

Retention Project

Annual Summary

All Faculties

2022-2023



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Executive Summary

9,300

Check- ins completed

3,953

Non-engagement checks completed

58,624

Calls made

403

Referrals made for immediate support

This report gives a summary into the key findings, themes and recommendations from the Retention calling project. Across 2022-2023, we called mostly students based at Greenwich campus (64%) followed by Avery Hill (18%) and then Medway (17%).

34% of those called were from Greenwich Business school, 32% from Engineering and Science, 19% Education, Health and Human Sciences and 14% Liberal Arts and Science.

The majority were in their first year of study (27%) followed by PGT (25%) and 3rd and 2nd year both at 21%. 62% were also home students.

These student groups are therefore overrepresented in the below.

Escalations

Overall, 403 students were referred for support to university services. Most of the escalations came from Business and FES and largely through term 2 of calls.

Most referrals were to Student Finance and Student wellbeing followed by to Retention and success officers. This is largely consistent across the year.

Academic Experience

Personal Tutoring

56% of all students know and have met their personal tutor and 27% know, but have not met them.

Course Satisfaction

86% of students felt positively towards their course and only 2% negatively, with the remaining 12% offering a neutral response.

The majority of students that felt positively towards their course cited 'quality of teaching' as one of the reasons. This was the most frequently given response. The area that drew the most negative response was 'timetabling'.

Absences

3,953 non-engagement calls were made to students across the faculties which amounted to 43% of all total check ins.. The most frequent reason for non attendance cited was due to illness (33%). Other significant and reoccurring reasons are family circumstances (loss or caring) and work commitments.

Withdrawal/ Interruptions

Only 258 (3%), students spoken to were considering withdrawing/ interrupting at the point of check-in. This figure peaked during term 2 which again suggests this point in the academic calendar is when students are feeling the most pressure. The most commonly cited reasons for considering withdrawing was for Academic concerns (29%).

Co-Curricular Experience

Belonging

Students were asked if they ever feel lonely during their time at university and 10% of all students reported that they did.

Financial

18% of students are concerned about supporting themselves financially or paying their fees.

Other Pressures

69% of students in the faculty reported no pressures on their university experience. Of the other 31%, the three most commonly reported were:

- Cost of living (14%)
- Part time/full time work (10%)
- Travel/ commuting (8%)

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.

Query response rates

We know that competing demands can result in difficulty in responding to queries within a few days. Beyond more resource need, a triaging system would be useful to ensure urgent queries are picked up in a reasonable timeframe. Students are telling us that they are not getting responses to queries. Particularly, we have found that this worsens during times of crisis where students are more dependent upon essential University services. In these cases, it is advisable to have temporary staff respond to generic queries to enable more complex cases to be handled efficiently.

Deadlines and Assessments

Stress from deadlines and assessments is impacting students. We suggest reducing assessment clusters at key points of the year. Allied to this, increased use of alternative assessments i.e. presentations, reports where appropriate to reduce essay strain. A toolkit of 'inclusive assessments' for academic colleagues to easily implement, whilst still meeting learning objectives, would be an impactful resource for this.

Fee repayments

A large number of overseas students have experienced difficulty due to the current model for fee repayments. Some students also report great distress at the communication that they receive in regards to outstanding payments. It is recommended to increase the number of repayment options and to ensure continued support for those who experience administrative barriers from their home countries to access funds.

Personal Tutoring

The data tells us that there is still a significant shortfall of students who know and engage with their personal tutor. It is recommended that the current model for enabling students to find them is reviewed alongside continued development sessions for tutors to support students and engage with them.

Lecture space

Reports of overcrowded teaching spaces result in disengaged learners and in extreme cases, students being turned away or lectures being moved online last minute. It is recommended that students can opt for online/ in person or blended for large modules where overcrowding is a likelihood. Giving students the power to control their studies would help with aforementioned timetabling issues and limited teaching space.

Cost of living support

Despite the existing hardship funds, students report needing quicker, short-term support for shortfalls in bills and other essential expenditures. Students report being unable to access funds immediately when needed. More flexibility would be beneficial for more students in need to gain access.

The welcome introduction of alternative study provisions for students with long-term disability could be extended to students with severe financial hardship. This student group is vulnerable to disengagement due to the need to work more hours and the travel costs to get to campus. Even short term allowances for those in need would give vulnerable students the flexibility to balance work and study, other commitments and reduce unnecessary expense. Finally, the consideration of financial hardship as grounds for an EC claim. Students in this position are most likely to have immovable commitments and stress.

Work/ Study balance

As outlined above, students increasingly report the need to prioritise work over study. Once again, short term financial support is recommended alongside Employability and careers service workshops embedded in the curriculum to help students obtain higher paid work whilst studying allowing a reduction in working hours. More so, a review into where more student-staff could be used in the university and GSU with good pay and flexible hours around studies. More details will be provided in the cost of living report.

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