracts from student groups

First Year BSc

In contrast, the number of students that 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: Majority of students work while at university

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



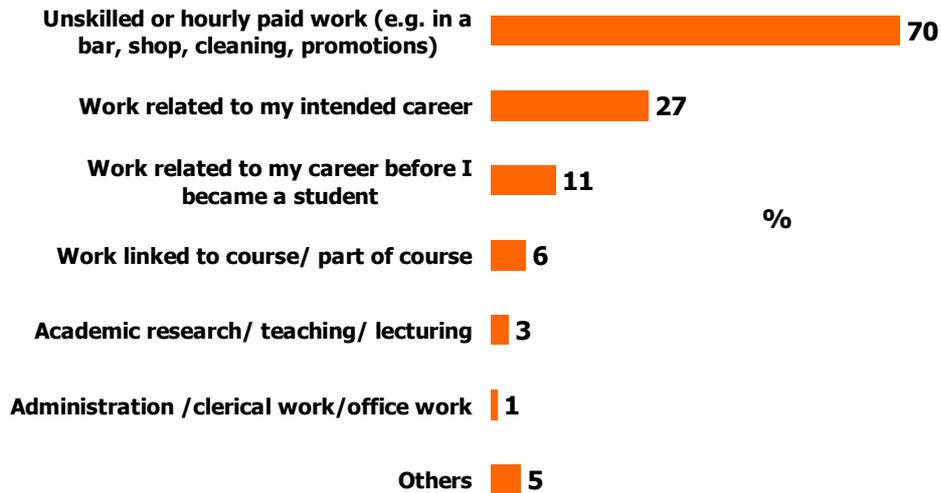
Base: All students (2372), 1st year (622), intermediate (1174), final year (576)

Interestingly, when these results are crossed by whether or not students have dependent children, those with dependent children are significantly less likely to have paid employment. 54% of students with dependent children said that they do not have, or intend to arrange, any form of paid employment, while only 20% of students without dependent children said that 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.

Where work is taken on by students, this would typically be unskilled, hourly-paid work such as bar work, which is viewed as being a more sociable form of work, and because the shift hours are outside of their teaching hours (see chart 45 below). However, more than a quarter of students, 27%, gain employment related to their intended career.

Chart 45: Unskilled or hourly-paid work most common type of work

Q90 What type(s) of paid work do you do?



Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614)

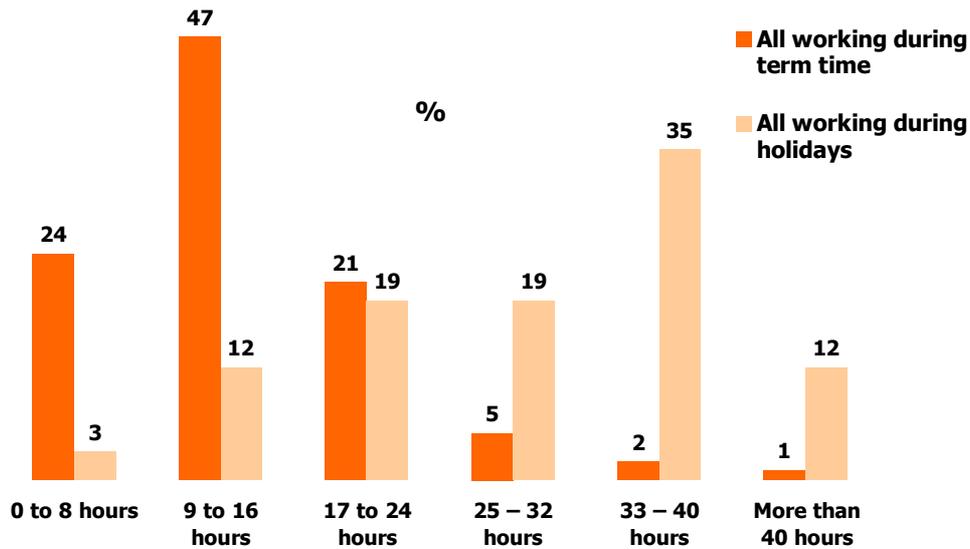
When looked at by institution type, students that attend Post 1992 institutions can be seen to be significantly more likely to work during term time than students that attend both Pre 1992 institutions and Russell Group institutions. 40% of students that attend Post 1992 institutions said they worked during term time compared to 32% of students that attend Pre 1992 institutions and 30% of students that 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%, work 17+ hours. During the holidays students work, or intend to work, much longer averaging 29 hours a week (see chart 46 below).

Chart 46: Student likely to work longer hours during the holidays

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?



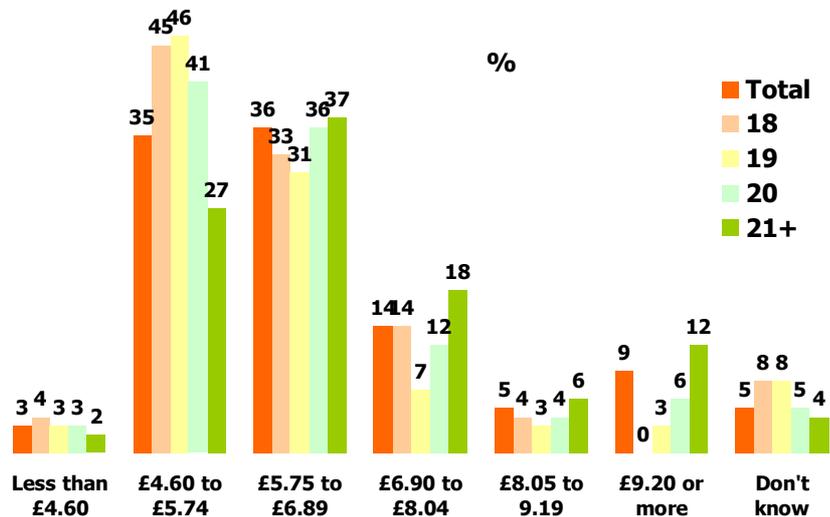
Base: Q88 All working during term time (830)
 Q89 All working/planning to work during holidays (1199)

9.1 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 minimum wage for workers aged 22 years or older, set at £5.52. Only 3% of students said that they earn less than the minimum wage. However within this, non-EU international students were significantly more likely to be earning below the minimum wage with 11% saying that they earn less than £4.60 per hour. As can be seen in chart 47 below, student earnings are significantly affected by age, with older students more likely to receive higher wages, a result no doubt of the two-tier minimum wage framework. Interestingly, there were no significant differences when looking regionally at student wage rates.

Chart 47: Student earnings are significantly affected by age

Q 91 Approximately how much do you get paid per hour?



Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614), 18 (49*), 19 (286), 20 (394), 21+ (882)
 *small base

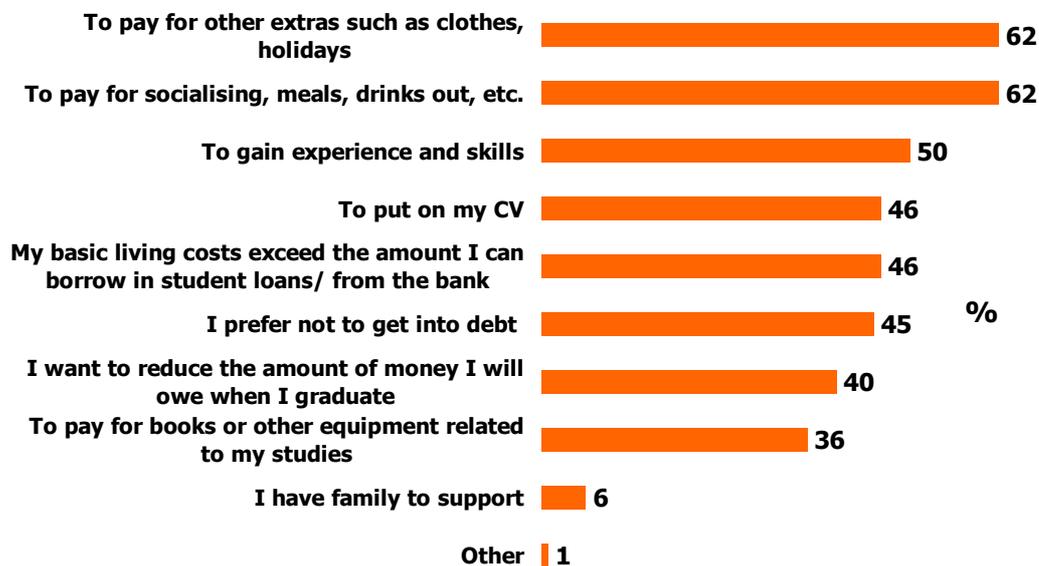


9.2 Motivations for working

The most common motivations students cite for working are: to pay for extras such as clothes and holidays (62%), and to pay for socialising (62%). This would seem 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%, are still reliant on paid employment to fund their basic living expenses, with 36% relying on paid work to pay for books and other study aides (see chart 48 below). Interestingly, however there are no significant differences by socio-economic group.

Chart 48: Student motivated to work in order to pay for extras such as clothes and holidays or to pay for socialising

Q 92. Why do you work?

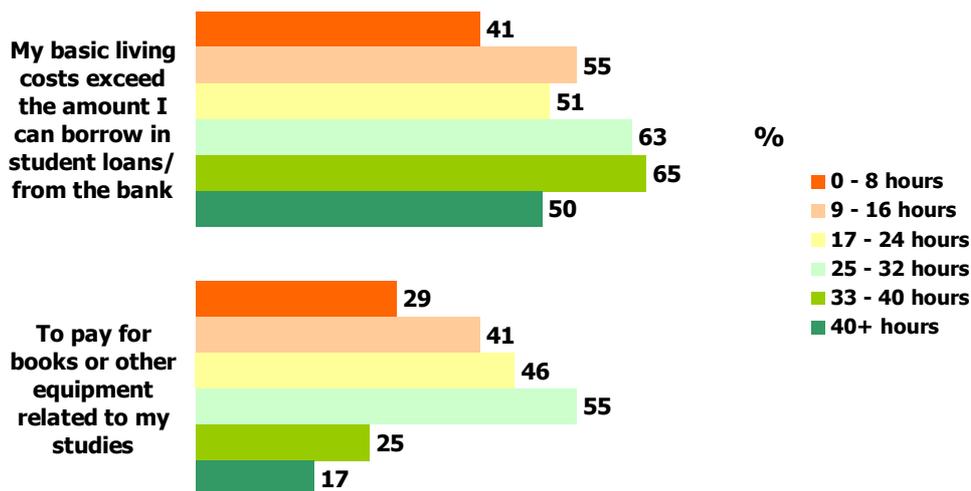


Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614)

When this is crossed by the numbers of hours worked during term time, a trend appears whereby students that work longer than 8 hours a week are significantly more likely (with the exception of those that work between 17 and 24 hours where the difference is not significant) to say that their basic living costs exceed the amount they can borrow. In addition, students that work more than 8 hours a week are more likely to cite paying for books and other study equipment as a reason for working (see chart 49 below).

Chart 49: Students working to meet their basic living costs or to pay for books or other equipment are likely to work longer hours

Q 92. Why do you work?



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

In addition, institution type has an effect on motivations to work. A significantly higher proportion of students attending a Post 1992 institution, 49%, rely on work to pay for basic living costs, higher than those at Pre 1992 institutions, 42%, or a Russell Group institution, 43%.



9.3 Impact of paid employment

Looking at the impact that paid employment has on studying, social life and voluntary work shows that there is a fairly even split between those that feel that paid employment has a negative impact and those that don't (see chart 50 below). Those who do not work generally consider that it would have a detrimental effect on both academic and social areas of their lifestyle – 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.

A significant departure from this trend occurs when students were asked whether they thought paid employment during the holidays has a negative impact on

studies. Here the vast majority of students, 70%, did not think such work has a negative impact on studies. This work is seen as crucial to reduce the debts they have incurred during the academic year, and as such is a period that spending is reduced and more saving occurs.

"If you work, well, you can get in debt and have a good time or work and miss out on uni"

"If you manage your time properly, it isn't a problem."

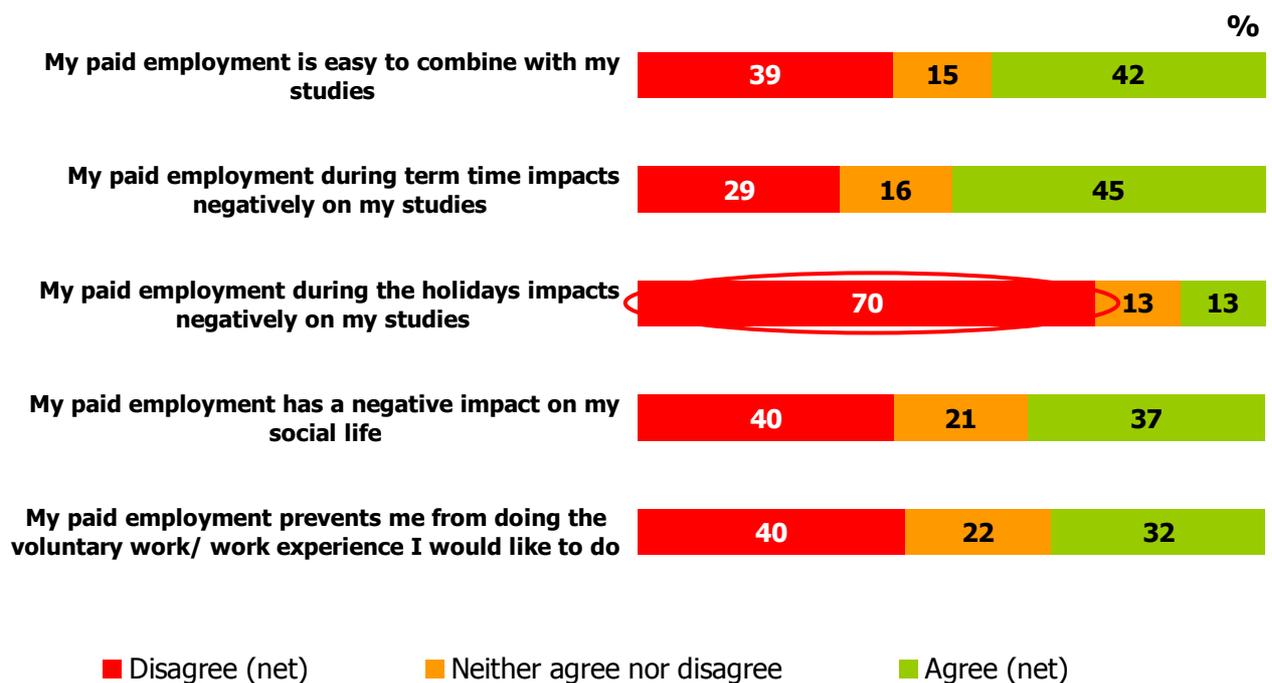
"It's good, it's flexible, it's really good for that, I quite enjoy it, you meet so many people."

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



Chart 50: Impact of paid employment

Q 93. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?



Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614)

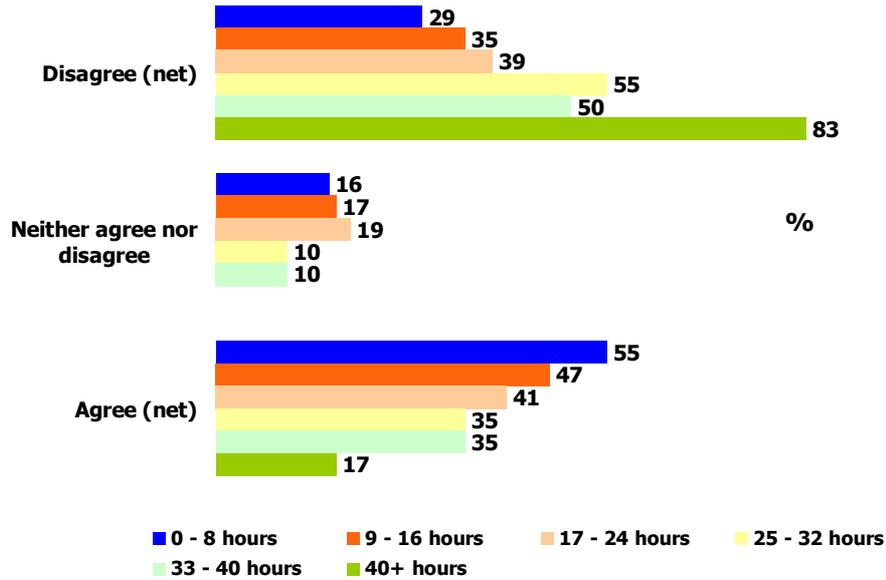
While these results do not change significantly when crossed with either year of study or institution type, they are influenced by the number of hours worked during term time. Unsurprisingly, students that worked longer hours were significantly less likely to say that paid work was easy to combine with 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 below). 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.



Chart 51: Hours worked significantly affects student attitudes on how easy it is to combine work with study

Q 93 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

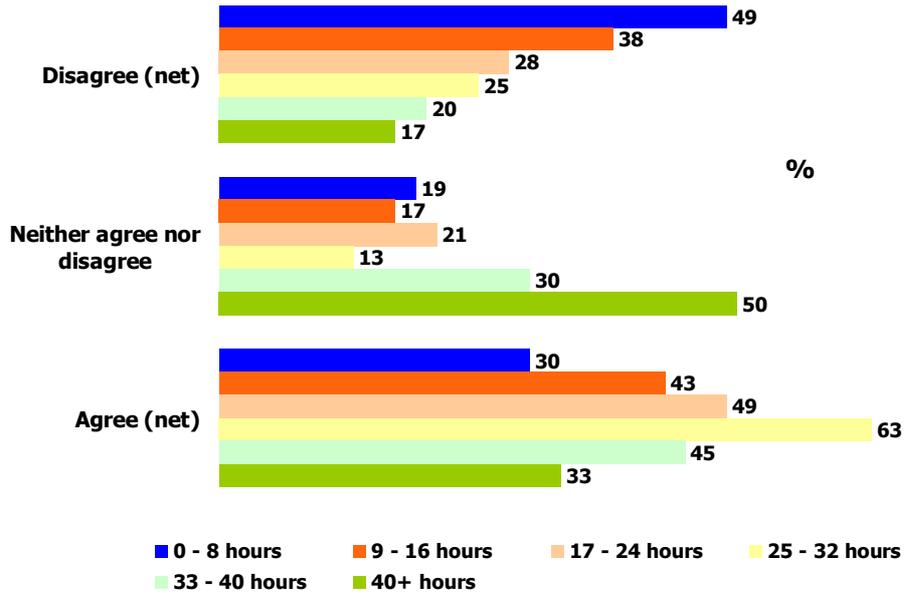


Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 to 8 hours (196), 9 to 16 hours (394), 17 to 24 hours (174), 25 to 32 hours (40*), 33 to 40 hours (20**), 40+ hours (6**) *small base **very small base ineligible for sig. testing

Chart 52: Hours worked significantly affects student attitudes on whether work negatively impacts on studies

Q 93 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?

My paid employment during term time impacts negatively on my studies



Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 to 8 hours (196), 9 to 16 hours (394), 17 to 24 hours (174), 25 to 32 hours (40*), 33 to 40 hours (20**), 40+ hours (6**)

*small base **very small base ineligible for sig. testing



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”, which was identified by 46% of respondents, and “looking for work”, which was identified by 34%. However, while these were the most popular responses it is a little surprising that more people 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%) planning to do this after their current course. Interestingly, only 6% of students said that they had no idea what their plans were for after studying.

Both gender and institution type can be seen to influence students’ plans after studying. Chart 53 below gives a breakdown of students’ post-course plans by gender. This shows that male respondents were more likely to be planning either to look for work or go into permanent full-time employment, while female respondents were more likely to be planning further study.

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

Chart 53: Plans after current course of study influenced by gender

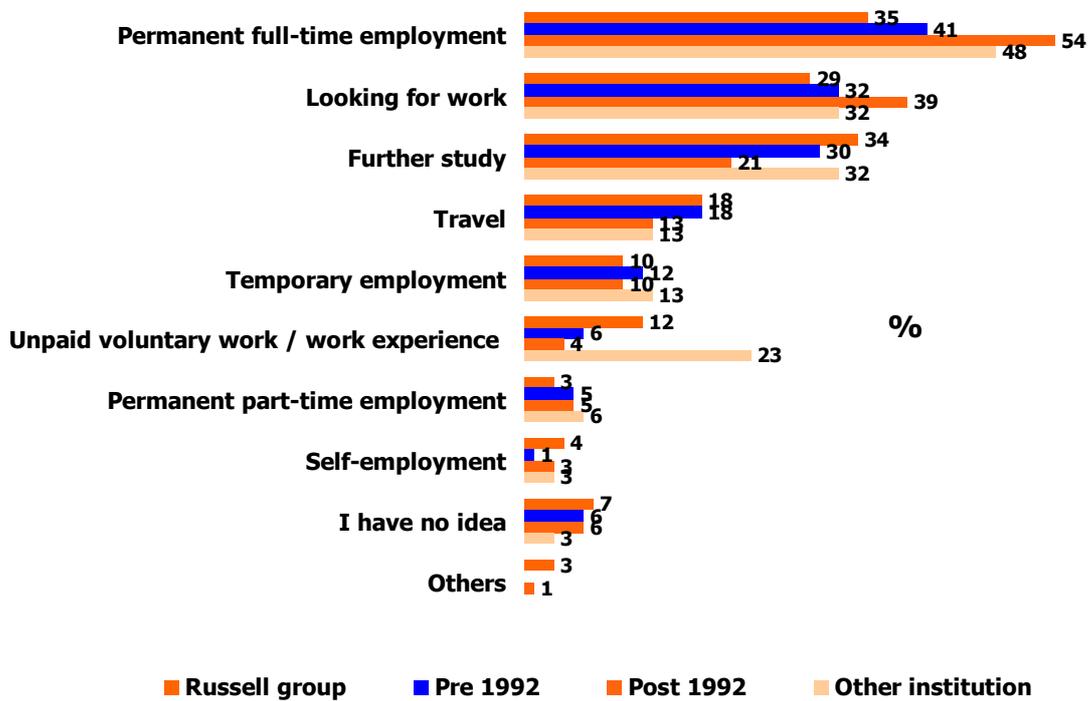
Q 94 Which of the following best describes your plans after your current course of study?



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

Chart 54: Plans after current course of study influenced by institution type

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



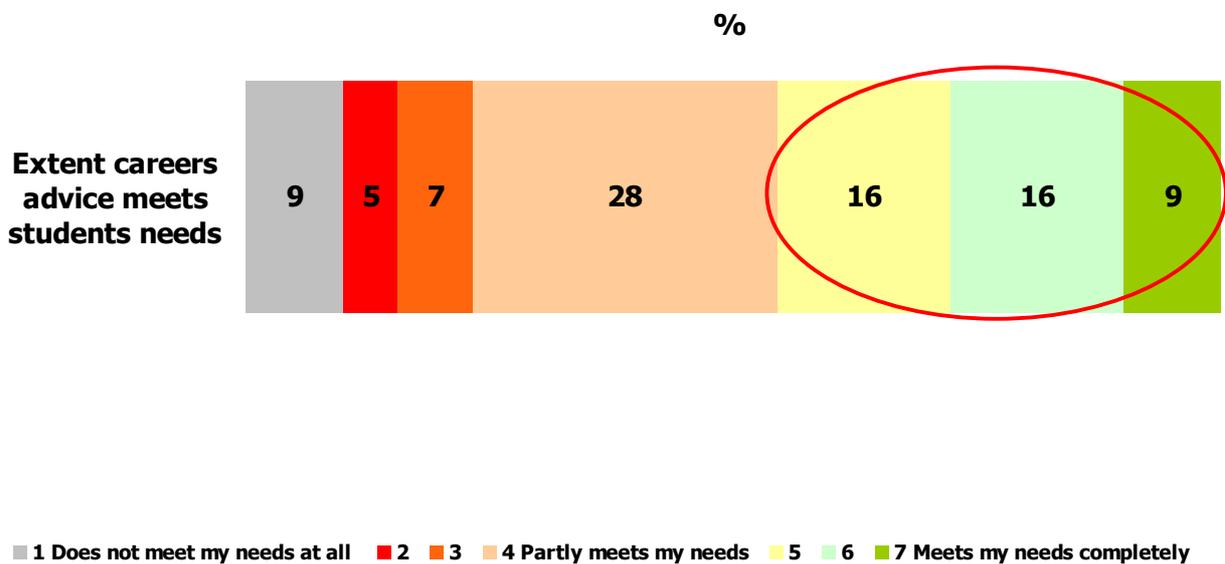
Base: All final-year students (540), Russell Group (119), Pre 1992 (136), Post 1992 (254), Other institutions (31)

12.2 Careers advice – does it meet needs?

41% of final year students said that the careers advice provided by their university did meet their needs, with only 21% saying that it did not.

Chart 55: Whether careers advice meets student needs

Q 95. To what extent does the advice provided by your university about careers and future study meet your needs?



Base: All final-year students (540)



Generally students 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 aiming to take the next step. Where the career advice appears to fare less well, is in dealing with students who have little or no idea of which career they want to do 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 address this need. Another particularly interesting group of students who were 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. This said, these students are highly self motivated, and tend to seek the information out themselves through journals and speaking to university staff.

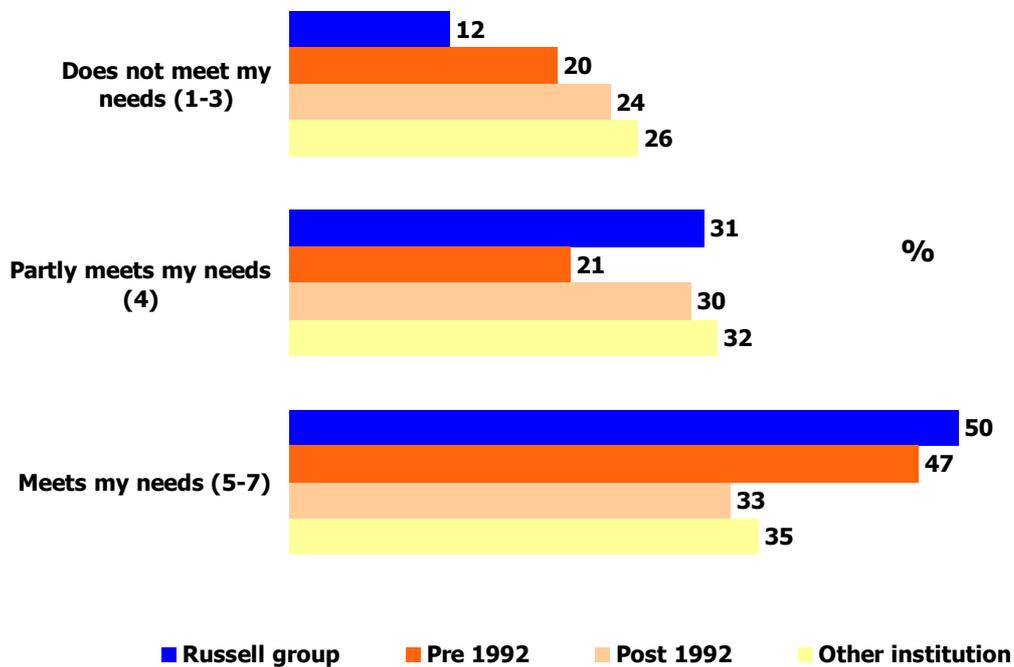
"After this a bunch of us headed down to the careers fair for various reasons. It turned out to be pretty useful this year as I have a plan of what I want to do next summer.

Extract from student blog
Second Year BSc

While these results do not appear to change much when broken down by gender, they do appear influenced by institution type (see chart 56 below). 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.

Chart 56: Institution type influences whether careers advice meets student needs

Q 95. To what extent does the advice provided by your university about careers and future study meet your needs?



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

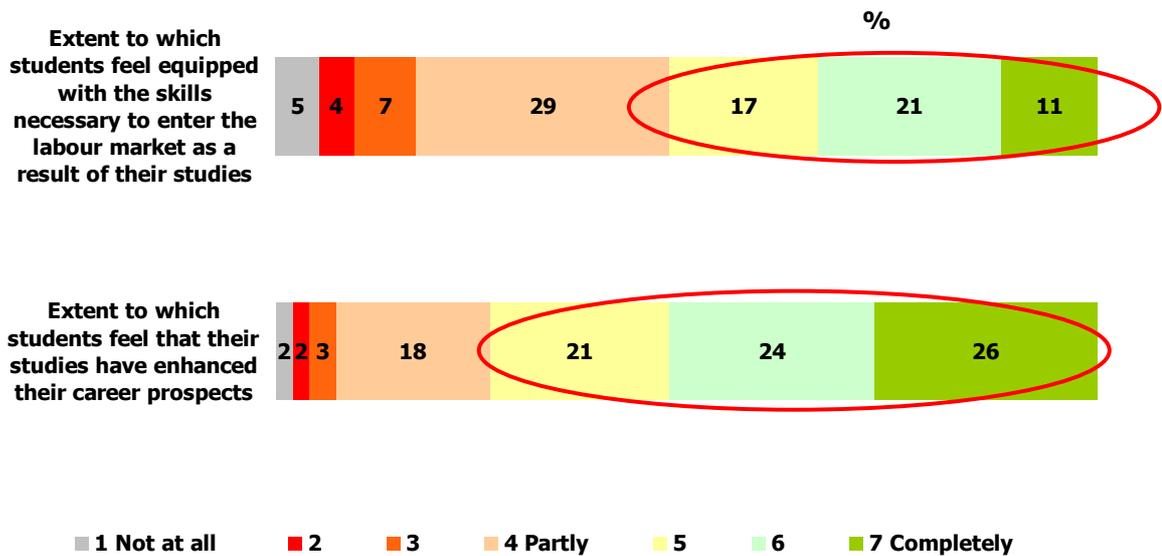
12.3 How students feel their studies have affected future employment

There is a large difference between the number of students that thought that their studies have given them the necessary skills to enter the labour market, 49%, and those that feel that their studies have enhanced their career prospects, 71%.

Chart 57: Large difference between the number of students that feel they have the skills necessary to enter the labour market and the number that feel that their career prospects have been enhanced

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?



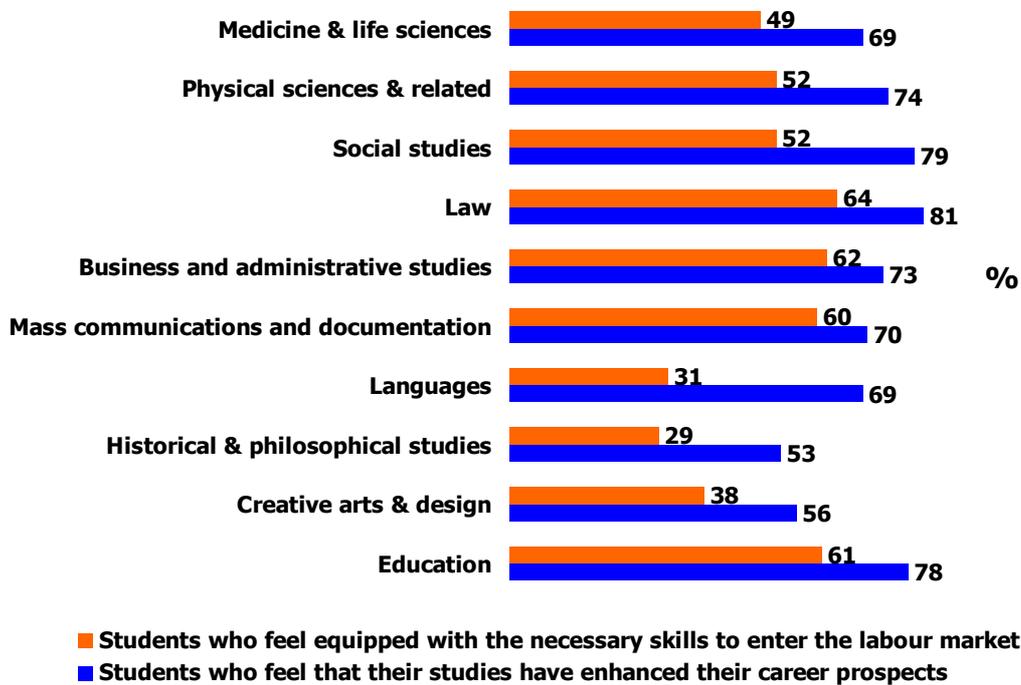
Base: All final-year students (540)

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

Chart 58: Students studying science or vocational degrees more likely to feel equipped for the labour market than those studying arts or humanities

Q 96 Which of the following best describes your plans after your current course of study?

Q 97 To what extent do you feel that your studies have enhanced your career prospects?



Base: All final year students (540)



12.4 How have studies improved students' skills?

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

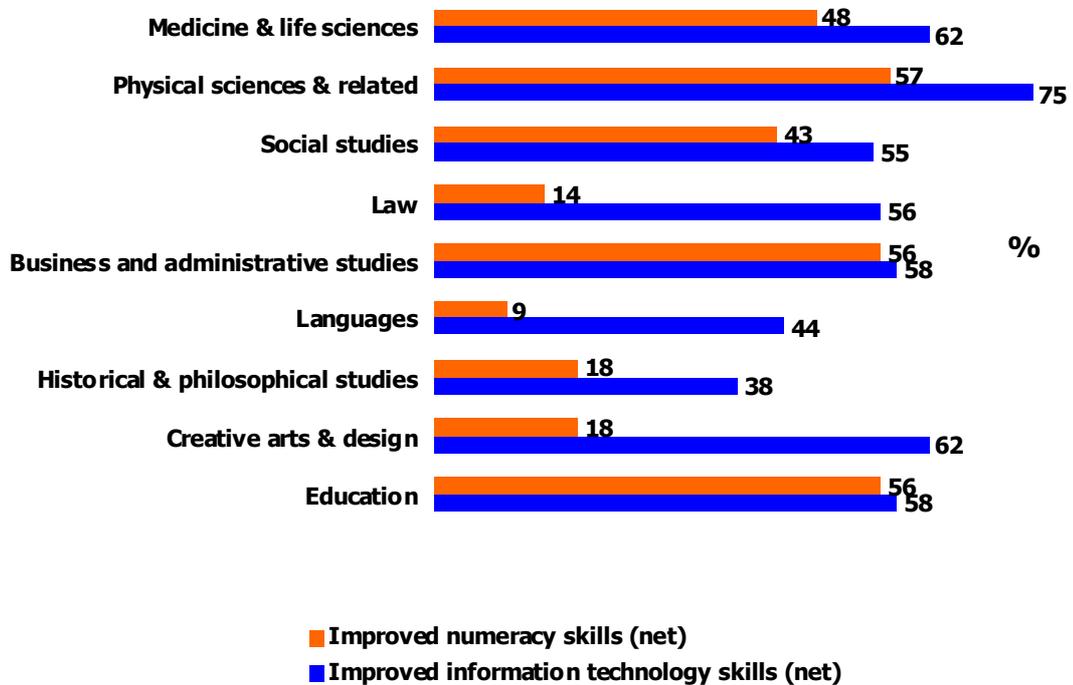
Fewer students feel their studies have improved their numeracy skills have improved

	Communication skills	Numeracy	Use of Information Technology	Independent Study Skills
Improved (net)	74%	41%	61%	80%
Not improved (net)	9%	34%	16%	8%

While these results are not significantly influenced by institution type, a number are influenced by subject area. Both numeracy skills and information technology skills are influenced by subject area (see chart 8 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%, 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 that 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 IT skills have improved and students studying either languages or historical and philosophical studies are less likely.

Chart 59: Influence of subject area on whether students feel that their studies have improved their numeracy and information technology skills

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



Base: All final year students (540)



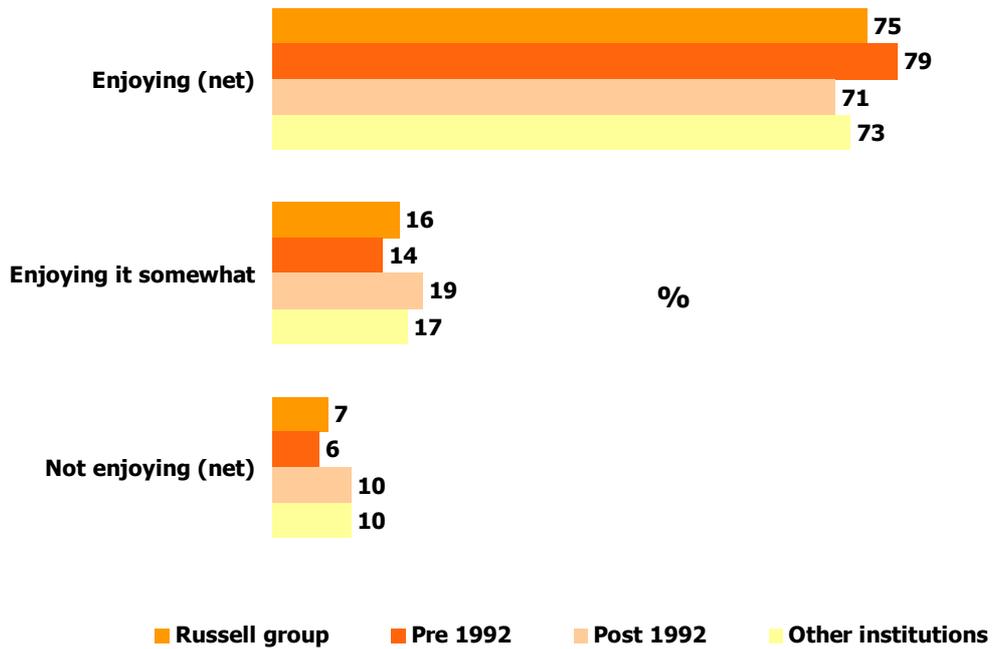
13 Overall feelings about university

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

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



Base: All answering section 12 (2407), Russell Group (599), Pre 1992 (617) Post 1992 (1021), Other institution (169)



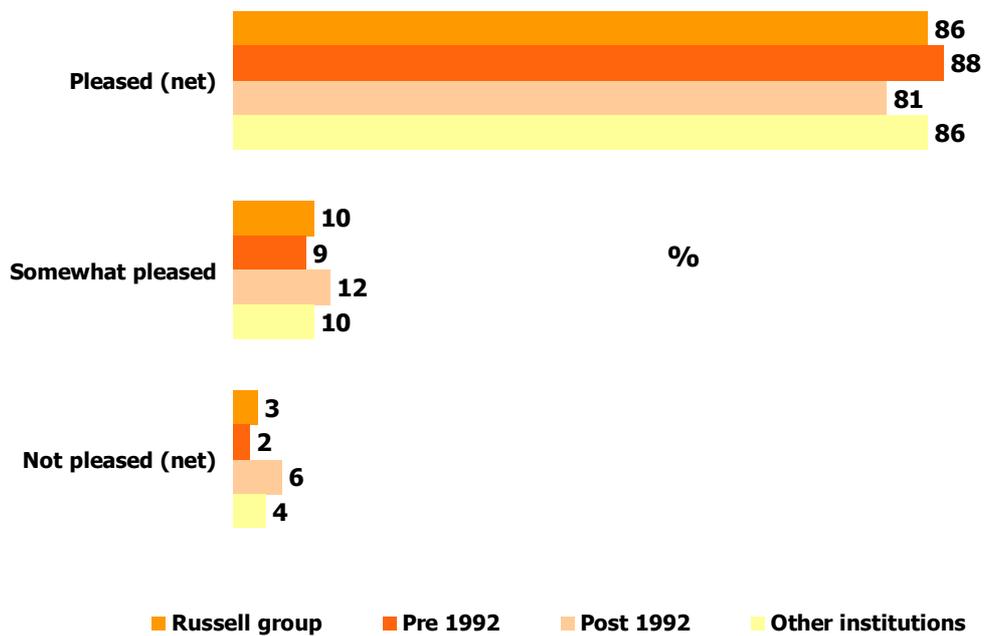
Students that said they were enjoying their university experience were asked what they enjoyed most about university. The main theme to come out of this was the social life and meeting new people, although the learning experience and course content was also often raised. There were no significant differences when crossed with institution type.

In addition, students that said that they were not enjoying their university experience, were then asked why this was the case. From this two main themes can be discerned. 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 students were asked how pleased they were that they had decided to go to university the vast majority, 85%, said they were pleased, with the most of these, 56%, saying that they were extremely pleased. Again, when this is split by institution type while there are some differences, the overall trend is maintained – see chart 61.

Chart 61: Institution types influence on happiness with decision to go to university

Q 103. Overall how pleased are you that you decided to go to university?



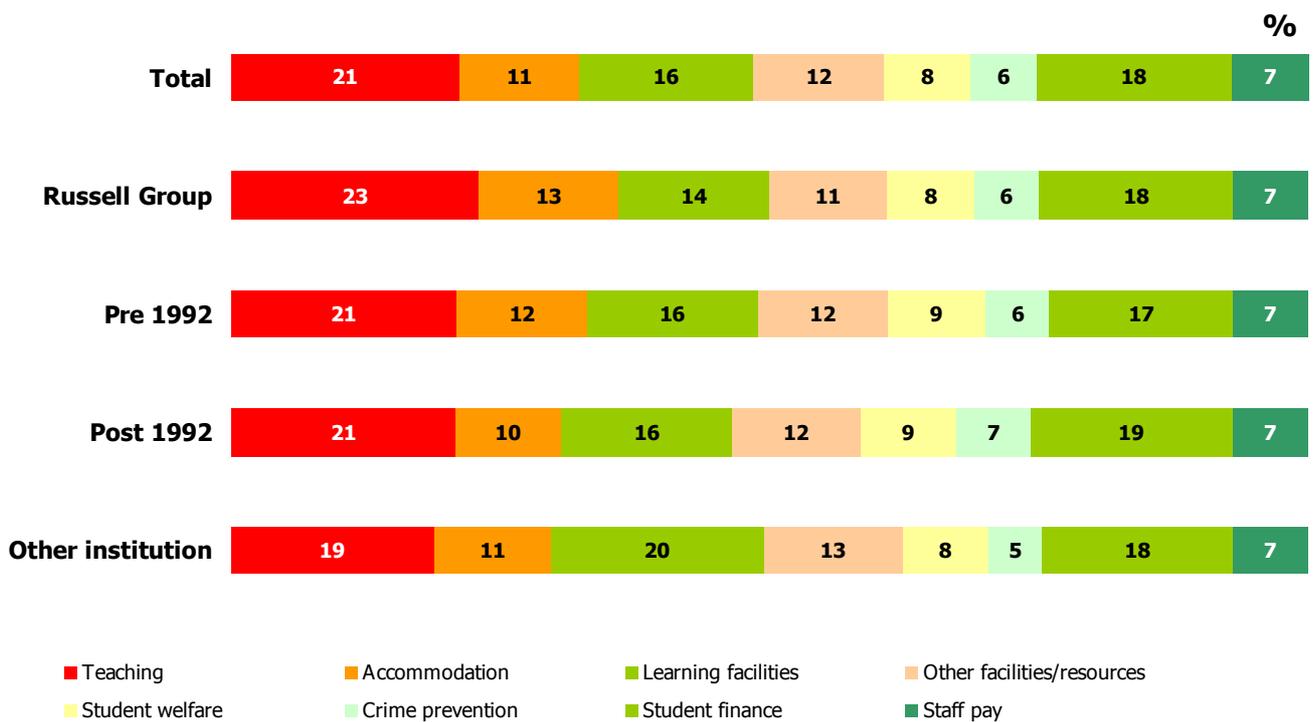
Base: All answering section 12 (2407), Russell Group (599), Pre 1992 (617) Post 1992 (1021), Other institution (169)

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 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



Base: All answering section 12 (2407)

END