

GSU Check-in Service

Term 1 Summary
2024/25

Steph Scott
Retention and Wellbeing
Manager
s.e.scott@greenwich.ac.uk

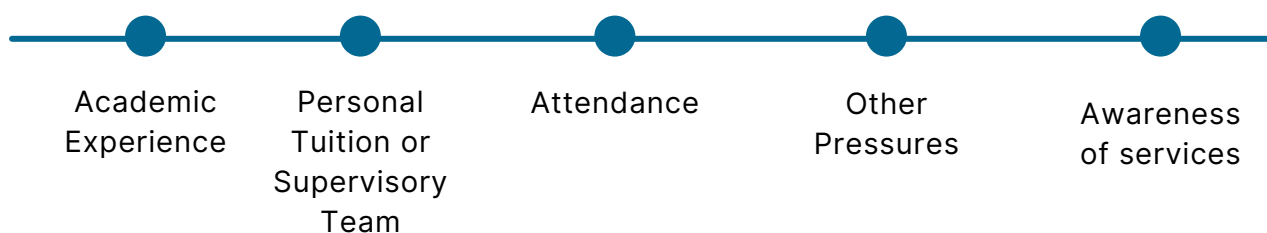
greenwich
students'
union

The Check-in Service

What is the Check-in Service?

The Check-in Service is run by Greenwich Students' Union, previously referred to as The Retention Project. It is a peer-to-peer wellbeing service, which aims to contact students who are vulnerable to withdrawing from their studies, and provide them with early intervention support to help them to stay at Greenwich and thrive.

Our student-staff reach out, primarily through phone calls at the moment, and lead students through a structured conversation. We make it clear we're calling from the SU, that we hold their confidentiality unless they consent for us to share information, or they disclose anything that breaches our confidentiality or safeguarding policies, and that students can be open with us about issues they are facing. We ask questions about the following things:



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

How do we decide who to call?

We prioritise calling students who are most at risk of being withdrawn due to nonattendance and students at risk of withdrawing or interrupting themselves.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

- Returning Interrupted Students
- Repeating
- POLAR4 Q1
- First Year International
- Mature students for GSU research
- Students on programmes with high non-continuation rates or flagged as Red on the Performance Task Force
- Spanish students after the flooding
- Students spoken to in Welcome by GSU staff for the Talk To Every Student objective

New questions we asked this term

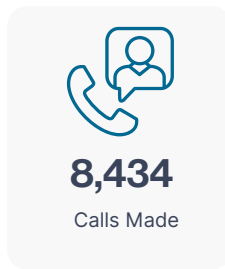
This term we introduced a few new questions, to see what students were thinking about the Wellbeing service, their student reps and their experiences of being in their final year of their studies.

This term we also introduced follow up calls to students who were previously escalated. These are intended to check on the situation that the student initially disclosed, and to see if there is any further support needed to resolve issues.

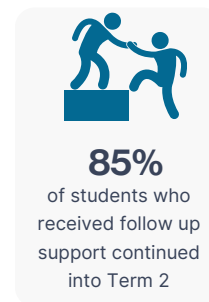
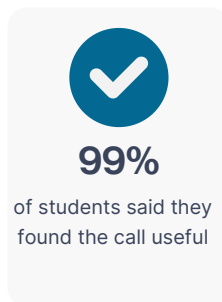
We also asked students if they were aware that the Greenwich Students' Union would be calling students before they received the call, and if so, where they heard about the calls. This is because we are relaunching the service with new branding and its new name, and we want to be able to track whether this has an impact on the visibility and knowledge of the service for students.

Executive Summary

KPI overview

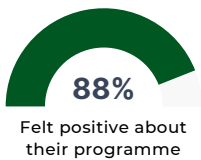


Our Impact

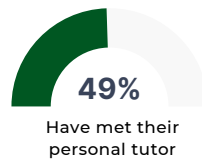


What are students saying?

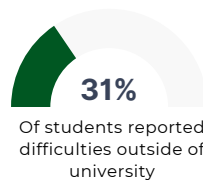
Course Satisfaction



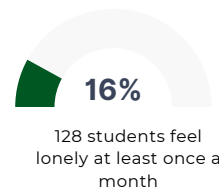
Personal Tuition



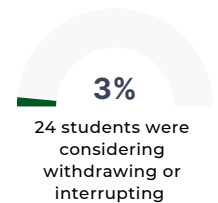
Pressures



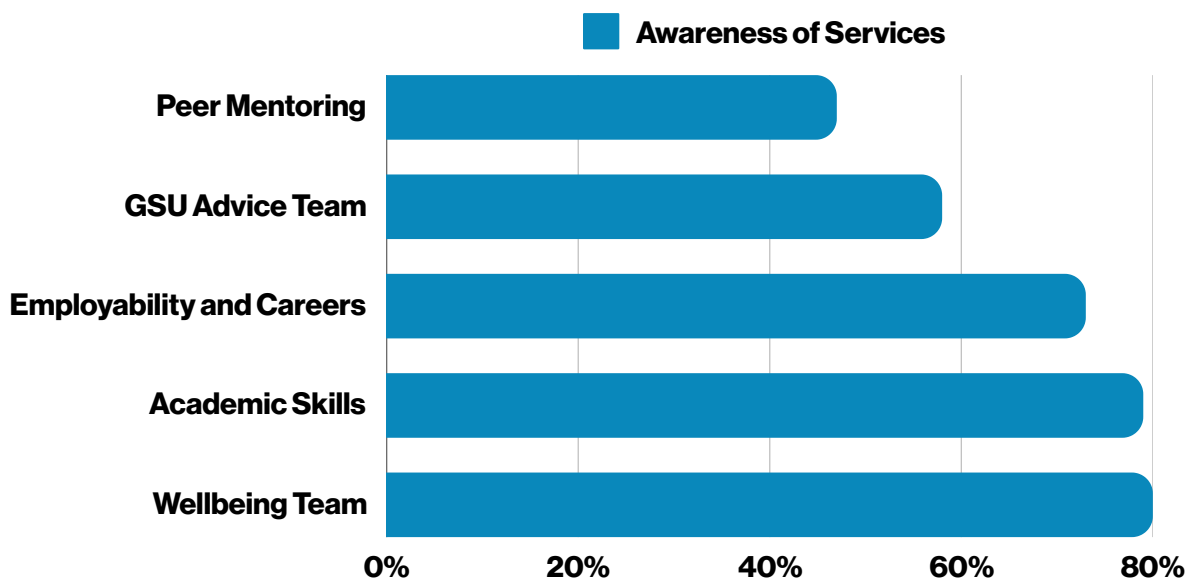
Loneliness



Considering Withdrawing



Support Service Awareness



Term 1 Overview

This report gives a summary of the key findings, themes and recommendations from the Check-in service in term 1 of 2024/25.

Who we called this term

- Returning Interrupted Students
- Repeating
- POLAR4 Q1
- First Year International
- Mature students for GSU research
- Students on programmes with high non-continuation rates or flagged as Red on the Performance Task Force
- Spanish students after the flooding
- Students spoken to in Welcome by GSU staff for the Talk To Every Student objective

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

Spanish Student Check in

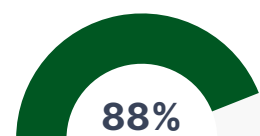
We called Spanish students after the floods, to check in and see if they needed any additional support. We spoke to 176 Spanish students - many of them commented on how grateful they were to hear from us and to know that someone was checking in. Students were directed to Wellbeing and the Hardship funds if needed.

Analysis of General Check In Calls

Course Satisfaction

88% of students felt positively towards their course and only 2% negatively, with the remaining 10% offering a neutral response.

55% of students cited 'quality of teaching' as a positive aspect of their course, and this was the most frequently given response. The area that drew the most negative response was 'timetabling', which is in line with previous reports from other cohorts. As previously, students mentioned big gaps in timetables and a lack of flexibility with the timetabling. Overseas students also ranked greater course satisfaction (92%) than their home counterparts (84%).



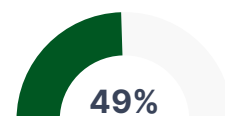
Felt positive about their programme

“It's amazing, I love it. The teaching style is new but I appreciate it because I love new things!”

First year international Human Sciences student

Personal Tutoring

49% of all students know and have met their personal tutor and 27% know, but have not met them. This is lower than previous years, and may be due to the launch of the new framework, and how students understand the delegated responsibilities of the Academic tutors and Faculty Student Advisors.



Have met their personal tutor

We also included a new question, asking those who had met their personal tutors how the experience had been for them. 92% said that meeting their personal tutor had been an overall good experience. We will be adjusting this question in future to ensure it is relevant for the new personal and academic tutoring framework.

“[My personal tutor was great], she made me feel comfortable and made me feel better about being in a new country”

1st year international Engineering and Science student

Co-Curricular Experience

Loneliness

126 students we spoke to reported feeling lonely in Term 1 equating to 16% of respondents, 9% more than this time last year.

Of these students, the majority (63%) reported feeling lonely sometimes, 16% said often and 13% said all the time. Students reporting loneliness were half overseas and half home students. 44% attributed their loneliness to difficulty making friends, and 20% cited homesickness.

Cost of Living Concerns

21% of students are concerned about supporting themselves financially or paying their fees. Of those students concerned about their finances and fees, 43% identified financial pressures affecting their studies, such as cost of living, commuting and travel or work commitments.

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.



172

Students had a follow up with further support



63

Students were sent personalised follow up support

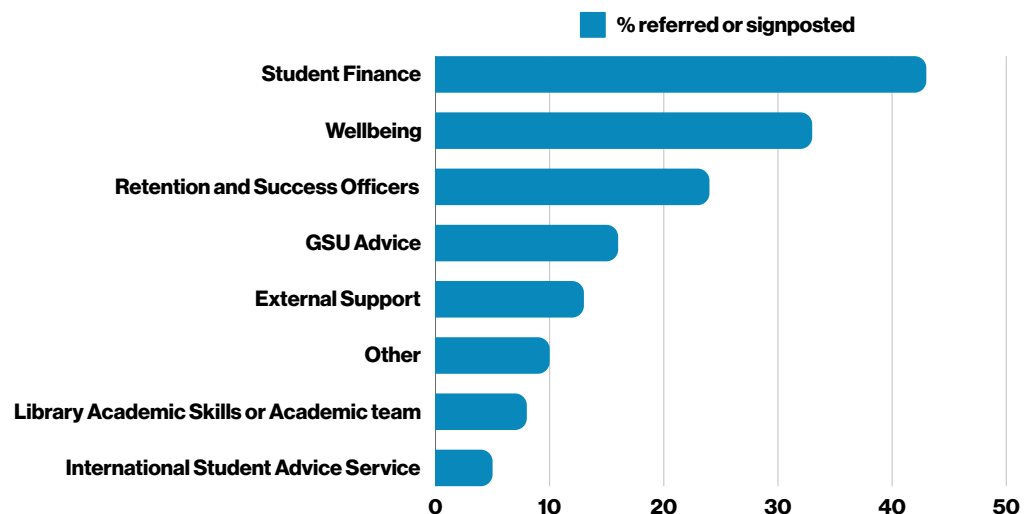
Referrals to other services

63 students were sent personalised follow up support based on their specific circumstance. Some of this support includes direct referrals to other services, as well as more complex signposting and ensuring students have the information about support that they need.



85%

of students who received follow up support continued with their studies into Term 2



In addition to those students who were directly referred for support, 109 students told us about financial concerns, social support, and course issues. We send these students additional information in support packs. 80 students received a finance support pack, 39 students received a social support pack and 16 received a course support pack.

Wellbeing Service

Of the 797 students spoken to 73 had used the Wellbeing services. Many students commented on how helpful, supportive and responsive the team had been when they used the service. Some of the suggestions for improvement included the university paying for the tests needed upfront rather than reimbursing the student, ensuring that contacting the Wellbeing team is accessible and offering more meetings to discuss Greenwich Inclusion Plans before they are issued.

Of students who had heard of the Wellbeing Service but had not used it, the vast majority said they had not used the service because they had not needed to. Some students told us that they were accessing support elsewhere, for example through BetterHelp or their GP. One student said that they would prefer to access therapy in their native tongue, rather than English.

Final Year Students

245 students that we spoke to were in their final year of their studies. 132 were feeling overall positive about life after graduation, 27 felt overall negative and 95 felt neutral. 80 students mentioned being worried about employment after they graduate, with several of them talking about how competitive the job market is.

Programme Reps

47% of students knew who their programme reps were. Of those who knew who they were, 72% rated them a 4 or 5/5 for supporting students on their course. Students commented that issues have been resolved, the reps were kind, helpful and very good at listening to the issues that their fellow students were bringing.

Follow Up Calls

28 students were called following a previous escalation, to check on the progress of their case and to see if any further support was needed. 17 of those calls were completed and of these 12 students were fully or partially satisfied with how their situation had been dealt with.

These follow ups have been useful to ensure that students are receiving and reading the follow up emails sent, and to offer additional support when and where needed. We will continue to track our escalations throughout the year to gain a more complete picture.

Student Follow Up Case Study

The student initially disclosed that they were experiencing issues with their visa, as well as difficulty with their mental health. When the case was followed up, the visa issue had been mostly resolved, but the student was still looking for additional support with their mental health. The Retention and Wellbeing manager called the student directly and offered support and validation for the student's concerns. The student has since reached out to the Wellbeing team, has information about other local counselling services and received a financial support pack. Following up with the student's escalation ensured that they felt heard, supported and had the information that they needed.

Absences

415 students who completed the survey were called due to non-engagement across the faculties.

The most frequent reason for non attendance cited was due to illness (38%). Other significant and reoccurring reasons are personal or family circumstances, such as bereavement or childcare, issues with registration and QR code issues.

Continuation Rate

94% of all students called continued on their programme.

This was fairly consistent across faculties with the highest continuation in FES and the lowest in FLAS.



94%

Of students called continue on their programme

Faculty	Continuation %
Faculty of Education, Health and Human Science	94%
Greenwich Business School	95%
Faculty of Engineering and Science	97%
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science	88%

Those considering withdrawing

23 students told us they were considering withdrawing or interrupting this term.

20 were home students, 3 were international students. 21 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.

Of those who suggested that they were considering it, 6 students withdrew or were withdrawn, 2 interrupted their studies and 1 never completed registration. The remaining 14 have continued on their programmes.



23

Students told us they were considering withdrawing

6

students withdrew (or was withdrawn)

2

students interrupted their studies

1

did not complete registration

14

students are continuing with their studies

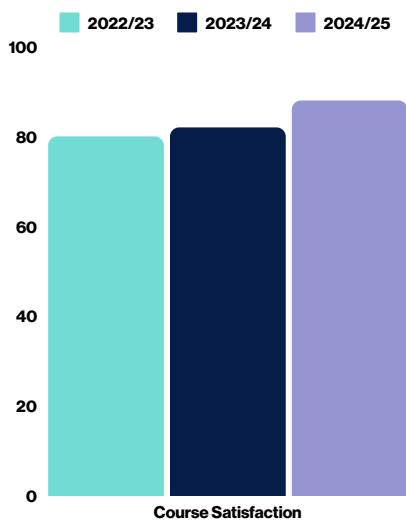
**Approx
£150,000**

of fee income retained this term*

*12 x UG home, 1 x UG overseas, 1 x PGT overseas

3 Year Comparison of Check In Calls in Term 1

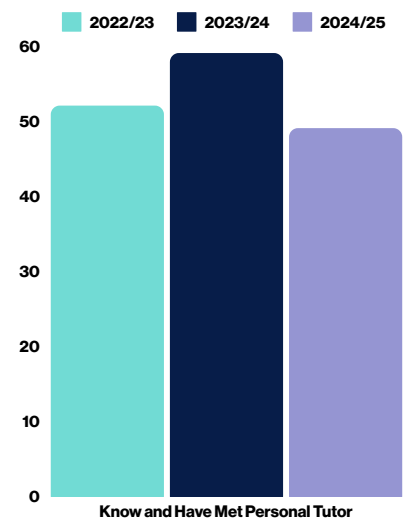
Over the years that the calling service has been running, the questions being asked have changed and adapted to the needs of students and the perceived pressures they may be facing. However, we do now have enough similar data to compare trends over three years in certain areas.



Academic life

Course satisfaction in Term 1 has been increased very slightly over the last three years on the calls by 8%.

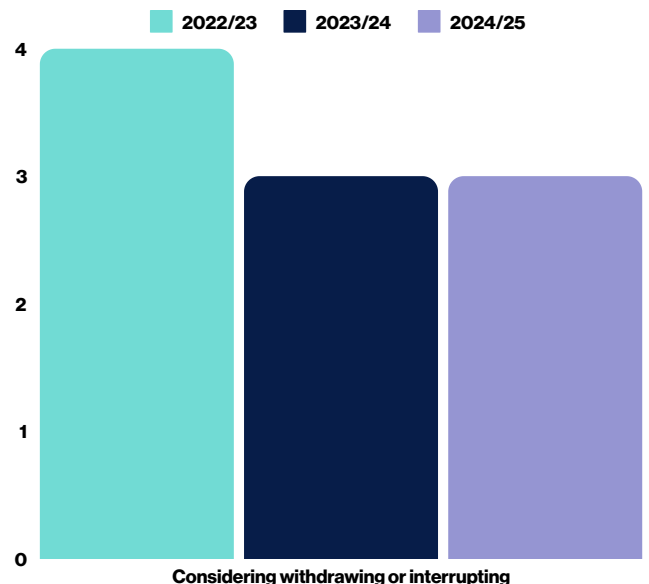
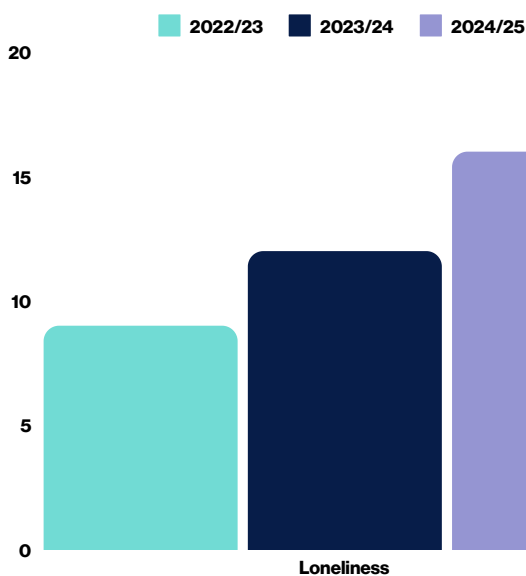
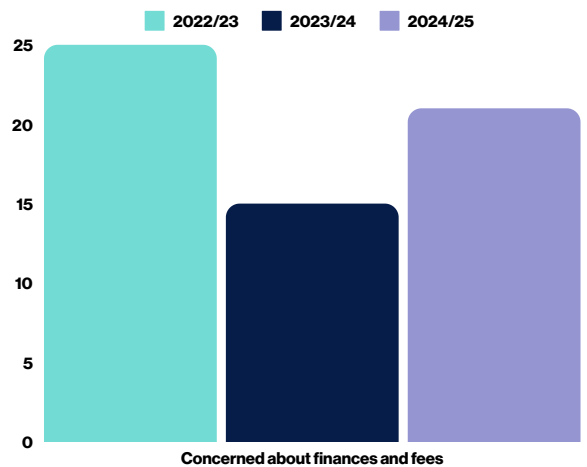
We have seen a dip in Term 1 regarding knowing and meeting personal tutors - this may be due to the changes in the framework and the ways in which students are utilising the Academic tutors and the Faculty Student Advisors.



Co-curricular student experiences

This term saw an increase in reported loneliness and concern about finances and fees, although financial concerns have not reached as high as in 2022/23. It will be interesting to see as the academic year progresses whether 2023/24 was outlier.

Reported loneliness has also increased in Term 1 compared to previous years, which is concerning. The reasons given have been primarily difficulty making friends and homesickness, so considering ways of encouraging connection for students may be important in coming terms.

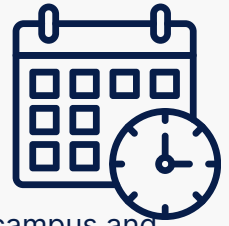


Recommendations

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 for several years and there are clear issues and barriers to resolving them.



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 Check-in Service 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.

Difficulties with SFE payments

The issue: We noticed this term that there were more issues with SFE payments than we have seen in previous years.

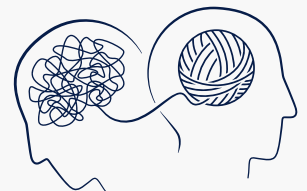


Students said: They had applied for SFE funding, and did not know why these payments were not granted. They were stressed due to the uncertainty.

The Check-in Service recommends: Ensure that there are accessible information sources regarding SFE and common SFE issues on the website. Where the issue is resolvable, for example is due to a January foundation year start, ensure this is communicated to students to alleviate distress and worry as soon as possible.

Mental health support for students post-withdrawal

The issue: After students have been withdrawn, either for non-engagement, non-payment or other issues, they are not able to access support from the Wellbeing team. This is often a time of high distress and impact on their mental health.



Students said: They were needing mental health support after being withdrawn, and particularly if they were appealing the decision.

The Check-in Service recommends: A three month grace period after withdrawal for students to access Wellbeing team support - this would be similar to the three month post-graduation period for student-staff jobs, and would cover the time it takes for a student to submit an appeal and receive the outcome.

Temporary Illness Support

The issue: It is unclear where students should go to get support for ongoing illness which has not yet lasted for 12 months, as this does not qualify as long-term, therefore they cannot get support from the Wellbeing team.



Students said: Students report that they are unsure where to go to get support for ongoing but as yet short term illness such as hospitalisations lasting several months, surgery with an extended recovery time or long COVID.

The Check-in Service recommends: Having a clear section on the university website, potentially in the Wellbeing section, as this is where students will look, that states the ways in which they can access support. Ensuring that tutors are equipped to support these students in the ways needed.

Support for student carers

The issue: Student carers are not offered any specific report from the university, and are at a much higher risk of dropping out, due to the specific pressures that carers face.



Students said: Student carers were concerned about how their caring responsibilities can conflict with their studies, including the emotional strain and needing extenuating circumstances extensions in certain circumstances.

The Check-in Service recommends: The university could begin to work towards the Carers Federation Quality Standard in Carer Support Accreditation, which aims to help universities move towards proactive support and increase student carer retention and opportunities for student carers.

Term 2 2024/25

In the coming term we have lots of exciting developments regarding our strategy and objectives. In Term 2 our priority order will be:

1. New January Starters
2. Students not in attendance
3. Students on placement
4. All other students

We will be calling between 27th January to 3rd April.

As well as this, in Term 2 we are launching our brand refresh which will increase the visibility of the service across both students and staff. You can see the new branding on our website here: <https://www.greenwichsu.co.uk/gsub/wrproject/>

We will also be moving forward with our research into WhatsApp outreach, which will reach many more students and give us a new angle for reaching students.

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.