

Retention Project - Faculty of Engineering and Science

Term 2 Summary
2023/24

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greenwich
students'
union

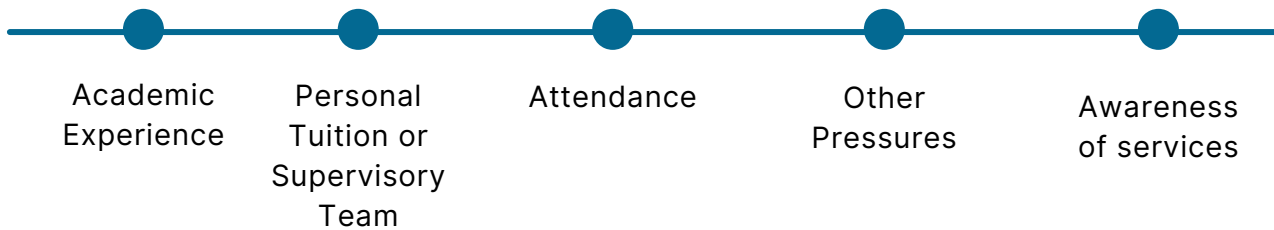
Retention Project

What do we talk to students about?

Our student callers have a 1-1 structured conversation asking students about their experience at Greenwich and reminding them of the support available.

We make it clear we're calling from the SU, that we hold their confidentiality unless they consent for us to share information and that students can be open with us about issues they are facing.

During the calls we ask questions around the following:



If at any stage during the call we identify an additional support need we'll ask the student for permission to refer their case to the relevant service

Who we called

We prioritise calling students who are most at risk of being withdrawn due to nonattendance and students at risk of withdrawing or interrupting themselves.

- January starters
- Students on courses with a large awarding gap
- Students not in attendance
- PGR students

This term we changed our focus from the number of calls made to increasing the quality of the calls made. This meant that we made less calls, however callers were encouraged to spend more time with each student to delve into their experiences. As a result, we have more case studies throughout this report than in previous reports.

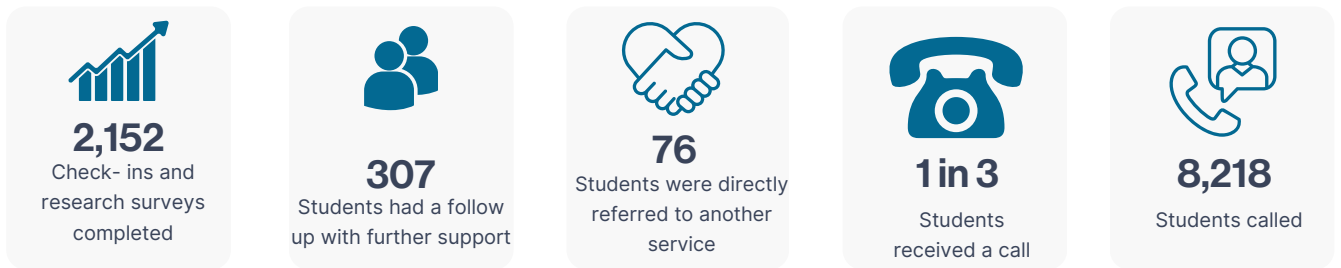
We also had some technical issues to work through this term. This means that some data has been lost regarding how many individual calls were made, and therefore We are very grateful to have had our computers replaced, which means that we are in an excellent position going forward to avoid any further technical problems.

'This term we have seen a higher number of students giving positive feedback about the phone calls from GSU, and wanting to follow up with GSU. We have seen improved feedback from Steph regarding the follow-up of these calls and this has alerted us to student issues we were otherwise unaware of.'

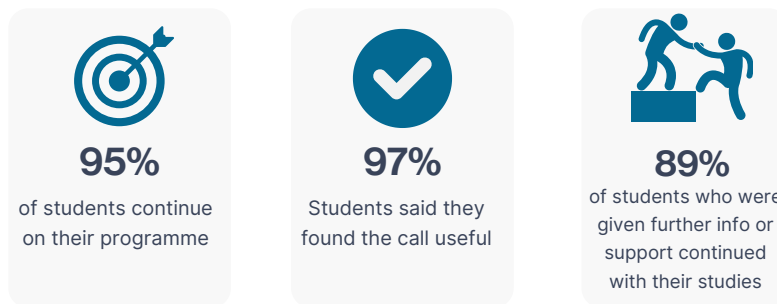
Feedback from a Retention and & Success Officer

University Summary

KPI overview

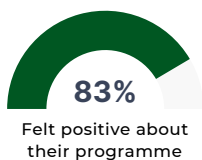


Our Impact

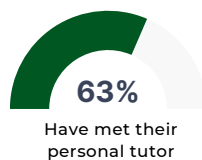


What are students saying?

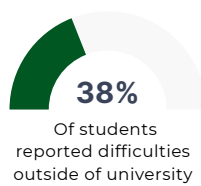
Course Satisfaction



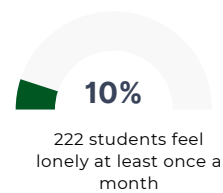
Personal Tuition



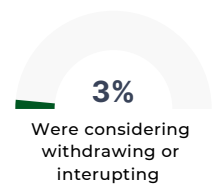
Pressures



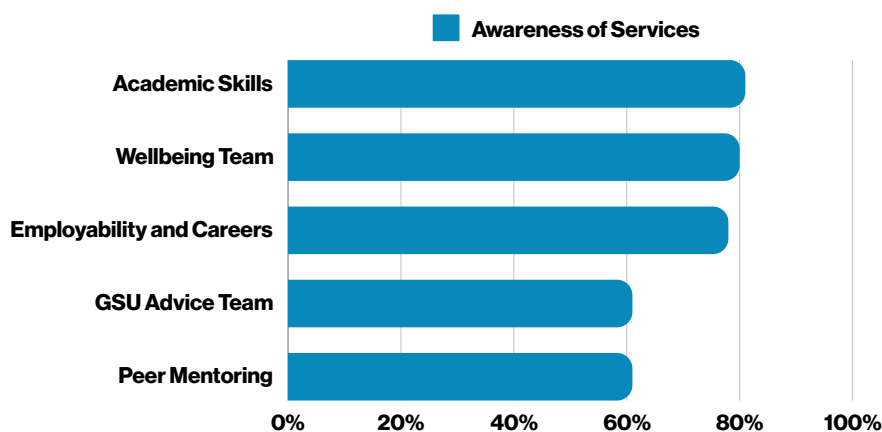
Loneliness



Considering Withdrawing

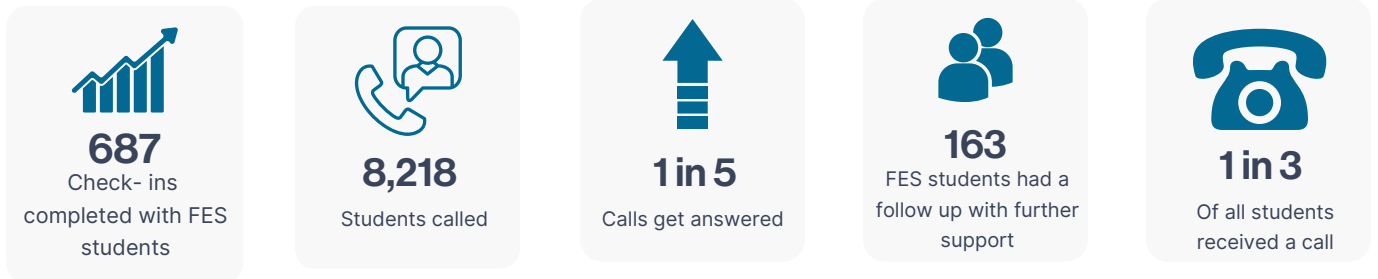


Support Service Awareness

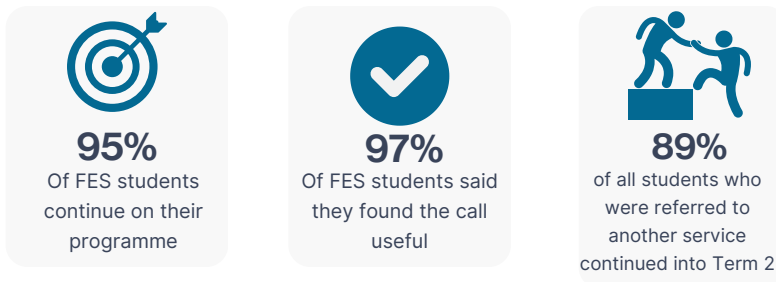


Faculty of Engineering and Science Summary

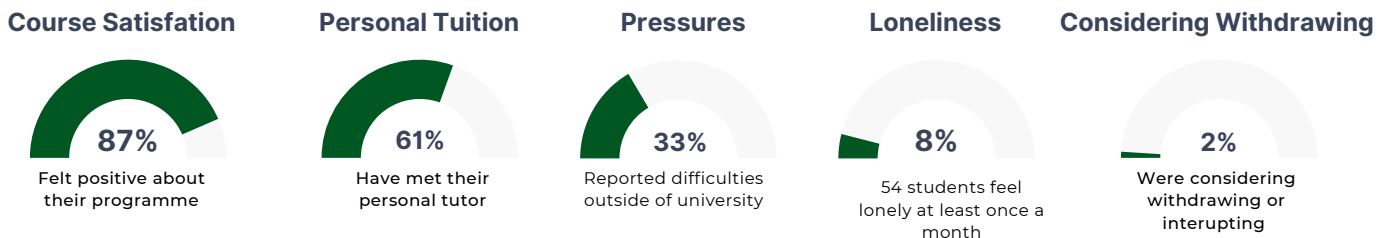
KPI overview



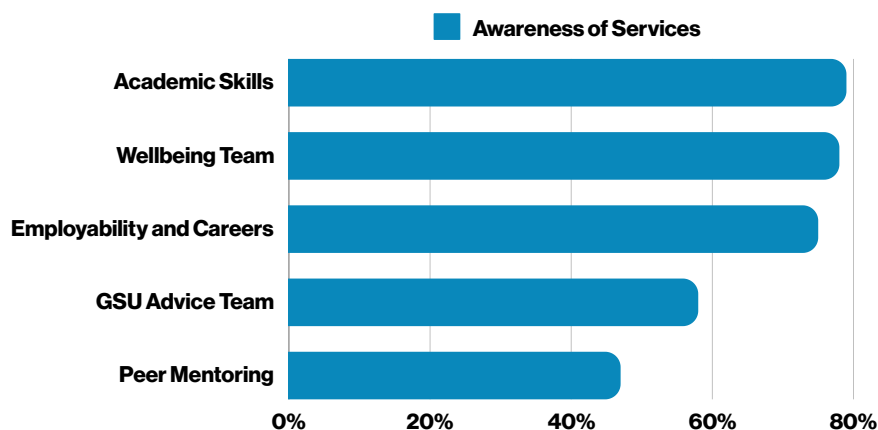
Our Impact



What are FES students saying?



Support Service Awareness



Term 2 Project Overview

This report gives a summary of the key findings, themes and recommendations from the Retention calling project in term 2 of 2023/24.

Who we call

- January starters
- Students on courses with a large awarding gap
- Students not in attendance
- PGR students

These groups are therefore over-represented in the findings below.

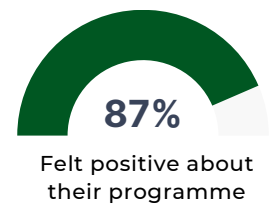
Inclusivity Research Project

This term we partnered with the GSU Voice and Rep team to work on their inclusivity research project. Our calls called 281 individual students and completed 553 surveys regarding modules with a significant awarding gap. The Voice and Rep team have then included this data in their research for this project.

Course Satisfaction

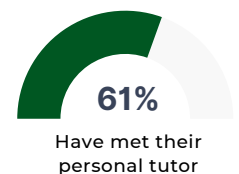
87% of FES students felt positively towards their course and only 2% negatively, with the remaining 11% offering a neutral response.

Overseas students also ranked greater course satisfaction (90%) than their home counterparts (82%).



Personal Tutoring

61% of FES students know and have met their personal tutor and 20% know, but have not met them.



I really like the program, it's a good experience, the course is diverse and interesting.

1st year
Computing and
Mathematical
Science student

Personal Tuition Feedback

In Term 1 2022/23, only 47% of FES students knew and had met their personal tutor. Last year one of our recommendations was a development of the personal tutoring system - it seems that any action taken has had a positive effect.

GSU more generally has fed back on the personal tuition review being conducted across the university.

The course has been enriching yet challenging. It has exceeded my expectations!

Linking students with support

We aim to link students with the right support at the right time.

We believe if we support students with the underlying issues they are facing they will be more likely to continue on their course of study.

This is why we prioritise making contact with students who are likely to be withdrawn because of poor attendance or who we know are more likely to withdraw because of their personal circumstances.



106

FES students had a follow up with further support

Direct Referrals to other services

28 FES students were referred for support to another university service who aim to follow up with the student the next day as per an agreement set out in service level agreements.



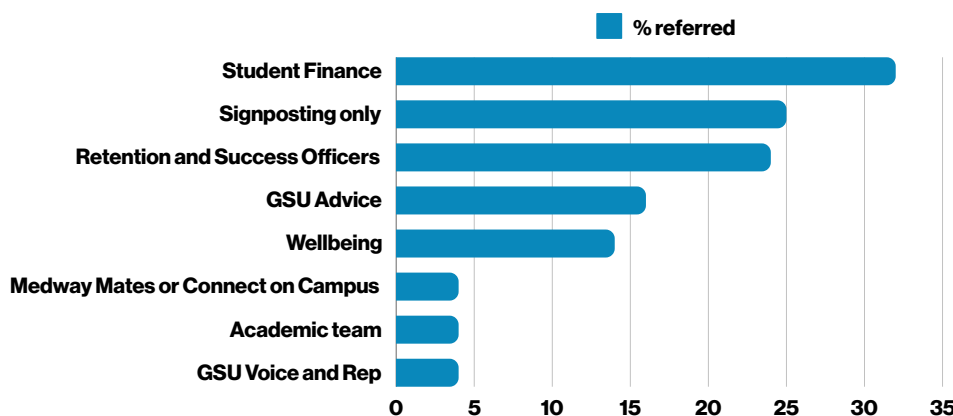
25

FES students had a direct referral made to another service



89%

of all students who were directly referred to another service continued into Term 2



In addition to those students who were directly referred for support, 81 students told us about financial concerns, social support, and course issues. We send these students additional information in support packs.



56

FES students told us they were concerned about their finances, and were sent a finance support pack



33

FES students told us they felt lonely, and were sent a social support pack



6

FES students told us they were struggling with their course, and were sent a course support pack

The finance support pack includes information on ways to access cheaper food shopping, such as Too Good To Go or local community pantries, the free breakfasts and dinners provided by GSU on campus, university hardship funds and bursaries, budgeting tips and the opportunity to get a free Totum card.

The social support pack includes information on the Global English courses, Vygo (the peer mentoring app), GSU's buddy schemes, a downloadable calendar and colouring pages and information on GSU societies.

The course support pack includes information on the interruption and withdrawal process, how to contact your personal tutor, financial, academic and wellbeing support and information for international students on the visa implications of interrupting or withdrawing from their studies.

So far reading [the financial support pack], it's really useful and I'll be applying for some financial help.

FEHHS
undergraduate
student

Absences

470 FES students who completed the survey were called due to non-engagement.

The most frequent reason for non attendance cited was due to illness (36%). Other significant and reoccurring reasons are personal circumstances (such as bereavement), clashes with other responsibilities, and issues with attendance recording systems or timetables.

Continuation Rate

96% of all students called continued on their programme.

These were broadly consistent across faculties with FEHHS had the highest continuation rate and the Business school had the lowest.

Faculty	Continuation %
Faculty of Education, Health and Human Science	98%
Greenwich Business School	93%
Faculty of Engineering and Science	96%
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science	94%



96%

Of FES students called continue on their programme

Those considering withdrawing

12 FES students told us they were considering withdrawing or interrupting. Of these 12, 5 continued on their studies.

7 were home students, 5 were international students. 10 were UG students, 2 were PGT students.

All students who are considering withdrawing or interrupting receive follow-up support including signposting to Retention and Success Officers, their personal tutors and to any other additional support tailored to their situation.



29

FES students told us they were considering withdrawing

3

withdrew (or were withdrawn) from their studies

4

interrupted their studies due to a range of circumstances

5

students continued on their studies

£212,400

of fee income retained in FES School this year*

*2 x overseas PGT, 1 x overseas UG and 2 x home UG + Term 1 figure

Co-Curricular Experience

Loneliness

54 FES students we spoke to reported feeling lonely in Term 2 equating to 8% of respondents in the faculty. This is slightly lower than the overall % of students reporting loneliness (10%).

Of these, the majority (50%) reported feeling lonely on a weekly basis. 63% of those who felt lonely were overseas students.

Cost of Living Concerns

15% of FES students are concerned about supporting themselves financially or paying their fees which is the same as the overall % of students called.

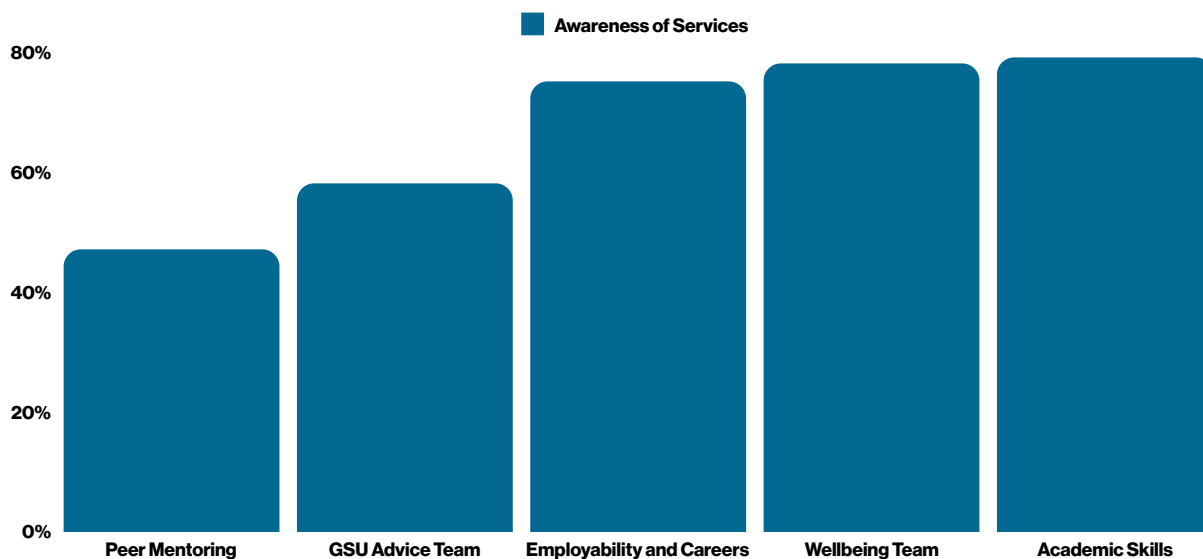
Of those students concerned about their finances and fees, 44% identified financial pressures affecting their studies, such as cost of living, commuting and travel or work commitments.

Commuting and travel came up as a consistent concern. This was spread fairly consistently across all campuses, and consisted of comments regarding the Medway bus, parking issues and students who live far from campus.

Support Service Awareness

During the calls, students are asked if they are aware of and have used, the following services.

All students called were reminded about the support that these teams offer, and many students commented at the end of the call regarding how useful it is to be given this information.



Recommendations

The recommendations made here stem from the conversations had with students and the themes that emerged. It is proposed that these are reviewed by university services, faculties and the GSU.

Timetabling



The issue: Timetabling has been a recurrent theme again this term. FES students are more likely than those in other faculties to raise this issue.

Students said: Timetables can be sporadic which result in frequent journeys to campus and difficulty with balancing other commitments. There have also been reports of last-minute timetable changes and overcrowded teaching spaces.

The Retention Project recommends: Coordination across faculties and programmes to ensure that, from the beginning of the year, there are as few issues as possible. As suggested last year, flexibility for students to change seminar groups to ensure they are convenient for students is recommended, although initially arranging timetables carefully may limit disruption for both students and teaching staff of mid-term changes.

Spreading payments for international student fees

The issue: A recurring theme in the Retention calls and the GSU Advice Service is international students asking for payment plans, although they do not meet the University of Greenwich criteria for a payment plan.



Students said: They felt the payment plan was too harsh, worry about paying fees was impacting on their ability to study and the Student Finance team were very slow to respond to emails and queries. Students reported feeling very stressed and worried about finances and visas.

The Retention Project recommends: Additional fee payment installments could be offered to all self-funding students. Other London universities already offer this - for example, Goldsmiths College offers three or five payment installments, UCL, LSE and London South Bank University offer three installments. These do not include the initial deposit that international students are required to pay. We believe this could significantly reduce the number of students contacting the GSU Advice Service and the Student Finance team to request payment plans, as well as addressing the stress and detriment that students report.

Work/Study balance



The issue: FES students were more likely to cite work/study balance as an additional pressure on their studies than other faculties.

Students said: they were struggling to find part-time work or struggling with attendance due to the financial need to work.

The Retention Project recommends: the faculty be aware that students in FES may require additional financial support, as well as support to access well paid part-time work. The faculty could publicise student job opportunities within the university to FES students.

Commuting between campuses



The issue: Medway buses to Greenwich and Avery Hill were oversubscribed at the beginning of the year, resulting in students being unable to commute to their classes, difficulty integrating into the student community and increased stress levels. The price of the buses can also be detrimental to students.

Students said: They were getting stranded and missing lectures. They had to book the buses weeks in advance (an issue when combined with changing timetables) and the buses are very expensive.

The Retention Project recommends: As much as possible, provision should be accounted for at the beginning of term to limit impact on students. We also recommend a reconsideration of the price of the Medway buses.

Term 3

In Term 3, we will be calling in a new priority order:

1. April starters
2. Students not in attendance
3. PGT students at dissertation stage
4. Interrupting students: w/c 3rd June
5. Students resitting over summer: 8th-26th July

These calls will take place from the 7th May to 26th July.

As before, we will be reactive to any local or global events that may make students vulnerable to disengagement from their studies and will prioritise checking in with them where needed.

Want to make a referral?

We will also check in with any students that staff have concerns for. Staff can refer a student for a check in call via email at gsu-retention@greenwich.ac.uk.

Full reports will be available soon on the GSU website:
<https://www.greenwichsu.co.uk/gsuhub/wrproject/>

Any questions or specific data requests please contact Steph Scott, Retention and Insights manager on s.e.scott@greenwich.ac.uk