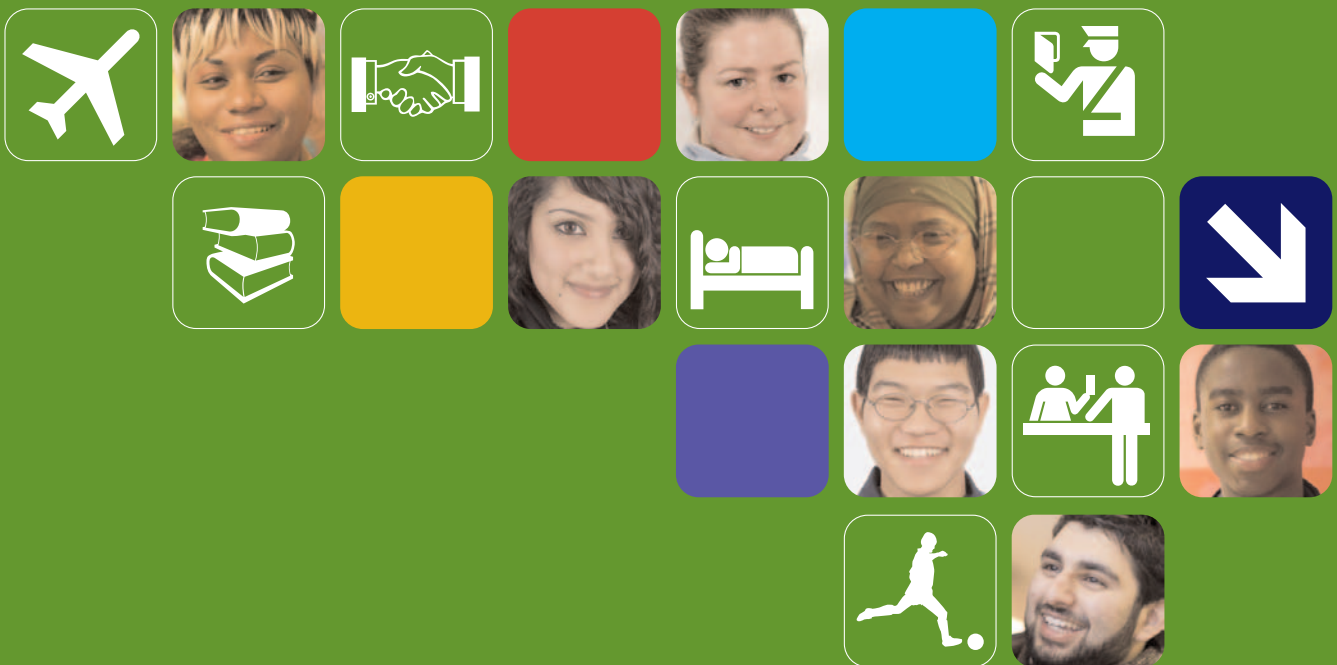


THE EXPERIENCES OF  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN  
UK FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

NEW  
HORIZONS

REPORT OF THE UKCOSA SURVEY



In association with the Association of Colleges,  
the Association of Scotland's Colleges,  
British Council and English UK

**UKCOSA**  
The Council  
for International  
Education

**THE EXPERIENCES OF  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN  
UK FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES**

**NEW  
HORIZONS** 

REPORT OF THE UKCOSA SURVEY

**In association with the Association of Colleges,  
the Association of Scotland's Colleges,  
British Council and English UK**

UKCOSA: The Council for International Education is the national advisory body serving the interests of international students in the UK and those who work with them. It does so through research, publications and guidance notes, a national training programme, dedicated advice lines for students and advisers and liaison and advocacy with institutions, agencies and government.

Its members include all UK universities, those colleges which are active internationally and a range of specialist and representative bodies.

UKCOSA: The Council for International Education  
9-17 St Albans Place  
London N1 0NX  
[www.ukcosa.org.uk](http://www.ukcosa.org.uk)

UKCOSA is a registered Charity No. 1095294 and a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No 4507287.

© UKCOSA 2006  
ISBN 1 870679 40 7

# CONTENTS

List of tables and figures	4
Acknowledgements	5
Foreword	6
<b>A. Introduction</b>	
Background	8
Methodology	9
Demographics of respondents	9
International comparisons	12
About the report	12
<b>B. Findings</b>	
<b>Chapter 1 The learning experience</b>	15
Satisfaction with course	16
Learning English	18
The cultural experience	20
Personal development and gaining independence	20
<b>Chapter 2 Student services: meeting practical needs</b>	21
Students' concerns pre- and post-arrival	22
Sources of information	23
Support services	25
Accommodation	28
<b>Chapter 3 Social contact and leisure time</b>	31
Social opportunities	32
Making friends across cultures	33
<b>Chapter 4 Immigration, employment and finance issues</b>	37
Visas and immigration	38
Part-time work	39
Financial issues	41
Banks	43
<b>Chapter 5 Expectations and realities:         whether students got what they came for</b>	45
<b>Chapter 6 Overall impressions</b>	49
<b>C. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	53
<b>Bibliography</b>	57
<b>Appendix 1: Survey questions</b>	60
<b>Appendix 2: Domicile of respondents</b>	71

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

<b>Table 1</b>	Respondents by course and UK region	11
<b>Table 2</b>	Best things about living and studying the UK (top 10 responses)	18
<b>Table 3</b>	“What would have made your experience better?” (top 10 responses)	18
<b>Table A1</b>	Full list of countries or territories of domicile of respondents, by region	71
<b>Figure 1</b>	Domicile and course type of respondents	10
<b>Figure 2</b>	Gender and age of respondents	10
<b>Figure 3</b>	Satisfaction with aspects of course	16
<b>Figure 4</b>	Students’ worries and concerns over time	22
<b>Figure 5</b>	Satisfaction with information sources	24
<b>Figure 6</b>	Use of support services	26
<b>Figure 7</b>	Satisfaction with support services	26
<b>Figure 8</b>	Accommodation issues	28
<b>Figure 9</b>	Satisfaction with accommodation and help from college	28
<b>Figure 10</b>	“Who would you say most of your friends here in the UK are?”	33
<b>Figure 11</b>	Perceptions of UK people & society	34
<b>Figure 12</b>	“How would recent increases in fees for visas and extensions affect your decision to study in the UK?”	38
<b>Figure 13</b>	Reasons for financial hardship	42
<b>Figure 14</b>	Reasons for choosing the UK	47
<b>Figure 15</b>	Reasons for choosing college by course type	47
<b>Figure 16</b>	Students’ main objectives by course type	48
<b>Figure 17</b>	Satisfaction with course in general	51
<b>Figure 18</b>	Satisfaction with aspects of stay in the UK	51

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UKCOSA's thanks and grateful acknowledgements go to:

- The British Council for co-funding the survey
- Those who attended Steering Group meetings and commented on questionnaire design and drafts of the report, namely Geoff Pine, Principal of Greenwich Community College (Chair of the Steering Group); Jo Clough, and her successor Diane Mullen at the Association of Colleges; Liz Speake of the Association of Scotland's Colleges; Jane Lowther and Janet Ilieva of the British Council; Richard Truscott of English UK; Maeve Borges of Colchester Institute; Sandra Tavakoli of City of Bath College and Julia Weedon of Edinburgh's Telford College
- The colleges who arranged for students to participate in the survey, namely:

Aberdeen College	Edinburgh's Telford College
Bournemouth and Poole College	Glasgow Metropolitan College
Bradford College	Greenwich Community College
Broxtowe College Nottingham (now part of Castle College Nottingham)	Hastings College of Arts and Technology
Cardiff College (Coleg Glan Hafra)	Itchen College
Chichester College of Arts, Science & Technology	John Leggott Sixth Form College
City College Manchester	Josiah Mason Sixth Form College
City of Bath College	Kingston College
City of Sunderland College	New College Nottingham
Colchester Institute	Newcastle College
Cornwall College	Solihull College
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College	Stevenson College
	Swansea College

We are also grateful to all those who gave up time to comment on the report and otherwise assist with the project. Any errors or omissions, however, remain the responsibility of the authors.

**Beatrice Merrick**  
**Judy Robinson**  
October 2006

## FOREWORD



International students in UK colleges are a small but important group. Their diversity is striking – 641 students from 88 different countries responded to the UKCOSA survey, some under 18, others over 40, on a diverse range of courses, at colleges across the UK. Yet, despite this diversity of characteristics, a strong common experience emerges from the report: students improving their future life chances by gaining new skills and qualifications, improving their English in particular, developing their independence and experiencing, perhaps for the first time, a truly international and multicultural environment.

There is much in this report of which the sector can be proud. International students show a high degree of satisfaction with studying in UK colleges, on a par with the satisfaction shown by their peers in our higher education institutions. They rate extremely positively the support from teaching staff and advice services. They appreciate the particular strengths of UK further education in offering skills-based practical training. Those in host families are particularly appreciative of the warm welcome they receive.

Nevertheless, in a competitive international market place, we cannot afford to be complacent, and the report also identifies areas where colleges can give themselves a competitive advantage: helping students develop their employability by securing appropriate part-time work while studying; helping students better budget and manage their money; offering improved social opportunities and facilitating contact with UK students and other locals.

Government and national agencies, too, have their role to play in removing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, and ensuring the “official welcome” balances compliance with customer service. The report identifies a number of areas for action.

In the last couple of years, the sector has demonstrated the priority it gives to the quality of the international student experience, by the introduction of the Association of College’s Charter for Excellence in International Education and Training in England, and the International Student Recruitment and Support Good Practice Guidelines in Scotland. These provide frameworks against which colleges can continue to benchmark themselves, particularly in the light of data from this report.

It is also timely that this report appears just as work is beginning on the second phase of the Prime Minister’s Initiative for International Education (PMI), allowing the findings and subsequent discussions in the sector to influence development of the PMI, and in particular the strand focused on the student experience. We hope that this “New Horizons” report will provide a useful starting point for colleges collectively and individually to reflect on and share best practice, for government, regional and national agencies to reflect on their roles, and for all players to ensure the UK continues to extend the warmest possible welcome to international students.

**Geoff Pine**

Principal, Greenwich Community College

**A.**

# **Introduction**

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

The aim of this survey was to increase knowledge of why students choose to study in UK Further Education (FE) colleges, what they wanted to get out of their time there and whether they were satisfied with the experience they had. It aimed to find out what was being done well, and to identify areas for improvement for colleges, regional and national bodies and government.

Research into the experiences and expectations of international students<sup>1</sup> in UK FE has to date been somewhat limited. To start with, we have no reliable centrally collected data about the demographics of this group, as the student data reported to the Learning and Skills Council and its equivalents include only voluntary fields on domicile and nationality. Their data suggest there are about 70,000 international (i.e. non-UK domiciled) students in UK further education. There are also known to be significant numbers of international students in private sector colleges, but data about this sector are even scarcer. The private sector was not included in the current survey, but developments such as the DfES Register of Providers and future Home Office moves to regulate institutions' ability to accept international students on visas should in future improve knowledge of the scale of this sector and facilitate its inclusion in future surveys.

Not all UK FE colleges are involved in international activity, and many are involved in activities other than the recruitment of international students such as partnerships, student and staff exchanges, in-country courses and capacity building. The Association of Colleges' (AoC) 2001 report found 191 out of 243 responding colleges claiming to be actively engaged/interested in some form of international work. 133 colleges listed student recruitment to the UK as one of the areas of work they were involved in. Another indicator of the scope of international work in FE is membership of UKCOSA: 200 public sector FE colleges currently belong to UKCOSA, including 17 in Scotland.

Even though not all FE colleges are internationally active, the recruitment of international students in further education is both important for the sector itself, and to the wider education sector for its role as part of the progression route for students who may go from language course to foundation course, A-levels or vocational courses, and/or to higher education. It is therefore vital that we understand the expectations and experiences of the students within this sector, and learn how best to meet their needs.

1. International students are defined here as all students not normally domiciled in the UK, i.e. not only as those paying the overseas rate of fee. The survey was restricted to full-time students who had been studying in the UK for at least three months.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Previous experience suggested that it could be hard to generate responses to online surveys from students in FE, so colleges were asked to administer a paper survey to students in class or in specially arranged meetings, and to ensure students handed in the completed surveys, in sealed envelopes, before leaving. The college then sent them on to UKCOSA for processing.

In total 641 valid responses were received from 25 colleges across Scotland, England and Wales. No colleges in Northern Ireland responded to the invitation to participate, but data suggest the numbers studying there are very small indeed at present.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS**

Of the 641 students who completed the survey, 283 were undertaking English language or English Plus courses; 124 were taking A-levels, AS-levels, Highers or International Baccalaureate; 147 were on Access or Foundation courses; 70 were on BTEC HND courses; 27 were taking degree courses and 18 were taking other types of courses. The number of students on degree courses was too small to allow conclusions to be drawn about this group. It is possible that it was easier for colleges to conduct the survey with groups of students in classes where all the students were international, e.g. EFL and Foundation courses, and that the sampling method may therefore have skewed the profile of students. In the absence of national data on the course profile of students, this cannot be verified.

In terms of domicile, the largest single group of students were from East Asia (237), followed by the EU (118), North Africa and the Middle East (77), Sub-Saharan Africa (50), South-East Asia (39), Central and South Asia (37), non-EU Europe (36) and the Americas and Oceania (25). See Figure 1 overleaf, and also Appendix 2 for a full list of countries and regions.

When asked about their knowledge of English, 354 considered English entirely a foreign language, 243 said they had done some or all of the education in their home country in English and 20 classed themselves as native speakers. However, there was some room for doubt as to how students interpreted the second category in particular, and therefore this question did not provide a reliable indicator of students' levels of competence in English.

Figure 1 Domicile and course type of respondents

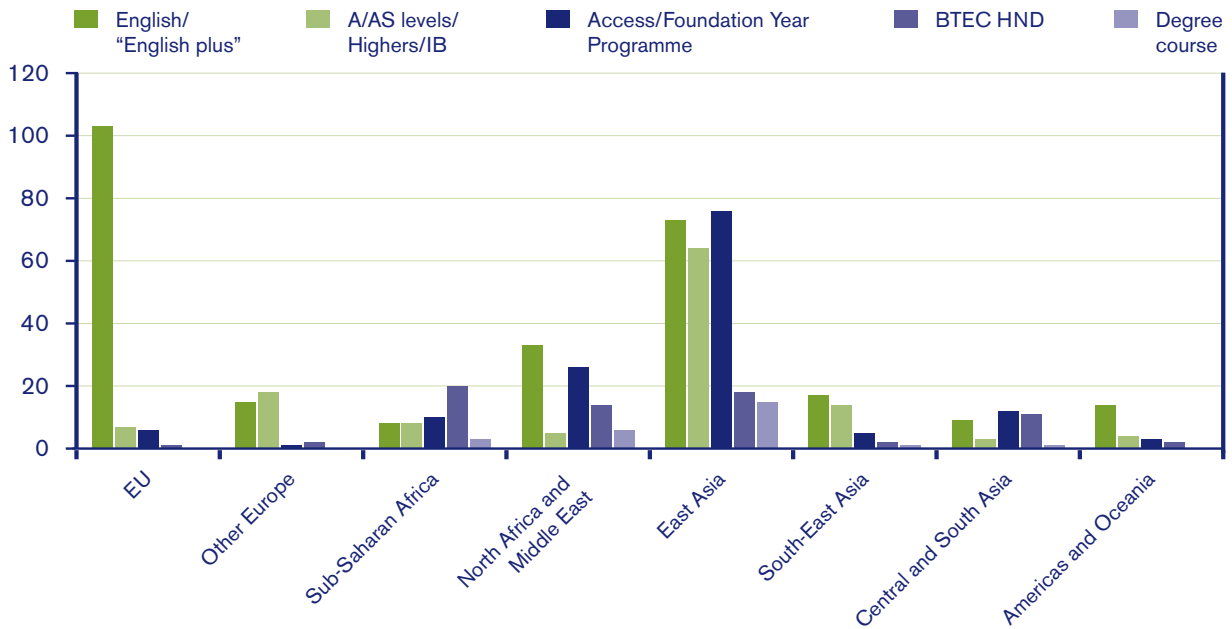
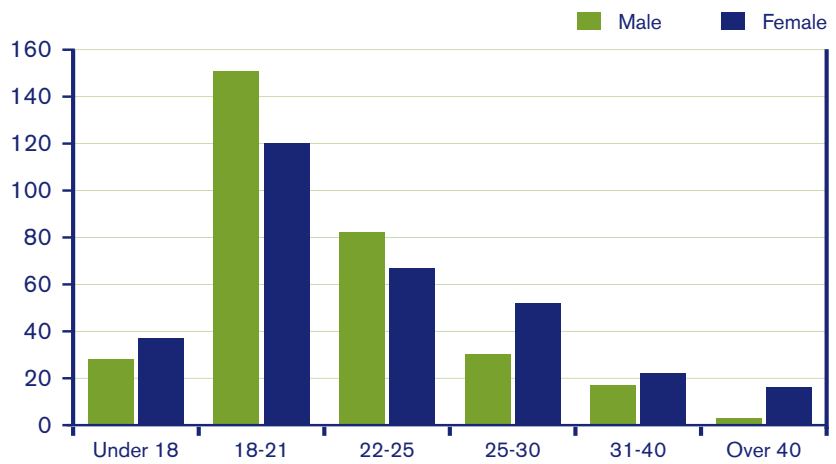


Figure 2 Gender and age of respondents



The gender distribution was almost exactly even, with 312 males and 315 females (14 not stated). The largest group of respondents (272) were between 18 and 21, and a further 151 were between 22 and 25. 10% were under 18, and only 3% were over 40. Figure 2 gives the distribution by age and gender.

18% of students had been studying in the UK for less than six months, 35% for between 6 months and a year, 32% for 1-2 years and 15% for more than 2 years.

For the purpose of the survey analysis the responses have been grouped according to the following areas of the UK (number of responses per region given in brackets):  
 Greater London (73)                                      East and South-East England (112)  
 South-West and Wales\* (123)                      Midlands (112)  
 North of England (121)                                Scotland (100)

It is worth noting that the proportion of students on each type of course varied greatly from one region to another. Again, without national level data, we cannot tell whether this is representative or was due to the sampling method or the small number of colleges per region. For example, the table below shows that the proportion of students taking BTECs varied from 3% in East and South-East England to 24% in Scotland, and the proportion taking English language courses varied from 30% in the North of England to 58% in East and South-East England. These variations make it hard to detect variations in students' experience, e.g. relating to cost of living or impressions of local people, that were linked to the location as opposed to other student characteristics.

**Table 1** Respondents by course and UK region

	English/ "English plus"	A/AS levels/ Highers/IB	Access/ Foundation Year Programme	BTEC HND	Degree course
East and South-East England	58%	13%	19%	3%	9%
Scotland	56%	10%	4%	24%	4%
South-West and Wales	47%	28%	19%	11%	2%
Midlands	37%	16%	35%	11%	4%
Greater London	37%	19%	32%	5%	1%
North of England	30%	27%	31%	11%	4%
<b>Survey average</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>

\*Numbers for Wales alone were too small to allow for reliable conclusions to be drawn in most cases.

### **INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS**

Several of the UK's "competitor" countries, namely Australia, Canada and New Zealand, have carried out surveys including international students in their equivalents of the UK's FE sector (Smith et al, 2002; Prairie Research Associates, 2004, Ward & Masgoret, 2004). None provide data which is directly comparable with this study, so no attempt has been made to cross-reference them here. However, the findings show many common features in terms of students' concerns, priorities and experiences and although direct benchmarking against these competitor countries is not possible, those wishing to compare might find some material which is indicative of relative strengths and weaknesses.

### **ABOUT THE REPORT**

A copy of the survey can be found at Appendix 1. Most of the data gathered were quantitative, but a number of open questions were also included to allow students to expand on answers given in tick box form, and to allow them to include any issues of concern to them which the researchers had omitted.

The report gives an analysis of the quantitative data generated by the survey, supplemented where appropriate by quantitative analyses of the topics raised in the open sections for comparison. We have also included students' comments in their own words to add flavour and variety, but it should be noted that not all of the comments made reflect the views of the majority of students – quotes should generally be taken as expressing the views of individual students, unless the data elsewhere in the report indicate they are widely shared. However, the diversity of the international student population reinforces the importance of reflecting individual viewpoints and a range of opinions in any work of this nature. The report aims to capture the diverse experiences of international students, rather than suggesting that there is a single "experience".

# **B.**

# **Findings**



## CHAPTER 1

# The learning experience

*“I really love the course I am doing and especially the teachers who are friendly, helpful, enthusiastic and caring. My teachers have encouraged me a lot in my course and in my results.”*

# CHAPTER 1

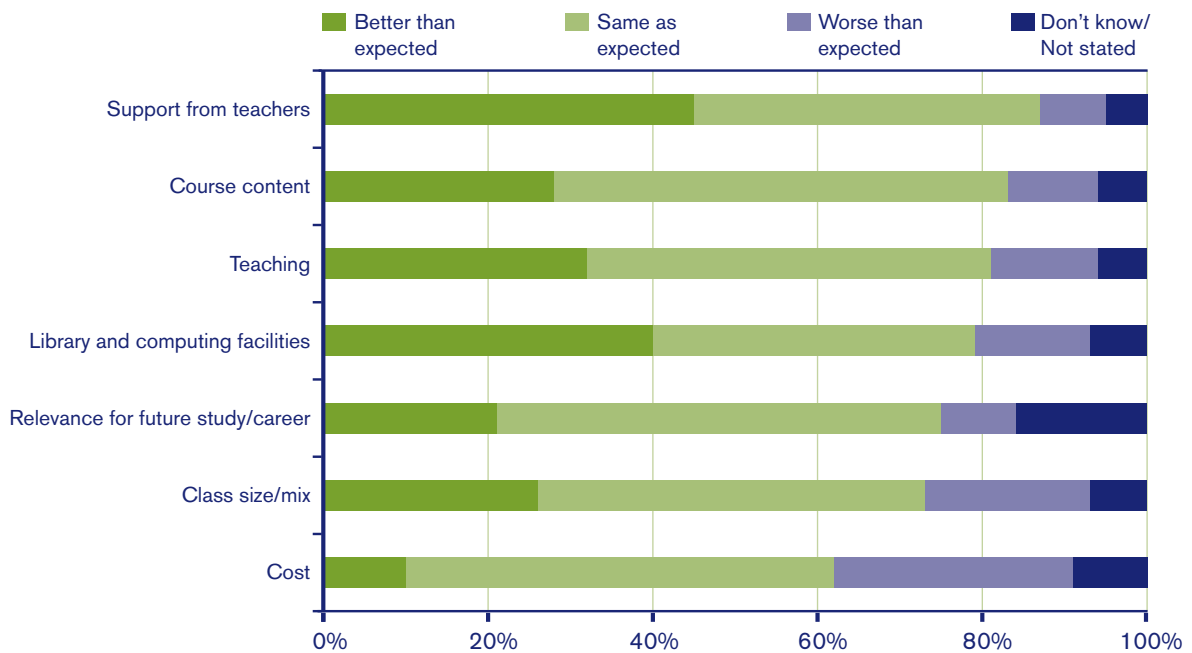
## THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

*“The best thing about studying here is the amount of practical work we do in classes. I was trained very well to conduct experiments with excellent quality equipment.”*

### SATISFACTION WITH COURSE

Students’ satisfaction with their academic experience was good, with 88% describing themselves as satisfied or very satisfied with their course in general (see figure 17 on page 50). This almost exactly matches the 87% satisfaction level found in UKCOSA’s survey of students in higher education (UKCOSA, 2004). Satisfaction with course content was good with 83% rating it as the same or better than expected, 81% rating the way the course was taught and 87% rating support from teachers as the same or better than expected. Satisfaction with library and computing facilities was also high (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Satisfaction with aspects of course



Some students chose to comment on the quality of their teachers in response to the open questions. The supportiveness of teachers was remarked on, as were differences between UK teaching and learning styles and those previously encountered, such as more interactive learning and styles which integrated theoretical and practical work and encouraged students to become independent thinkers.

Class size and mix of students were somewhat less positively rated, with 20% rating these as below expectations. This finding would merit further exploration, to see whether the disappointment related for example to class size, dominance of particular national groups, or absence of UK students – the latter was certainly mentioned by students (see Chapter 3).

Although 62% rated the cost of the course as the same or better than expected, 29% rated it as worse. The latter raises questions about whether students were sufficiently well informed about course costs in advance, and where the deficiencies lay. Chapter 4 shows that unexpected extra course costs were sometimes a factor in student hardship, and this issue must therefore be taken seriously.

A small percentage of negative statements among the open comments about courses focused on absences of teachers, problems with course availability, a lack of UK students in class, and of course the costs. One comment identified a lack of course reviews *“There is no regular meeting even every term to discuss problems. We really need it”*.

Levels of satisfaction were higher among BTEC HND students than other courses, fitting with students' praise for courses which integrate the theoretical with the practical.

Students from Sub-Saharan Africa were more likely than other groups to rate their course exceeding expectations (58% compared to 28% on average), and students from East Asia were more likely to rate their courses as meeting but not exceeding their expectations (66% compared to a 55% average).

***“The practical approach to most of the concepts that you study in class. The student/lecturer relationship is awesome. The best thing about studying in the UK is that I can have more practices than in my home country not just theories.”***

***“New methods of teaching and studying. Up to date information.”***

***“The teaching style is totally different from my own country. It makes it easy for me to learn from teachers.”***

***“They are the best professionals I've ever met. They should be valued by the college management board.”***

***“They encourage individual thinking.”***

***“The studying environment is very friendly, the teachers are co-operative with students.”***

***“The attitude of the tutors towards the foreign students has been fantastic.”***

*“To improve my English, to feel confident in speaking English.”*

*“Trying to learn English and practise it in the same time.”*

*“Easy to get a chance to practise my English.”*

### LEARNING ENGLISH

Although the questionnaire asked about whether learning English was an influential factor in students’ decision to come to the UK, it did not ask them about their actual experience of learning English. However, this merits some discussion in view of the high priority it was given even by students who were not on English courses, and the large number of unprompted comments in the open comments section: 32% of students surveyed cited learning, or improving their English as one of the best aspects of their stay, and it also came top of the areas for improvement (11% of students).

**Table 2** Best things about living and studying the UK (top 10 responses)

Learning/improving English	32%
British culture/traditions/lifestyle	22%
Mixing with people from all different countries and cultures	19%
Meeting people – host family, friends	14%
Being independent/learning to live alone	12%
Get the qualification/education	12%
New experiences	10%
Good accommodation/facilities	8%
Good teachers/staff at college	5%
Friendly people	5%

**Table 3** What would have made your experience better? (top 10 responses)

Improving/using English more	11%
Meeting more British people/student	11%
More independence/More free time/More confidence in myself	11%
More social/leisure activities, trips to other cities etc	9%
Better job opportunities	9%
Making more friends/Meeting new people	9%
People being more open minded (friendlier)	5%
Lower tuition fees/more funding	5%
Lower cost of living/cheaper accommodation	3%
Better accommodation	3%
Nothing – all OK	8%

What emerged from students' comments was the centrality of English as a global generic skill which many students regarded as a qualification in its own right, effectively a passport to better life-chances.

Several mentioned the benefits of immersion for language learning:

*"I can improve my English skills quickly"*

*"I can learn English easily not only in the college but also in daily life with my British friends"*

*"I can practise my English with native speakers."*

*"The best thing for me is... I can learn a confident English in UK."*

Students often found they needed to use English to make themselves understood not only to teachers but to other students. For some, this may well have been the first time they used English as a lingua franca or for genuine communicative purposes. Friendships as well as study depended on communication in English.

*"The best things were the social experience, meeting people... It was also improving my English and discovering new places."*

*"The best thing is how to communicate with English people and International students. It is interesting and hard to know."*

Students also commented on the use of English as the medium of study and also the use of English with confidence for the world of work:

*"I speak a lot of English in my work"*

*"I am more using English Language for study"*

*"Studying all in English. It can improve my English level"*

*"I'm teaching martial art in a small gym. It is very good experience for me to improve my English and to make UK friends even if I can teach just 2 hours in a week."*

A small number specifically commented on learning British English:

*"You can learn British English. I have studied American English for years but now I think British English is more beautiful"*

*"The opportunity to learn English and get British accent rather than American one"*

*"I am learning British English as it is the best"*

***"The main reason I am here is to improve my English and make my life easier for me and my children in the future. With good English I can find better job."***

***"Living and study in the UK which are better to improve my English and learn some of culture. It's good for my life."***

***“Meeting people from other cultural/nationality backgrounds.”***

***“The best things about living and studying in the UK are that you can mix with people from other countries and you can live in a country different from your own.”***

***“UK is a multicultural place with a lot of people from different areas of the world.”***

***“Meet new people from different backgrounds which I never expected.”***

***“I like the independence and freedom that I have in the UK. It makes me open up myself to try new things.”***

***“The best things that had happened to me was that I’ve had better manners and become very broad-minded.”***

***“I become more extrovert and confident ... [and] ... listen to different people’s opinion.”***

***“Having an open mind and experiencing what it’s like to be a Western teen.”***

## **THE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE**

When students were asked about their aims in coming to the UK, there was more interest in getting experience of living in a foreign country (38%) than experiencing British culture in particular (28%). In response to the open questions, 19% of students mentioned unprompted the benefits of meeting people from many different cultures and countries. They rated highly “Getting to know different countries’ culture and people” and “Understanding cultural difference”.

However, when asked about the best aspects of their time in the UK, 22% mentioned British culture, tradition and lifestyles.

*“To meet British people and see how the society here works. To see how the society has developed considering the feminist movement, the Working Class struggle, Black Power movement, comparing with my home country. To experience the ethnic mix.”*

*“Experiencing a new culture. Freedom. I think UK is one of the most free countries. Experiencing the advancement in technology. Experience living with different races.”*

*“The best part has been the exposure to UK culture and working conditions out here. Everything is really systematic which helps in managing time to a great extent.”*

UK colleges therefore offer a double benefit, in terms of the opportunities to experience life in the UK and at the same time to participate in a multicultural atmosphere in college and/or local communities.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GAINING INDEPENDENCE**

Many students focused on the progress they had made in their own personal development, in terms of independence and broadmindedness. Others gave examples of activities such as running sports clubs or working for Oxfam which they had clearly enjoyed. Exploration of historical or heritage sites was mentioned by some as were night life, fresh air, a quiet environment, the music scene and shopping. Many cited the opportunities to travel not only around the UK but also to wider European destinations.

Although “Becoming more independent” was not students’ main focus in coming to the UK, 29% cited it as one of the things they aimed to get from their stay and 12% mentioned it as one of the best aspects of their stay (18% of EU students, 16% of students from N Africa and the Middle East). There was evidence of pride in managing without family nearby (in most cases) and without the usual support systems. Several students were clearly enjoying a first taste of freedom and some acknowledged that in taking this step, the support of college or host family was very important. It underpinned the success of their new found independence and their ability to cope with and enjoy new experiences.

*“I learn to live alone, clean my clothes, do all myself and speak a lot of English”*

*“I became mentally independent as I have nobody to rely on”*

*“The biggest experience is that I have found it very useful being independent. When I was back home I was 100% controlled by my parents”*



## CHAPTER 2

# Student services: meeting practical needs

*“Trying to struggle with getting over culture shock. UK teaching and study methods are different and the English Language is used in a more advanced level which is confusing when you start in a UK Secondary school/college.”*

## CHAPTER 2 STUDENT SERVICES: MEETING PRACTICAL NEED

*“If my family was around. If my best friend was here [it would have improved the experience].”*

*“I feel pleased and unworried in the UK. Whenever I asked for help everyone was helpful and close to me. I never felt loneliness either at the college or at my house.”*

*“When I have some troubles the British people are really very warming to help me.”*

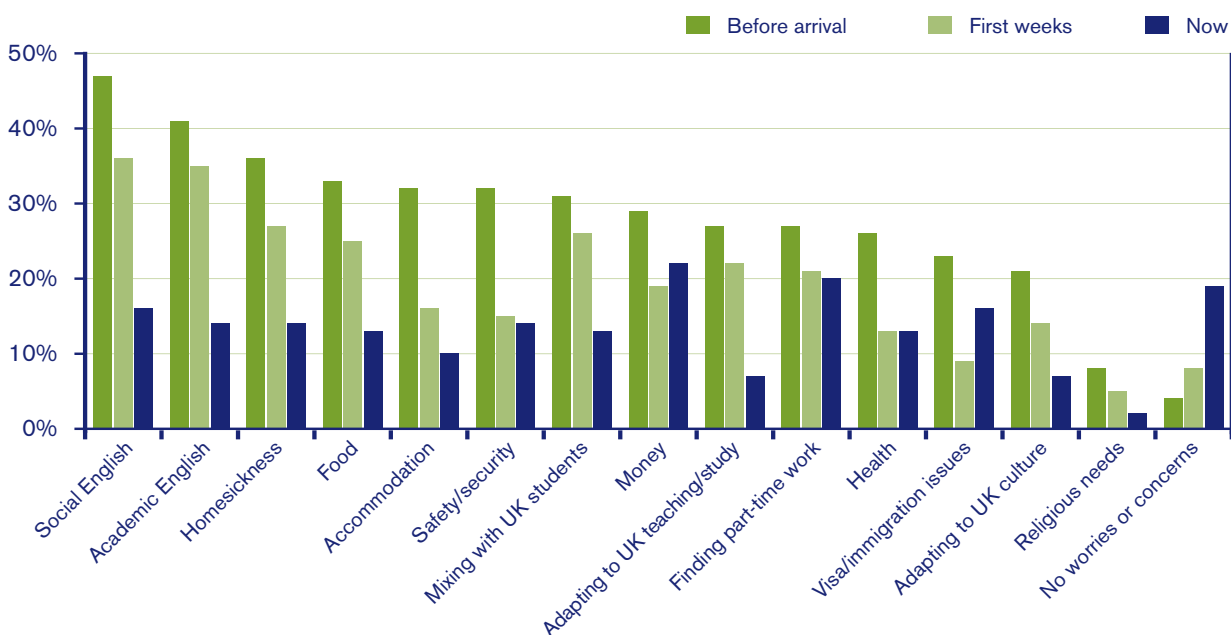
### STUDENTS’ CONCERNS PRE- AND POST-ARRIVAL

Students’ main worries before arrival and in the first few weeks of their stay were use of English (both social and academic), homesickness, food and mixing with home students. This contrasts with the concerns of higher education students in the *Broadening our Horizons* report, which at the pre-arrival stage focused much more on accommodation and finance issues (UKCOSA, 2004). Accommodation – and security – did figure on students’ list of concerns pre-arrival, even if they were not the top issues, but concerns about these issues decreased to a significantly once they had arrived.

Having enough money to live on remained a significant worry throughout students’ stay, as did the related issue of finding part-time work, in common with the findings for HE students (UKCOSA, *ibid*). Concerns over most issues had abated to a great extent by the time of the survey, but visa and immigration issues increased in prominence towards the end of the academic year.

This changing pattern of concerns and priorities demonstrates the importance of seeing orientation as a process that continues over the period of the student’s stay, with a changing focus to reflect their pre-occupations and strategically timed advice and information.

Figure 4 Students’ worries and concerns over time



## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

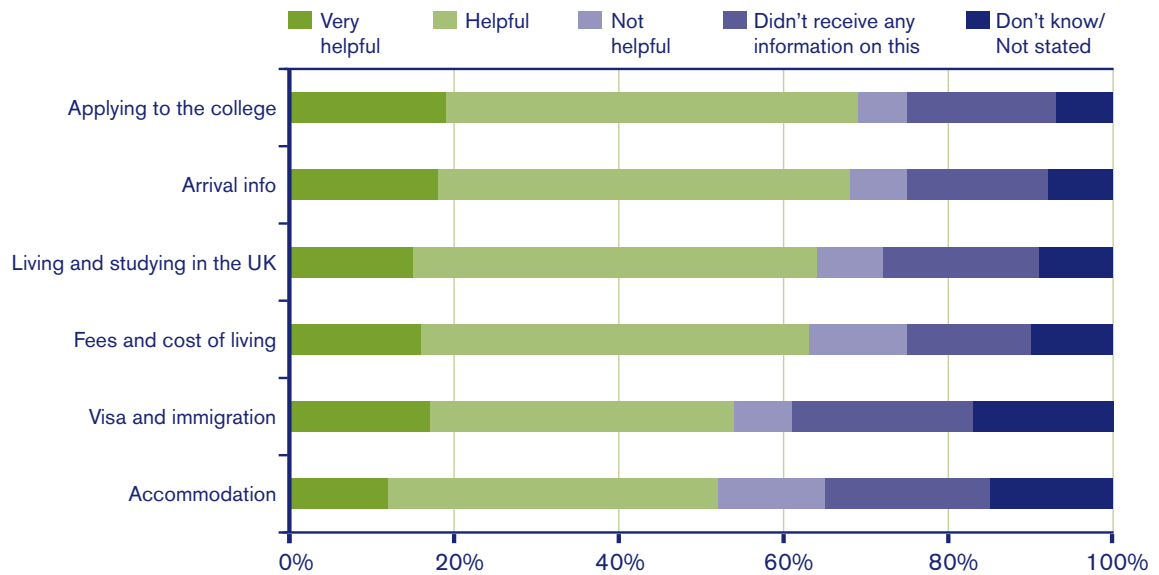
The main sources of information students used before coming to the UK were the college's website (42%) or prospectus (33%), showing the importance of electronic forms of information. Non-EU students were more likely than EU students to use a prospectus (36% compared to 22%). The 2001 AoC survey already found 31 out of 40 colleges sampled by phone gave the internet a high priority for attracting international students, higher than the British Council's (then) Education Counselling Service and self-organised marketing visits, suggesting colleges are already well aware of the importance of electronic forms of communication.

Agents were used by 26% (28% of non-EU and 19% of EU students), Students from East Asia were most likely to use an agent (35%) and those from North Africa and the Middle East were least likely to (13%). These figures may be seen by some as surprisingly low, given that the AoC survey (2001) found that agents were used by 27 out of 40 colleges, but is considerably higher than recent research by I-Graduate (2006) which found that only 8% of students at Scottish colleges and universities mentioned using agents.

The Education UK website was mentioned by 20%, 12% said they had used the UKCOSA website or guidance notes, and 8% had visited a British Council office (10% of non-EU students compared to 3% of EU ones).

When students received information from the college, they were generally satisfied with it – over 90% of students who received information about applying to the college, living and studying in the UK, what to do on arrival and immigration issues, found it helpful. Satisfaction was slightly lower with information about accommodation and fees and costs of living, although still 80% or over. Although 15% or more students claimed not to have received information on these topics, it is possible that some of these were already in the locality and therefore did not have need of it.

Figure 5 Satisfaction with information sources



***“I had a lot of difficulties to find subsidised English courses in UK. Some Spanish agencies charge you up to £400 to give information about these courses.”***

***“I was told by somebody I met that there are funded English course for EU students but the College didn't tell me that straight away, only when I asked them about it.”***

There were a very small number of comments in the open section of the questionnaire about difficulties obtaining information, most of which related to EU students trying to find out about free and subsidised courses, which was not necessarily straightforward from their home country.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

The support services which students were most aware of, and made most use of were college advice services such as the international office or student services (although the method of selecting students, which often involved these services, may have skewed this response). Language and study skills courses and social activities organised by the college were also well used. Levels of awareness of accommodation offices and careers advisers were marginally lower, and lowest of all was awareness of orientation programmes. Students on English language courses were least likely to know whether an orientation programme was offered, perhaps because where continuous enrolment systems operate, arrangements for orientation will be more tailored to the individual and less of a group event, and perhaps (evidence from the pilot surveys suggest), the term was not always understood by students.

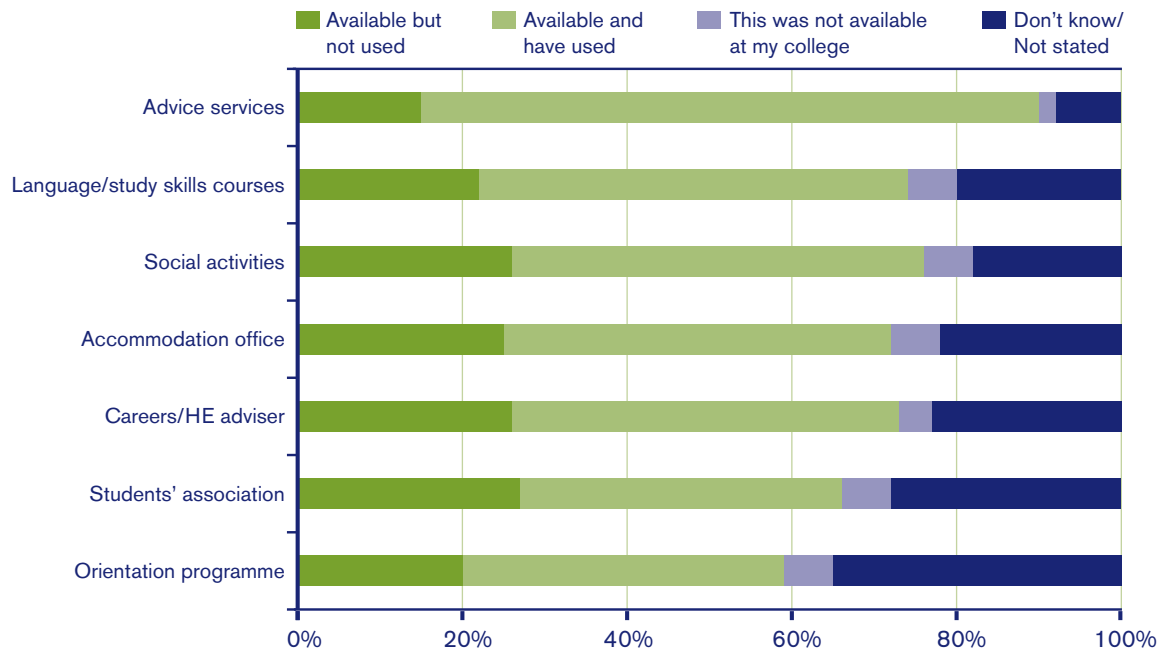
Among students who had used support services, levels of satisfaction were exceptionally high, with over 51% rating advice services “Very helpful” and a further 43% rating them “Helpful”. Satisfaction with orientation programmes was almost as high – underlining that it was unfortunate that not more students were aware of these. Students were slightly less positive about students’ associations and accommodation services (Figure 7).

Although over 50% of respondents indicated that social activities were available and they had used them, 20% were not satisfied with what they had been offered and 9% of respondents raised the issue of improved social opportunities in the open section of the questionnaire. This is addressed in more detail in the next section. Colleges may have to manage these expectations with more care at the marketing stage and reconsider the budget implications for increased and appropriate social events.

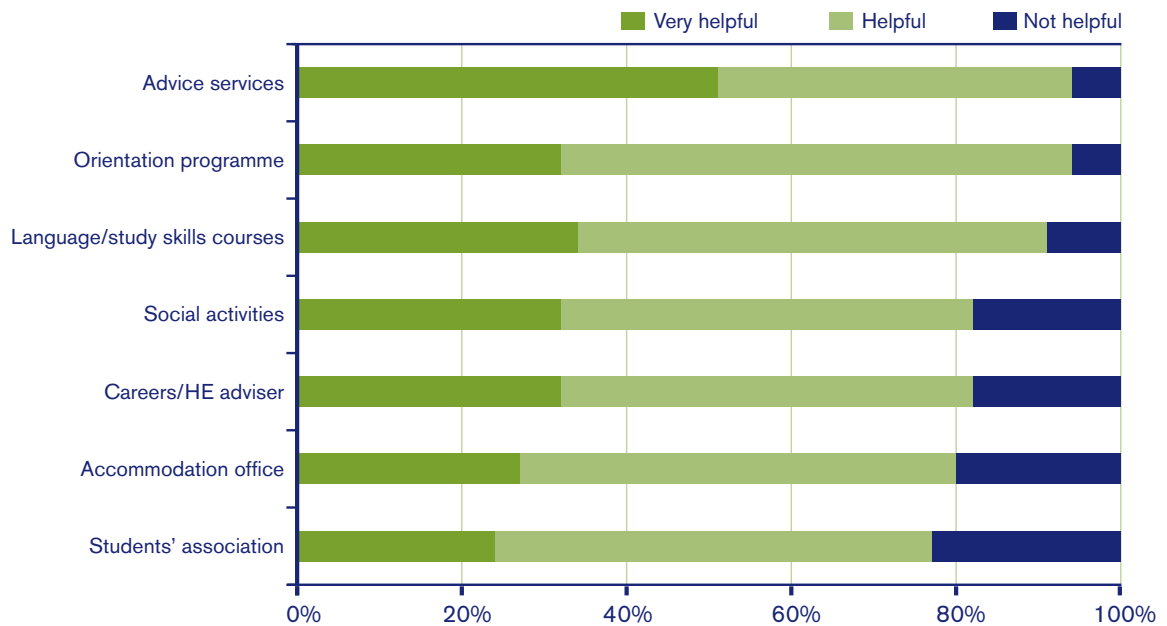
Students’ comments suggested that they particularly valued the supportive environment they found at college. It became evident that both designated support staff and also good teaching staff constitute this supportive atmosphere. The latter received much attention and praise, perhaps reflecting the way that teachers are a daily part of students’ lives, while contact with support services may be more sporadic. It may be worth colleges which are new to international recruitment noting that the key part played by teaching staff makes it important to adopt a whole-staff approach to welcoming and keeping international students.

*“I get all the support needed from the International Student Office.”*

**Figure 6** Use of support services



**Figure 7** Satisfaction with support services (if used)



One worrying trend concerning support services and international offices was observable in the course of the survey, and had been noted in the AoC survey in 2001. Several international offices had wanted to participate in the UKCOSA survey but could not as their colleges were facing uncertainties concerning their future international activity, whether in the light of local decisions (the priorities of governing boards) or national policies (such as the changing regulations affecting funding for EFL/ESOL courses). This frequently led to understaffing, vacant posts and the loss of key experienced staff. This, in at least one case was felt acutely by a student who reported on the lack of *“A proper international adviser ... Our college merged and since then no adviser for international students”*.

It is to be hoped that colleges will continue to be mindful that the high levels of satisfaction with support services recorded in this survey need specialist staff and a continuity of service.

Figure 8 Accommodation issues

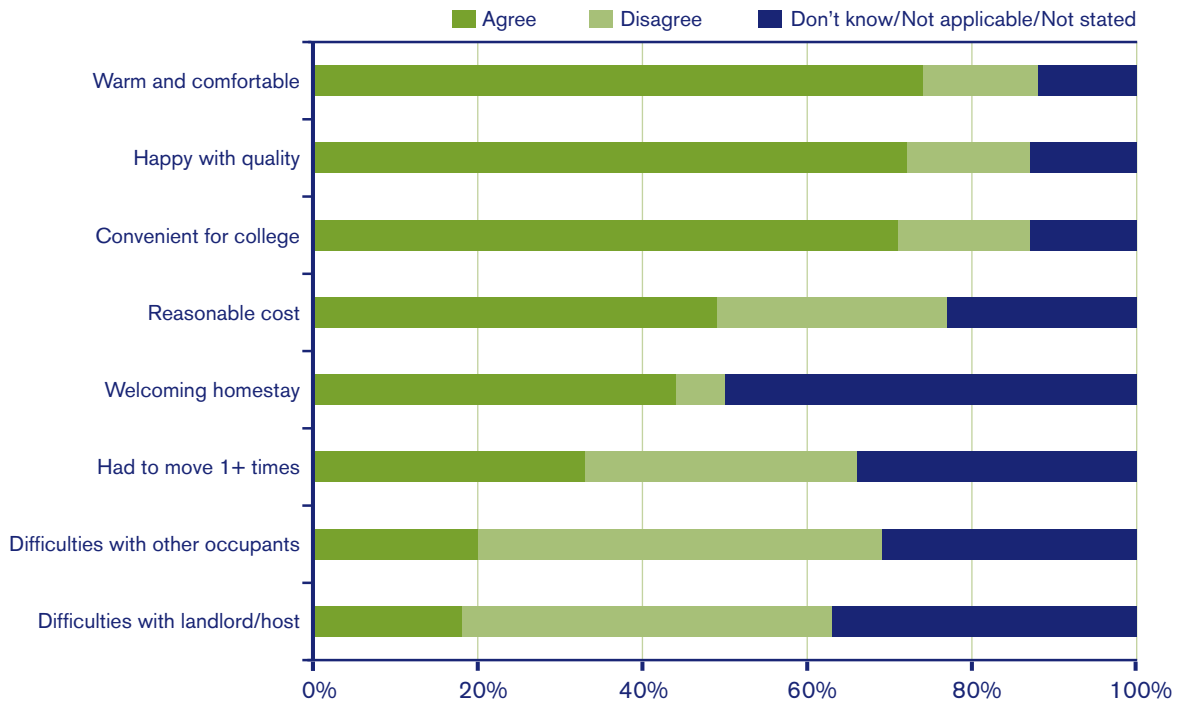
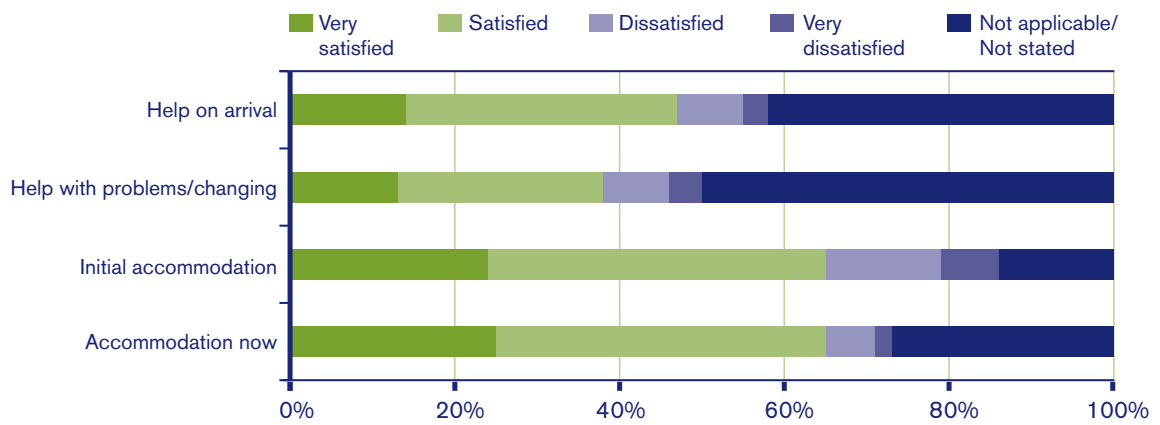


Figure 9 Satisfaction with accommodation and help from college



## ACCOMMODATION

Students were generally happy with their accommodation with respect to ease of travel to college (71%), quality (72%), warmth and comfort (74%), but only 49% agreed that the cost was reasonable (Figure 8). These figures again compare respectably with the *Broadening our Horizons* figures, which found that 80% of HE students were happy with the quality of their accommodation (UKCOSA, 2004). Students in the Midlands were most satisfied with the cost of their accommodation, while students in London were the least satisfied with the quality of theirs.

A large number of students (42%) made their own accommodation arrangements without asking for help – particularly students from the EU and Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas only 27% of East Asian students made their own arrangements. 55% of EFL students made their own arrangements compared to only 18% of A-level students.

21% were placed in homestays on a long-term basis, 14% were put in temporary accommodation with a homestay or in a hotel while 9% were given places in a hall of residence (21% of students on Foundation programmes) and another 9% were given help finding somewhere in the private sector. A very small number (2%) said they asked for help with accommodation but didn't receive any.

81% of students in homestay accommodation agreed that their hosts were friendly and welcoming, and students who went into long-term placements with homestays when they arrived were more satisfied generally with their accommodation than those in halls of residence (80% versus 66%). The open comments included many accolades for friendly hosts. The cost, quality, warmth and comfort of homestay accommodation was rated more highly than for halls, although those in halls were slightly more positive about the location being convenient for the college. Students in halls were also most likely to report problems with other people living in the same place. Unsurprisingly, given these findings, students in halls were more likely to change their accommodation than those in host family accommodation.

Students generally were able to find suitable accommodation, although it sometimes involved moving once or more. 21% of students were unhappy with the accommodation they had when they first arrived, while only 8% were dissatisfied with their current accommodation (Figure 9). In both cases students from East Asia were more likely to be dissatisfied. One third of students said they had had to move at least once to find suitable accommodation. 18% of respondents reported problems with a landlord and 20% reported difficulties with other people living in the same place. Students in London were less likely to be satisfied with the quality, comfort and cost of their accommodation while students in the Midlands were more likely to be satisfied with the cost than students in other regions.

***“I like living with a host family because it helps me to experience UK culture.”***

***“The host family is so nice.”***

***“The quality of UK’s education system in general was good. The living facility is not good.”***

***“One time I came to my friend’s house, the Host lady was very nice and willing to teach us to bake British cakes.”***



## CHAPTER 3

# Social contact and leisure time

*“International students who do A-levels course are arranged to mix with UK students (i.e. grouped into same classes), however, those who do International Foundation Course do not have the opportunity to have classes with UK students. College provides free part-time courses for full time international students, which gives us opportunity to learn other skills and be more sociable.”*

## CHAPTER 3

# SOCIAL CONTACT AND LEISURE TIME

*“If there are more and cheaper facilities where I can do sports exercise it would be better for my health.”*

### SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

A significant minority of students (37%) said that the opportunities to meet UK students at college were worse than they had expected. A-level and BTEC students were a little more positive about this aspect, suggesting that it is particularly for students who will not be in classes with UK students that either expectations need to be modified or more opportunities created for such contact. Similarly, 28% of students found it harder than expected to meet British people outside the classroom.

24% of students found the social activities and trips organised by the college worse than expected, and 31% found the opportunities for sport, music, drama and similar activities failing to meet expectations. Students from East and South-East Asia were particularly likely to say their expectations were not met by the latter. A smaller proportion (22%) had expectations not met by the enrichment opportunities – possibly an area where students came with fewer expectations. Expectations were not met for 20% regarding involvement in college life such as being a student representative.

In the open section of the questionnaire, almost one in ten students said they would have liked more or better social activities, e.g. trips, leisure and sporting activities. Often the request was couched in quite general terms suggesting that almost any activity which drew students together would be welcomed:

*“Trips with all students somewhere”*

*“The City needs more entertainment for students overall, keeping in mind that most students here are international”*

*“More social opportunities to meet local people organised by the college”*

Alongside the repeated request for more social activities and visits to other cities (which do involve preparation, cost and staffing), several practical suggestions emerged for colleges to consider such as informing students by email about events and keeping the cost down by e.g. having local tours or picnics – or even opening up part-time classes to international students. There was also some comment that social activity needs to be appropriate to the student’s age: *“More social activity less teenager.”*

Sport was frequently and very specifically mentioned, either because such facilities were not available, or where they were not open to international students:

*“Not allowed to use the college to do sports (basketball or football)”*

*“I wish my college had a gym and some sports facilities”*

*“Greater help joining local clubs for example for badminton and basketball would be welcomed.”*

## MAKING FRIENDS ACROSS CULTURES

A key finding from the open comments was that meeting more British students and/or British people was one of the two things students said would most improve their experience, on a par with improving their English language (each mentioned by 11% of students). This was particularly the case for European students (both EU and non-EU) where one in five said they wished they had met more British people.

The survey found that, as in other previous research with international students, respondents were more likely to mix with their co-nationals and with other international students than with UK students or other local British people. In total 64% did not include British people as part of their main friendship groups.

- 22% said that most of their friends were co-nationals,
- 23% said most were other international students
- 19% said they were mainly a mixture of these two groups.

Students who included UK students and other locals in their friendship groups to a greater or lesser extent made up 27% of the sample.

- 4% had friends who were a mixture of co-nationals and UK students or locals
- 7% said most of their friends were a mixture of other international students and UK students or locals
- 7% said most of their friends were only UK students or locals, and did not include any co-nationals or other international students

*“[It would have improved my experience] if I had got to know more British people my age.”*

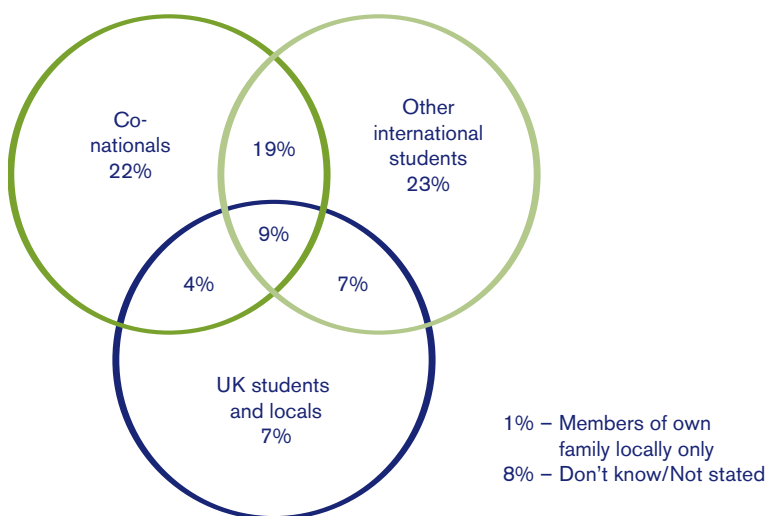
*“[I’d like] having more friends outside college to talk to and practise my English and with this improve my speech.”*

*“Participation in the community as much as there is to indulge in.”*

*“It is actually very rare to meet and have a talk with English speakers.”*

*“Get more British friends. Win the British lottery.”*

Figure 10 Who would you say most of your friends here in the UK are?



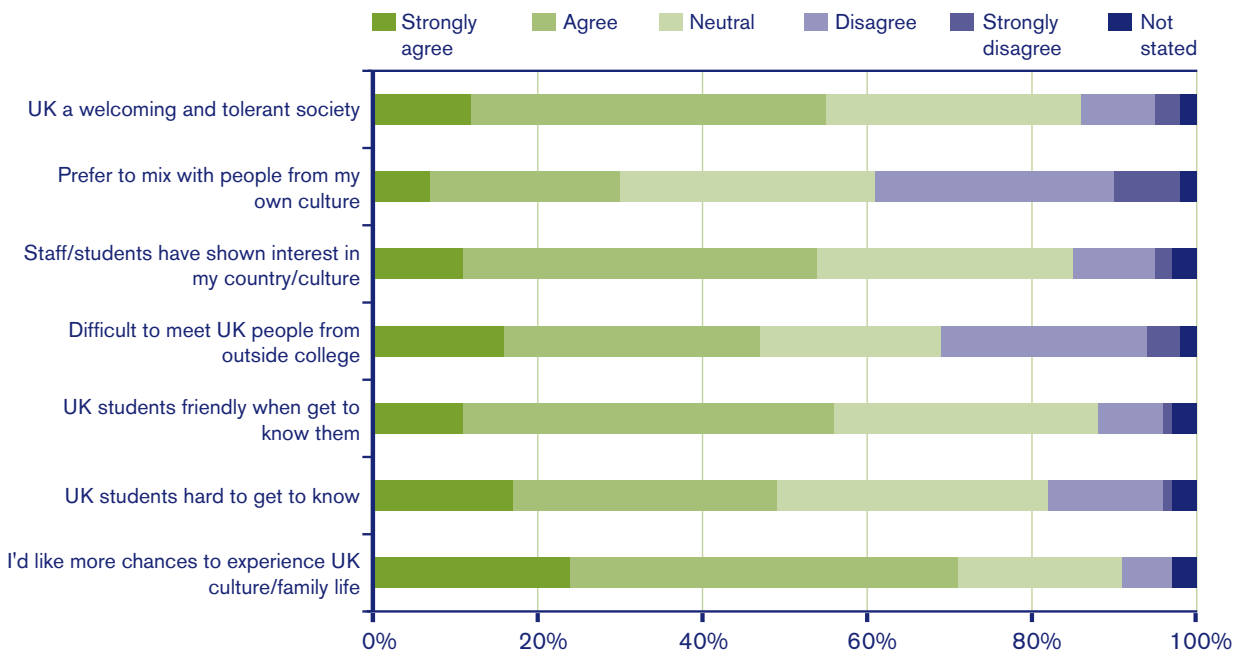
9% said their “Most of their friends” were a mix of all three groups, namely co-nationals, other international students and British people.

A further 1% mixed mainly with members of their family and 8% did not know or did not answer.

East Asian students were significantly more likely than other groups to mix with co-nationals (68% compared to 54%). On the one hand, as the largest single national group, they were often surrounded by large groups of co-nationals, but on the other hand, as we will see below, it may also have been a matter of choice.

57% of respondents mixed with other international students – in this case it was EU students who were most likely to do so (81%). This may also be related to the type of course students were taking: only 8% of EFL students said their friends included UK students compared to 31% of BTEC students and 25% of A-level students.

**Figure 11** Perceptions of UK people and society



Only 27% of students included UK students and locals among the category of people they mixed with most often. This compares with 39% of students in the Broadening our Horizons study, who would have had more chances to do so as they were almost all in classes with UK students. Students from Sub-Saharan Africa were the only group to have significantly more contact with British people, perhaps related to the fact that they were also more likely to be spending time with family locally, and were more likely to be on BTEC courses alongside UK students rather than in EFL or access courses. Notwithstanding, all students agreed that it was difficult to meet local people, and in this respect Sub-Saharan African students did not differ significantly from any other group.

The figures above fit with the perception amongst the respondents that it was hard to get to know British students. Only a small proportion disagreed with the statement that UK students were friendly once one got to know them – but about a third didn't feel able to express an opinion on this, perhaps because of their lack of contact. Again, on balance, students agreed that other students and staff had shown an interest in their country and culture – but again, with some students not feeling able to express a view on the matter.

Students showed a slight tendency to disagree with the statement “I prefer to mix with people from my own culture”, but there was a higher level of agreement among East Asian students and a stronger expression of disagreement among EU students. This fits with theories that ease of inter-cultural contact is related to cultural distance, i.e. it is easier to get to know those who are culturally most similar to ourselves. Most students expressed an interest in having more chances to experience British culture, although students from the Middle East and North Africa were marginally less interested in this than other groups (perhaps related to as much to their course type and study motivations as to their region of origin).

Research by Bochner et al (1977) has shown that international students may have different roles for friendships with co-nationals (to affirm and express their own culture), other international students (recreation and mutual social support) and locals (facilitating the student's functioning in the host society). This to some extent explains the survey findings, and suggests we should not necessarily be concerned at these patterns. However, the fact that students expressed a wish to meet more British people, particularly to improve their English, does warrant consideration of whether more can be done to facilitate the process.

More than half of respondents agreed that the UK was a welcoming and tolerant society, though again about a third were neutral on this question, and 9% disagreed, suggesting that some may have had negative experiences. In the open section there were mixed reports about students' encounters with local students and others in the community.

***“Some teenagers on the street are very rude. I don't know how to handle it.”***

***“[I would like] more liberal and friendly attention from the local people and employers.”***

***“Some of the locals are not too friendly but most are.”***

***“[I would have liked] more friendly home students.”***

***“Most of the people I have ever seen in the UK are kind and polite, especially in college.”***

***“[I wish] English people could know my country more and the information they have got is more accurate.”***

***“[I would have liked] a higher degree of open mindedness and tolerance from UK residents and students. I feel there is an inclination to assume that ‘third world’ students are inferior both in the classroom and in the workplace! International students are, more often than not, frowned upon, for one reason or another! Therefore I feel that more compassion, understanding and open mindedness, would better my experience.”***



## CHAPTER 4

# Immigration, employment and finance issues

*“I don't think it is fair to increase cost of obtaining a visa as we've already paid a lot of tuition fee”*

## CHAPTER 4 IMMIGRATION, EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE ISSUES

*“I think the cost of the visa is too expensive.”*

*“Government should understand the problems rather than just minting money from us.”*

*“No proper facility, security for foreign students. Treated like aliens at times.”*

### VISAS AND IMMIGRATION

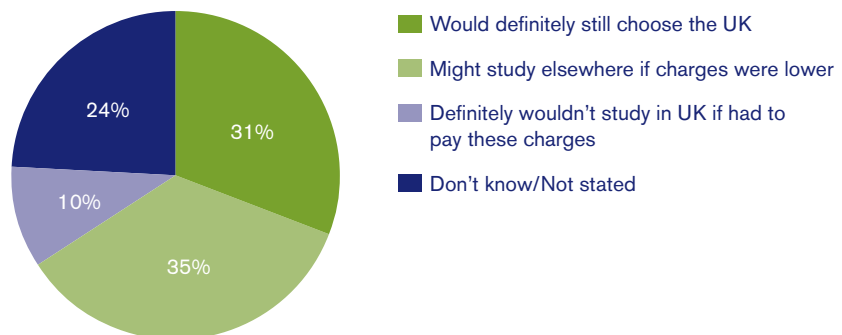
Two thirds of students who required a visa found applying for one easy and straightforward, but 18% found it a lengthy and difficult process even though their first application was eventually successful, 8% were initially refused but received a visa on a second application and 5% received one after appealing their initial refusal. The data available do not show any statistically significant differences by country of origin, possibly because of sample sizes, or possibly because even though we know that there are differential rates of refusal across countries, the experience of successful students may be common across regions.

31% of students said they had had to renew their leave to remain since being in the UK. Of these, 57% extended it in the UK with help from an adviser in their college, 17% extended it in the UK without help, 4% paid an adviser to help and 18% extended it while back in their home country. A third of those who extended their leave found the process slow and/or difficult.

Students were asked whether the increases in visa and leave to remain extension charges would affect their decision to study in the UK in the future. 10% said they would definitely not study in the UK in future if faced with these extra costs, and a further 35% said they would look at other destinations if the charges were lower there. Students from East Asia were most likely to be put off by the thought of higher charges – 13% said “Definitely not” and 45% “Maybe not” to paying higher charges.

One in five non-EU students also quoted additional costs of visas and extensions as a factor in financial hardship (see figure 13 below).

**Figure 12** How would recent increases in fees for visas and extensions affect your decision to study in the UK? (Non-EU students)



## **PART-TIME WORK**

More than half of students had looked for work, with 20% having looked for but not found a job and 33% having found part-time work. Students from Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and South Asia were most likely to be working part-time and students from North Africa and the Middle East were least likely to have looked for part-time work. 28% of respondents said the work was relevant to their future careers. 77% said that the work had helped them improve their English.

While a similar proportion of EU and non-EU students had looked for work, non-EU students were significantly more likely to say they had faced difficulties in finding work.

National Insurance (NI) numbers had been a problem for some: 80% had successfully obtained one, although 21% said that it had taken more than six weeks to get one, and 6% had not managed to get one at all. Students in Scotland seemed to find it easier to obtain their NI number.

Students also reported that the most common reason for difficulties in finding work was being told that they couldn't work until they had obtained a NI number. Another 30% said employers were unsure about their right to work. The student's level of English was given as a difficulty in 27% of cases (38% of students from East Asia).

Some of the difficulties students faced in finding jobs were similar to those faced by UK students. These included a lack of jobs in a particular place, students' own lack of experience, employers wanting someone longer time or full-time and the difficulty fitting in work around studies. However, a particular issue for international students was employers' and agencies' unfamiliarity with other countries' systems: they were either unwilling or unable, according to some students, to evaluate foreign qualifications and overseas experience. Both in terms of intra-European mobility, and attempts to encourage international students (and other skilled migrants) to stay on in the UK, this demonstrates that much more work needs to be done with employers.

***“Life, it’s too expensive here without job it’s impossible to survive. NI number system is ridiculous.”***

***“[I’d like] Job opportunities while I am still in college for future experience.”***

***“Help us more about getting a job and National Insurance number.”***

***“Misunderstanding my education because of different education system.”***

***“They were unsure about my experience because I had only worked in Sweden and Norway.”***

***“My qualification. I am a lawyer in Italy.”***

***“I didn’t have work experience in UK but I had in my country.”***

***“Job experience [would have improved the experience]. Because I want to speak more fluently for my life in Japan.”***

***“If I didn’t have to work to support my living and studying I would use my time to learn, read British books, newspapers. I haven’t got time for studying because of work.”***

Amongst a few respondents there was a sense of discrimination. Students perceived that the refusal to offer work was based not on suitability or even on misunderstanding or communication difficulties but on lack of trust.

*“Discriminative resistance from every hiring agency in the city”*

*“Employers don’t really trust people from abroad”*

*“Kind of discrimination because I am a foreign student”*

*“Sometimes they’ll mind where you are from”*

Students worked an average of 16 hours per week. The average for EU students who were not constrained by a limit on their hours was 22 hours per week. Students from East Asia worked an average of only 11 hours per week.

About half of students who looked for work sought help from their college. Students who were unsuccessful in their search were even more likely to seek help (61% did), but their level of satisfaction with the help available was low (two-thirds were dissatisfied with the help received), and even among students who successfully found work and sought help from the college to do so, there was only marginally more satisfaction with the help the college provided. Given that finance and part-time work are relatively significant concerns for students, colleges might think about whether there are ways in which they can provide more help on this issue.

Bearing in mind that 60% of respondents said they wished to stay on in the UK for further study (which they might have to support by working) and another 11% hoped to stay and work, any difficulties faced by international students may affect their own decisions about whether to stay on for study or work, and may result in negative impressions being passed on. These results emphasise the importance of the employment agenda for all international students, including those in FE, and these issues would merit further examination at national and regional level.

## FINANCIAL ISSUES

The majority of students were self-funding, with 69% having their fees paid by their families and 20% paying their own. Only 5% had fees covered by a government scholarship and 4% by an employer. 3% received some form of discount or scholarship from their college. Students from non-EU Europe, North Africa and the Middle East were slightly more likely to receive scholarships from their government (36% and 13% respectively), and the latter were more likely to be funded by their employers (17%).

The pattern for living costs was similar with 72% receiving funding towards these from their families, 31% contributing to them from their own resources, government scholarships contributing towards them in 3% of cases and employers in 2% of cases.

A third of students reported financial problems as a result of the cost of living being higher than they had budgeted for (43% of students from East and South-East Asia), 19% because fees were higher than they had budgeted for (30% of students from East and South East Asia) and another 19% having expected to find jobs but not been able to. Students in Wales were significantly less likely to find living costs a problem (50% had no financial problems compared to an average of 36%). 16% of respondents were affected by exchange rate fluctuations (22% of students from East Asia and 36% from South-East Asia). 16% were hit by unexpectedly high costs of visa applications and extensions (28% of students from East Asia and 38% from South-East Asia). Although in general only 5% of students had difficulty when money from family and sponsors failed to materialise, for students from Sub-Saharan Africa this figure was 18%. Just over a third of students said they had had enough money to live on (Figure 13).

Students' comments revealed a recurrent theme of surprise at the actual costs of studying in the UK, which raises questions about how institutions manage students' expectations, and what level of detail they provide about living costs.

Sometimes the problem was money management, with some particular issues such as mobile phone contracts, but also issues about flexibility over payment of fees.

*"Finance – I believe I spend too much money".*

*"I didn't plan my budget well a few times, so had less money by the end of the month."*

*"I should have signed fewer mobile phone contracts and shouldn't have spent so much money for the first 3 months."*

*"At times I feel more depressed and stressed when I run out of money and I have to pay my fees, I feel we should get more time to pay less than be given certain time to finish it, it makes me more stress and not concentrate on my school work."*

***"I am very sad to say this but money [would have improved the experience]. There is no need to be a millionaire but paying rent and living cost is a huge cost."***

***"The overall fees for the course is very much more than I expected for the Foundation course."***

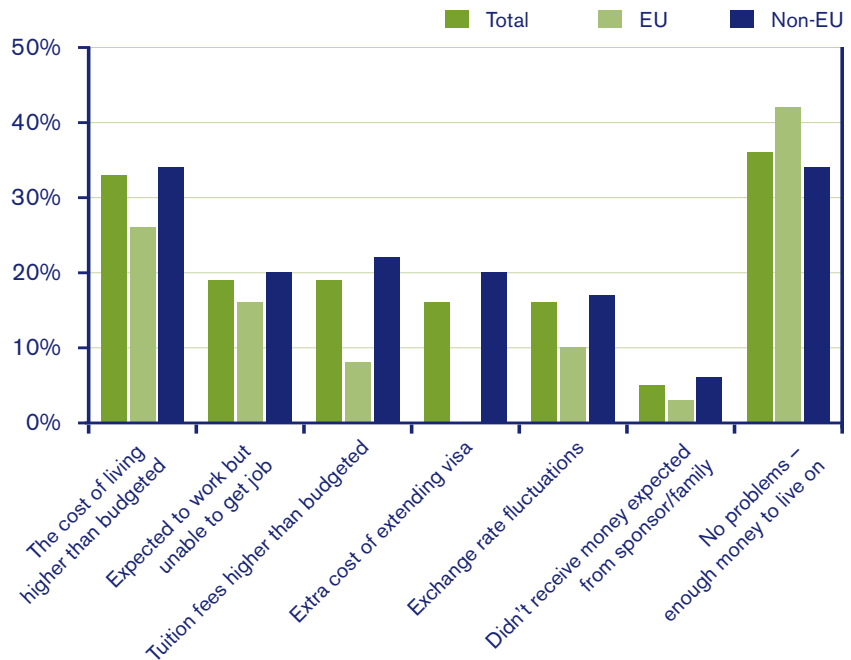
***"If I had known that the course was free for EEA-Students, because then I would not have paid an agent £500."***

***"If the cost of tuition was less, it would be a lot easier for me to study. Tuition fees is about what I earn annually, so it really is difficult to study because I have to work a lot."***

***"Would be better if college gave more pay opportunities. I mean give discounts or at least give different ways of paying the courses."***

***"The host family was great! The food and drink were cheap. The social life and London City was extraordinary!"***

Figure 13 Reasons for financial hardship



Another indicator of students' vulnerability to unexpected extra costs was that 53% had no form of insurance. Only 30% had medical insurance (60% among EU students, but only 23% of non-EU students), which gives some cause for concern. Even if some students' stays were long enough to entitle them to free NHS treatment, they would still be liable for additional costs related to illness or treatment for which they might not have budgeted. Colleges might therefore consider giving more or more emphatic information about health insurance.

14% had travel insurance and 11% had personal possessions insurance. A recent event run by the Government Office for London focused on the vulnerability of international students to property crime and ways of mitigating this. In addition to the prevention measures suggested by the event (Stark, 2006), colleges might consider more actively encouraging international students to take out appropriate insurance.

## **BANKS**

Half the students questioned said that opening a bank account had been easy or very easy, but 20% found it difficult, 17% found it very difficult and 2% had not been able to. Only 9% of students had not tried to open a bank account.

The main reasons for any difficulties were difficulties in providing the documents requested (22%) and difficulty providing proof of address (19%). If the Financial Services Authority's guidance on identity checks and basic bank accounts were implemented by banks, many of these problems could be avoided. However, it seems likely colleges will continue to need to work closely with local branches to ensure they are aware of and adhering to this guidance, as head office policy on this in the past often appeared not to be followed, or even known of.

11% of students reported that they were required to provide too large a deposit, and 11% were told their courses were too short to be able to open an account. Students in London were the most likely to report that opening an account was very difficult.

***“The efficiency of agencies is low especially in banks.”***

***“I can't open a bank account here.”***

***“Delay in opening a bank account by the Bank.”***

***“Bank doesn't offer me a cheque book.”***



## CHAPTER 5

# Expectations and realities: whether students got what they came for

*"I dreamt of an experience before coming to England and it is beyond my expectations. This is a year in which I realise all my dreams and just enjoy every second!"*

## **CHAPTER 5**

# **EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES: WHETHER STUDENTS GOT WHAT THEY CAME FOR**

*“[You should have asked us] ‘What do you think of Britain if we leave out the education?’”*

Students listed their main reasons for choosing to study in the UK as being the quality of the UK’s education system in general (56%) and wanting to learn British English (51%) (Figure 12). The former was particularly important to those on A-level and Access courses, and while the latter was slightly more important to students of English than to other groups, at least 39% of students quoted it as a reason even among the group for whom it was least important (BTEC students). Family links were also important to students in Scotland (26%).

Matching this against what students said had been the best aspects of their experience, we saw that 88% of students were satisfied with their course, and learning English was the highest rated item when students were asked to identify the best feature of their stay, suggesting students are getting what they most want.

Choice of college was most frequently driven by personal recommendations (43%), the courses offered (34%) and location within the UK (22%). The courses offered were particularly important to BTEC students (50%), and they and students taking A-levels and similar qualifications were more influenced by the reputation of the college (27%). Reputation of the college was of least importance to EFL students (10%), but personal recommendation was key (44%). Links with local universities were unsurprisingly of interest to Access and higher education students (27% and 30%) (Figure 15).

Again, the levels of satisfaction with course provision and support from the college indicated that students’ choice of college was delivering well.

Students’ main objectives in coming to the UK were to improve their English (75%) and to prepare for further study (59%). Although the desire to improve their English was strongest among EFL students (90%), it remained a significant factor for all students, half to three quarters of all other students still quoting it as a reason for studying. There was more interest in getting experience of living in a foreign country (38%) than experiencing British culture in particular (28%). A-level and BTEC students were more interested than other groups in getting a qualification (52% and 56%) (Figure 16).

Figure 14 Reasons for choosing the UK

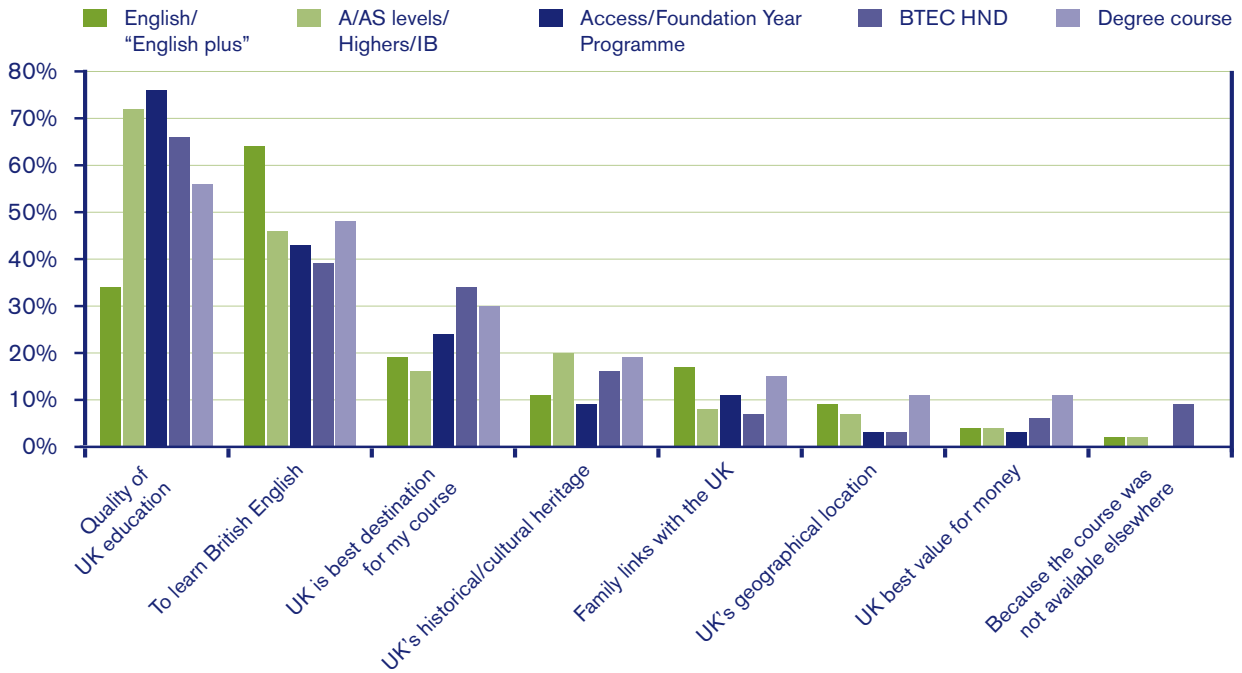
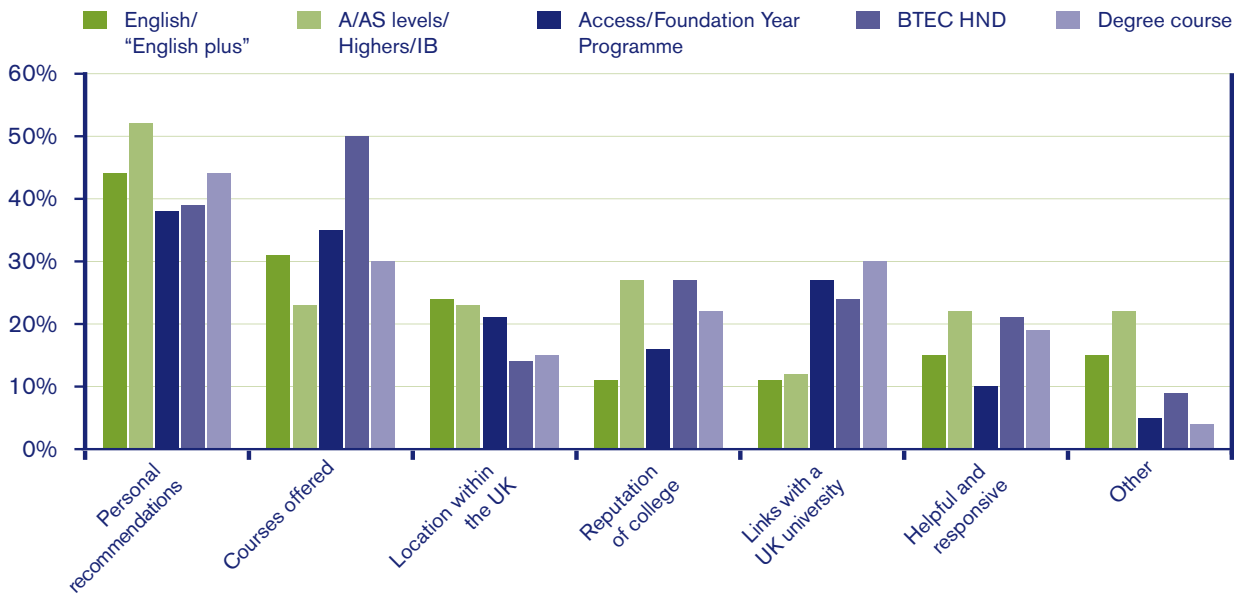


Figure 15 Reasons for choosing college by course type



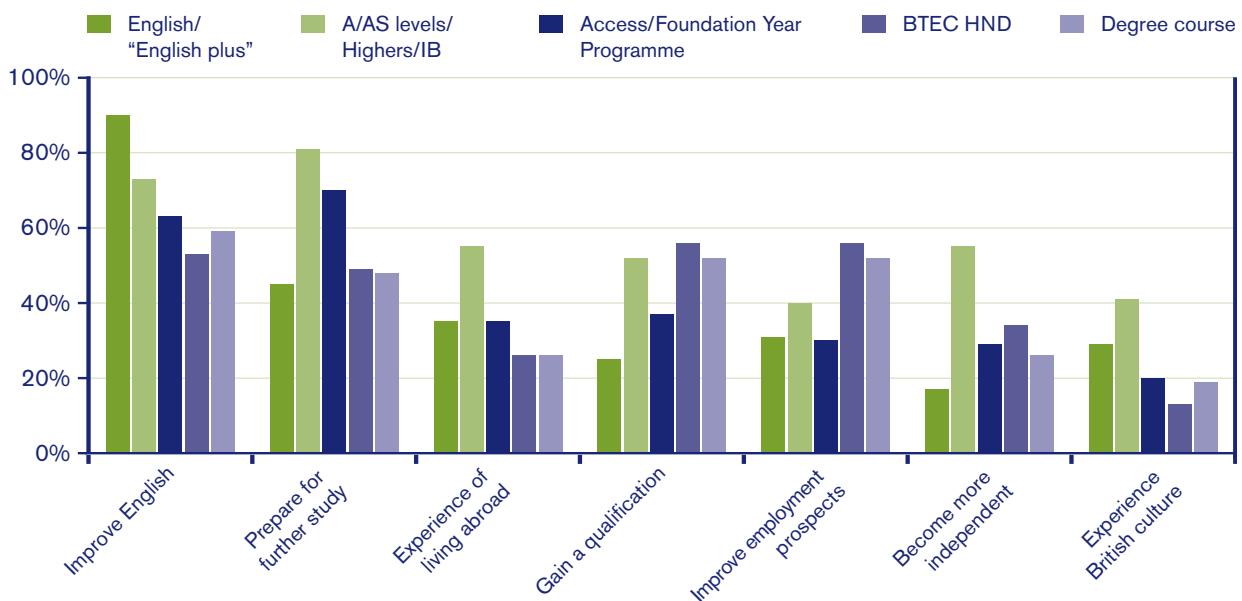
Students rated improving their English as the best thing about their UK experience, followed by experiencing British culture and lifestyles, and mixing with people from other cultures. However, having further opportunities to use and improve their English was also top of students' list of what would have improved their experience (See tables 2 and 3 above). On balance, then, we can say that this aim is achieved to some extent, but that students see scope for further improvement.

The most common intention after the current course was further study in the UK (59%), compared to only 9% intending to study in another country, but 19% of students taking A/AS levels, International Baccalaureate and Scottish Highers planned to study in another country, compared to only 3% of Access students. 24% of respondents planned to work in their home country and 11% hoped to work in the UK (17% of students in Scotland, perhaps linked with the Fresh Talent Initiative, but perhaps due to the nature of their courses or to the existence of prior family links).

We have no data to indicate how many of the students who were preparing for further study were successful in progressing, nor how many successfully found work; these might be useful areas for further research.

Getting a qualification was in the end rated as much of a benefit as developing more independence, despite the latter having been less of a priority on entry, suggesting that students see a wider range of benefits after the experience of studying abroad than they did when they started out.

Figure 16 Students' main objectives by course type





## CHAPTER 6

# Overall impressions

*“My view is widened, so has  
my knowledge”*

## **CHAPTER 6**

# **OVERALL IMPRESSIONS**

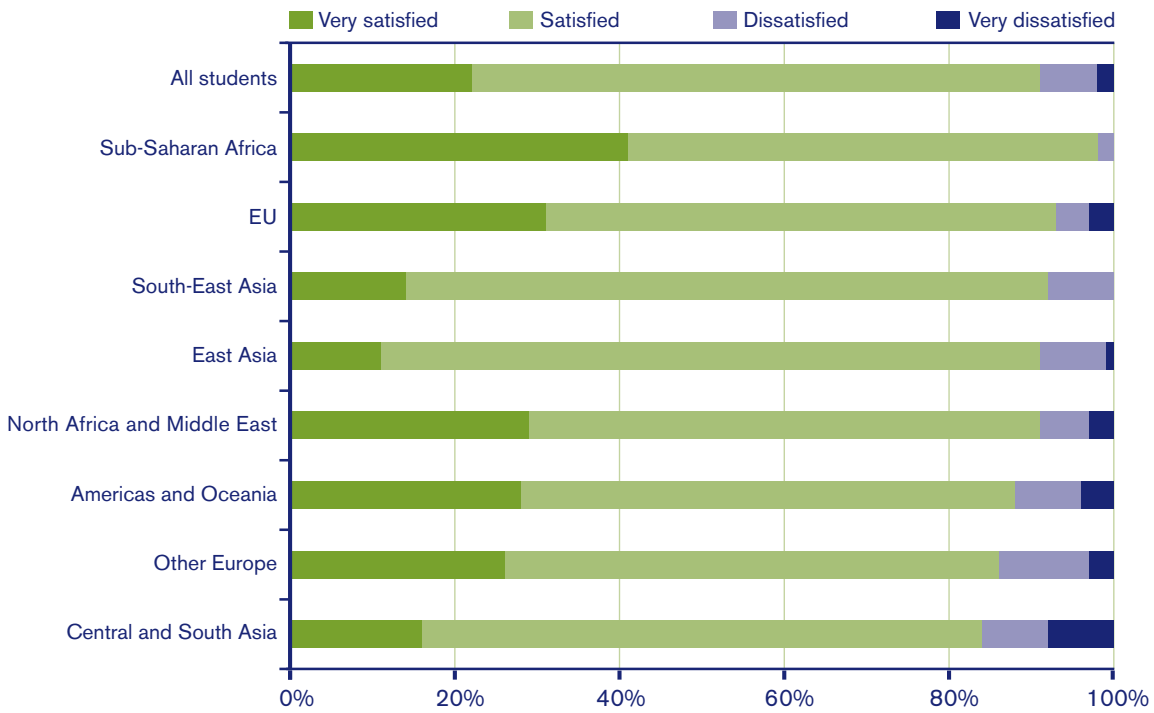
In general there was a high level of satisfaction with the experience of studying in the UK. 88% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their course. Students from the EU and Sub-Saharan Africa were more likely than other groups to be very satisfied, and students from East Asia were less likely to be very satisfied (Figure 17).

80% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with the support they received from the college – and 90% of students from Sub-Saharan Africa. Students from East Asia were less likely to be very satisfied and were more likely to be dissatisfied.

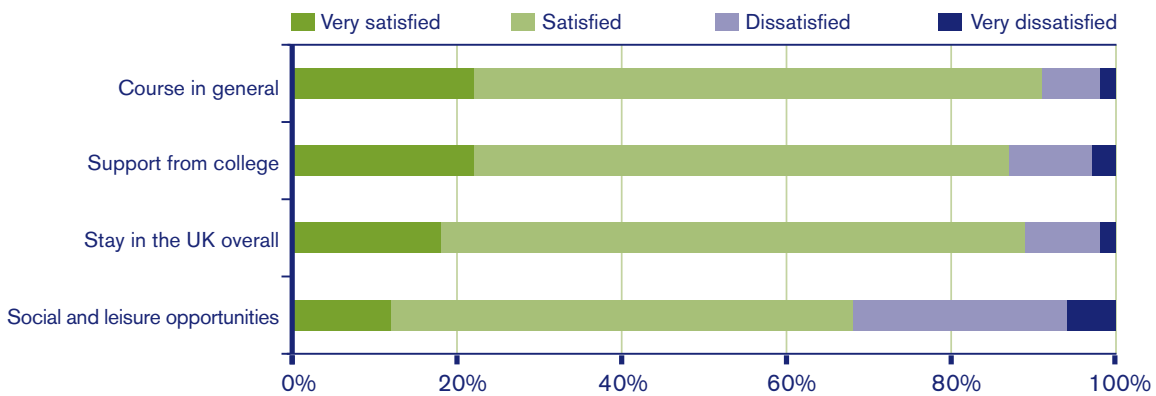
Levels of satisfaction with social and leisure opportunities were noticeably lower, with only 59% being satisfied or very satisfied with these. East Asian students again were more dissatisfied with this aspect of their stay.

In terms of their stay in the UK overall, 82% of students were satisfied or very satisfied, and once again East Asian students were slightly more likely to be dissatisfied. Students from North Africa and the Middle East were more likely to be very satisfied than other groups.

**Figure 17** Satisfaction with course in general



**Figure 18** Satisfaction with aspects of stay in the UK



**C.**

# **Conclusions and recommendations**

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSIONS

The generally high levels of satisfaction among international students are a positive finding, especially as they relate to the experience of the course and the extremely high ratings of advice services. Nevertheless, there are areas where colleges could perhaps raise their game, most notably in relation to social and leisure opportunities, helping students manage their finances and find part-time work, and in some aspects of accommodation services.

The fact that personal recommendations are the single most influential factor in students' choice of college mean that ensuring a good experience for students currently at the college is by far the most cost effective means of recruiting new ones – even without considering the ethical arguments for providing good student support.

The points below are offered as suggestions for where colleges, government and regional and national agencies might focus their efforts, and we hope will provide a starting point for debate about the best route forward to an improved international student experience in the FE sector.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL AGENCIES

- **The LSC, SFEFC, Fforwm and DENI** should make the domicile field in the student record mandatory, in order to provide reliable national level data about international students in UK FE.
- **UKvisas** should address the problems encountered by one third of students in obtaining visas (18% found it a lengthy and difficult process even though their first application was eventually successful, 8% were initially refused but received a visa on a second application and 5% received one after appealing their initial refusal). They should also review whether visas are issued for appropriate periods of time, given that 31% of respondents had to renew their leave to remain during their time in the UK.
- **The Government** should reconsider the proposed removal of appeal rights for visa applicants in the light of the finding that 5% of our sample received a visa only after appeal. Johnes (2004) estimated overseas tuition fee income to FE institutions (excluding EFL) at £38.9m and other related export earnings at £331.5m. 5% fewer students could therefore potentially represent £18.5m in lost earnings to the UK.
- **The Home Office** should, when reviewing charges for leave to remain applications, take account of the fact that
  - 31% of students said they had had to renew their leave to remain since being in the UK (a third of whom found the process slow and/or difficult).
  - 10% said they would definitely not study in the UK in future if faced with the increased visa and extension extra charges, and a further 35% said they would look at other destinations if the charges were lower there. Students from East Asia were most likely to be put off by the thought of higher charges – 13% said “Definitely not” and 45% “Maybe not” to paying higher charges.

- **Government** should address the problems faced by international students seeking work with regard to obtaining National Insurance numbers, difficulties with employers over recognition of foreign qualifications and experience, understanding of students' permission to work, and perceived discrimination.
- **British Council** should make use of the positive feedback from students about teaching and learning styles as a unique selling point of UK FE, and the potential for direct quotes from students to send a powerful message in students' own words about student-centred learning. They help to convey the satisfaction students feel when theory and practical work are well integrated and taught.
- **UKCOSA, British Council and others** should ensure future questionnaires include questions about extent to which students have met their goal of improving their English.
- **UKCOSA and British Council** should aim to make realistic and comprehensive information about cost of living and tuition fees more easily available to students.
- **Further research should be undertaken** to test how many students achieved their aims of further study or work, to measure the extent to which their UK FE experience was delivering what was intended.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGES

- Ensure **ongoing orientation** continues over the period of the student's stay, with a changing focus e.g. continuing finance/budgeting advice, finding part-time work, visa and immigration issues.
- Explore ways of ensuring all students receive **comprehensive pre-arrival information**.
- Improve **information about tuition and living costs**, and manage students' expectations about these; help students with budgeting and managing money; and put in place hardship funds to help when students have been hit by hardship caused by factors which could not have been foreseen.
- Provide information to students about **medical, travel and personal possessions insurance**, and ensure students are aware of the limits of NHS provision.
- Consider how best to manage students' expectations about the **cost and quality of accommodation**, including temporary arrangements on first arrival, provide flexibility where possible and advice and support for students wishing to change.
- Increase **awareness of accommodation offices, careers advisers and orientation programmes**. Explore whether students' experience of students' associations and accommodation services can be improved.
- **Improve social activities** and trips and opportunities for sport (in particular), music, drama and similar activities including consideration of budgetary implications, or manage expectations about what colleges are resourced to offer.

- **Improve opportunities to meet UK students and locals**, especially for students not in classes with UK students, taking this as part of the learning experience rather than a purely social activity. The sector might make use of pilot schemes to explore the effectiveness of a range of models.
- Take account of the role of both designated support staff and teaching staff in providing support, and the importance of a **whole-staff approach to welcoming and keeping international students**. Colleges should therefore ensure there are appropriate opportunities for staff development for all those in contact with international students, as well as encouraging the sharing of creative approaches to teaching and learning.
- Ensure the **availability of specialist staff and continuity of service**, in order to maintain the high levels of satisfaction with support services recorded in this survey. Note that recruiting international students requires long-term commitment to building relationships with partners and establishing a reputation built on satisfied former students, and act to address the turbulence in the sector which frequently results in the loss of expertise.
- Provide more advice for international students and **help with finding part-time work**, and other ways of helping improve their employability. Colleges should explore ways of improving employer awareness of the skills brought by international students.
- Note the problems students encountered in trying to open **bank accounts** (difficulties in providing the documents requested, proof of address, size of deposit, length of course) and work with local banks to ensure awareness of FSA guidelines, and with students to brief them on what their options are and what will be required.
- Note as **selling points** the multicultural nature of their campuses and the opportunities for developing independence and self-confidence. Also to note the vital role of personal recommendations (43%), and concentrate on supporting their current students as the best way to generate positive word of mouth.
- Conduct **regular research into international student satisfaction** within their own colleges to inform policy and practice.

# Bibliography

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Association of Colleges (2001) *International Activity in Further Education Colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. Accessible online at: [http://www.aoc.co.uk/Members/int/aoc\\_survey.pdf](http://www.aoc.co.uk/Members/int/aoc_survey.pdf)

Bochner S, McLeod BM and Lin A (1977) "Friendship patterns of overseas students: a functional model." *International Journal of Psychology*, 12. pp 277-297, referenced in Ward C, Bochner S and Furnham A (2001) *The Psychology of Culture Shock*. London: Routledge

I-Graduate (2006) *Tracking the college and university experience in Scotland: what do international students think? Summary report, British Council Scotland* (unpublished)

Johnes G (2004) *The Global Value of Education and Training Exports to the UK Economy*, British Council. Accessed on 6 October 2006 at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/global-value-of-education-and-training-exports-to-the-uk-economy.pdf>

Prairie Research Associates (2004) *Canada First: The 2004 Survey of International Students*, Ottawa: Canadian Bureau for International Education

Smith G, Morey A and Teece M (2002) *How international students view their Australian experience: a survey of international students who finished a course of study in 1999*. Australian Education International

Stark E (2006) "Preventing property crime against international students in London" in UKCOSA: *World Views* Summer 2006 Issue 20

Ward C and Masgoret A (2004) *The experiences of international students in New Zealand: Report on the results of the national survey*, New Zealand Ministry of Education, accessed online on 5/10/06 at [http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl9939\\_v1/040604-final-report-for-printers.doc](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl9939_v1/040604-final-report-for-printers.doc)

# Appendices

# APPENDIX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONS

## SECTION 1: Reasons for coming to the UK

**Q1 Which college are you studying at?**

**Q2 What were your main reasons for coming to study in the UK?**

*(You may tick more than one answer)*

- Quality of the UK's education system in general
- UK is the best destination for the course I wanted to study
- Because the course was not available elsewhere
- I wanted to learn British English
- UK offered best value for money
- UK's historical and cultural heritage
- UK's geographical location
- Family links with the UK
- Other – please specify
- Don't know/Not applicable

**Q3 What were the main reasons why you chose this college?**

*(You may tick more than one answer)*

- Because of the courses it offered
- Location within the UK
- Reputation of college
- Personal recommendations from family, friends or teachers
- Links with a UK university I wish to attend
- They gave quick and helpful responses to my enquiries
- Other – please specify
- Don't know/Not applicable

**Q4 What were the main things you wished to get from studying at the college?**

*(You may tick more than one answer)*

- To improve my English
- To prepare for further study
- To improve future employment prospects by gaining new skills and experience
- To gain a qualification
- To experience British culture
- To get experience of living in a foreign country
- To become more independent
- Other – please specify
- Don't know/Not applicable

**SECTION 2: Your course of study**

**Q5 For how long have you now been studying in the UK?**

*(Tick one)*

- Less than six months
- 1-2 years
- 6 months – 1 year
- More than 2 years

**Q6 What type of course are you taking?**

*(Tick one)*

- English language or “English Plus”
- A levels, AS levels, Highers, International Baccalaureate
- Access to Higher Education or Foundation Year Programme
- BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND)
- Higher Education degree course
- Other – please specify

**Q7 How well did the following aspects of your course meet your expectations?**

	<i>Better than I expected</i>	<i>Same as I expected</i>	<i>Worse than I expected</i>	<i>Don't know or Not applicable</i>
Course content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The way the course is taught	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support from teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Class size and mix of students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relevance for future career or study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library and computing facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost of the course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q8 What do you intend to do after your course?**

*(Tick one)*

- Work in the UK
- Work in my home country, or another country
- Further study in the UK
- Further study in another country – please say which
- Something else – please tell us what
- Don't know or no specific plans

**SECTION 3: Support, information and advice**

**Q9 Which of the following sources of information did you use BEFORE coming to the UK?**

*(Tick all that you used)*

- The college's website
- An agent in your home country
- The college's prospectus
- UKCOSA website or Guidance Notes
- Education UK website
- Something else – please say what
- British Council office
- Don't know

**Q10 If you received any information about the following topics before you arrived at the college, tick to indicate how helpful it was. If you didn't receive information, tick the box "didn't receive any" for that topic.**

	<i>I received information and it was</i>			<i>I didn't receive</i>	<i>Don't know or</i>
	<i>Very</i>	<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Not</i>	<i>any information</i>	<i>not applicable</i>
	<i>helpful</i>		<i>helpful</i>	<i>on this topic</i>	
How to choose your course and apply to the college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visas and immigration issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fees and cost of living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Living and studying in the UK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting to the college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q11 We would like to know which services were available from your college, whether you used them and if they were helpful. Please tick one box in each row to tell us which services you used, and how helpful you found them.**

	<i>This was not available at my college</i>	<i>This was available, but I have not used it</i>	<i>I have used this service and it was Very helpful</i>	<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Not helpful</i>	<i>Don't know or not applicable</i>
Orientation programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extra English language or study skills support classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College advice services (e.g. International Office or Student Services)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College-organised social activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students' association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers service or higher education adviser	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q12 We would like you to think about what concerns you have had at different times before and during your time at the college.**

**a) Thinking back to before you left home, which, if any, of the following issues were you worried about?**

*(Tick to tell us which ones)*

- Using English language in social situations
- Using English language for study
- Adapting to UK teaching & study methods
- Mixing with UK students
- Feeling homesick or lonely
- Adapting to UK cultures/customs
- Obtaining your visa or other immigration issues
- Food
- Health
- Accommodation
- Meeting religious needs
- Finding paid part-time work
- Having enough money
- Safety/Security
- Other – please tell us what
- None of the above – no worries or concerns

**b) Thinking back to your first few weeks at the college, which, if any, of the following issues were you worried about?**

[same list was given as in 12a]

**c) Now, which, if any, of the following issues are you worried about?**

[same list was given as in 12a]

**Q13 What help did your college give you in finding accommodation when you first arrived?**

- No help required – I made my own arrangements
- I wanted help but none was offered
- I was offered temporary accommodation by the college (e.g. in a hotel or host family)
- I was offered a long-term place with a host family
- I was offered a place in a hall of residence
- I was given help with finding my own accommodation e.g. the college provided lists of private landlords or agencies
- Other – please tell us what

**Q14 How satisfied were you with the following?**

	<i>Very satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Very dissatisfied</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Your accommodation when you first arrived	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where you are living now (if different)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The help available from your college with finding accommodation on arrival	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The help available from your college if you wished to change accommodation or had problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q15 Say whether you agree or disagree with following statements about your accommodation. Tick the final column if any do not apply to you.**

**Where you are living now**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know or not applicable</i>
My accommodation is convenient for travel to the college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy with the quality of my accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My accommodation is warm and comfortable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My host family are friendly and welcoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The cost of my accommodation is reasonable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Anywhere you have lived since coming to the college**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know or not applicable</i>
I had to move one or more times before finding somewhere suitable to live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have had difficulties with my landlord or host family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have had difficulties with other people living in the same place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## SECTION 5: Immigration

Please answer this section if you are a student from outside the European Union who has had to apply for a visa to study in the UK.

If you are an EU student, please go straight to Section 6: Employment.

**Q16 Which of the following statements best describes your experience of applying for a visa to study in the UK?**

*(Tick one)*

- I received a visa the first time I applied. It was a straightforward process.
- I received a visa the first time I applied, but it was a lengthy or difficult process.
- I was refused a visa initially, but received one when I applied again.
- I was refused a visa initially, but received one after making an appeal.

**Q17 Have you had to extend your visa, residence permit or Leave to Remain since you have been a student in the UK?**

- No – go straight to Q20
- Yes – answer Q18, Q19 and Q20

**Q18 Where and how did you extend your visa?**

*(Tick one)*

- I extended it when I was back in my home country
- I extended it in the UK with help from an adviser in my college
- I extended it in the UK with help from a lawyer or other paid adviser.
- I extended it in the UK without any professional help.

**Q19 How easy or difficult was it to extend your visa?**

*(Tick one)*

- Very easy and/or quick
- Quite easy and/or quick
- Quite difficult and/or slow
- Very difficult and/or slow
- Don't know

**Q20 The cost of obtaining a visa for the UK has recently increased from £36 to £85, and the cost of applying for an extension of Leave to Remain as a student has increased to £250 for a postal application and £500 to apply in person.**

**How, if at all, would this affect your decision to study in the UK in future?**

*(tick one)*

- I would definitely still choose to study in the UK.
- I might study in the UK, but I might study elsewhere if the charges were lower
- I would definitely not study in the UK if I had to pay these charges
- Don't know

## SECTION 6: Employment

### Q21 Have you tried to find part-time paid work since coming to the UK?

- Yes, I looked for a job, but I did not find one – go to Q26
- Yes, I have found part-time work – answer Q22 onward
- No, I have not looked for work – go to Section 7: Finance

### Q22 Has your employment been related to your programme of study or future career plans?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

### Q23 Has working helped you improve your English?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

### Q24 Have you obtained a National Insurance Number?

(tick one)

- Yes – I was able to get one quickly and easily
- Yes – but it took a long time (more than six weeks) to get one
- No – I tried to get one, but was not able to
- No – I have not tried to get a National Insurance number
- Don't know or not applicable

### Q25 On average how many hours a week do you work? hours per week

### Q26 Did your college help with your search for part-time employment?

(tick one)

- They were very helpful
- They were quite helpful
- They were not at all helpful
- Help would have been available, but I did not use it

### Q27 Do you think it was difficult for you, as an international student, to find work?

- No – go to section 7: Finance
- Yes – go to Q28, then continue to section 7: Finance

### Q28 What were the reasons you found it difficult to find work as an international student?

(Tick all that apply)

- Employers were unsure about whether I was allowed to work
- I was told I could not work until I obtained my National Insurance Number
- I was told my English was not good enough
- Something else – please tell us what
- None

## SECTION 7: Finance

### Q29 Who is paying the fees for your current course?

*(Tick all that apply)*

- No fees – the course is funded by the UK government
- Yourself
- Your family
- Your employer
- Scholarship from your government
- Discount or scholarship from your UK college
- Other organisation – please tell us what sort (e.g. charity)
- Don't know

### Q30 Who is paying your living costs while you are here?

*(Tick all that apply)*

- Yourself
- Your family
- Your employer
- Scholarship from your own government
- Scholarship from your UK college
- Other organisation – please tell us what sort (e.g. charity)
- Don't know

### Q31 If you have had any financial problems while studying here, please tell us what caused them.

*(Tick all that apply)*

- Exchange rate fluctuations meant I had less money than expected
- The cost of living was higher than I budgeted for
- Tuition fees were higher than I budgeted for
- I expected to work while studying but unable to get a job
- The cost of extending my visa was higher than I budgeted for
- I didn't receive all the money I expected from my sponsor or family
- Any other financial problems – please tell us what
- None of these – I have had enough money to live on

### Q32 Do you have insurance to cover you during your stay in the UK?

**If so, for which of the following items.**

*(Tick all that apply)*

- Medical insurance
- Travel insurance
- Personal possessions insurance
- None of the above

**Q33 If you have tried to open a bank account here, how easy was it to do so?**

(Tick one)

- Very easy
- Easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult
- Not possible
- Not applicable – I have not tried to open a bank account

**Q34 If you had problems, what were the reasons?**

(Tick all that apply)

- Length of course was too short
- Minimum deposit required was too large
- Difficulty providing acceptable proof of address
- Difficulty providing documents requested
- Other – please specify

**SECTION 8: Social life and leisure**

**Q35 How would you rate the following social and leisure opportunities at your college?**

	<i>Better than I expected</i>	<i>Same as I expected</i>	<i>Worse than I expected</i>	<i>Don't know or Not applicable</i>
Opportunities to meet UK students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities to meet other British people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social activities and trips organised by the college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for doing sport, music, drama, etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for enrichment activities e.g. volunteering or community work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for involvement in college life e.g. student societies, buddying schemes, being a student representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q36 Who would you say that most of your friends here in the UK are?**

(Tick one or more boxes to indicate which kinds of people you spend most time with)

- Students from my home country
- Other international students
- UK students
- Local British people
- Members of my own family locally
- Don't know

**Q37** Listed below are a number of things that other people have said about studying in the UK. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each.

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
UK students are hard to get to know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
UK students are friendly when you get to know them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff and students here have shown an interest in my country and culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer to mix with people from my own culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would like more chances to experience UK culture and family life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is difficult to meet UK people from outside the college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The UK is a welcoming and tolerant society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION 9: General impressions**

**Q38** In general, how satisfied are you with the following aspects of your time at the college?

	<i>Very satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Very dissatisfied</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
The course in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support from the college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social and leisure opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your stay in the UK over all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q39** What were the best things about living and studying in the UK?

**Q40** What would have made your experience here better?

**Q41** Is there anything we have not asked about which you would like to tell us?

## SECTION 10: About you

Please give us some information about yourself. When we analyse all the responses to the survey, this will help us understand how different issues affect different groups of students.

**Q42 What is your nationality?**

**Q43 Which country were you living in before coming to the UK?**

**Q44 Please tell about your knowledge of the English language**

*(Please tick one answer only)*

- English is my first language or mother tongue
- English is not my native language, but some or all of my education in my home country was in English
- English is a foreign language for me

**Q45 Are you**

- Male
- Female

**Q46 How old are you?**

- Under 18
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 25-30
- 31-40
- Over 40

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire.**

## APPENDIX 2: DOMICILE OF RESPONDENTS

**Table A1** Full list of countries or territories of domicile of respondents, by region

European Union	118	Other Europe	36
Spain	33	Russia	12
France	18	Norway	10
Germany	15	Turkey	6
Poland	11	Georgia	2
Italy	8	Switzerland	2
Czech Republic	7	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Latvia	4	Bulgaria	1
Sweden	4	Greenland	1
Cyprus	3	Iceland	1
Greece	3		
Austria	2	Sub-Saharan Africa	50
Lithuania	2	Nigeria	16
Netherlands	2	Tanzania	6
Portugal	2	Zimbabwe	5
Hungary	1	Cameroon	3
Ireland	1	Kenya	3
Malta	1	Uganda	3
Slovakia	1	Guinea	2
		Mauritius	2
		Namibia	2
		South Africa	2
		Congo	1
		Gabon (Africa)	1
		Ivory Coast	1
		Malawi	1
		Sudan	1
		Zambia	1

*cont.*

**Table A1** *cont.*

North Africa and Middle East	77	Central and South Asia	37
UAE	34	India	22
Iran	11	Pakistan	8
Saudi Arabia	9	Azerbaijan	2
Libya	7	Kazakhstan	2
Oman	4	Sri Lanka	2
Yemen	4	Tajikistan	1
Egypt	2		
Kuwait	2	Americas and Oceania	25
Algeria	1	USA	5
Israel	1	Brazil	4
Jordan	1	Jamaica	3
Syria	1	Mexico	3
		Australia	2
East Asia	237	Colombia	2
China	159	Canada	1
Hong Kong	43	Chile	1
Japan	21	New Zealand	1
South Korea	11	Nicaragua	1
Taiwan	3	St Lucia	1
		Trinidad and Tobago	1
South-East Asia	39		
Vietnam	13	Not stated	22
Thailand	12	Total	641
Bangladesh	3		
Malaysia	3		
Cambodia	2		
Myanmar	2		
Singapore	2		
Brunei	1		
Philippines	1		



**UKCOSA**  
The Council  
for International  
Education

