

# Retention Project 2021-22: Term 3 Report

## 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 Bangladeshi students and recalling Ukrainian and Russian students as well as Sri Lankan students in term 3. Interrupting students were also called for the first time in preparation of their return in September.

Overall, the project made 17,110 calls in term 3 completing check-ins with 2,875 students. 189 of these students were referred for additional support and linked in with appropriate services. Table 1a provides a breakdown of calls by different student groups and Table 1b by Faculty:

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Taught students</b>	<b>Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian students</b>	<b>Sri Lankan students</b>	<b>Bangladeshi students</b>	<b>Interrupting Students</b>
<b>Total calls</b>	<b>17,110</b>					
<b>Calls completed</b>	<b>2,875</b>	2,553	21	40	269	159
<b>Escalations</b>	<b>189</b>	141	3	6	35	4

**Table 1a. Breakdown of calls by student demographic**

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Business School</b>	<b>FES</b>	<b>FEHHS</b>	<b>FLAS</b>
<b>Calls completed</b>	843	907	494	302
<b>Escalations</b>	64	72	37	16

**Table 1b. Breakdown by Faculty**

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. The most common referrals were for Student Finance and Wellbeing matters.

## 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, 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 (Table 3).

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Positive</b>	81%	78%	85%
<b>Neutral</b>	16%	18%	13%
<b>Negative</b>	3%	4%	2%

**Table 2. Programme experience by taught demographic**

### Personal Tutor

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Yes and we have met</b>	64%	70%	56%
<b>Yes but we haven't met</b>	24%	20%	30%
<b>No, I don't know</b>	12%	10%	14%

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

### Positive comments

Students commended:

- Return to on-campus classes welcomed
- Informative and engaging tutorials and lectures
- Accessibility of pre-recorded content, easy to engage with
- Supportive and helpful tutors
- Improved experience compared to previous year

### Areas for improvement

Students highlighted the following challenges:

- Assessment deadline bunching
- Assessment feedback turnaround and comments
- Lecturers reading off slides, not engaging
- Quality of blended delivery, difficult to follow for online students
- Managing workload difficult at times
- Not all staff responsive to student emails
- Level of support from staff not consistent
- Support for placements
- Timetabling: long gaps between classes or having online classes scheduled directly before/after in-person classes making it difficult to attend both
- 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
- 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
- No access to timetable
- Personal matters/Bereavement
- Commuting costs

### 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. As withdrawals and interruptions are not processed in term 3 due to Progression and Award Boards taking place, these students were contacted for further support.

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Yes</b>	3%	4%	1%
<b>No</b>	97%	96%	99%

**Table 4. Considering withdrawal or interruption**

### Loneliness

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

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Never</b>	84%	84%	85%
<b>Monthly</b>	8%	8%	8%
<b>Less than monthly</b>	3%	3%	3%
<b>Weekly</b>	3%	4%	2%
<b>Daily</b>	1%	1%	1%

**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 from previous year
- Difficult for commuter students to make connections and engage in extra-curricular activities
- Difficult for mature students and student parents to make connections
- Prioritisation of work commitments to fund studies

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

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Yes</b>	30%	33%	27%
<b>No</b>	70%	67%	73%

**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.

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Yes</b>	20%	20%	19%
<b>No</b>	80%	80%	81%

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

The most common pressures highlighted by students were:

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

Students also cited:

- Personal/health (mental and physical) issues
- Adapting to online learning
- Academic workload
- Placements

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 8-10); two thirds of students were aware of the GSU Advice Service (Table 11).

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Yes, I've used them</b>	34%	25%	36%
<b>Yes but I've not used them</b>	51%	64%	48%
<b>No</b>	15%	11%	15%

**Table 8. Academic Support Team**

	Overall	UG	PGT
<b>Yes, I've used them</b>	23%	25%	20%
<b>Yes but I've not used them</b>	63%	64%	62%
<b>No</b>	14%	11%	18%

**Table 9. Wellbeing Service**

	Overall	UG	PGT
Yes, I've used them	33%	27%	39%
Yes but I've not used them	49%	58%	40%
No	18%	16%	20%

**Table 10. Employability and Careers**

	Overall	UG	PGT
Yes, I've used them	17%	16%	19%
Yes but I've not used them	47%	48%	46%
No	35%	36%	35%

**Table 11. GSU Advice Service**