Retention Project

Term 3 Summary

The Business School

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greenwich
students'
union

Executive Summary (BUS)

1314
Check-ins completed

37
Non-engagement checks completed

7759
Students called

43
Referrals made for immediate support

This report gives a summary into the key findings, themes and recommendations from the Retention calling project. 52% of these were UG, 47% PGT and 1% PGR. 62% were overseas students and 38% home students.

Students were called in the following priority order:
- April starters
- Students not in attendance
- Interrupting students
- Remaining student cohorts

These groups are therefore over-represented in the below.

Escalations

Overall, 127 students were referred for support to University services. 43 of those students were from BUS (34%).

Of BUS students who were referred for further support, 44% of escalations needed support regarding financial issues. 14% of those referred were resitting students who were signposted to how to access their results letter.

Academic Experience

Course Satisfaction
90% of BUS students felt positively towards their course and only 1% negatively, with the remaining 9% offering a neutral response.

Overseas students also ranked greater course satisfaction (94%) than their home counterparts (85%).

Academic relationships
61% of BUS students know and have met their personal tutor and 23% know, but have not met them. 15% reported not knowing who their personal tutor was.

Absences
37 students who completed the survey were called regarding non-engagement with the course. The most frequent reason for non attendance cited was due to illness (35%).

Withdrawal/ Interruptions
98% of BUS students were not considering withdrawing or interrupting at the point of contact. All students that reported considering these options, were referred to the Retention and Success Officers and were provided with additional resources and support by GSU.

Co-Curricular Experience

Belonging
Students were asked if they ever feel lonely during their time at University. 9% of BUS students reported feeling lonely, and of those that did, 39% reported feeling lonely on a weekly basis and 27% reported feeling lonely less than once a month. 52% of these students were overseas students and 48% were home students.

Themes that came through from reported loneliness included international students struggling to make friends and feeling homesick, as well as mature students feeling separated due to age differences.

Financial
13% of BUS students were concerned about supporting themselves financially or paying their fees. Of the 102 students who were sent support packs, 84% were sent our financial support pack.

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
- Finances and fees
- Travel/ Commuting

53% of students reporting they experienced other pressures mentioned some kind of financial stress or pressure.

Service usage

During the calls, students are asked if they are aware of and have used, the following services. Below indicates awareness levels within BUS for students:

- **Peer mentoring:**

Used (9%), Aware, not used (36%), Not used or aware (51%)

- **GSU Activity**

Used (26%), Not used (74%)

- **Employability and careers**

Used (36%), Aware, not used (46%), Not used or aware (17%)

- **Wellbeing team**

Used (12%), Aware, not used (60%), Not used or aware (28%)

- **GSU advice team**

Used (15%), Aware, not used (48%), Not used or aware (37%)

All who are not aware of services or have not used them, are given information and details on how to access them.

All students who complete the survey are asked whether or not they found the call helpful. 98% of BUS students asked reported that the call was useful, and many mentioned that they were now aware of services they had not previously known about.

Recommendations (from the Retention Project Annual Review 22-23)

The recommendations made here stem from the conversations had with students across all faculties 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.