

# GSU Retention Service

Term 3 Summary  
2023/24

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greenwich  
students'  
union

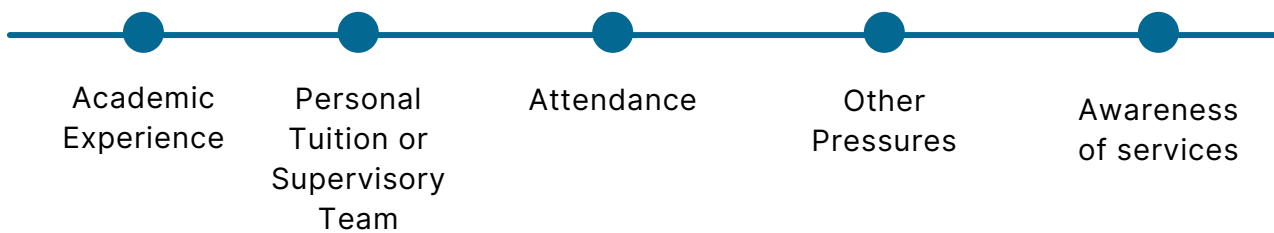
# Retention Service

## 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

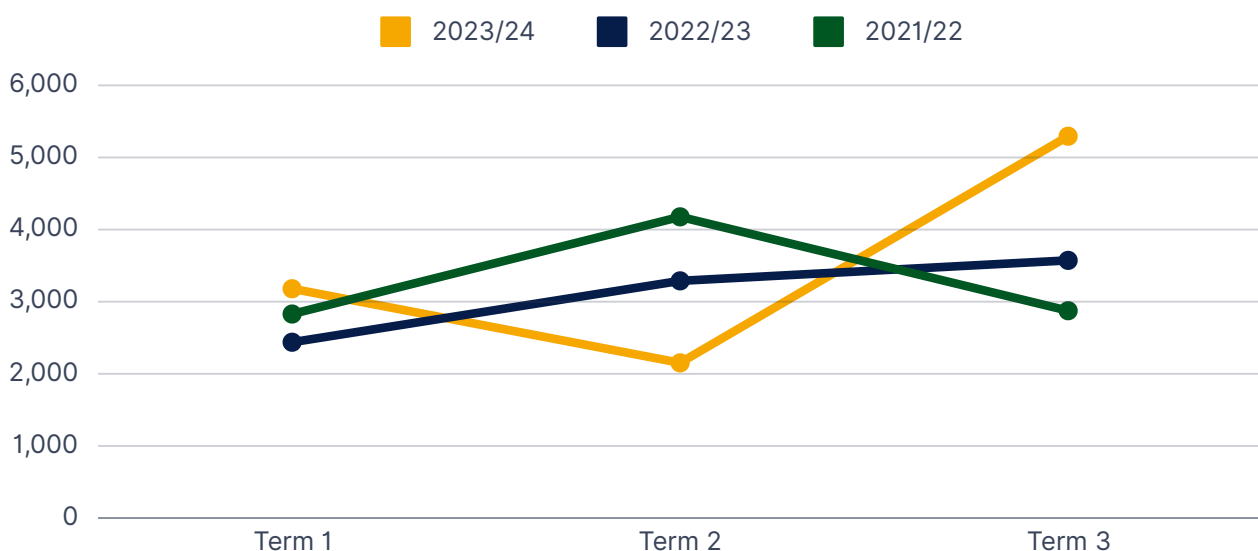
We prioritise calling students who are most at risk of being withdrawn due to nonattendance and students at risk of withdrawing or interrupting themselves.

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

## Number of calls made

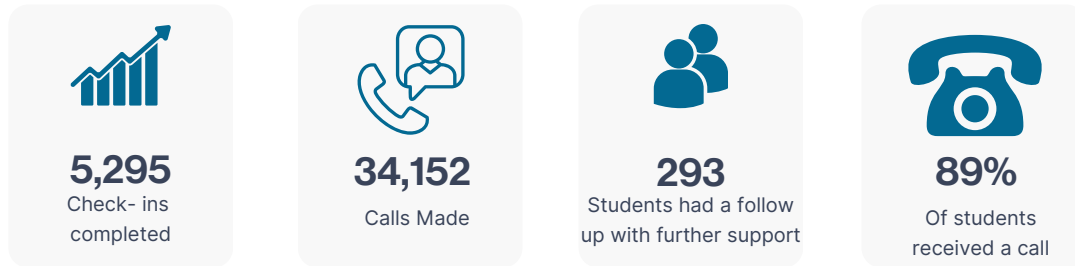
We completed calls to 5,295 students this term, which is the most calls that have been completed in one term over the lifetime of the Retention Service

Below is a graph showing completed calls per term over the past 3 years

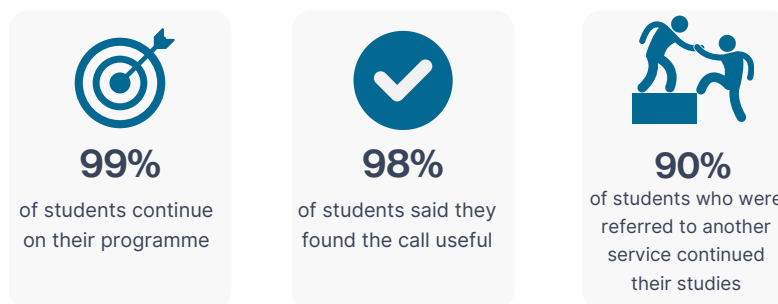


# Executive Summary

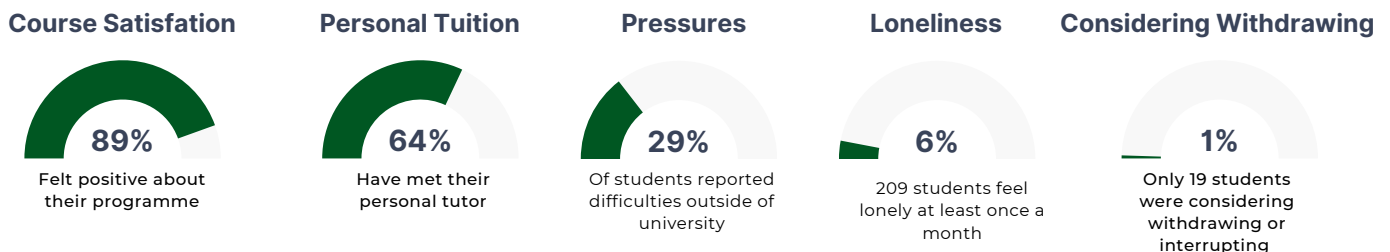
## KPI overview



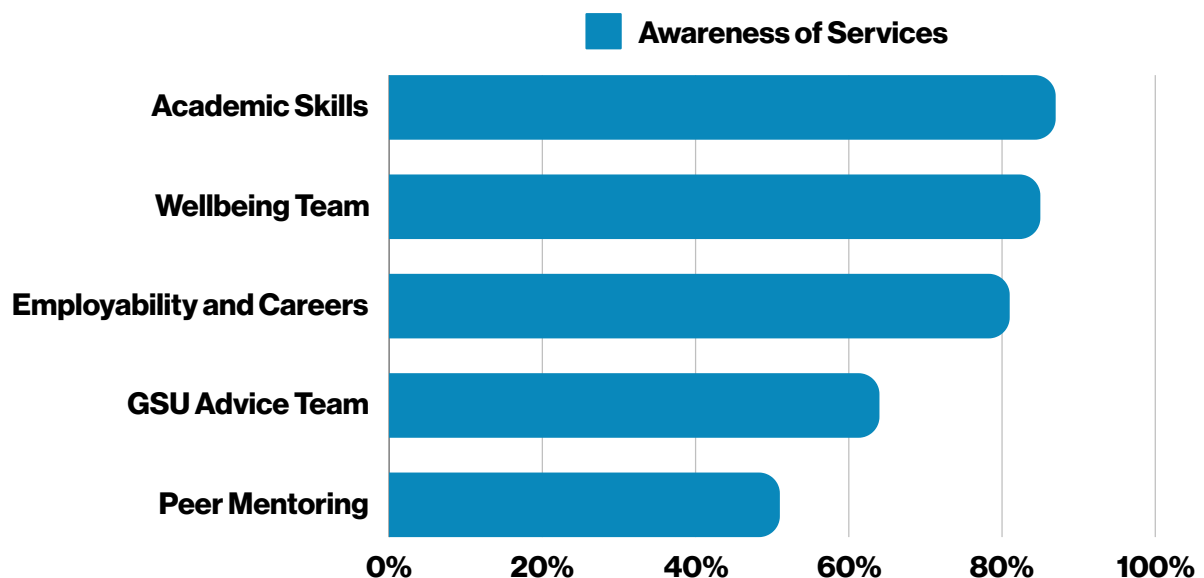
## Our Impact



## What are students saying?



## Support Service Awareness



# Term 3 Data Overview

This report gives a summary of the key findings, themes and recommendations from the Retention calling service in term 3 of 2023/24.

## Who we call

- April starters
- Students not in attendance
- PGT students at dissertation stage
- Interrupting students: w/c 3rd June
- Students resitting over summer: 8th-26th July
- Student Reps Offboarding calls

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

### Bangladeshi Student Check in

At the end of the term we also called Bangladeshi students to check in and signpost to places of support within the university, during the political instability and protests in Bangladesh. We spoke to 232 Bangladeshi students and the majority were primarily worried about not being able to contact family. They were all signposted to the Wellbeing team for support.

## Analysis of General Check In Calls

### Course Satisfaction

89% of students felt positively towards their course and only 2% negatively, with the remaining 9% offering a neutral response.

75% 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.

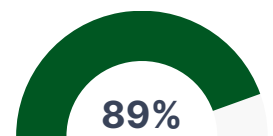
As previously, students mentioned big gaps in timetables and a lack of flexibility with the timetabling. As well as this, organisation of courses was repeatedly spoke about, with students suggesting that this could be improved.

Overseas students also ranked greater course satisfaction (91%) than their home counterparts (87%).

### Personal Tutoring

64% of all students know and have met their personal tutor and 18% know, but have not met them.

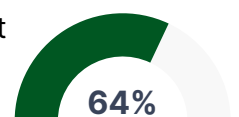
Next term we will be asking follow up questions regarding the quality of support students have received from their personal tutors.



Felt positive about their programme

**"The course was well organised, lecturers were knowledgeable and supportive."**

PGT Business student



Have met their personal tutor

# Co-Curricular Experience

## Loneliness

209 students we spoke to reported feeling lonely in Term 3 equating to 6% of respondents, 4% less than in Term 2. Of those who did report loneliness, the majority (32%) reported feeling lonely on a weekly basis. Students reporting loneliness were half overseas and half home students. 31% attributed their loneliness to difficulty making friends, and 22% cited homesickness.

This term was the lowest reported loneliness throughout the year, with the spike of loneliness being in Term 2. This may be due to the number of students spoken to in Term 3 who were not from priority groups, and were therefore less at risk of isolation and loneliness.

### Case Study

One student spoken to had had a particularly difficult time regarding the placement on their course and had decided that they did not want to continue with their studies. Despite this decision having been made, they were incredibly grateful to speak to someone about their experience, to feed this back to enable future change and spoke about feeling less lonely and isolated after the check in call, and follow up support.

## Cost of Living Concerns

9% of students are concerned about supporting themselves financially or paying their fees. Of those students concerned about their finances and fees, 48% 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. Part-time work and worries about employment were also repeated issues. Students, particularly international students, are struggling to find part-time work alongside their studies and they highlighted this as an additional pressure which was impacting their studies.

## 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.



# 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.



**293**

Students had a follow up with further support

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.

# Referrals to other services

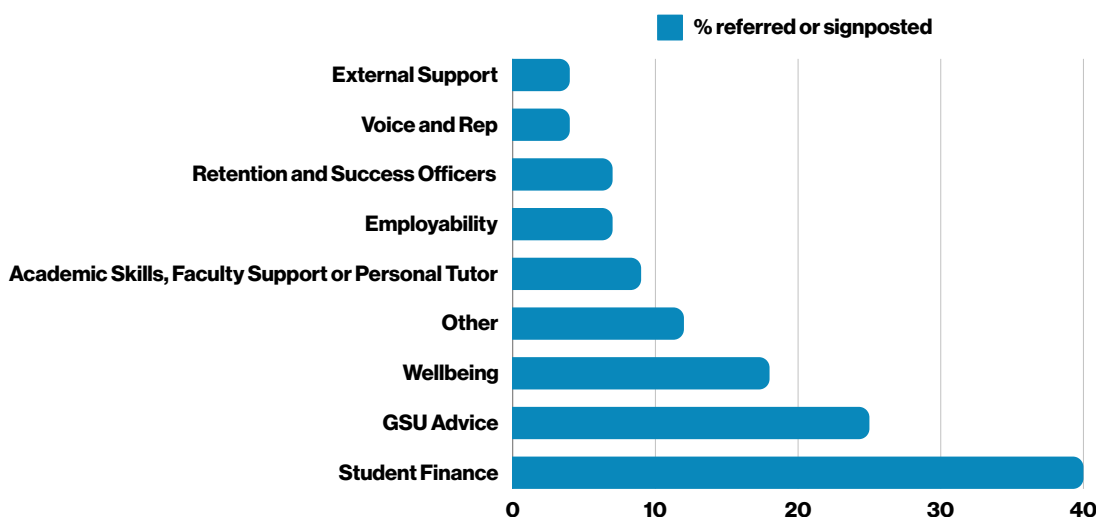
90 students were sent personalised follow up support based on their specific circumstance. Some of this support includes direct referrals to other services, as well as more complex signposting and ensuring students have the information about support that they need.



**90**

Students were sent personalised follow up support

**90%**  
of students who were directly referred to another service are continuing with their studies



In addition to those students who were directly referred for support, 293 students told us about financial concerns, social support, and course issues. We send these students additional information in support packs.



**142**

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



**53**

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



**19**

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

# Continuation Rate

99% of all students called continued on their programme.

This may reflect this point in the academic year, as the deadline to interrupt studies fell early in this term for September starters and students are less likely to withdraw in term 3.



**99%**

Of students called continue on their programme

Faculty	Continuation %
Faculty of Education, Health and Human Science	100%
Greenwich Business School	99%
Faculty of Engineering and Science	99%
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science	99%

## Those considering withdrawing

Only 19 students told us they were considering withdrawing or interrupting this term.

18 were home students, 1 was an international student. 17 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, only 1 student is currently withdrawn.



**19**

Students told us they were considering withdrawing

**1**

student withdrew (or was withdrawn)

**18**

students are continuing with their studies

**Approx  
£481,750**

of fee income retained this term\*

**Approx  
£936,550**

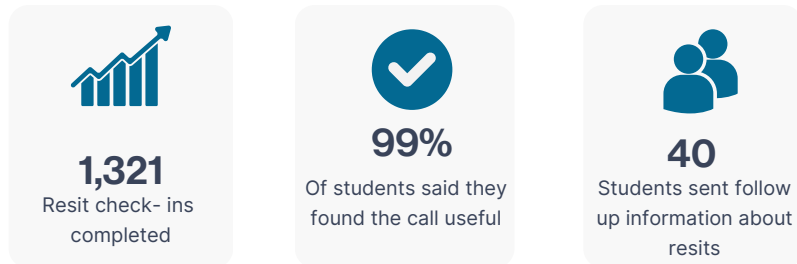
of fee income retained this academic year\*\*

\*16 x UG home, 1 x UG overseas, 1 x PGT home

\*\* Combined retained student fees over all terms

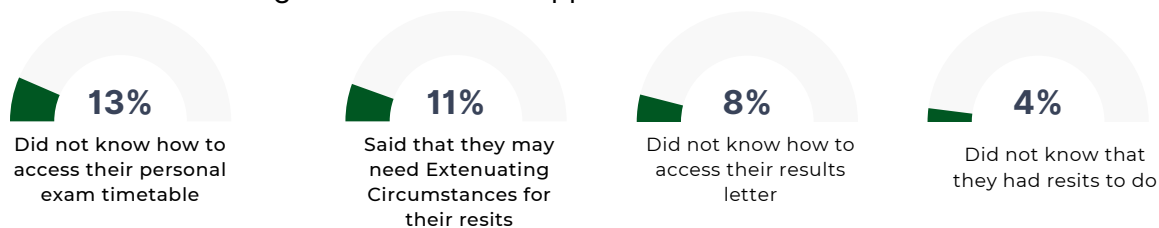
# Analysis of Resit Calls

## Call statistics



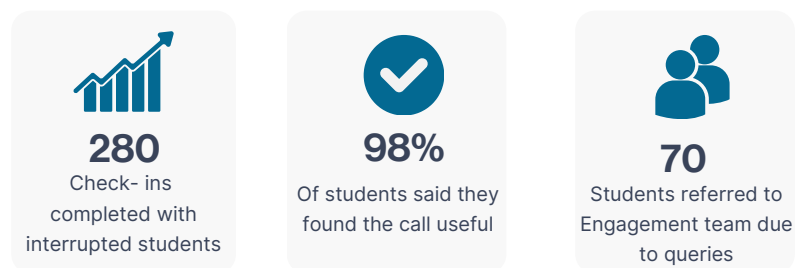
# Resit Specific Questions

When calling students who have resits over the summer, we ask questions specifically about the resits, as well as reminding students of the support that is available to them.

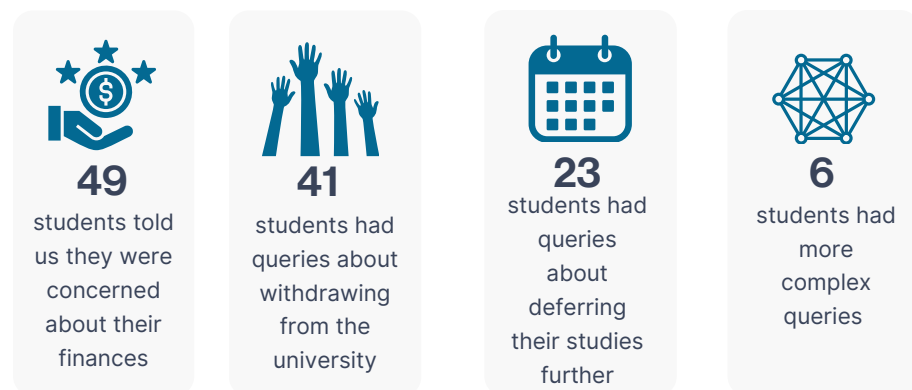
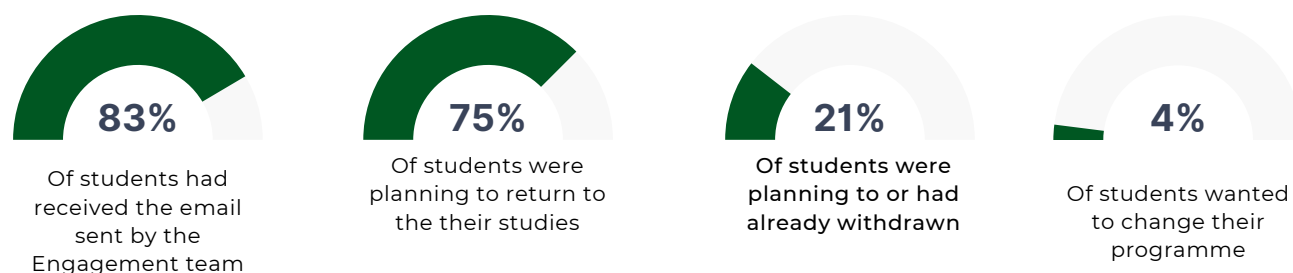


# Analysis of Interrupted Students Calls

## Call statistics



When calling students who are on an interruption, we ask about students' plans in terms of returning to university and if they have received the email sent by the Engagement team offering information about returning to university.

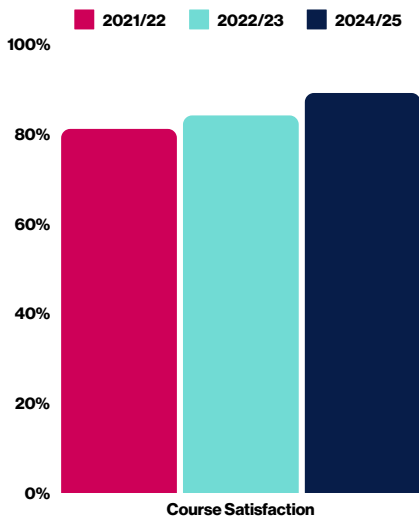


The majority of the follow up support needed by students was regarding how to defer their return further, how to communicate their withdrawal to the university and how to register for the coming term.



# 3 Year Comparison of Check In Calls in Term 3

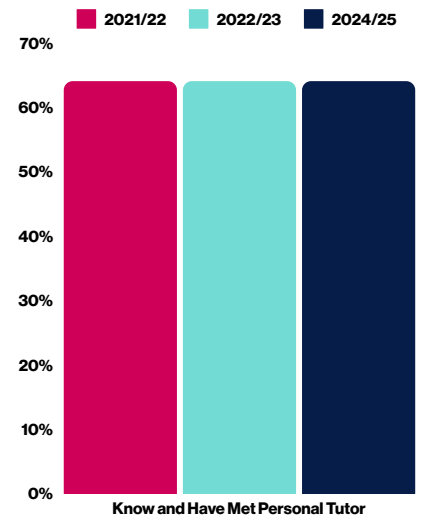
Over the years that the calling service has been running, the questions being asked have changed and adapted to the needs of students and the perceived pressures they may be facing. However, we do now have enough similar data to compare trends over three years in certain areas, particularly from term 3 reports.



## Academic life

Course satisfaction has risen slightly each year since 2021/22.

The percentage of students who know and have met their personal tutor by term 3 has stayed exactly the same. This suggests that more work can be done on personal tuition.

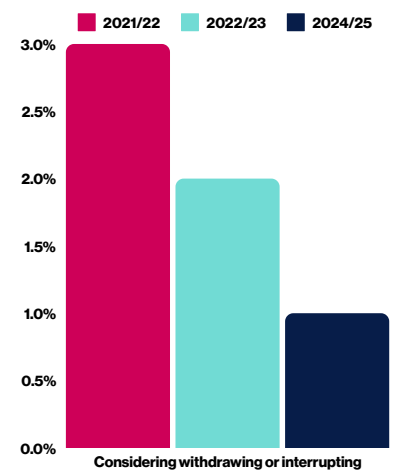
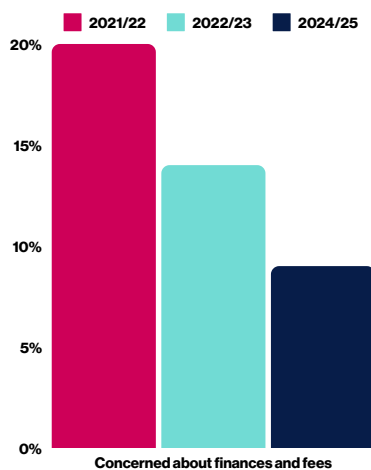
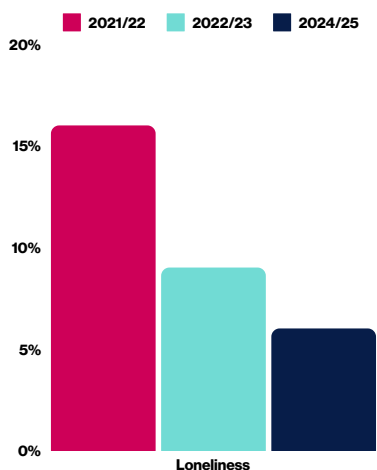


## Co-curricular student experiences

As would be expected, reported loneliness by students has dropped over the years since lockdown and remote study has been phased out or decreased. Programmes which have been put in place to support students to return to campus and connect with their peers again may be part of this decline. This is positive to see, however we are still seeing more than 1/20 students reporting that they feel lonely at least once a month.

Concerns about financially supporting themselves or paying fees have also dropped in this time. This is interesting, as we may have expected this to remain more consistent or have risen, given the economic context that students are currently studying in.

Finally, less students are reporting considering withdrawing or interrupting. These are very small numbers dropping from 3% to 1% over the three years, so we cannot infer anything significant from these numbers. However, it will be interesting to see if this trend continues in the coming year.



# 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 this year and in the previous academic year.



**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 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.

## Placements

**The issue:** During placements there is a higher risk of students having negative experiences which are missed by the university and this leaves students feeling isolated if they face any issues.



**Students said:** There were several students who spoke about difficulties with placements, including experiences of bullying and other issues, as well as difficulty finding placements for students who have to apply independently.

**The Retention Service recommends:** Ensure that students know who to contact for support with finding placements (if needed) and are given enough support to find them. Strengthen the processes for students reporting difficulties on placements so that they can be supported through any issues. Ensure students are given support to find placements when needed.

## Refunds

**The issue:** Some refunds are delayed and not reaching students for months after graduation.



**Students said:** They were feeling stressed and upset by the delays and lack of communication. Many had been waiting for their refunds for several months.

**Retention Service recommends:** Ensure that communication is sent regarding any refunds that are required for students and that students are given realistic timelines, so that they can plan financially around these timelines.

## Employability support in Term 3

**The issue:** Term 3 may be a particularly important term to host employability and employment activity so that students feel confident leaving university and moving into the UK job market.



**Students said:** They felt stressed and worried about being able to find a job after graduation. They were looking for more employment support from the university.

**The Retention Service recommends:** More employment support offered in Term 3 after assessments have concluded. These would need to be advertised very specifically to students who are graduating and looking for post-academia support.

## 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 Service 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.

## 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 Retention 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.

# Academic Year 24/25

In the coming academic year we have refocused our objectives for the service. We are focusing on the support and retention aims of the project, and therefore focusing on students who are at higher risk of withdrawal.

We have laid out a number of strategies which we will implement over the next academic year, to ensure that we are reaching the students that we would like to reach, and to provide the most high quality support to those students.

Strategy	Objective
<u>Outreach</u> Calls; updated survey Texts and WhatsApp; new ways of reaching students	<u>Outreach</u> Diversify contact methods and therefore reach more students Focus on support and retention aims Targeted support to students with an increased risk of withdrawal
<u>Follow Up Support</u> Signposting and referring Additional follow ups for escalated students	<u>Follow Up Support</u> Tracking outcomes for students and ensuring communication has reached them Consistent support and monitoring Early identification of unresolved or repeating issues
<u>Marketing</u> Social media Updated website New brand identity for the service	<u>Marketing</u> Increasing the visibility of the service Potentially increasing self-referrals
<u>Training and monitoring</u> More in-depth training and refreshers Call quality monitoring alongside 121s	<u>Training and Monitoring</u> Increased quality of support and signposting Callers feel supported and upskilled
<u>Collaborative targeted support</u> Linking with the university when reacting to global events Linking with Engagement and Opportunities to launch the AH and GRE buddy schemes	<u>Collaborative targeted support</u> Ensuring a joined up approach Increased visibility of the service for university staff Targeted support for students facing loneliness

If you have any further questions about our aims and strategies for next year, or questions about any of the information and recommendations given above, please to reach out to:

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