Retention Project 2021-22: Term 2 Report Faculty of Education, Health and Human Sciences

Executive Summary

The Retention Project delivers a peer-led check-in call for all undergraduate and postgraduate students. Since term 2 the project has provided more targeted support to students who are not engaging with their studies and have been escalated through the Student Engagement Policy. The project also prioritised calls to students from APP demographics and calls to Ukrainian and Russian students during the current conflict. Overall, the project made 22,146 calls in term 2 completing check-ins with 2,905 students. 473 of these students were referred for additional support and linked in with appropriate services. Table 1 provides a breakdown of calls by these groups for the Faculty of Education, Health and Human Sciences (FEHHS) in comparison to the whole University:

	Overall		UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP		PGR	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Total calls	22,146	1,854	1,396 (FEHHS)				344 (FEHHS)					114
Calls completed	2,905	400	1,859	211	285	95	440	43	167	17	158	34
Escalations	473	71										

Table 1. Breakdown of calls by student demographic

During the phone call, students are asked about their programme experience, loneliness, engagement in extra-curricular activities, other pressures being faced and awareness of University and SU services. If students are not aware of the latter, additional information is provided during the call. If the student raises an issue that cannot be resolved during the call, the issue is escalated to the Student Engagement Team for onward referral to the relevant service/contact. Of the 400 completed calls to FEHHS students, 71 students (18%) required an onward referral to resolve their issue which is slightly higher than the University average (16%). The most common referrals were to Student Finance and the Wellbeing Service. Of the 400 FEHHS students who completed a Retention call, only 12 had withdrawn, and 5 had interrupted by the end of term 2.

Taught Students

Programme experience

Callers asked students how they found their programme and coded the answers as either positive, neutral or negative (Table 2). The majority of students described their experience as positive. Most students were also aware of who their Personal Tutor is exceeding the University average (Table 3).

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Positive	65%	52%	74%	74%	77%	53%	84%	76%
Neutral	27%	36%	21%	21%	18%	33%	11%	18%
Negative	8%	11%	5%	5%	6%	14%	4%	6%

Table 2. Programme experience by taught demographic

Personal Tutor

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Yes and we have met	57%	70%	68%	79%	51%	81%	49%	82%
Yes but we haven't met	24%	18%	18%	11%	24%	9%	31%	18%
No, I don't know	19%	12%	14%	11%	25%	9%	19%	0%

Table 3. Do you know who your Personal Tutor is?

Positive comments

Students commended:

- Informative and engaging tutorials and lectures
- Supportive and helpful tutors, good communication
- Improved experience compared to previous year

Areas for improvement

Students highlighted the following challenges:
- Assessment deadline bunching
- Issues with attendance recording
- In-person exams for non-final year students unexpected
- Quality of blended delivery, preference for all classes to be on campus
- Not all staff responsive to student emails
- Level of support from staff not consistent
- Placements – organisation and workload
- Personal issues impacting on students that staff not always aware of (e.g. caring responsibilities, part-time work, health issues, financial issues)

Reasons for not attending classes

Students who were called due to having received a notification in line with the Student Engagement Policy were asked why they did not attend their class. The most common reasons cited were;

- Illness without submitting apologies (34%)
- Attended but did not tap in/not recorded by staff (15%)
- Class time clashes with other commitments (caring responsibilities, work etc.) (10%)
- Attended online, did not know they had to attend in person (4%)

These are comparable to the top four reasons across the University. Students also cited:

- Financial issues meaning the student had to work or could not afford transport to university
- Mental Health
- Timetable issues
- Bereavement

Interruptions and Withdrawal

Students were asked whether they were considering withdrawing from or interrupting their studies (Table 4) and linked in with the appropriate support if needed.

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Yes	5%	8%	3%	4%	2%	7%	1%	6%
No	95%	92%	97%	96%	98%	93%	99%	94%

Table 4. Considering withdrawal or interruption

Loneliness

Students were asked whether they felt lonely and how often this was the case (Table 5).

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Never	75%	71%	82%	84%	86%	85%	86%	82%
Monthly	9%	6%	9%	10%	4%	5%	7%	12%
Less than monthly	5%	7%	3%	2%	3%	0%	2%	0%
Weekly	8%	11%	5%	3%	6%	5%	4%	6%
Daily	3%	6%	1%	1%	1%	5%	2%	0%

Table 5. Frequency of feeling lonely

Students that did not feel lonely cited their friends at university as one of the key reasons. Students that felt lonely noted the following challenges:

- Impact of Covid-19 and online study
- Lack of social opportunities
- Time spent in placement
- Mental Health and social anxiety
- Language barrier for International students

Students who expressed loneliness were signposted to GSU activities and events if they were not already aware (Table 6).

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Yes	29%	24%	29%	21%	19%	14%	26%	13%
No	71%	76%	71%	79%	81%	86%	74%	87%

Table 6. Are you involved in any GSU activity?

Pressures

Students were asked whether they had any financial concerns (Table 7) and what additional pressures they were facing.

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Yes	21%	26%	19%	18%	22%	40%	22%	18%
No	79%	74%	81%	82%	78%	60%	78%	82%

Table 7. Do you have any fees or finance concerns?

The most common pressures highlighted by students were:

- Cost of living (7%)
- Commuting/Travel cost (7%)
- Part-time/full-time work (6%)
- Kids/Caring Responsibilities (5%)

These are comparable to the top reasons across the University. Students also cited:

- Academic pressure
- Mental and Physical Health
- Housing/Halls incl. homelessness
- Family matters

Students particularly highlighted challenges around the impact of commuting to University:

- Increase in travel cost
- Length of commute (including to placement)
- Difficulty of balancing commute with work/caring commitments and timetable/placement
- Lack/cost of parking

Many students noted that while they wished to attend classes and engage fully with their studies, their caring and work commitments prevented them from doing so highlighting that they would not be able to afford their studies without working either part-time or full-time.

Awareness of Support Services

Students were asked whether they were aware of key university and SU support services and provided with additional information on how to access these. Most students were aware of central University services (Tables 8-9); two thirds of students were aware of the GSU Advice Service (Table 10).

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Yes, I've used them	28%	30%	32%	32%	37%	23%	35%	41%
Yes but I've not used them	43%	44%	49%	52%	41%	56%	39%	35%
No	29%	26%	19%	17%	22%	21%	26%	24%

Table 8. Academic Support Team

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Yes, I've used them	22%	21%	22%	27%	18%	23%	22%	24%
Yes but I've not used them	60%	60%	60%	58%	58%	60%	55%	53%
No	18%	19%	17%	15%	23%	17%	23%	24%

Table 9. Wellbeing Service

	UG non-attendance		UG APP		PGT non-attendance		PGT APP	
	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS	UoG	FEHHS
Yes, I've used them	14%	11%	16%	15%	17%	19%	17%	12%
Yes but I've not used them	42%	45%	36%	36%	40%	44%	36%	59%
No	44%	44%	48%	49%	44%	37%	47%	29%

Table 10. GSU Advice Service

Postgraduate Research Students

Out of the 158 completed calls to PGR students, 34 were made to FEHHS students.

Research experience

Callers asked students how they found their research experience and coded the answers as either positive, neutral or negative (Table 11).

	UoG	FEHHS
Positive	73%	71%
Neutral	22%	21%
Negative	5%	8%

Table 11. Research experience

Positive comments

Students commended:

- Supportive supervisory teams
- Improved experience this year now that contact with other PGR students is possible again

Areas for improvement

Students highlighted the following challenges:

- RETI training and requirements can be difficult to navigate
- Not enough networking opportunities with other PGR students

Interruptions and Withdrawal

Students were asked whether they were considering withdrawing from or interrupting their studies (Table 12) and linked in with the appropriate support if needed.

	UoG	FEHHS
Yes	8%	6%
No	92%	94%

Table 12. PGR Withdrawals and Interruptions

Of the 2 students indicating they were considering withdrawal or interruption, neither had withdrawn or interrupted by the end of term 2.

Loneliness

Students were asked whether they felt lonely and how often this was the case (Table 13).

	UoG	FEHHS
Never	73%	65%
Monthly	11%	18%
Less than monthly	6%	6%
Weekly	8%	12%
Daily	3%	0%

Table 13. How often do you feel lonely at University?

22/34 students did never feel lonely citing their friends and supportive supervisory teams as key reasons. Students that felt lonely noted the following challenges:

- Research experience is a lonely experience
- Lack of contact with supervisory team
- Lack of contact with other PGR students
- Lack of communal and office space on campus

Students who expressed loneliness were signposted to GSU activities and the Doctoral Society if they were not already aware of these (Table 14).

	UoG	FEHHS
Yes	39%	41%
No	61%	59%

Table 14. Are you involved in any GSU activity?

Pressures

Students were asked whether they had any financial concerns (Table 15) and what additional pressures they were facing.

	UoG	FEHHS
Yes	23%	12%
No	77%	88%

Table 15. Do you have any fees or finance concerns?

Only 10/34 students commented they were experiencing other pressures noting the following reasons:

- Caring responsibilities
- Part-time/full-time work
- Academic deadlines and work/life balance

Awareness of Support Services

Students were asked whether they were aware of key university and SU support services and provided with additional information on how to access these. Most students were aware of RETI (Table 16) and the Wellbeing Service (Table 17). Just over half of students were aware of the GSU Advice Service (Table 18).

	UoG	FEHHS
Yes, I've used them	67%	76%
Yes, but I've not used them	25%	15%
No	8%	9%

Table 16. RETI

	UoG	FEHHS
Yes, I've used them	18%	24%
Yes, but I've not used them	73%	76%
No	9%	0%

Table 17. Wellbeing Service

	UoG	FEHHS
Yes, I've used them	11%	6%
Yes, but I've not used them	42%	47%
No	47%	47%

Table 18. GSU Advice Service