

# Retention Project 2021-22: End-of-year Report

## Overview

The Retention Project delivers a peer-led check-in call for all undergraduate and postgraduate students. Established in 2020-21, the project has been refined in 2021-22 to meet its original objectives and support the delivery of the Student Success sub-strategy:

1. To support students to remain enrolled and participate in their community at Greenwich enhancing retention.
2. To provide a friendly connection ensuring students are aware of support and wellbeing services, and social/ community connecting activities across the University.
3. To quickly identify suitable pathways into University specialist interventions for students found to be at risk of withdrawing.

## Call statistics

In 2021-22, the project made **53,994 calls to 21,404 individual students**. Of these, 9,193 students received a call in two terms and 2,997 students received a call in all three terms. This means that **92% of the student population<sup>1</sup> were called at least once** this academic year.

Students are called three times to increase completion rates. **34% of students called completed the check-in**. Of the 8,615 check-ins this year, 1,141 students had two completed check-ins and 83 students had three completed check-ins over the course of the year.

	2021/22 Term 1	2021/22 Term 2	2021/22 Term 3 <sup>2</sup>	2021/22 Summary
<b>Number of calls made</b>	14,517	22,367	17,110	<b>53,994</b>
<b>Check-in's complete</b>	2,829	2,911	2,875	<b>8,615</b>
<b>Number of direct referrals made</b>	91	473	189	<b>753</b>

**Table 1. Call statistics 2021-22**

## Student Groups

The project aims to call 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 postgraduate research students (Term 2), Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian students (Term 2 and 3), Sri Lankan students (Term 2 and 3) as well as Bangladeshi students (Term 3). Interrupting students were also called for the first time in preparation of their return in September (Term 3).

<sup>1</sup> Based on student population of 23,231 students at main sites.

<sup>2</sup> These figures are exclusive of the 5,000 resit students called during July.

## Key Themes

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.

Callers asked students how they found their **programme** and coded the answers as either positive, neutral or negative. The majority of students described their experience as positive, this was slightly higher for postgraduate taught students. Most students were also aware of who their **Personal Tutor** is, this figure was higher for undergraduate students. More detailed analysis on this is available in the Term 2 and Term 3 reports.

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
- Class time clashes with other commitments (caring responsibilities, work etc.)
- Attended online, did not know they had to attend in person
- Attended but did not tap in/not recorded by staff

Students were asked whether they felt **lonely** and how often this was the case. In the 2022 AdvanceHE Student Academic Experience Survey (full-time undergraduate students only) 20% of respondents felt lonely most of the time and only 4% never felt lonely<sup>3</sup> compared to 79% (Term 2) and 84% (Term 3) of Greenwich undergraduate students called via the project never feeling lonely.

Students were further asked whether they had any **financial concerns** and what additional pressures they were facing. 20% of students called noted fees and finance concerns. The most **common pressures** highlighted by students were:

- Cost of living
- Part-time/full-time work
- Commuting/Travel cost
- Kids/Caring Responsibilities
- Housing/Halls incl. homelessness

Finally, 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 (Wellbeing, Academic Support, Employability); two thirds of students were aware of the GSU Advice Service. More detailed analysis on this is available in the Term 2 and Term 3 reports.

## Continuation

During the call, students were asked whether they were considering withdrawing from or interrupting their studies. Of the 163 students who answered yes during term 1 and term 2 calls, only 35 students had withdrawn or interrupted by the end of the year, and only two of these were Overseas students.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/student-academic-experience-survey-2022>, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Term 3 stats are not included in this as withdrawals and interruptions are not processed during term 3.

In the 2022 AdvanceHE Student Academic Experience Survey (full-time undergraduate students only) 30% of respondents considered withdrawing<sup>5</sup> compared to 4% of Greenwich undergraduate students called via the project.

**Overall, 97% of students who completed the check-in call continued their studies in 2021-22.**

## Onward Referral

If a student raised any issues that could not be resolved during the call, the student caller completed an escalation form for further referral with the student's consent. One of the strategic recommendations of the 2020/21 project report was to enhance the tracking and reporting of these referrals to measure impact and ensure student queries had been resolved.

All escalations were reviewed by the Student Engagement Manager and processed by the Student Engagement Team for onward referral either directly to other SAS services (Wellbeing, Finance, International Advice, Accommodation), the GSU Advice Service or appropriate Faculty staff to ensure contact was made with the student and proactive support provided. Where students requested specific information or Personal Tutor details, they were contacted directly by the Student Engagement Team. All referrals were processed within one working day following the call to ensure a timely response to the student, reducing the burden on academic staff and other service teams by identifying and resolving issues on the phone or through GSU and the Student Engagement Team where possible.

The highest number of referrals across all terms were made to Student Finance, Wellbeing (Mental Health), GSU Advice and Personal Tutors/Programme Leaders.

**In 2021-22, 753 direct referrals were processed with a significant increase in term 2 and term 3 due to prioritising students not attending their classes. 64% of the referrals were home students. 93% of referred students continued with their studies. 2% of students received referrals more than once over the course of the year.**

## Plans for 2022-23

The proposed timeline and priority groups for the next academic year are set out below:

### Term 1

**10 October 2022 (TW 3) - 9 Dec 2022 (TW 11)**

#### Priority Groups:

1. First year students: International students, Returning Interrupting students
2. Students not in attendance from w/c 24<sup>th</sup> October
3. POLAR Q1 first year students
4. NSS taskforce programmes final year students
5. International students before Christmas
6. Remaining student cohorts

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/student-academic-experience-survey-2022>, p. 24.

### Term 2:

**30 Jan 2023 (TW3) - 6 April 2023 (TW12)**

#### **Priority Groups:**

1. January starters
2. Students not in attendance
3. PGR students
4. Remaining student cohorts

### Term 3:

**2 May 2023 (TW2) - 23 June 2023**

#### **Priority Groups:**

1. April starters
2. Students not in attendance
3. Interrupting students
4. Remaining student cohorts

### Resit calls:

**26 June 2023- 14 July 2023**

- Following PABs all students based on progress decision RP