

international student experience report

2015/16



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foreword from the activities and opportunities officer

Last year, we were happy and excited to introduce our 'Transforming the International Student Experience at UEA' project at the Students' Union. As an officer at the Union, and being international student myself, I understand the importance of the Students' Union to incorporate how it engages and works with international students into all areas of the organisation. Transforming the international student experience should not only just be the work of the Student Officers, it should also be something that both the University and the Students' Union understand and consider in everything we do. That's why we are producing the International Student Experience report at UEA|SU to understand these issues and how we can address them.

What we are trying to achieve is simple.



We want to make the campus more internationalised and welcoming, and be inclusive of all students and promote a global perspective and positively integrate all students at UEA. Through this report, we want to show a commitment to improve international students' experience at all levels of study, and we will continually seek the input of our international student members and stakeholders.

International students make up almost a third of the students at UEA and currently this group of students is not cohesive. Amongst international students there are a plethora of ethnicities, nationalities and religions. Bearing this in mind, creating a sense of cohesion amongst international students will not be easy, but as long as we remain conscious of their diversity and follow the recommendations in this report, we are confident that we will succeed in improving our international students' experience by working with students and accommodating their needs. I believe through the recommendations established throughout this report, we will work towards offering a better experience for international students at UEA.

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activities and opportunities officer

foreword from the international officer

In the 2014 Undergraduate Experience Report, UEA students asked us to produce a report focusing on the International Student Experience at UEA, looking into the areas where international students face challenges and establishing how these can be addressed.

International students make up 26 per cent of the student population here at UEA, and they are an invaluable contribution to the university experience, bringing cultural diversity to campus and allowing students to explore and embrace other cultures from all over the world. These are some of the many reasons why it is essential that we strive to maintain an excellent student experience for international students at UEA.

Here at the Union, we have been working hard to reflect the wide demographic of students that we represent and support and international students are no exception. This year, we have organised a range of events, activities and demonstrations with our international students in mind, such as our multicultural Global SU event or the student walkout on the International Day of Solidarity to show support for refugees and migrants.

As the number of international students coming to the university grows each year, it is increasingly important to



understand the significance of the diversity of the student population. There are a number of issues, ranging from culture shock and homesickness to language barriers and inclusion and integration, that affect international students in very particular ways and it is important to understand how their experiences and satisfaction might differ from those coming to UEA from within the UK.

I hope that this International Student Experience Report meets the expectations of the students who asked us to produce it and allows you to further understand the barriers that exist within the international student experience. I also hope that it provides a framework that can help UEA and the Union strive towards providing a world-class experience for international students.

ting ni
international officer

introduction

1. This report was prompted by the Undergraduate Student Experience Report 2014, where UEA students asked the university to produce a report on the International Student Experience here at UEA, and it forms part of the Students' Union's Internationalisation Strategy¹. Throughout this report, the term "international student" refers to students at UEA who are from outside of the UK. International students are also categorised according to whether or not they are from the European Union (excluding the UK). Here, the terms "EU" and "non-EU" international student shall be used.

2. This report was prepared and authored by the Activities and Opportunities Officer, the International Officer, and a Research Assistant in the Campaigns and Policy Department at UEA|SU. It brings together several years of the Union's research into student experience here at UEA.

3. This report draws upon a large range of data from the UEA|SU Annual Student Survey (SU ASS) from 2015 and 2016, the National Student Survey (NSS) 2015, the International Student Assembly, the UEA|SU The Honesty Project Survey (THPS) 2015, the UEA|SU International Students: Arriving and Leaving UEA Survey (ISALS) 2015, UEA Student Facts and Figures 2015/16, UEA|SU Advice Centre cases, Dean of Students cases, and student consultations to try to build the most accurate picture of the International Student Experience here at UEA.

4. Data from the Student Union's Annual Student Survey 2015, which received 555 responses from international students, the Student Union's Annual Student Survey 2016, which received 335 responses from international students, the National Student Survey, which received 400 responses from undergraduate international students, and the Student Union's The Honesty Project 2015 were key sources of evidence. We recognise that there are certain limitations in this sample of data, as it may not be representative of the entire international student population at the University. However, this report is one of the first steps in a sustained strategy to improve the International Student Experience at UEA, and we believe that we will gain additional feedback from a wider range of international students throughout this strategy's development and implementation.

¹ See <http://www.ueastudent.com/main-menu/opportunities/global-su/internationalisation-strategy>.

5. We have focused on four big issues that emerged from the data in this report. While these issues are not exhaustive, and may not speak to the experience of every international student here at UEA, we felt that these issues in particular were in need of closer attention and scrutiny.

6. These issues have been identified as particular areas of the International Student Experience where certain improvements and enhancements can be made. This report makes nine recommendations for the Students' Union and University to implement to improve the experience of international students.

five themes:

international student profile

academic support

teaching and organisation

welfare and wellbeing

community, inclusion and engagement

international student profile

Headcount and Domicile

FIGURE 1A: Total UEA Student Headcount by Domicile

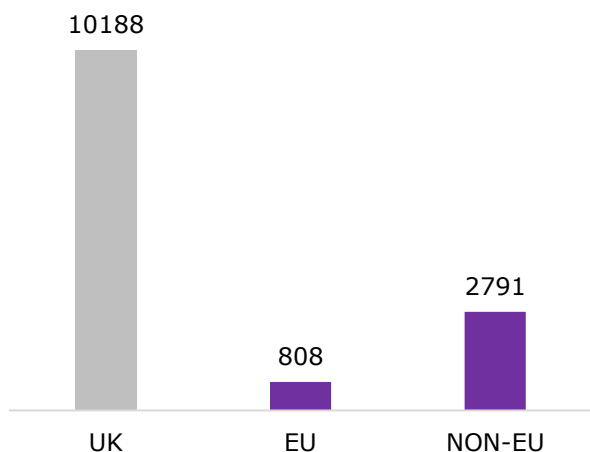
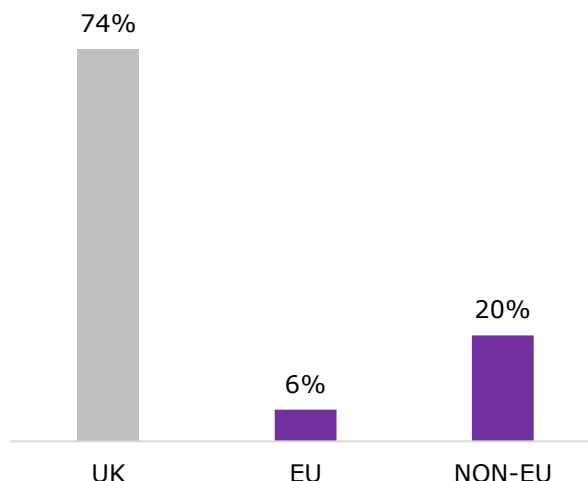
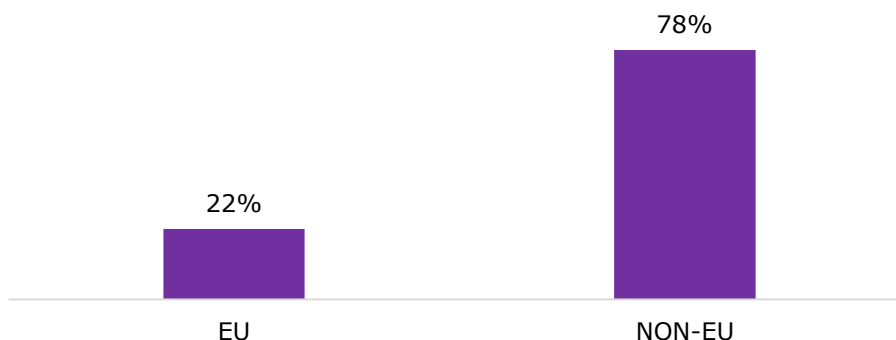


FIGURE 1B: Total UEA Student Population by Domicile (%)



As of 2015/16, 10,188 students (74 per cent of the total student population at UEA) are categorised as UK students, and 3,599 students (26 per cent of the total student population) are categorised in turn as “international students”. 808 students (6 per cent of the total student population) are EU (non-UK) students, and the remaining 2791 students (20 per cent of the total student population) are non-EU students².

FIGURE 2: International Student Population by Domicile (%)

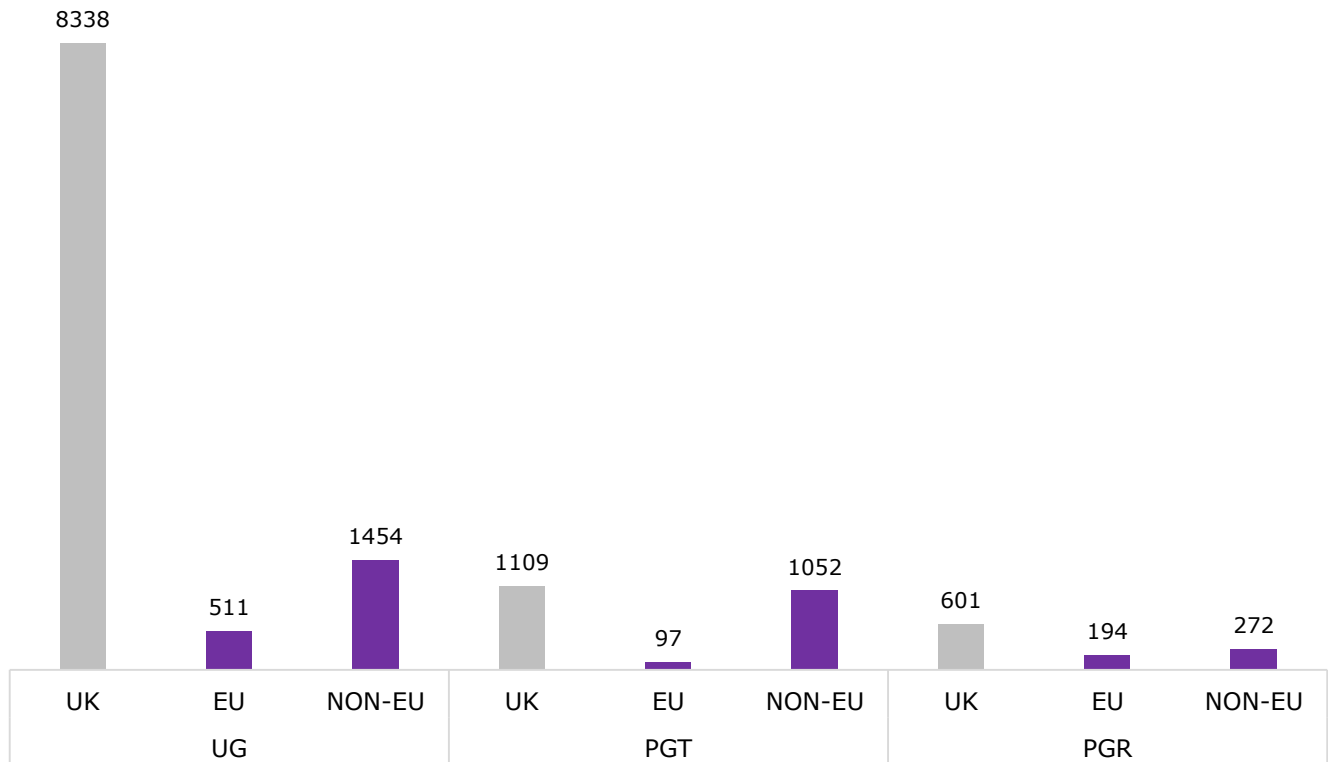


22 per cent of international students at UEA are EU students, and the remaining 78 per cent of international students are non-EU.

² These figures do not include students classified under their Fee Profile as “EU Exchange”, “Overseas Exchange”, “Overseas Visitor”, and “Other”. See *UEA Student Facts and Figures 2015/16* for more information.

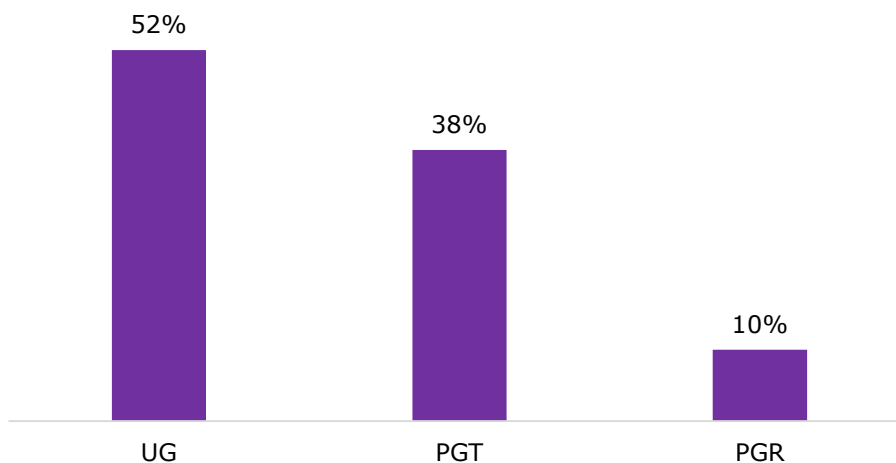
Level of Study

FIGURE 3: Student Headcount by Domicile and Level of Study



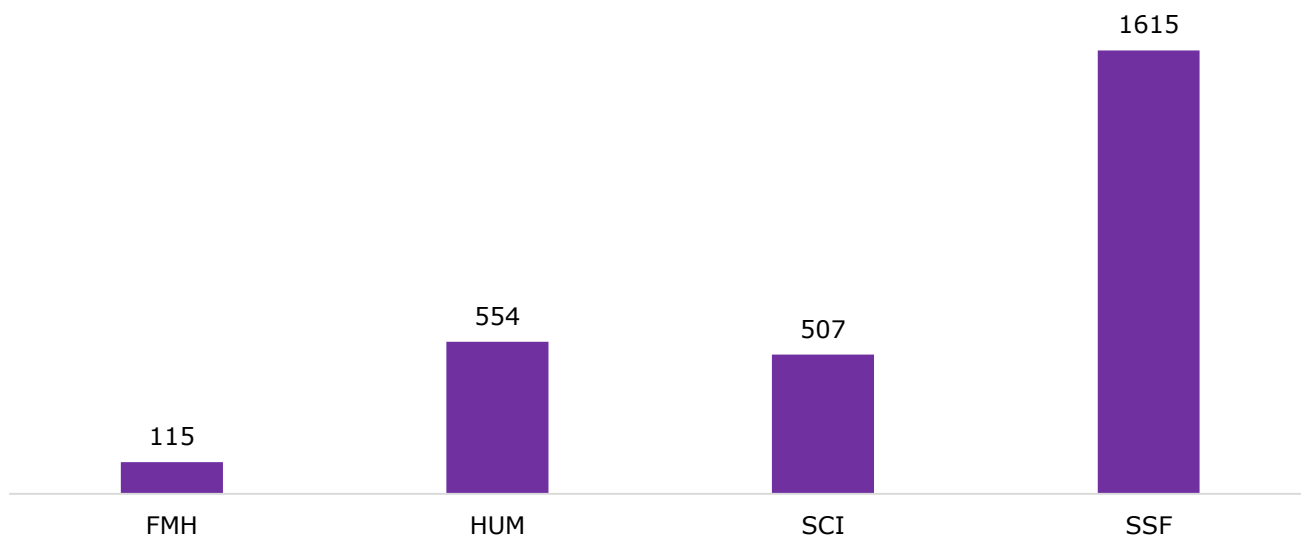
1,965 (52 per cent) of international students at UEA are undergraduate students (UG), 1,149 (38 per cent) are postgraduate taught (PGT), and the remaining 466 (10 per cent) are postgraduate research (PGR).

FIGURE 4: International Students' Level of Study (%)



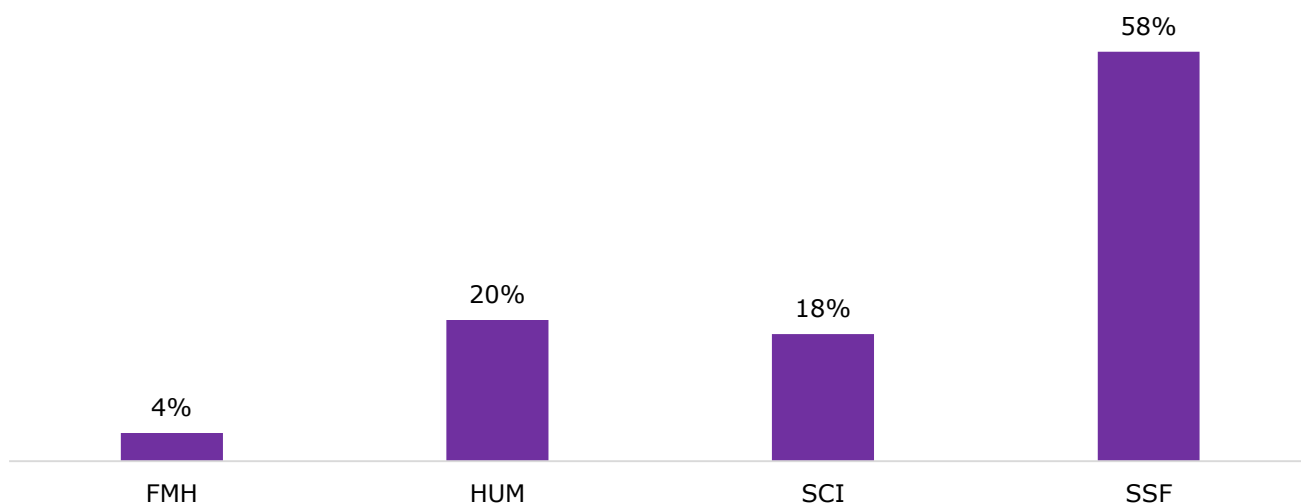
Faculty

FIGURE 5A: Headcount of International Students by Faculty



The Faculty of Social Sciences (SSF) has the highest number of international students across the faculties, at 1,615 international students. This figure accounts for 58 per cent of the total number of international students at UEA. This is followed by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (HUM), which has the second-highest number of international students, at 554, hosting 20 per cent of the total number of international students. The Faculty of Science (SCI) has 507 international students, 18 per cent of the total number of international students, and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMH) has 115 international students, the remaining 4 per cent of the total number of international students at the University.

FIGURE 5B: International Student Population by Faculty (%)



Protected Characteristics

FIGURE 6A: International Student Protected Characteristics Headcount

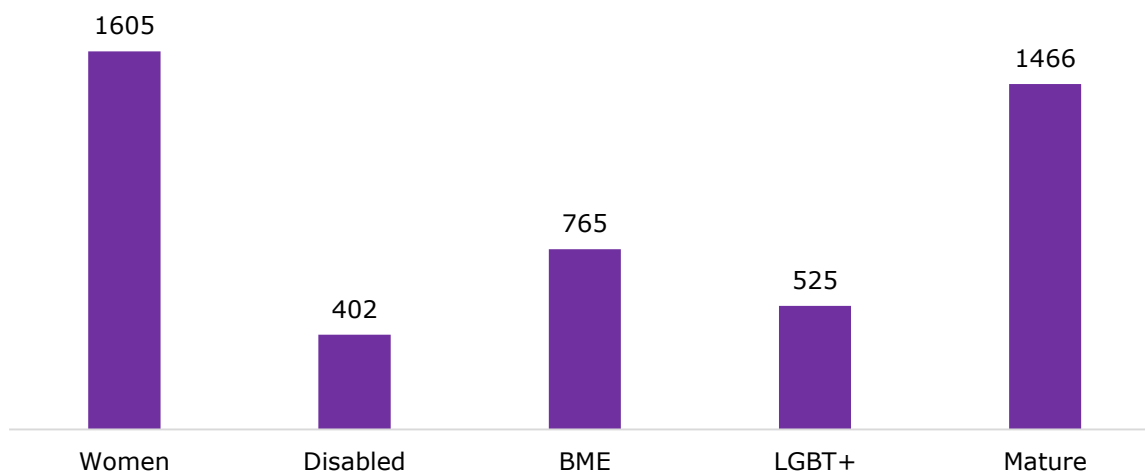
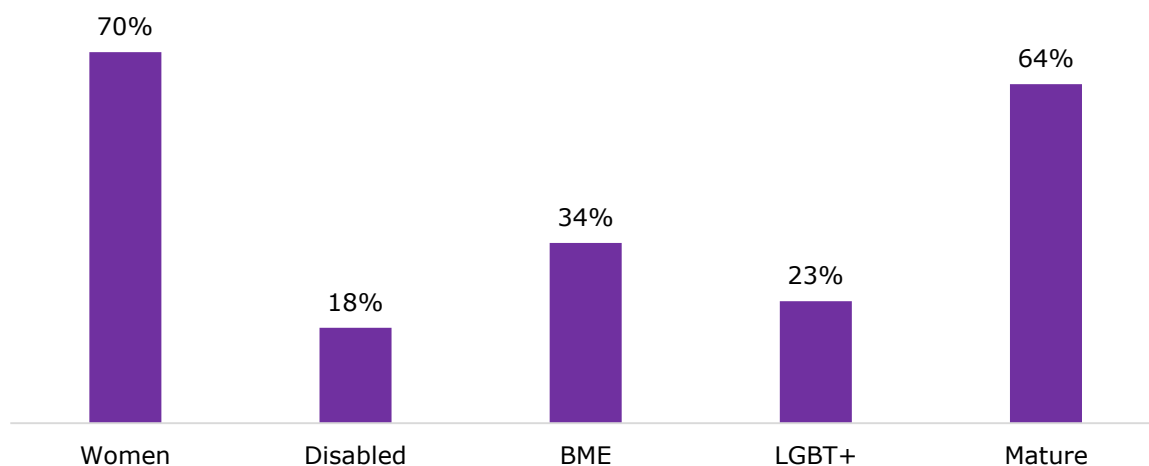


FIGURE 6B: International Student Population with Protected Characteristics (%)



The figures above are from the Students' Union's website registration data 2015/16 related to all of our current members who identified themselves as an "international student" upon registration. The protected characteristic figures are from international students' self-identified characteristics upon website registration. These figures indicate that 70 per cent of the international students at UEA are women, 18 per cent have a disability, 34 per cent are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, 23 per cent identify as LGBT+, and 64 per cent identify as mature students³.

³ While UEA|SU define a mature student as a first undergraduate student over the age of 21 upon entry, the figure listed here is according to international students' self-definition as a "mature student" during website registration, rather than an automated categorisation according to UEA|SU's definition. We recognise that this is a limitation of the data.

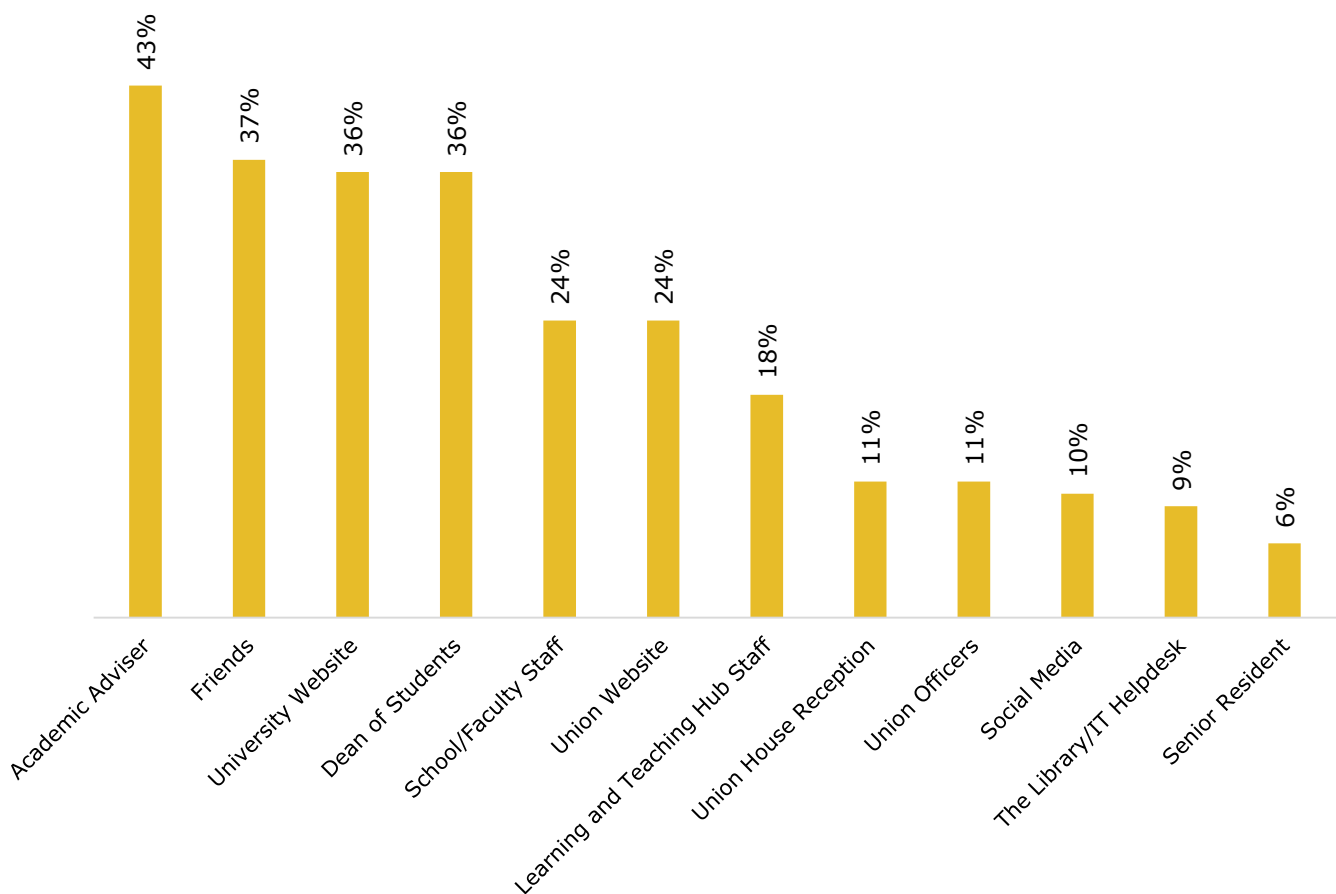
academic support

According to UEA's Advising Policy for UG and PGT students⁴, the Advising System aims to:

"...support students in achieving their academic and personal development and prepare students for graduate employment or further study by offering academic, professional and personal advice, guidance and support".

Academic support, particularly from students' Academic Advisers, Supervisors or Supervisory Team, is integral to a student's success, achievement, and personal and professional development throughout their studies. For international students settling into life in the UK, Advisers and Supervisors can be a crucial point-of-call in helping them adjust to the University environment. With international students facing a number of problems affecting their student experience, such as loneliness, culture shock and language barriers, it is increasingly important that UEA ensure that academic support is of the highest and most consistent standard for international students.

FIGURE 7: Where would you be most likely to look for information about help and advice? (SU ASS 2015)



⁴ See <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching/staff/advising>.

Fortunately, international students who responded to our Annual Student Survey 2015 listed their Academic Adviser as someone they would be most likely to go to for information about help and advice. 43 per cent of the international student respondents said that they were most likely to go to their Academic Adviser for help and advice, followed by their friends (at 37 per cent), the University website (at 36 per cent), the Dean of Students (at 36 per cent), and School or Faculty Staff (at 24 per cent). Further, in qualitative feedback from NSS 2015, a number of international students gave extremely positive feedback about their Academic Advisers. For instance, the international student below highlighted how their “*supervisor is really patient and excellent*”, explaining how their Academic Adviser shares a range of knowledge, expertise, and experience with her Advisees, which ultimately “*really helped*” the international student below.

“My supervisor is really patient and excellent! She offered me lots of useful background knowledge and news related to my project. And she also talked her own experience about how to choose the academic way in the future and why she wanted to be a scientist. That’s really helped me a lot.” (NSS 2015⁵)

International students also commended the support of their Academic Adviser “*during challenging times*”, and noted that their Advisers are “*really nice*” and have “*really helped me*”.

“I had great support from my academic adviser and she replied to emails and concerns within a reasonable time frame. I felt she support me as person rather than as just a student especially during challenging times.” (NSS 2015)

“My academic advisor was really nice, she really helped me. Getting a good academic advisor really helped me.” (NSS 2015)

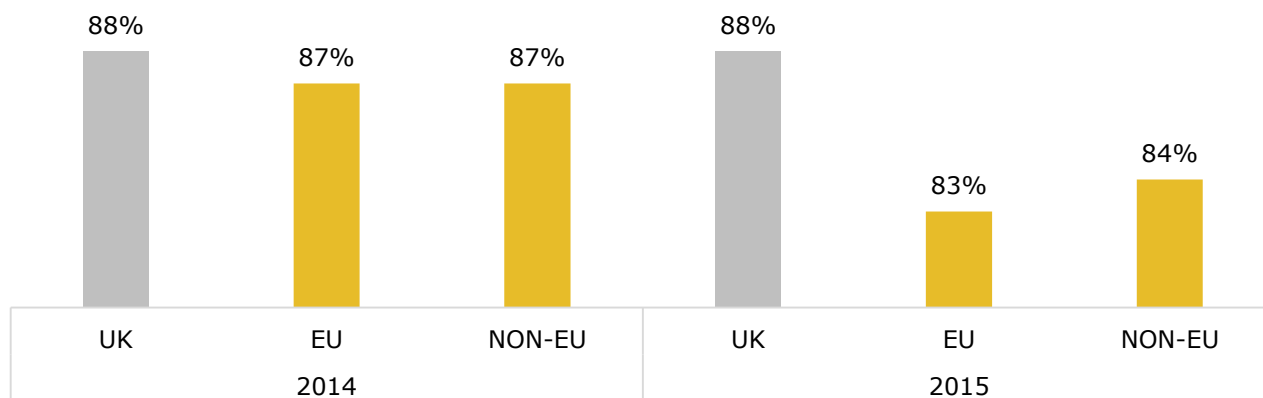
As the international student below highlighted, “*a close relationship with staff*”, including one’s Academic Adviser, allows students to “*access support and assistance much faster*”. This element of academic support may be particularly beneficial to international students, as Academic Advisers and Supervisors can signpost international students to various support services across the University that may be of additional help, support, and assistance to them.

“A close relationship with staff allows one to access support and assistance much faster.” (NSS 2015)

⁵ Where an international student’s School of Study is not listed, this data was not available from Ipsos MORI. We suspect that this may be due to the variation in NSS response rates across the different Schools of Study, as student comments are only made available to us at the 10 response threshold.

However, quantitative data from the National Student Survey suggests that undergraduate international students' satisfaction with academic support is slightly lower than that of undergraduate students at UEA from the UK. For instance, in the NSS 2015, UK students' satisfaction with academic support was 88 per cent, and EU and non-EU students' was 87 per cent. However, in 2015, UK students' satisfaction remained at 88 per cent, while EU students' dropped by 5 per cent to 83 per cent, and non-EU students dropped by 3 per cent to 84 per cent. The qualitative feedback from international students detailed in this section of report may offer further insight as to why this may be the case. Although, considering the stark contrast between UK and international students' satisfaction with academic support in more specific cases, such as international students on Medicine courses (see page 16), these variations between UK, EU, and non-EU students between 2014 and 2015 are statistically quite small. Further, the percentages listed in Figure 8 are all higher than the NSS 2015 sector-wide average of 82 per cent student satisfaction across the UK. Thus, while it is important to consider the factors which may have contributed to the slight decrease in international student satisfaction with academic support between 2014 and 2015, the decrease is nevertheless statistically small, and even the lowest percentage of 83 per cent satisfaction situates the University above the sector-wide average.

FIGURE 8: UG student satisfaction with academic support by domicile (NSS 2015 Q10-12)



However, a number of international students at UEA notably did report experiencing problems or difficulties in regards to their Academic Advisers and Supervisors. For example, some reported that their advisers were “*not friendly or helpful*”, and “*unreachable*” or difficult to contact, despite UEA’s Advising Policy stating that Advisers are “*expected to respond within 48 hours*”. Further, one international student highlighted that Advisers “*generally do not email students to check on their progress so far*”, even though policy dictates that Advisers “*will invite their advisees to at least three meetings each year*”.

“Original academic advisor was horrible. He was inconsiderate and massively unhelpful. Then, when I went to change, I got told off for saying he was unhelpful. Reality is I could've said a lot worse.” (NSS 2015)

While these more negative experiences of academic support may not be representative of the experience of all international students, they are nevertheless important to consider, as they are instrumental to identifying potential areas for improvement within the Academic Advising system, and to understanding how the system can cater more specifically to the needs of international students in the future. For instance, several weaknesses within international students' experiences of academic support emerged in relation to joint and triple-honours, Medicine, and Supervisors at postgraduate research level in particular.

Joint and Triple Honours between ECO and PPL

Students in the School of Economics studying joint-honours or triple-honours split between the School of Economics and the School of Politics, Philosophy and Language and Communication Studies expressed how the joint-honours and triple-honours system was particularly detrimental to their experience of academic support. These students highlighted how, due to the cross-disciplinary nature of their studies, they were often undermined by having an Academic Adviser in one of the two Schools when they felt more closely aligned with the other. They highlighted how this made their experience of their studies “*less stimulating*”, and often did not know who to approach if they “*had a problem*”.

“It was difficult to know whom to turn to when I had a problem, as my advisor was only from ECO, and not [PPL].” (ECO NSS 2015)

“Having an advisor who is an economist when you yourself identify more as a politics or a philosophy student makes your main link to the university institution less stimulating.” (ECO NSS 2015)

Medicine

Given the demands, duration and intensity of Medicine degrees, it is crucial that the Advising System is of the highest possible standard to ensure that international students studying Medicine are adequately supported throughout their studies. Academic Advisers in MED should abide by UEA's Advising Policy and invite their advisees to at least three or, if needed, more meetings each year. Further, as Medicine degrees involve mandatory clinical placements away from the University, Advisers should also offer their support through alternative methods of

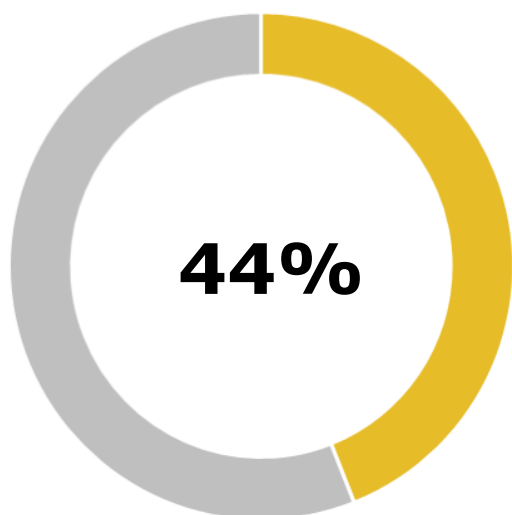
communication, such as email, telephone and Skype, while their advisees are on placement.

Evidence suggests, however, that this is not the case. The responses of international MED students to the NSS 2015 highlighted that they were significantly less satisfied with the academic advice and support they received throughout their studies than the rest of the total student population at UEA. One student in particular highlighted that they felt their Adviser was only meeting with them to fulfil the conditions of the UEA Advising Policy, rather than offering genuinely helpful support to their advisees.

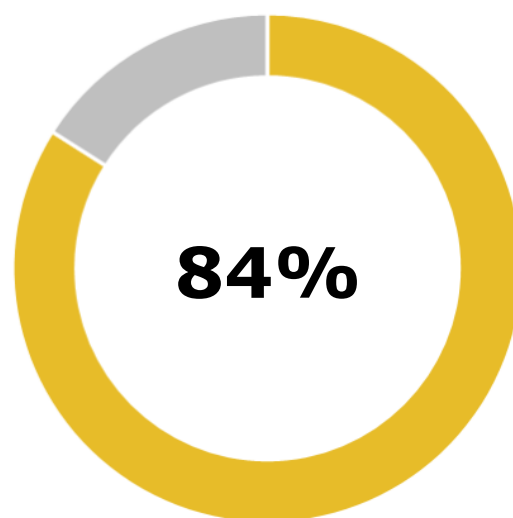
“There is no support provided to students who need it. There is no one to turn to for academic advice. The advisors simply meet with you to check list: oh yes, I've met this student. There is no accountability.” (MED NSS 2015)

NSS 2015 Q10: “I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.”

% of International MED Students who agreed



% of all UEA Students (including UK) who agreed



Postgraduate Research Supervisors

The role of a PGR student’s supervisory team is “collectively to provide candidates for research degrees with academic and pastoral guidance as they pursue advanced study and research”⁶, yet several PGR international students reported encountering

⁶ See page 16 of UEA’s Code of Practice for Research Degrees 2015-16.

difficulties with the academic support they received from their supervisors. For example, the student below highlighted how tensions between their two supervisors had shattered their confidence and left them feeling increasingly vulnerable and isolated.

“Another issue that has affected my performance and sense of well-being is the anxiety of dealing with 2 supervisors who do not like each other and will not communicate with one another. As a result, I get conflicting information/advice. I was unsuccessful in my upgrade the first time around because of this. That shattered my confidence. My 'confidential' conversation with the PGR director about this tenuous arrangement ended up not being very confidential as both supervisors were approached, despite my requesting confidentiality. It has resulted in my feeling vulnerable and not having anyone to talk to about my concerns.” (SU THPS

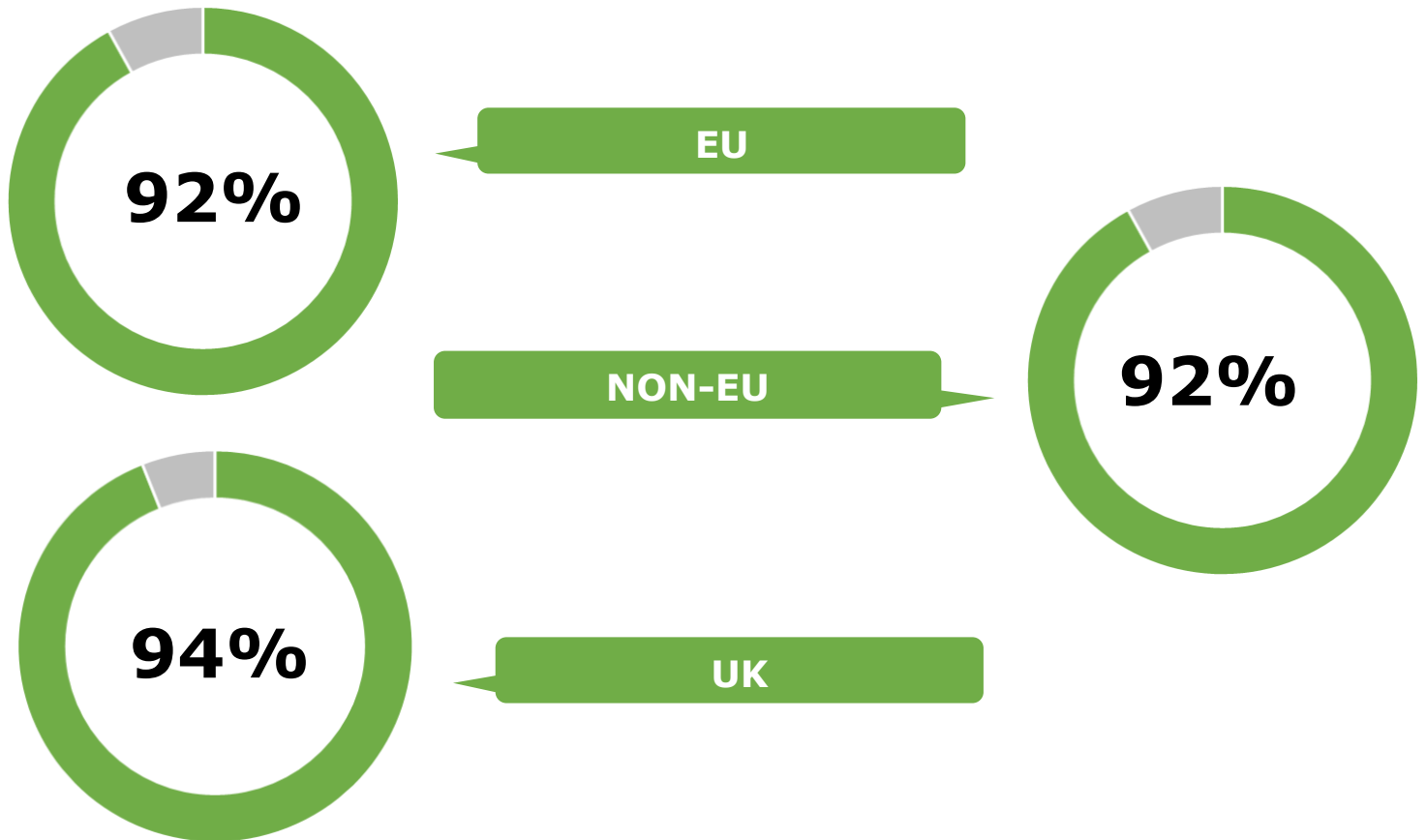
2015)

recommendations

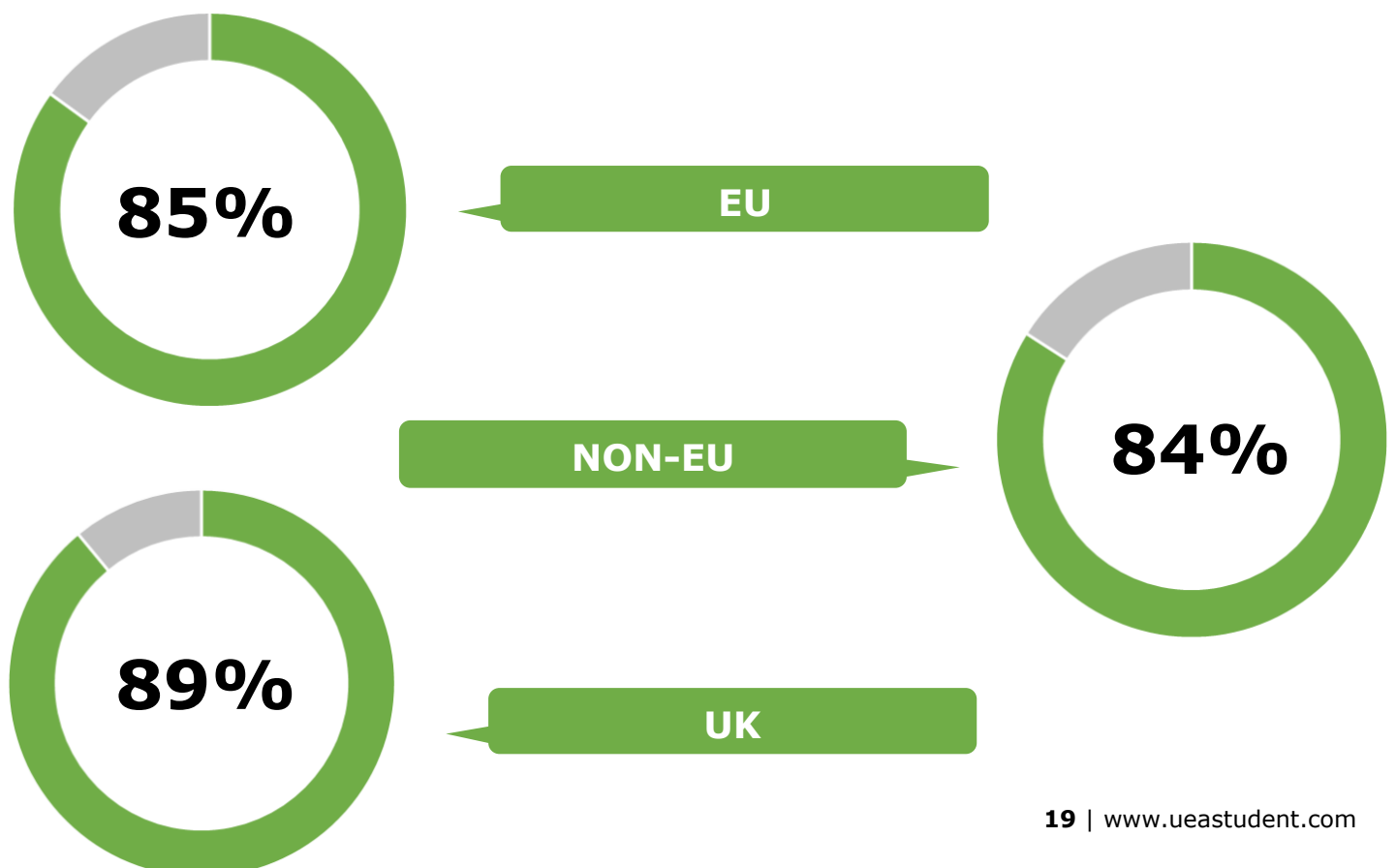
1. We recommend that the University ensure that Academic Advisers are using feedback, logging, and reporting systems to monitor their meetings with Advisees. Further, UEA need to ensure that Senior Advisers and Deputy Senior Advisers have the necessary means to adequately oversee the operation of the Advising System in their respective School of Study.
2. At present, mandatory training for all Academic Advisers is on a triennial basis. We believe that the University needs to ensure that all Academic Advisers and Supervisors have completed mandatory training before they are allowed to begin acting in an advisory role, and we recommend that the University organise a mandatory training session in the next academic year (2016/17). Further, we believe that the University should extend the training to include the following components: Equality and Diversity training, mental health training, student welfare training, and cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity training. We believe that this training will better prepare Academic Advisers and Supervisors, particularly in Schools of Study with a high international student concentration, to accommodate the specific needs of international students highlighted throughout this report.
3. We recommend that, for a period of three years, the University form a subgroup of the Student Experience Committee to supervise, monitor, and review the implementation of the new Academic Adviser structure.

teaching and organisation

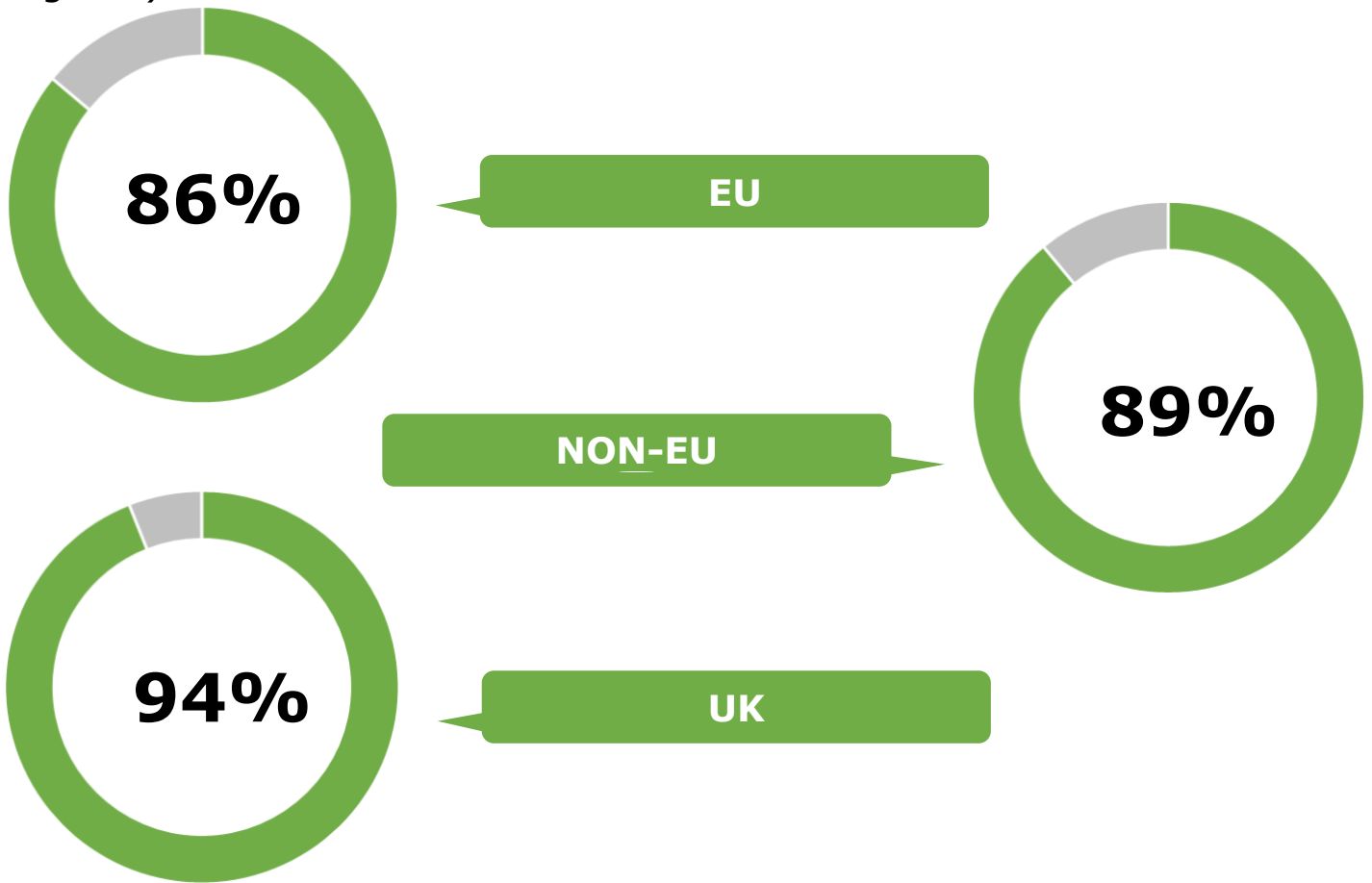
NSS 2015 Q1: "Staff are good at explaining things." (% Agreed)



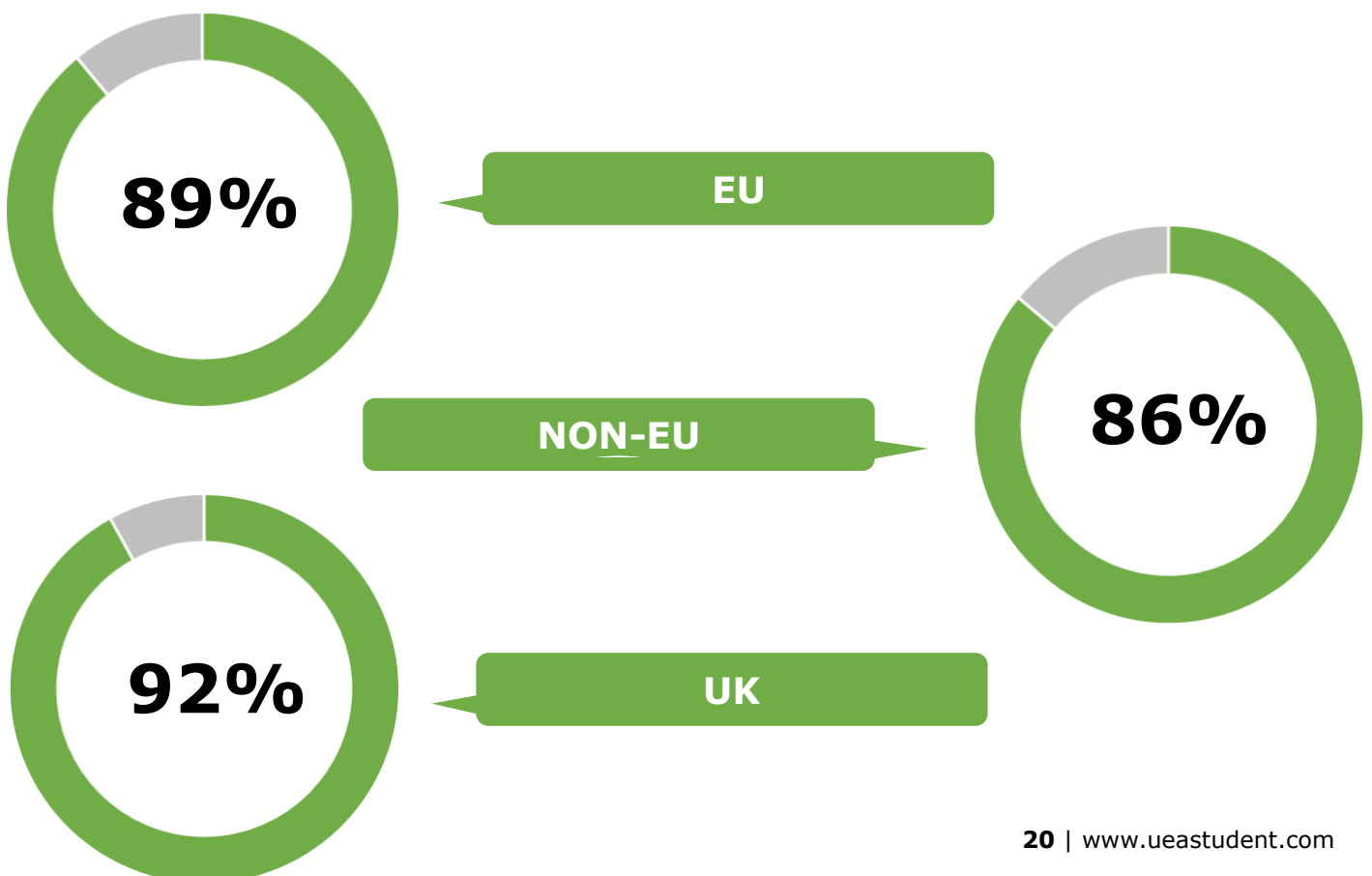
NSS 2015 Q2: "Staff have made the subject interesting." (% Agreed)



NSS 2015 Q3: "Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching." (% Agreed)



NSS 2015 Q4: "The course is intellectually stimulating." (% Agreed)



Approachability

"UEA has brilliant staff that supported me through my studies. There is a unique sense of camaraderie and respect between the staff & students and it is a pleasure to learn from these professionals. They truly consider our opinions valid and encourage independent thinking." (PHA NSS 2015)

A number of international students, particularly undergraduate international students who responded to the National Student Survey 2015, spoke positively about how approachable their lecturers are, emphasising that *"it is a pleasure to learn from these professionals"*, who *"truly consider our opinions valid and encourage independent thinking"*.

"Most teachers are nice and respect both national and international students, explain things well and give good advice about study." (NSS 2015)

For instance, the international student above mentioned how most of their teachers are nice, provide helpful advice about studying to their students, and are respectful to both *"national and international students"*.

"Lecturers are generally very good at promptly replying to emails and making the time to meet with you during working hours. This has help create a friendly rapport between students and academic staff." (ECO NSS 2015)

Further, another student highlighted how lecturers are *"generally very good at promptly replying to emails and making the time to meet with you during working hours"*. This is particularly reassuring, given some of the more negative feedback in relation to Academic Advisers being particularly difficult to contact (see page 14), as lecturers can provide an alternative avenue of academic support for international students who may be struggling with particular elements of their course. Further, the student above added that the approachability of their lecturers, and their willingness to make time for their students, has developed *"a friendly rapport between students and academic staff"*.

"Brilliant staff, always here when you need help. They are willing to spend time explaining things to you." (PHA NSS 2015)

"I like our open door policy as it makes me feel they are always here to help me." (PHA NSS 2015)

Likewise, the students above commended the *"brilliant staff"* at the University, who are *"always here when you need help"*, and added that academic staff are *"willing to spend time explaining things to you"*. Further, the open door policy adopted by many teaching staff made one of the international students above feel reassured that *"they*

are always here to help me". Academic staffs' willingness to offer this kind of additional support to their students outside of contact hours may be particularly beneficial to international students, as, as the data across this report suggests, certain barriers within their experience (such as language barriers or teaching speed) may affect the rate and ease at which they can follow the content within contact hours. Thus, the supplementary support that academic staff are more than willing to offer, is instrumental to closing these participation and comprehension gaps that may exist between UK students and international students – particularly those who do not have English as their first language.

Enthusiasm

"Very enthusiastic staff that was able to successfully convey their love [for] their subject. Stimulating course contents and assessment that greatly helped improve a number of skills, notably written & oral communication and time-management." (PPL NSS 2015)

International students also spoke favourably of the *"enthusiastic and inspiring teachers"* at the University, and this emerged as one of the most positive and consistent areas of feedback about teaching from international students.

"My lecturers and professor are so passionate about their areas. Most of them are nice, friendly and approachable. [...] Furthermore, the teaching is excellent. We have different styles of teaching to teach us fundamental knowledge and also build up our professional skills. Thus, I feel well prepared to become a pre-registration pharmacist." (PHA NSS 2015)

For example, the international pharmacy student above highlighted how the passion and enthusiasm of their lecturers, combined with a diverse and varied range of teaching styles and knowledge, made them feel *"well prepared"* as they entered the beginning of their professional career as a pre-registration Pharmacist.

"The teaching staff are incredibly passionate and enthusiastic, which has encouraged me to develop a deeper interest and understanding in particular subject areas. They are eager to help and I've never felt like I'm left by myself to struggle. The material covered was varied and interesting. The format of the course is well thought out, providing a smooth progression between the years." (NSS 2015)

Further, another international student commended the *"incredibly passionate and enthusiastic"* teaching staff at the University, adding that this passion and enthusiasm has encouraged them personally to *"develop a deeper interest and understanding in particular subject areas"*. Further, they added that the teaching staff are always eager to help and support their students which, as mentioned

earlier, can be particularly beneficial to international students who may need supplementary academic support.

"Some lecturers are extremely passionate about their subject which definitely makes the subject more interesting. I've had some of the best lecturers for the most uninteresting sounding courses which has made the course a whole lot better." (NBS NSS 2015)

"Some staff members definitely made some modules more interesting. These were those who shared their experiences with the particular subject, this made the lecturers more "human" as they shared something personal; thus making lectures more interesting, entertaining and certainly more interactive. This helped students become more involved and focused in the lectures." (NBS NSS 2015)

Two international students from the Norwich Business School, which has a particularly high concentration of international students, described how the passion, enthusiasm, and personalised teaching style of several of their lecturers within the School of Study had made even *"the most uninteresting sounding courses"* lively, interesting and engaging for their students. One of these students added that this has ultimately *"helped students become more involved and focused in the lectures"*.

Teaching Speed

"Teaching material is good enough but goes through them too fast, overall can be a bit slower." (NBS NSS 2015)

Teaching speed was cited as an issue by numerous international students. As many international students may encounter difficulties with language barriers and communication (see page 40), the speed at which lecturers go through the content during contact hours can make it difficult for international students who do not have English as their first language to follow the teaching material, and they may subsequently fall behind. International students spoke of their lectures being too *"rushed"* and not detailed enough, mentioning how this often prevented them from being able to fully develop their understanding of the subject.

"Some lecturers are not good at delivering and interpreting an understandable lecture. Really need to be changed." (NBS NSS 2015)

Lecturers ought to be more aware of the pace at which they are speaking and going through their teaching material, making an effort to go through the content at a slower pace to enable international students who do not have English as their first language to follow their teaching material. One international student suggested that, in order to make their lectures easier for students without English as their first

language to understand – particularly in large classes (see below) – lecturers should utilise room equipment in lecture theatres, such as microphones, as this would make their presentations louder and thus clearer to students who don't have English as their first language.

"Some lecturers are also not loud and clear enough, there's microphones that they can use so would be great if they utilise the room equipment."

(NSS 2015)

Moreover, another international student went beyond this suggestion and argued that UEA should instead record teaching material, through either audio or audio-visual recordings – a process known as "lecture capture" – and made available upon request to students in online formats for their independent private study. Not only would this be of benefit to students who do not have English as their first language, as it would allow them to be in more control of their learning experience and give them the opportunity to go through the teaching material at a pace more suitable to their individual needs, but it would also be of benefit to students with particular disabilities requiring reasonable adjustments under The Equality Act 2010, whose disability may affect their attendance, concentration, participation and capacity for note-taking during contact hours. In addition, these recordings could also be made available to all students during certain periods for use as a study aid for review and revision. Thus, digitally recording lectures and group-based learning and teaching activities would be of benefit not only to international students, but to a diverse range of students across the University.

"The lectures can be made concise and straight to the point (40 minutes lecture shouldn't contain over 40 Slides or excess material. All lectures should be recorded and be put on BB, iTunes U, podcast like other leading universities." (PHA NSS 2015)

Several universities across the UK, such as the University of Manchester or the University of Winchester, have already successfully implemented systems whereby lectures and group-based teaching and learning activities are digitally recorded and distributed to the student population online for private study. UEA should seek to implement similar systems, given how advantageous digitally recording teaching materials can be for a range of student groups.

Class Size and Student Intake

With the student population at UEA steadily increasing, it comes as no surprise that international students highlight class size as an issue at UEA. Students mentioned how overcrowded lecture theatres negatively affected their learning experience.

"Cramped lecture theatre no sunlight or fresh air which is exhausting for full day of lectures." (NSS 2015)

The student below also mentioned how the large numbers of students on their course hindered the running of the department, in addition to the overall experience of students.

“Too many students are being let in and it isn't a course that is made for large numbers. This hinders the running of the department as well as the overall experience of the students.” (LDC NSS 2015)

“University is trying to save money on staff so cram a 100 students to listen to the same speeches and expect it to be useful. Some modules are ridiculously unorganised. When we raised this subject in student meeting with the head of school, nothing was changed as the next year I heard exactly the same complaints about the same module from younger students.” (NSS 2015)

With the University building new student halls of residence each year to accommodate the gradually increasing number of students beginning their studies at UEA each year, it is fundamentally important that the facilities, teaching spaces and number of administrative staff improves and increases accordingly to meet this demand and improve and enhance the experience of all students at the University.

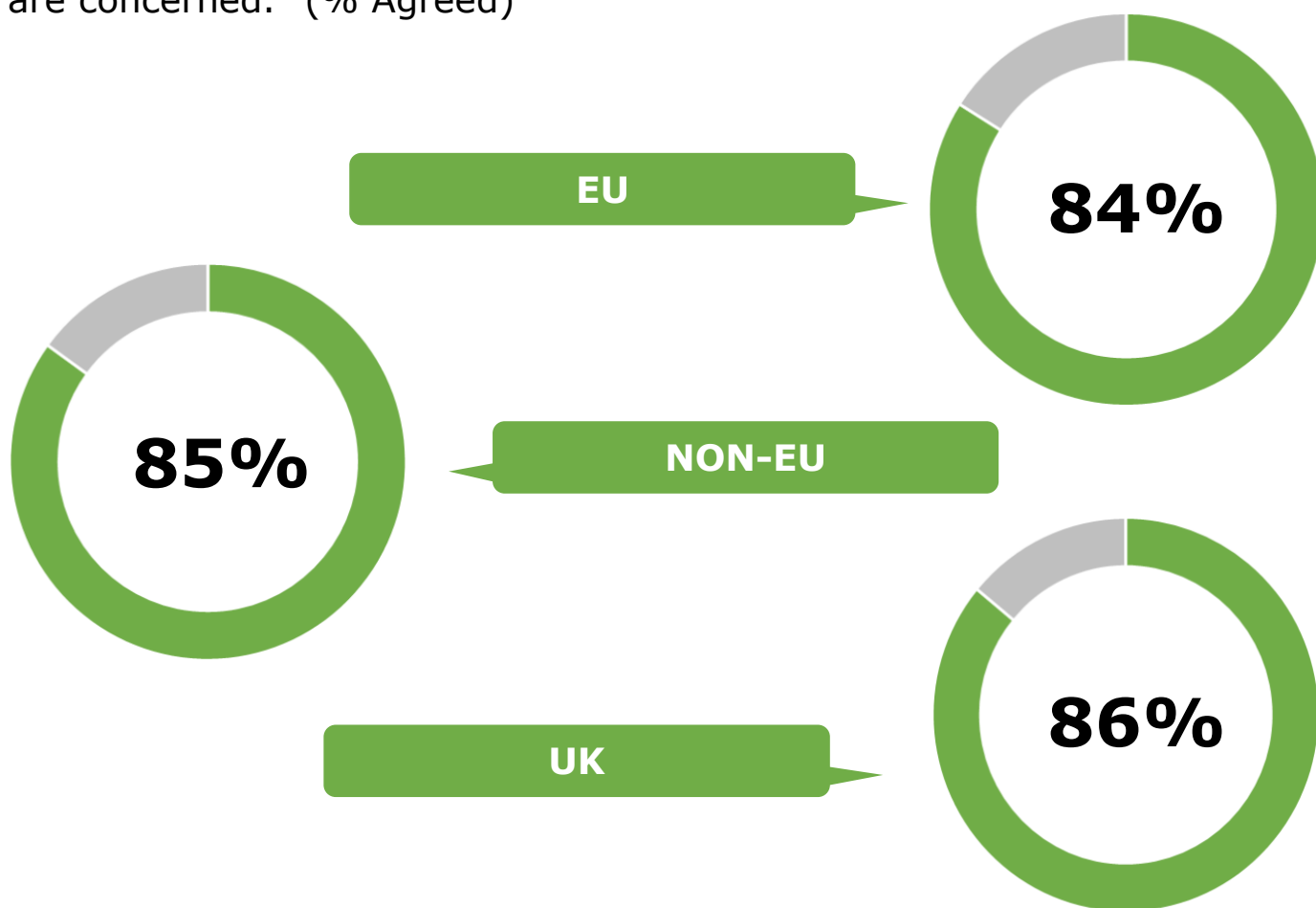
Timetables

“Horrible exam timetable, 5 exams in a week were a bit too much.” (PHA NSS 2015)

The lack of organisation surrounding timetables can be a great inconvenience to students, causing stress and anxiety and making it difficult to organise social activities, part-time work or childcare. International students across the University reported that they “don't always know what is going on with regards to our timetable”. Further, as the student below highlighted, impractical timetables can often impact the balance students are expected to maintain between attending contact hours, completing independent study and commitment to their independent research projects or dissertations. Students should not have to choose between attending their lectures or completing their project.

“The timetabling could have been better at times, as for example in the final year, we are expected to be in the lab at least 17 hours a week, which however turned out to be a lot more than 25 due to the challenging research projects. The challenging aspect is fine, but sometimes lectures have been timetabled in a way that the breaks in between them are too short to do anything sensible in the lab so many people have decided to skip certain lectures so they could actually do their project. Timetabling in the final year should take this into account and leave at least half of every day free for lab time.” (NSS 2015)

NSS 2015 Q13: "The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned." (% Agreed)



Furthermore, timetable issues can cause additional problems for international students who are trying to work visiting their family overseas around their studies and the breaks between semesters. For instance, the international students below highlighted how exam timetables, and the date at which they are released, can impact international students who need to plan their flights home around their timetable.

"It's really bad to schedule the test/examination time after the semester. I had an experience: the test time wasn't announced until two weeks before the test (during spring holiday). And I had already booked my flight before the spring holiday and I confirmed twice with the test organiser that the test would normally take place in week 2. However, the test was actually on the last day of the first week, and it wasn't announced immediately when the semester was over. Consequently, I spent another £470 to book a flight in order to attend the test." (NSS 2015)

"International students [...] need to know when exams are to plan flights. It is extremely expensive to fly across an ocean to attend school and having to wait to book flights bring prices up each day." (LDC SU ASS 2016)

International students highlighted that *"the exam timetable should be released earlier"* to avoid such problems. In 2015, the revised exam timetable was released to students at the very end of March, leaving less than one month for students to plan their revision and complete their remaining assignments before the beginning of the examination period.

"One of the problem every year is that the exam timetable is always an absolute nightmare. This year it came even worst as the timetable was scheduled twice and even with that, the schedule was not very appropriate. The university should really consider the time constraints of everyone and also space out exams to allow people to actually have a chance to study well and achieve better." (NSS 2015)

However, one international student affected by the timetable revision in March 2015 mentioned how the students in their cohort created a petition in response, and that their School of Study were *"extremely supportive"*, adapting the cohort's deadlines to work around the revised exam timetable to provide sufficient time for the students to complete their exam revision. This international student subsequently added that *"I have received ample support throughout my degree"*.

"In the final year, our exam timetable turned out to be very bad. We as students put together a petition and the school has been extremely supportive and helped us by moving other deadlines till after the exams as to give us a chance to revise. Other than that, I have received ample support throughout my degree and especially in my research project proving that UEA is truly a uni dedicated to good quality research and teaching." (NSS 2015)

Learning and Teaching Hubs

For many international students, the frustration they felt with the poor organisation of their timetables and exam timetables was the extension of frustration that they felt with the administrative Learning and Teaching Hubs across the University for UG and PGT students. Many students reported how administrative errors had negatively affected their student experience at the University, citing occasions where their modules had been incorrectly selected or even cancelled without prior notice. Organisation and communication should not be disadvantaging international students in this way, particularly on courses with a high international student intake.

"The hub has made lots of terrible mistakes. Last year it gave me incorrect information and asked me to choose wrong module choices. It caused a timetable clash, which made me cannot take classes as other students for 6 weeks." (CMP NSS 2015)

"Poor administration on behalf of the Humanities Hub: The post-marking process is extremely lengthy. Pieces of coursework have in some occasions

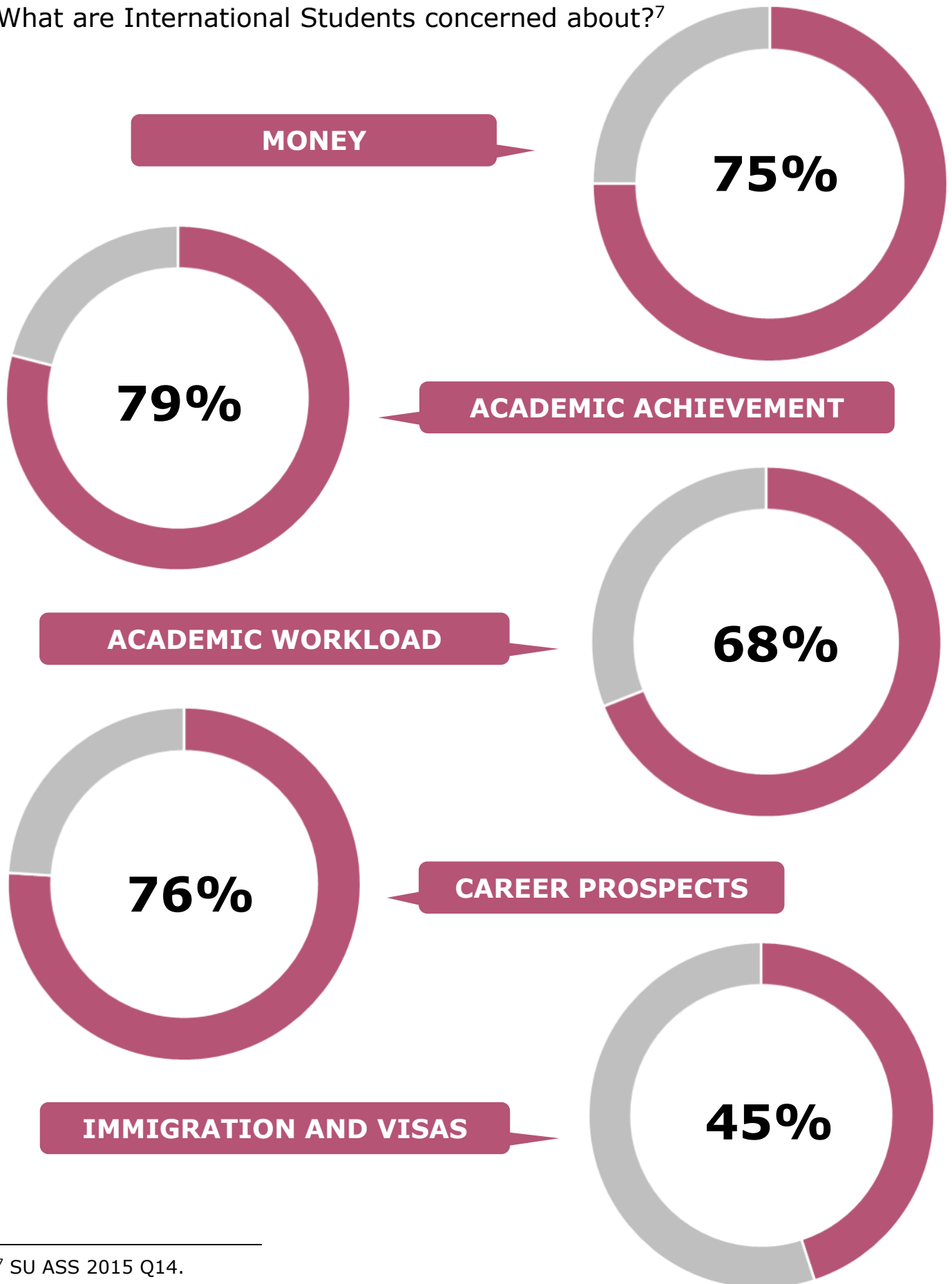
been lost. Module cancelled with notification given at the last minute (when the semester had already started)." (PPL NSS 2015)

recommendations

1. We believe that the University should endeavour to record all lectures and group-based teaching and learning activities and make them available online for private and independent study. This will give international students the opportunity to listen to the lecture at a more accessible pace. Additionally, the University has a responsibility, under The Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, who, according to our registration data, comprise 18 per cent of the international student population. Further, the University should ensure that, where available, equipment such as microphones should always be used by lecturers when delivering teaching materials.
2. When increased number of students are foreseen, we recommend that the University makes provision for increased funding for professional services such as the Learning and Teaching Services, the IT Services, the Dean of Students, Estates, and the Students' Union, accordingly.

welfare and wellbeing

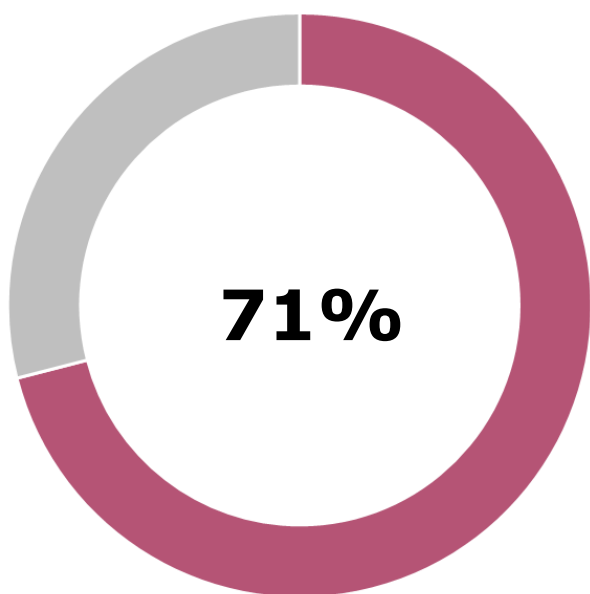
What are International Students concerned about?⁷



⁷ SU ASS 2015 Q14.

The findings from this section of the report highlight a number of problems affecting international students' welfare and wellbeing, and demonstrate several key areas for improvement in the Students' Union and University's support services and overall welfare provision.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing



**% of international students
concerned about their emotional
wellbeing**

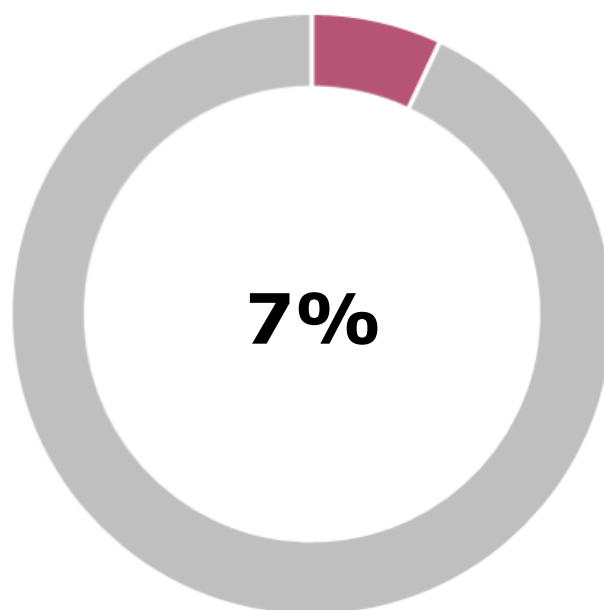
International students' mental health was a recurrent problem cited by students across the data, with a number of international students citing experiences of depression during their time at University. Accordingly, a number of international students mentioned how they felt that mental health support was lacking. For instance, while 71 per cent of international students said that they were concerned about their emotional wellbeing, only 39 per cent of these students said that they were likely to approach the Students' Union for help in regards to their emotional wellbeing.

For many international students, experiencing culture shock can worsen their symptoms of low mood and depression. The PGR student below highlighted the culture shock they experienced massively affected not only their mental health, but also their productivity, sense of identity, academic support, and feelings of isolation.

"I think the depression is a result of culture shock. The system is incredibly inflexible and most of the time I have to pretend to be English, which is obviously exhausting. I cannot work the way I want, I cannot write what I want. Rather, I am expected to do things that are anything from stupid to just plain morally wrong for me. The only choice I really have is drop out if I don't like it... I would like to point out that tolerance is really just a theory here because most tutors and my English colleagues do not even understand what it means. I also know that most of my foreign friends feel

the same and are really disappointed by the situation. If you have ever wondered why foreign students are incredibly unhappy here, then here is your answer.” (SU THPS 2015)

% of international students who used the **Counselling Service** in 2014/15



While there are various mental health support services offered on campus by the University and students and staff at the Union, including the Counselling Service, Multifaith Centre, Advice Centre and student-run Nightline, the lack of international student awareness surrounding a variety of these services implies that more needs to be done to raise awareness of and access to these services. However, even if a student is aware of such services, like the Counselling Service for instance, these services are often in extremely high demand, which is in itself telling, and students may be subjected to long waiting lists, shorter appointments, and a quicker turnover rate, and thus less satisfactory and sustained support. Further, the mental health models used within the UK may be more relevant to students from the UK than international students, and may not transfer particularly well across to other cultural backgrounds and contexts – which highlights the important of cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity within mental health support models. Further, language barriers may also impede international students’ access to mental health support.

“No mental health support.” (NSS 2015)

“Lack of emotional and academic support [after] failing an exam.” (MED NSS 2015)

Loneliness and Isolation

“I think isolation and work pressure combine and make you feel you can't cope.” (SU THPS 2015)

70 per cent of international students reported that they were “sometimes concerned” or “concerned” about feelings of loneliness and isolation. One international student highlighted that one of the reasons so many international students may struggle with their emotional wellbeing is because of loneliness and isolation they may feel when away from “*their loved ones*”. While feelings of loneliness and isolation are not unique to the international student experience, as the student below highlights, the causes of such feelings are unique to the international experience.

“Most of the international students who is away from their loved ones have different problems like loneliness, depression, stress, etc.” (INTO SU ASS 2015)

Feedback from international students in the SU’s International Students: Arrivals and Leavers Survey 2015 suggests that the first few weeks of University, particularly the days following arrival before UK students arrive, can be especially isolating for international students new to the University. While the Students’ Union and University do organise a variety of activities, events and excursions during this time to help international students adjust, make friends, and settle in, several international students reported that they weren’t aware of these activities at the time. Further, as the student’s experience below demonstrates, this may significantly disadvantage international students moving into student accommodation in the University Village as they are somewhat removed from the campus and are thus less likely to come across such events and activities on the main campus by chance. Thus, it is important that the University and the Union do not neglect to advertise such events and activities to international students at the University who may not be as easy to reach, such as part-time students, mature students, students with dependents or students living off-campus.

“I came here 4 years ago and being an international student living in the village without a phone or laptop yet, I remember being all alone in my lonely and isolated flat. I was not made aware of any activities at that time and was pretty miserable on my own until the home arrivals.” (SU ISALS 2015)

The feelings of loneliness and isolation reported by international students can also worsen in particular for who are required to move away from the University for placements. For instance, one Medicine student mentioned how they felt that they lacked a support network during their placements. Many placements require moving into temporary residences closer to the location of the placement. This means that, not only do international students on placements have to pay the hidden costs for placement accommodation, they also have to deal with the loneliness and isolation that comes with being removed from a support network while away from the University for extended periods during their placements. Further, given the feedback from international students studying Medicine about their academic support (see page 16), it is imperative that their academic advisers offer their support to students on placement, through alternative methods of communication such as Skype, as this

is instrumental to helping their advisees to establish and maintain support networks while away from the University.

"Been sent away for placement requiring staying in residences = hidden costs and lack of support network." (MED NSS 2015)

One international mature PGR student highlighted that having two dependents, combined with the social and academic demands of postgraduate study, had made them feel isolated and withdrawn. What emerges from this international student's experience is that the lack of support this student received, particularly with childcare, worsened their feelings of isolation from the university community. It is subsequently important that support services and facilities at the University are able to cater to the specific needs of students with dependents.

"As an international, mature student with two young children, it has been challenging to fit into the university community, both socially and academically. As a result I always feel out of the loop, and have withdrawn from participating in seminars and even social events. There is no (read zero) support with childcare, so my research gets done during the kids' school time or at night. Now that I am halfway through my program, I feel extremely exhausted and not very clever, and am questioning my ability to complete this degree. Each and every day I consider dropping out. I have not found much support, even when I was trying to inquire about possibilities for going part-time or intercalating. I never got that information. My children tell me I have become grumpy and 'no fun' since I started studying." (SU THPS 2015)

Immigration and Visas

"My main source of stress is the Home Office and the requirements for foreigner students." (SU THPS 2015)

While only 45 per cent of international students said that they were worried about immigration and visas in the Annual Student Survey 2015, figures from the Dean of Students and the Advice Centre suggest that this figure ought to be higher. Consider, for instance, that in 2014/15, the Dean of Students responded to over 2900 queries regarding "general advice and immigration".

One of the most visible manifestations of the impact of immigration and visa restrictions upon international students is through their experiences of renting housing and accommodation. The Immigration Act 2014 made it a legal requirement for landlords to check their tenants' immigration status before entering a tenancy agreement. In 2015, the National Union of Students argued, in conjunction with various leading charities including Shelter and MAS (Movement Against Xenophobia),

that such checks are discriminatory and expressed their concern that they will result in prejudice against a vast number of tenants, including international students. Indeed, the discriminatory and prejudicial nature of these checks was reflected in our data, with over 60 per cent of international students reporting that they are worried about accommodation and housing. Moreover, figures from the SU's Advice Centre reveal that housing problems, ranging from deposit disputes to harassment by landlords, are one of the most common reasons that international students use the Advice Centre's services.

Money and Part-Time Work

International students' tuition fees are an increasingly important source of revenue for higher education institutions across the UK and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' recent Higher Education Green Paper recently proposed that tuition fee caps may be adjusted and increased according to an institution's Teaching Excellence Framework level, meaning that tuition fees may well increase again in the near future.

At present, with international students at UEA paying fees ranging from £9,000 to £30,000, money is already a significant cause for concern for international students, with 75 per cent of international students reporting that they are "concerned" or "very concerned" about it. From the costs incurred from expensive visa applications, or the recently introduced NHS healthcare surcharge fee, to living costs or hidden course costs, studying in the UK can indeed be financially burdensome. Such burdens can also be significantly worse for international students with dependents to care for.

International students expressed their growing fears and concerns about tuition fee increases in the near future, especially given that international students don't pay a fixed tuition fee rate at present. The international student below highlighted that they felt that these issues weren't really being addressed by the wider student population. This student felt that, unbeknownst to UK students at UEA, tuition fees and money are two of the most significant issues affecting international students at UEA.

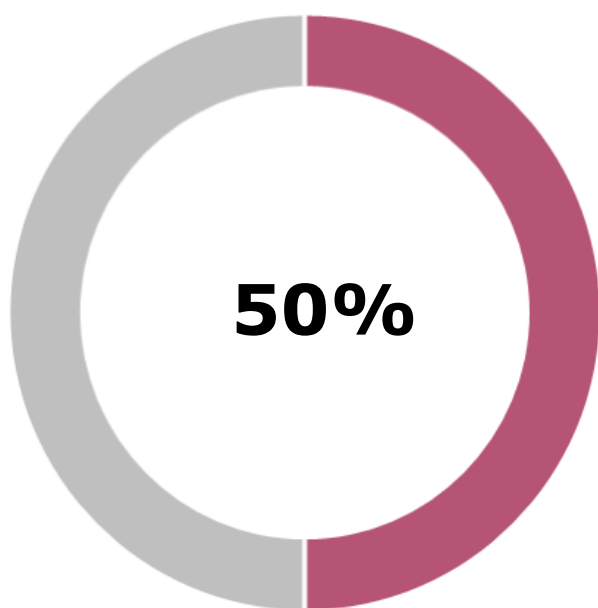
"I think there are a few issues international students face that don't really get addressed. For example, international student fees increase every year for international students- they don't pay a fixed price for their whole degree- are there is no breakdown provided as to why these fee increases occur. I feel many home students are unaware of these kind of issues that international students face and some general awareness would be really helpful." (AMA SU ASS 2016)

Money was also highlighted as a cause for concern by international PGR students, for whom there is often sparse funding available within the UK. The student below highlighted how, while they do receive a studentship, the amount they receive is ultimately not enough to cover both their tuition fees *and* living costs and they have to instead rely upon economic support from their family.

"My PhD is already consuming most of my time. I wouldn't have time for a job. However, my income is very tight (as I'm a foreigner, and the studentship is just not enough to cover my tuition fees and living costs). I get economic support from my family to get by." (SU THPS 2015)

As an extension of such financial concerns, 56 per cent of the international students who said they were concerned about money said that they were also concerned about finding part-time work during their studies to supplement their income. International students' visa restrictions mean that those looking for part-time work to support themselves financially cannot work more than 20 hours per week. Further, postgraduate research students are strongly advised to limit their part-time work to no more than 6 hours per week. One undergraduate international student from Poland highlighted that, in addition to these working restrictions, they'd also struggled to find part-time work because they weren't sure how to adapt their CV to UK standards.

"I also had problems with finding employment as I thought that British CVs look the same as in the other European countries." (SU ISALS 2015)



% of international students **concerned** about part-time **work and employment**

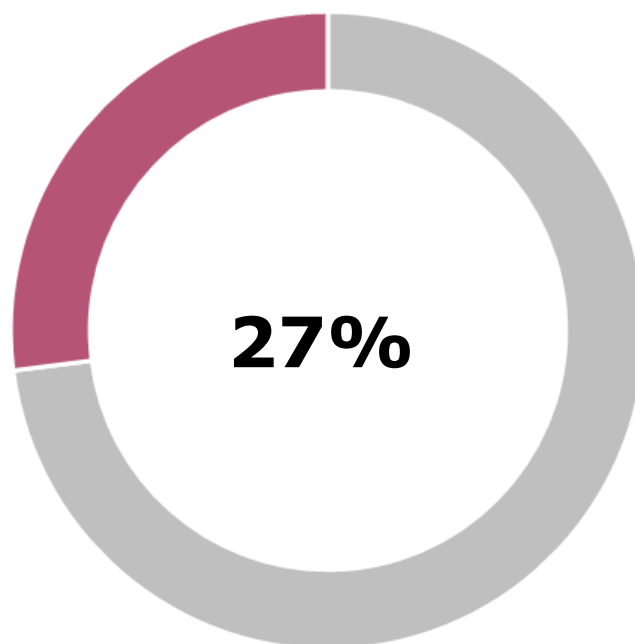
"Thinking about [offering] more information about part time jobs for international students if it is possible." (EDU SU ASS 2016)

Further, one taught postgraduate international student said, in the Annual Student Survey 2016, that they would find it helpful if the Students' Union had more information available to international students about part-time work. Fortunately, we have recently conducted a series of focus groups about part-time work, and, from the feedback we gathered from international students during these focus groups, we

hope to develop resources for international students to consult with more information about part-time work.

Support Services

% of international students who have used the **Advice Centre**



"Most of the support I've got was from DOS and the Chaplaincy." (SU THPS 2015)

One of the aspects of the data that is extremely important to consider is international students' awareness of certain support services at the University. At every level of study, international students highlighted that they weren't completely aware of the services, support, and help available to them throughout their studies. Many UG students, for instance, highlighted that during their first years as an undergraduate, they were either completely unaware of the services available, or aware of the services yet unaware of how to access them.

"The problem for me as a first year UG student is that I'm not quite sure how to approach [the Students' Union] if I have questions." (PSY SU ASS 2015)

"In my first years, the available help and consultation was not very highlighted. I discovered much of the help in the last year of uni." (PPL NSS 2015)

The PGR student below shared their experience of problems with culture shock, cross-cultural communication and unsatisfactory supervisory support. While, contrary to this student's awareness, the Dean of Students do offer personal and welfare advice about "cultural adjustment", only 5 per cent of the international

student queries received by the Dean of Students in 2014/15 were in relation to areas of wellbeing, which implies that even fewer were in relation to areas of culture shock and cultural adjustment. In addition, this international student's experience highlights that international students, particularly those which may be more difficult to reach like PGR students, need to be made more aware of these services.

"Who could I talk to about [depression and culture shock]? My supervisor, who is English and obviously disagrees. If there is someone at the DOS office who is qualified to talk about culture shock I have as yet to be made aware of it." (SU THPS 2015)

However, a significant number of international students also expressed praise for the support services at the University. For example, they pointed to the Dean of Students and Career Central as "very helpful", and added that these support services supported them throughout the duration of their degree.

"I would give 100% score to the Dean of student and the UEA career central who has been very helpful and supporting throughout the duration my course." (PHA NSS 2015)

Additionally, another international student highlighted how staff at the Students' Union had offered them "fantastic" help, support, and advice during their studies, despite the "complex circumstances", related to "serious health issues", that were affecting their wellbeing and student experience.

"I needed help, support and advice during my studies due to a serious health issues. The SU where just fantastic. I came back when everything was resolve with a bunch of flowers for the professional staff. Thank you so much all of you. Keep with the great job helping students when complex circumstances." (HSC SU ASS 2016)

recommendations

1. We believe that it is vital that the University and the Students' Union develop a new strategy to ensure that more "hard to reach" international students are targeted during the pre-arrivals phase and arrivals period. This is also an ideal opportunity to ensure that detailed information about Support Services are provided to all international students in a variety of formats to increase international student awareness of student Support Services.
2. We recommend that the University allocate more funding to the Dean of Students and Counselling Service to allow them to run mental health and wellbeing workshops and courses for international students. More funding will allow these services to recognise the complex needs of many international students and allow them to continue to adapt their services for international students. Further, we believe that the Counselling Service would benefit from a specialised international students Counsellor trained to support the complex and differing needs of international students.

community, inclusion and engagement

It is crucial that international students at the University feel that they are a valued part of the student community and that they feel included and engaged with all that life as a student at UEA has to offer. As the findings in this section demonstrate, there are numerous factors affecting international students' sense of inclusion within the student community at UEA.

Language Barriers, Culture Shock and Communication

Culture shock emerged as a recurrent theme across the feedback from international students, manifesting across many areas of the overall international student experience. Many students highlighted that it would be helpful if there were more resources available for international students providing detailed information about culture and etiquette in England. One student below highlighted that this would be especially helpful for students coming to UEA from Asia, who may be particularly susceptible to experiencing culture shock.

"I wish the Union takes one step forward to students and give some knowledge on day to day life in UK, especially students from Asia where we are not aware or experienced of so and so things like your culture, way of approaching people etc. Since a PGT student has only one year which is a limited time he/she may not have a chance of getting know of many things that the country offers and so does the university." (ENV SU ASS 2015)

"I think it would be better to send emails with PDFs about cultural and basic university life information." (SU ISALS 2015)

One of the most potent manifestations of culture shock for international students (who don't have English as their first language) is language barriers. Many of the international students at UEA do not have English as their first language and are instead studying in their second or even third language. At all levels of study, international students repeatedly referred to the difficulties they faced because of *"struggling with writing and speaking in a different language"*. Adjusting to a different culture while working in a different language can be incredibly demanding and can result in feelings of *"stress and anxiety"*.

"I experienced stress and anxiety related to the pressure determined by being for the first time a student in a foreign country. Working in a different language, adjusting to a different culture, have been sometimes difficult."

(SU THPS 2015)

Further, language and communication barriers can make contact hours particularly demanding for international students who do not have English as their first

language. The PGR student below commented that this ought to be taken into consideration when allocating assignments, as, to overcome language barriers, certain groups of international students may need to commit a significantly larger amount of time to their “*reading and writings*”. This may ultimately disadvantage international students who cannot work at the same pace as students who are native English speakers.

“As a foreign student whose first language is not English, [I] require a lot more time for studies compared to native students. But this factor is not well considered when giving assignments to students. I [sacrifice] my sleep in order to catch up with my reading and writings, and it makes me terribly drowsy at seminars and lectures. But I have no other choice.” (SU THPS 2015)

Further, language barriers may also distance some international students from their lecturers, as one international NBS student highlighted that one of their lecturers was “*not very nice about my English*”. Exchanges such as this may well deepen an international student’s feelings of isolation or exclusion. However, feedback about the approachability of the teaching staff (see page 21) suggests that the experience of this international student in particular is the exception to the norm.

Integration and Inclusion

Many of the findings in regards to international student integration and inclusion are related to feelings of loneliness and isolation discussed earlier (see page 32). A number of international students reported that they had struggled to feel fully integrated and included within the wider student body at UEA. For instance, the UG international NBS student below highlight that they struggled when studying with students from the UK because “*they hardly communicate with me*”.

“Because I am an international student, sometimes, it is difficult to study with English students. Because they hardly communicate to me.” (NBS NSS 2015)

Other international students also mentioned occasions where they had experienced or witnessed forms of prejudice against international students who do not have English as their first language. For example, the student below felt that, at times, the attitude of certain “*British students*” was racist and disrespectful, which ultimately deterred them from fully engaging with their “*study experience*” at the University.

“It was likely to have seen a number of British students who are not really well behaved and being sarcastic to certain international students who do not have fluent English speaking skill. Apparently, the lecturers/associate tutors that do not have British accent but full with enthusiasm are not being respected; whereby students walked out from lecture before dismissal and talked loudly during the lecture. I’m not being offensive but I really love the

study environment, despite those who are racist and not respectful are the deterrents in utilising the study experience.” (ECO NSS 2015)

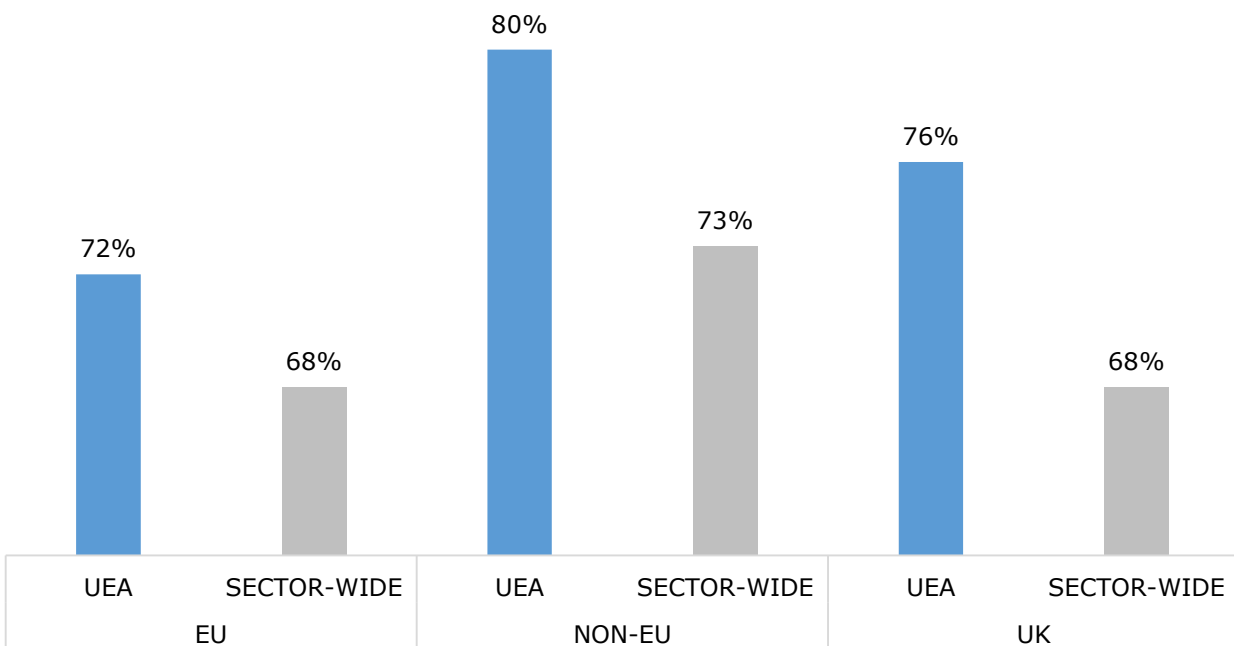
One PGR student from the United States highlighted that they felt frustrated because many of the extra-curricular activities aimed toward integrating international students were catered to those who did not have English as their first language. This highlights that, while integrating students struggling with language barriers is highly important, it is also important that the Students’ Union and the University do not overlook other groups of international students.

“Not all international students are Chinese. Some of us are English-speakers from countries like the US, so consider us.” (SU ISALS 2015)

The Students’ Union

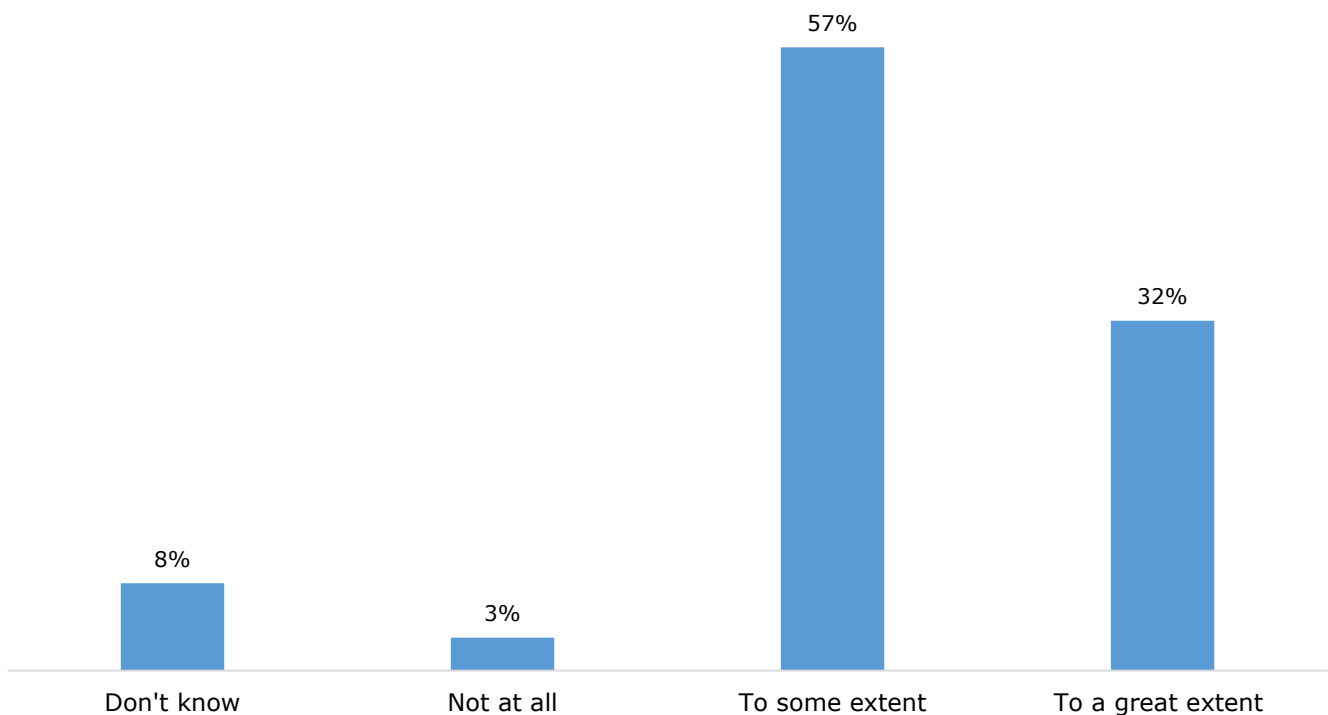
“I really, really see the Union making a positive change not only at my university but in my life. A great organisation.” (BIO SU ASS 2015)

FIGURE 9: "I am satisfied with the Students' Union (Association or Guild) at my institution." (% Agree) (NSS 2015)



The results of the National Student Survey 2015 suggest that non-EU international students at UEA are most satisfied with the Students’ Union, with 80 per cent of non-EU undergraduates agreeing with the following phrase: “I am satisfied with the Students’ Union (Association or Guild) at my institution”. This was followed by UK students, at 76 per cent, and EU students, at 72 per cent. Moreover, UEA undergraduate students’ satisfaction with the Students’ Union was consistently higher than the sector-wide average, for both international and UK students.

FIGURE 10: To what extent do you feel that the Union's services reflect the needs of UEA students? (SU ASS 2015)



32 per cent of the international students who responded to the Annual Student Survey 2015 said that the Students' Union's services reflect the need of UEA students "to a great extent", and a further 57 per cent of international students felt that the Union reflected these needs "to some extent". One international student noted, in the National Student Survey 2015, that the Union has "*grown to adapt well to student needs, becoming more involved with student welfare and activities*". Further, another international student, in the Annual Student Survey 2015, added that "*the Union does excellent job as far as students issues are concern thus I am comfortable with the arrangements.*"

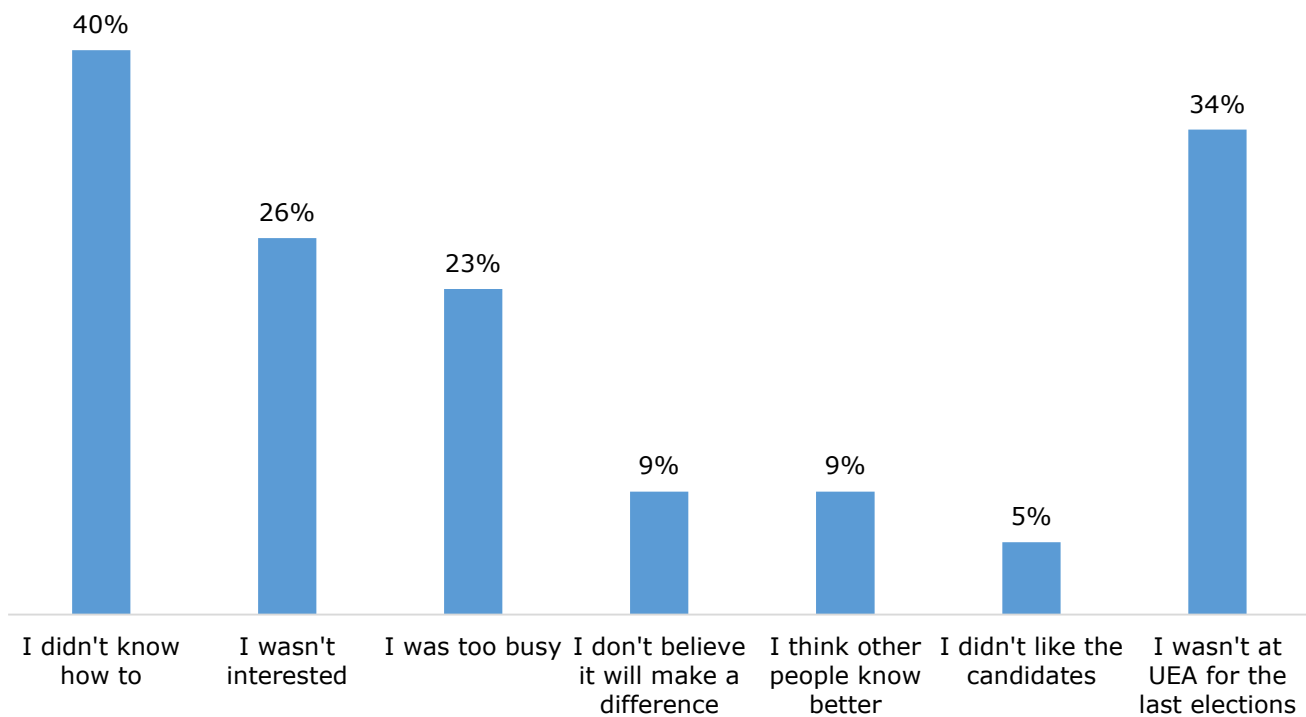
"I was not involved too much with the Student Union, but I think the services I see they provide, the activities they organize are great and make the life of students easier, fun and introduce many prospects to them." (CMP

SU ASS 2015)

Democratic and Representative Activities

Figures from the Annual Student Survey 2016 suggest that UK and EU (non-UK) students were almost twice as likely as non-EU students to vote in the Students' Union Elections in 2015. This contrast between the turnout of UK and EU students and non-EU students is an issue that most certainly needs to be addressed in the future. Notably, 40 per cent of the international students who claimed that they didn't vote in the Students' Union Elections said that it was because they "didn't know how to". However, 34 per cent of the international students who didn't vote explained that it was because they weren't studying at the University at the time.

FIGURE 11: Why didn't you vote in the SU elections 2015? (SU ASS 2016)



Data from across our sample suggests that international students are generally less aware of the democratic and representative activities of the Students' Union, ranging from the Elections to Course Representatives, Union Council, and Liberation Caucuses and Assemblies. The international student below highlighted that *"what actually goes on"* during many of these activities at the Students' Union is *"unclear to the majority of students"*. Likewise, another international student in the Annual Student Survey 2016, noted that they would like the Students' Union to clarify *"what representatives do what"*, as they felt that this was not made clear enough to them. Given how important such activities are to encouraging and empowering international students to create and implement change, it is extremely important that they are aware of and feel able to engage with these activities, should they wish to do so, to ensure that all international students are represented.

"It is unclear to the majority of the students what actually goes on in the Union in terms of meetings, votings and course reps." (DEV SU ASS 2015)

Moreover, turnout at the International Student Assembly, a democratic forum with the power to determine Student Union policy on the issues that affect international students, has unfortunately been lower than expected across the six assemblies this academic year. However, the debates in these assemblies have nevertheless been extremely informative and constructive, and the International Student Assembly successfully passed a motion in accordance with NUS' International Students' Campaign to support the national walk-out in solidarity with migrants and refugees on November 17th 2015. Further, the Liberation Caucuses and Assemblies were only introduced in the 2015/16 academic year, and were not included in the literature about the Students' Union's democratic and representative activities made available

to students upon arrival at the University. Also, the Students' Union's concept of and approach to democracy, and democratic and representative activities accordingly, may not be familiar to all international students. Thus, while the turnout has unfortunately been lower than expected this academic year, we anticipate that, in the future, as international students are made more aware of these democratic and representative activities upon arrival and throughout the academic year, the turnout shall increase accordingly.

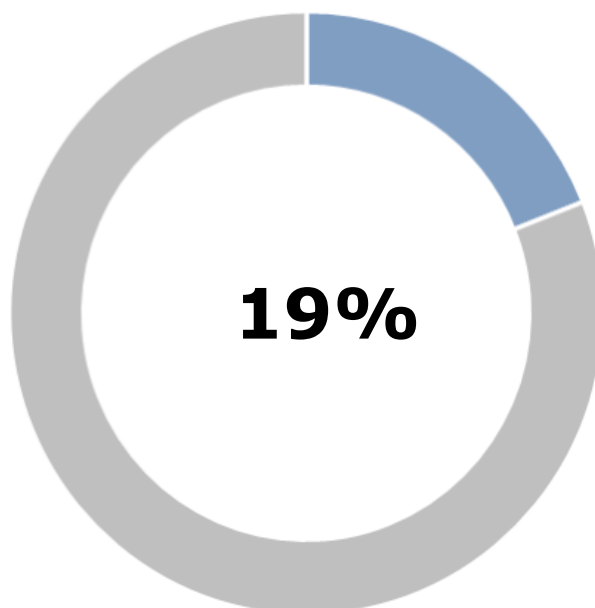
Sports Clubs and Student Societies

"For a foreigner (English is not my first language) it is already hard, so try to break the isolation from the very beginning by doing things outside your academic work." (SU THPS 2015)

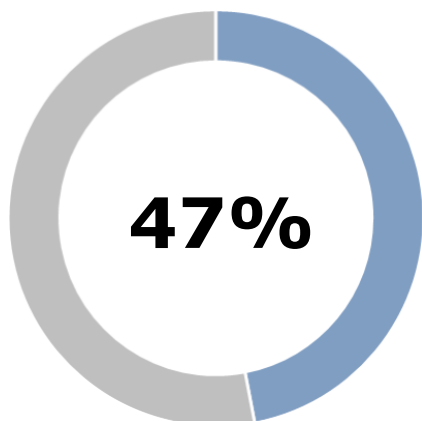
As the international PGR student above highlighted, participating in extra-curricular activities outside of one's "academic work", like joining a Sports Club or Student Society, can be an excellent way to curb feelings of loneliness and isolation during one's time at University. The Students' Union provides and facilitates the majority of extracurricular activity on campus, running and supporting over 60 Sports Clubs and 160 Student Societies. However, feedback from international students suggests that more could be done to make international students feel welcome to participate in the activities of the different Clubs and Societies

"Could be more interested in postgrad International student and provide more information to them. Sometime wanna [sic] join your activity but not really sure, should we could join or not." (NBS SU ASS 2015)

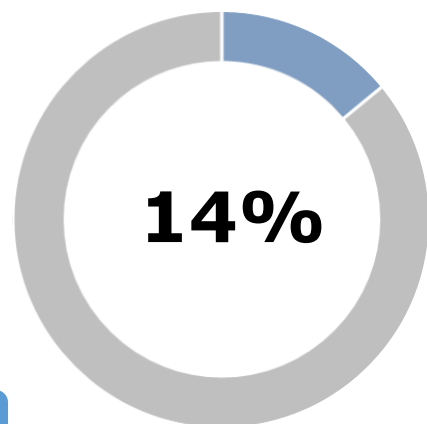
% of international students in Sports Clubs (according to SAM membership)



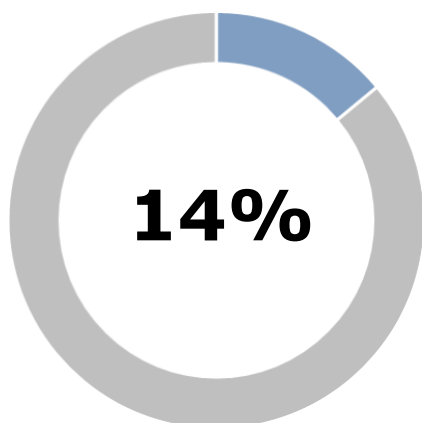
% of international students in Student Societies



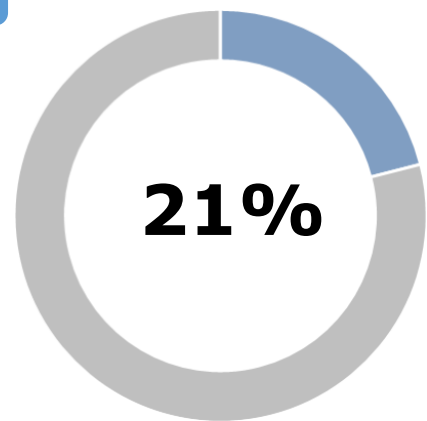
PRIDE



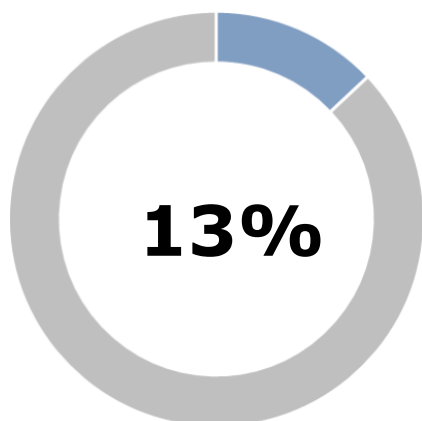
SALSA



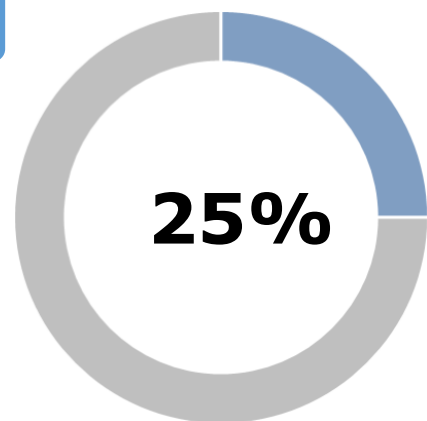
MUSIC



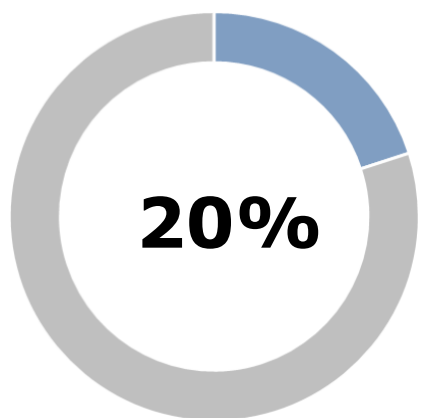
CINEMA



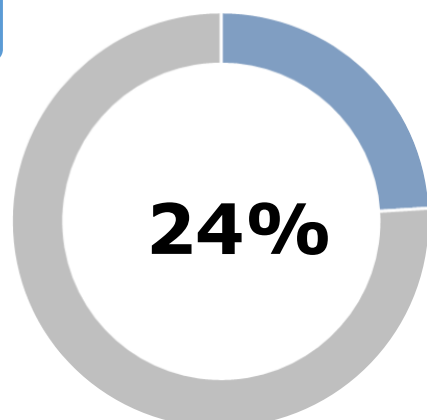
GEEK



VIDEO GAME



CREATIVE WRITING



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

The international student participation and membership statistics are widely vast and varied across the variety of Sports Clubs and Student Societies here at the Students' Union. While participation and membership rates will no doubt differ from Club to Club or Society to Society, for instance with Societies such as the International Student Society or the Erasmus Student Network having an extremely high percentage of international student members, feedback from a number of international students shows that one of the main issues discouraging international students from participating in certain Clubs and Societies is drinking culture.

"Most clubs, societies and social activities are targeted at the younger UG populations, and when I've participated in them have felt disconnected (e.g. social events and time given to planning pub/club nights rather than the activity the club/society is organised around, fine for 18-22 [year] olds to meet others, but less so for people a decade older who are interested in participating in those activities)." (DEV SU ASS 2016)

For instance, the mature international student above explained that certain Clubs, Societies, and social activities targeted at the younger undergraduate student population place a large emphasis upon pub and club nights, which made this student in particular feel "*disconnected*" with these events. This student felt that, while such pub and club nights may well be accommodating to 18 to 22 year old students, they do little to engage and include older members of the Clubs and Societies.

"I think some non-alcoholic events would be good. I know drinking is a big part of the party vibe, but there are many people who don't drink for health, religious, or personal reasons who get turned off by some of the heavy drinking that happens on LCR nights. Just one or two non-drinking events a semester would make these events more comfortable for such people, and I still think it would be possible to have a really good time."

(AMA SU ASS 2016)

Likewise, as another international student highlighted, age is not the only reason that international students may not want to, or be able to, participate in alcohol-related social activities and events. International students may not wish to participate in such events because of other health, personal or religious reasons. Further, pub and club socials during the evenings may also not be convenient for international students with dependents. As the international student above highlighted, Sports Clubs and Student Societies should endeavour to host at least one or two alcohol-free social events each semester in order to ensure that all student members can feel welcome and included in the social aspects of Clubs and Societies.

recommendations

1. We recommend that the University increase the funding available to the Students' Union to allow us to continue our internationalisation strategy and actively pursue international student engagement and equality of opportunity, and continue raising cultural awareness of the diverse student body, for instance, through the International Student Assembly or our cultural exchange events such as Go Global, for instance.
2. At our annual Committee Training, we will stress the importance of including international students in extra-curricular activities and the need to ensure that international students feel both welcomed and encouraged to participate in Sports Clubs and Student Societies. Additionally, we believe that Sports Clubs and Student Societies should be required to host at least one alcohol-free social event each semester to ensure that a wider range of international students feel welcome to participate.

summary of recommendations

1. We recommend that the University ensure that Academic Advisers are using feedback, logging, and reporting systems to monitor their meetings with Advisees. Further, UEA need to ensure that Senior Advisers and Deputy Senior Advisers have the necessary means to adequately oversee the operation of the Advising System in their respective School of Study.
2. At present, mandatory training for all Academic Advisers is on a triennial basis. We believe that the University needs to ensure that all Academic Advisers and Supervisors have completed mandatory training before they are allowed to begin acting in an advisory role, and we recommend that the University organise a mandatory training session in the next academic year (2016/17). Further, we believe that the University should extend the training to include the following components: Equality and Diversity training, mental health training, student welfare training, and cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity training. We believe that this training will better prepare Academic Advisers and Supervisors, particularly in Schools of Study with a high international student concentration, to accommodate the specific needs of international students highlighted throughout this report.
3. We recommend that, for a period of three years, the University form a subgroup of the Student Experience Committee to supervise, monitor, and review the implementation of the new Academic Adviser structure.
4. We believe that the University should endeavour to record all lectures and group-based teaching and learning activities and make them available online for private and independent study. This will give international students the opportunity to listen to the lecture at a more accessible pace. Additionally, the University has a responsibility, under The Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, who, according to our registration data, comprise 18 per cent of the international student population. Further, the University should ensure that, where available, equipment such as microphones should always be used by lecturers when delivering teaching materials.
5. When increased number of students are foreseen, we recommend that the University makes provision for increased funding for professional services such as the Learning and Teaching Services, the IT Services, the Dean of Students, Estates, and the Students' Union, accordingly.

6. We believe that it is vital that the University and the Students' Union develop a new strategy to ensure that more "hard to reach" international students are targeted during the pre-arrivals phase and arrivals period. This is also an ideal opportunity to ensure that detailed information about Support Services are provided to all international students in a variety of formats to increase international student awareness of student Support Services.
7. We recommend that the University allocate more funding to the Dean of Students and Counselling Service to allow them to run mental health and wellbeing workshops and courses for international students. More funding will allow these services to recognise the complex needs of many international students and allow them to continue to adapt their services for international students. Further, we believe that the Counselling Service would benefit from a specialised international students Counsellor trained to support the complex needs of international students.
8. We recommend that the University increase the funding available to the Students' Union to allow us to continue our internationalisation strategy and actively pursue international student engagement and equality of opportunity, and continue raising cultural awareness of the diverse student body, for instance, through the International Student Assembly or our cultural exchange events such as Go Global, for instance.
9. At our annual Committee Training, we will stress the importance of including international students in extra-curricular activities and the need to ensure that international students feel both welcomed and encouraged to participate in Sports Clubs and Student Societies. Additionally, we believe that Sports Clubs and Student Societies should be required to host at least one alcohol-free social event each semester to ensure that a wider range of international students feel welcome to participate.