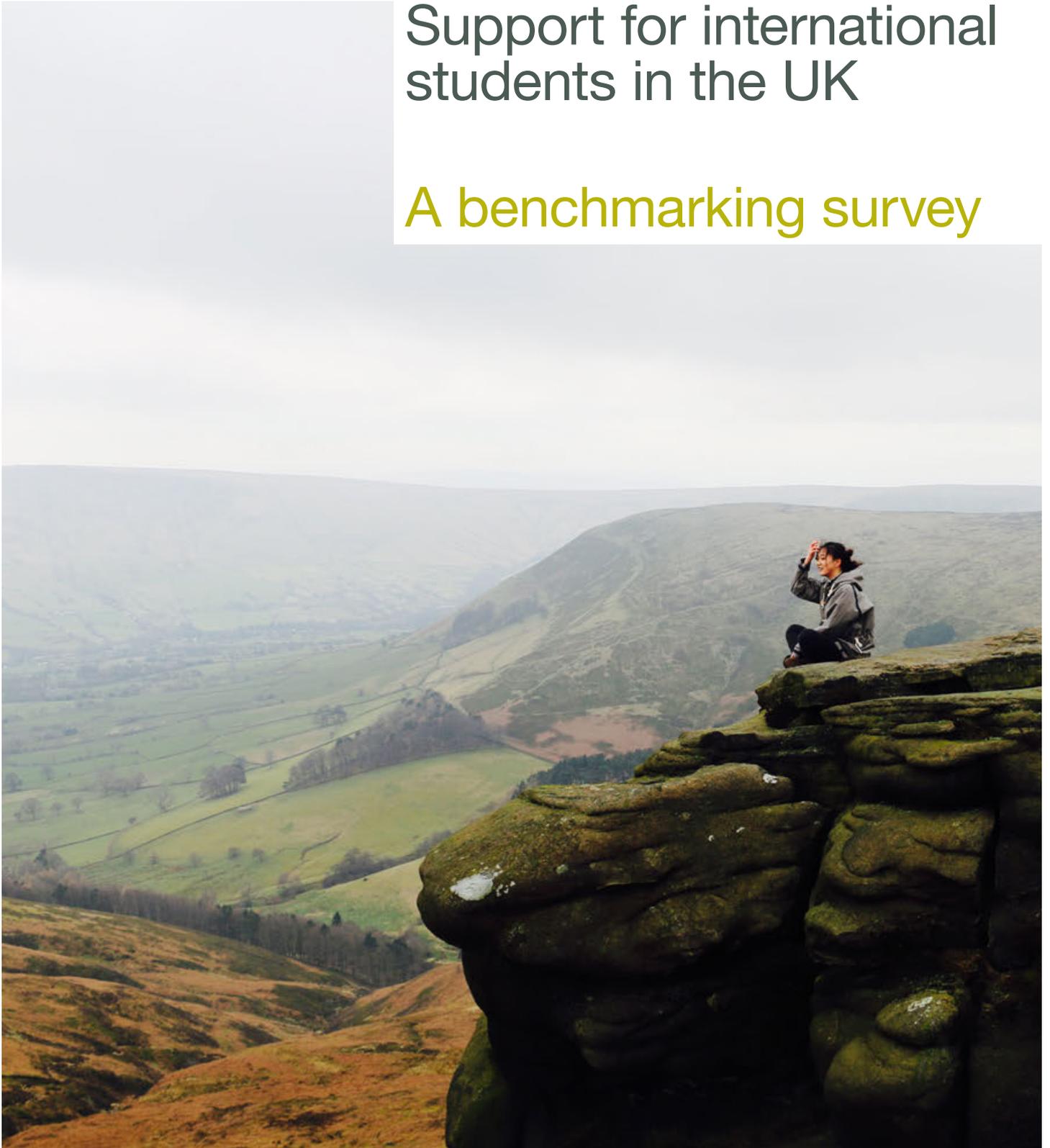


UK Council  
for International  
Student Affairs

**UKCISA**

Support for international  
students in the UK

A benchmarking survey



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**Thanks to all members who completed the benchmarking survey and to those who contributed case studies for the report.**

## Foreword

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I am delighted to introduce and welcome, in our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, this timely report on the range and scope of services to international students in the UK.

It is widely recognised international students are vitally important to our campuses and communities. They bring talent, new perspectives, global links and make such a substantial contribution to the prosperity and diversity of the universities and colleges throughout the UK.

But we face a number of challenges.

Firstly, there is without doubt continued pressure on all our budgets with so many calls for extra investment for a range of priorities and new initiatives. And since our last report, there has been the growth of far-reaching compliance pressures and responsibilities, which has at times led to a debate over the level of resources which must now go into those areas, in addition to traditional student advice services.

At the same time, we also face competitive pressures to demonstrate that the welcome, support and advice which we provide for our students is 'world class' – because if we do not, of course, they will merely choose to go elsewhere.

We also have a responsibility to support the wellbeing of all our students and to ensure that every one of them, whether from the UK or overseas, receives the support and advice they need to enable them to thrive and succeed.

We all recognise that the next few years will be particularly challenging, with the architecture of a new immigration system under development – and continuing concern over the way in which visa policy affects international students – and all the concerns over Brexit for both international students and the staff who either teach or support them.

This report covers all of these areas – including, most currently, findings on the concerns of EU students and offers recommendations with the conclusions. I hope that by comparing and contrasting the level and reach of services at your institution with the UK picture as a whole, you will find aspects that you might improve, adapt or expand - and by doing so, help to create an even stronger reputation for the UK around the world.

Finally, I hope that all of us (government, sector bodies, agencies and institutions) will be able to reflect on the state of the UK's provision in 2018 and areas for possible improvement, to ensure our welcome, advice and support is truly second to none.

**Prof Koen Lamberts**  
**Vice-Chancellor, University of Sheffield**  
**Chair of UKCISA's Board of Trustees**



# 1. About the survey

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UKCISA members across the UK were invited to respond to an online survey between February – April 2018. The survey assessed topics similar to previous UKCISA benchmarking surveys, the last one taking place in 2010-11. The aim was to provide an overview of the broad range of services to international students in the UK in 2018. In particular, UKCISA wanted to offer an insight into the resourcing of new compliance roles and how this may impact on other services to students. It was also an opportunity to assess concerns in the sector with regards to Brexit.

Given the time lapse between surveys, amendments to question formats and the addition of new sections, and as different institutions will have responded to this survey than those who completed previous surveys, comparability has been very limited. However, where significant differences were clear in the responses, these are noted in the report.

## About the data

Many questions gave respondents the option to 'tick all that apply'. As a result, many charts presented in the findings combine to totals above 100%. Similarly, for ease of presentation, 'don't know or N/A' responses are not always included, meaning some totals are less than 100%. Also note that all figures have been rounded up or down.

## About the respondents

UKCISA membership includes every higher education institution in the UK, all further education colleges who are active internationally as well as a number of private colleges and a range of sector representatives. With 120 usable responses to our 2018 survey, the findings represent a reasonably comprehensive picture of the state of provision of advice and support for international students throughout UK higher and further education. However, with only a small sample of FE institutions, the data presented does not distinguish between HE and FE responses unless this appeared particularly significant. Private institutions' responses have not been segregated.

A breakdown by country and institution is listed in Table 1.

**Table 1 Survey respondents by country and type of institution**

Country	Public sector HE	Public sector FE	Private sector institution	Other
England	74	13	7	7
Scotland	9	3	1	0
Wales	4	0	0	0
Northern Ireland	2	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

## 2. The findings

### 2.1 Pre-departure

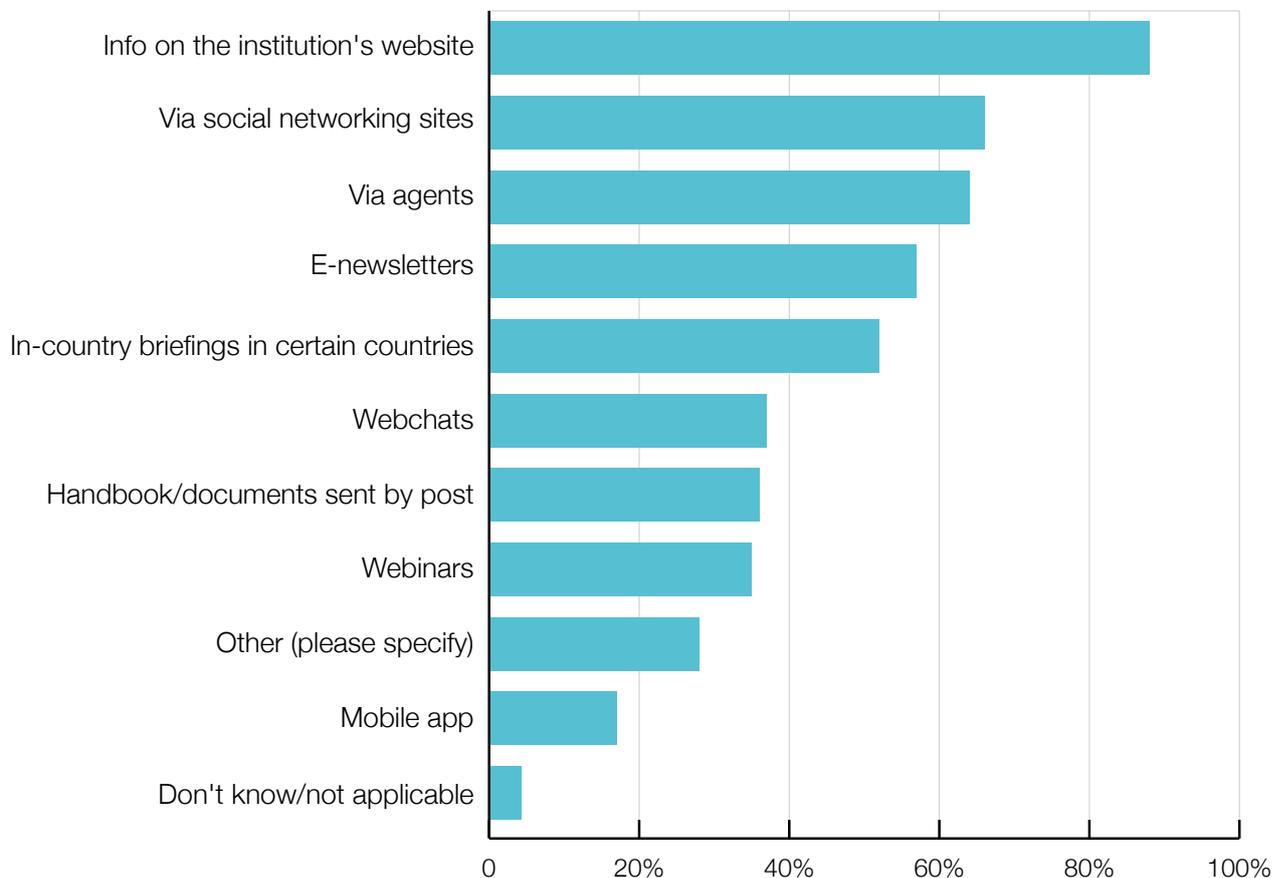
#### Information and advice

Institutions provide pre-departure information for students in a range of ways. Websites are the most common means of disseminating information (88%). Social networking sites (66%) are also very important as well as agents (64%). Digital communications are widely used with 37% using webchats, 35% using webinars and 17% using mobile apps. In contrast, just 36% send handbooks by post.

#### Changes since 2010-11

It is notable that in the 2010-11 survey, 66% sent handbooks by post, just 30% used social networking sites and webchats, webinars and mobile apps did not feature at all.

**Fig 1** In which ways does your institution provide pre-departure information to students?  
(tick all that apply)



## Study skills preparation

While the majority of respondents do not provide pre-arrival help with study skills or language, 33% link to the Prepare for Success website. This is a free online toolkit which prepares students for academic life in the UK ([www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk](http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk)). 24% provide in-house provision or study skills online. (This question does not refer to formal study skills courses such as Foundation or pre-sessional courses).

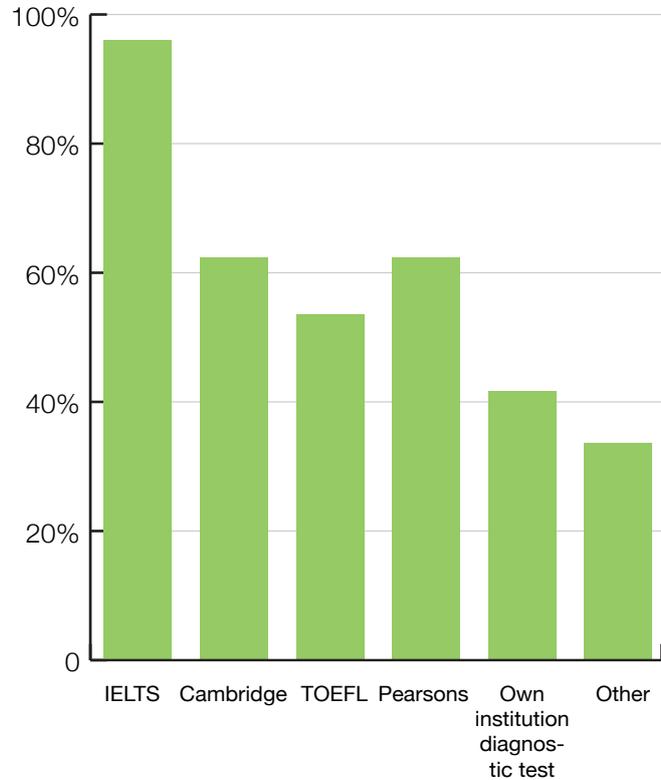
## English language testing (Fig 2)

Unsurprisingly, as IELTS is the only 'secure English language test' (SELT) approved by UKVI for Tier 4 applications by students made outside the UK it is the most accepted test when assessing English language ability prior to issuing a CAS. The 'other' test widely accepted is the Trinity College London test. The results also show that many higher education institutions also use their own methods of assessment (as they are permitted to do so by UKVI).

## Connecting students before arrival (Fig 3)

The majority (70%) of institutions help new international students make contact with current students and/or alumni before departure. As with pre-departure information, it is clear that social networks are a key communication tool. 'Other' methods for linking new students with current students are through events and/or buddy schemes. Alumni tend to be connected with current students online or through pre-departure events in their home countries.

**Fig 2** Which English tests do you accept when assessing English language ability prior to issuing a CAS to Tier 4 students?  
(tick all that apply)



## Did you know?

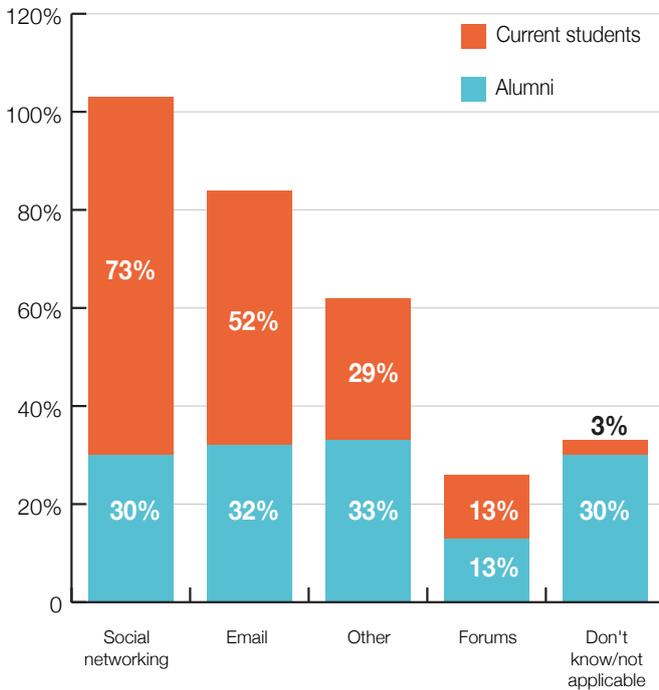
1

A student panel at the Net Natives Annual Summit for Digital Innovation for Higher Education Marketing Professionals in July 2018, said they prefer paper versions for anything 'important' for example, prospectuses. They explained their preference for being able to hold and flick through a physical, tangible document. (You can listen to a podcast of the panel at <http://thenative.com/2018/07/ask-a-student-anything-live-panel-from-asdie18>).

2

According to the QS International Student Survey 2018 (which surveyed 67,172 students from 63 universities from 191 countries between November 2017 and March 2018), 83% of prospective international students said they use social media for research when applying to university. This has grown significantly from 64% in 2016. 56% of those said they use Facebook, 40% use YouTube, 18% use Twitter. Interestingly 89% also said that they prefer to communicate with institutions by e-mail.

**Fig 3** How does your institution help new international students make contact with current students and/or alumni before departure?  
(tick all that apply)



## Did you know?

The QS International Student Survey 2018 reported that the best thing that institutions could do to alleviate students concerns about studying abroad is to enable them to ask questions to existing international students at the institution.

## CASE STUDIES

### Preparing students for arrival in the UK

#### Cardiff University

Cardiff University connects new international students with both current students and alumni. They do this by:

- encouraging all to connect via social media
- student interns and alumni ambassadors talk at international pre-departure meetings
- existing students are matched with their new mentees before the start of term and they are encouraged to get in touch before they begin at the University
- student ambassadors assist with student queries via phone and email during busy periods.

The University also matches their alumni ambassadors with prospective students, identifying those who study the same subject through their CRM system.

#### University of Dundee

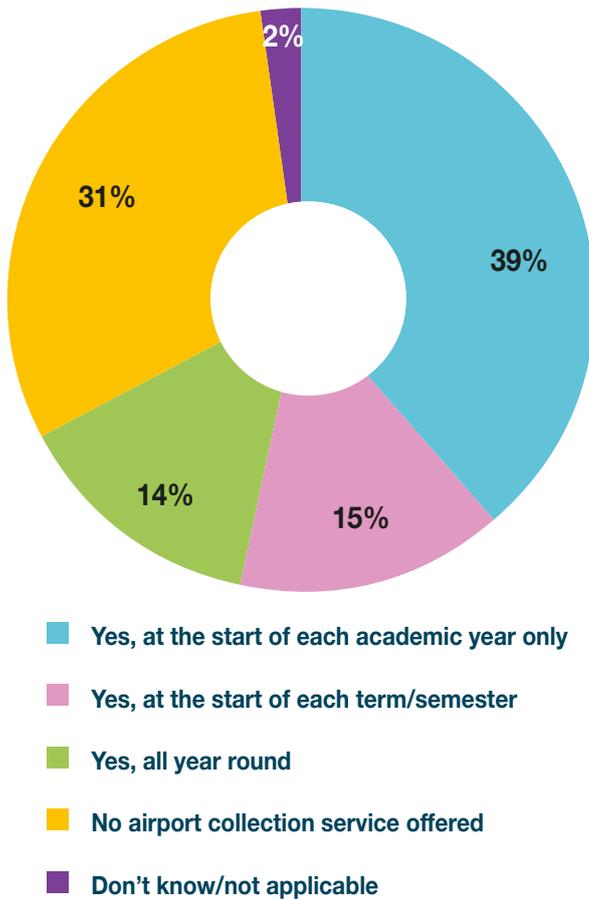
Funded by the UKCISA Grant Scheme, the University of Dundee created a series of videos to help prepare students for their life in the UK. The videos feature current students talking candidly (and unscripted) about their real experiences of studying at Dundee (but much of the advice is useful for any students considering coming to study in the UK). You can read the full report on the project and link to the videos at: [www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

## 2.2 Arrival in the UK

### Airport collection (Fig 4)

Just over one third of institutions run an airport collection service at the start of the year, 15% at the start of each term and 14% run this service throughout the year. Just under one third do not offer an airport collection service.

Fig 4 Does your institution offer an airport collection service?



### Changes since 2010-11

In our 2010-11 survey we asked institutions about a 'meet and greet service' while in the 2018 survey we asked about 'airport collection' so we are unable to make an exact comparison with the earlier findings. However if we assume that 'meet and greet' equates to 'airport collection', it would appear that the number of institutions offering this has decreased. In 2010-11, 48% offered a meet and greet service at the start of the year, 24% at the start of the term, 14% all year round and just 13% offered no meet and greet service.

### Late arriving students

The majority of respondents (62%) provide workshops or face-to-face advice for late-arriving students. 15% provide orientation materials online. Only 7% offer no additional support. 'Other' types of support included:

- monthly induction events
- re-orientation later in the year
- tutors meet with students to ensure they have all the information they require

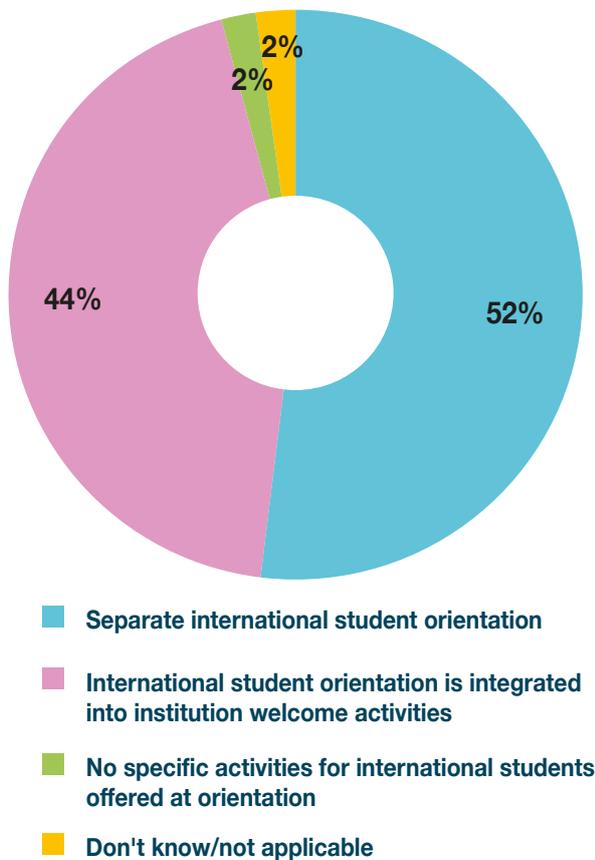
### CASE STUDY Induction at Keele University Students' Union

Keele University Students' Union ran a project supported by the UKCISA Grants Scheme to support students arriving in the UK throughout the year. Read the report 'Creating a rolling induction programme for international students' at [www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

### Induction and orientation (Fig 5)

52% of respondents offer a separate orientation for international students and 44% offer a joint student orientation for both international and home students. Just 2% of respondents do not provide specific welcome activities for international students. A number of institutions run a combination of events, ie some activities exclusively for international and others bringing student groups together. The majority of orientations run for 3-5 days (32% of international-only programmes and 61% of integrated programmes).

Fig 5 At the start of the year, what kind of orientation do you run?



### Changes since 2010-11

The data with 2010-11 is not directly comparable as the question specifically asked about integrating the international welcome programme with Fresher's Week or 'Week Zero' events. However, the trend does appear to be towards integrating the orientation programme for international students with welcome activities for *all* new students. The 2010-11 survey shows that 70% of respondents ran a separate orientation while only 15% integrated the international orientation with Fresher's Week or 'Week Zero'.

### CASE STUDY

#### From Orientation to Welcome Week: University of Warwick

University of Warwick overhauled their orientation programme in 2018 to create a lecture-free Welcome Week for all students at all levels. The students' union had recognised that the orientation programme for international students meant that a number of UK students were missing out. The new model was also a chance to create greater opportunities for integration and friendship-making between domestic and international students. By co-ordinating across the university, it also ensured that all students (not just international) experienced a warm welcome. Warwick reported that the results were extremely positive: 'students loved it, staff loved it, parents loved it'.

## 2.3 Accommodation (Fig 6)

Overall, more than three quarters of respondents provide institution-run accommodation with only 8% of institutions not providing any accommodation for international students.

Within institution-run accommodation, institutions provide a range of support:

- social activities and events (70%)
- student wardens (57%)
- staff wardens (46%)
- residential life officer (37%)

A number of respondents also commented that they provide 24-hour security (porters/overnight personnel) or a nightline.

36% of respondents offer accommodation for dependants.

Institutions offer a wide range of accommodation support – listed below:

- Advice on housing rights (56%)
- Vetted listings of private sector options (40%)
- Listings of private sector options, but not vetted by the institution (38%)
- Contract checking service (38%)
- House hunting events (38%)
- Referral to private sector lettings agents (36%)
- Institution willing to act as a guarantor for private lets (12%)

4% don't provide accommodation support.

A number of institutions offer 'other' types of support.

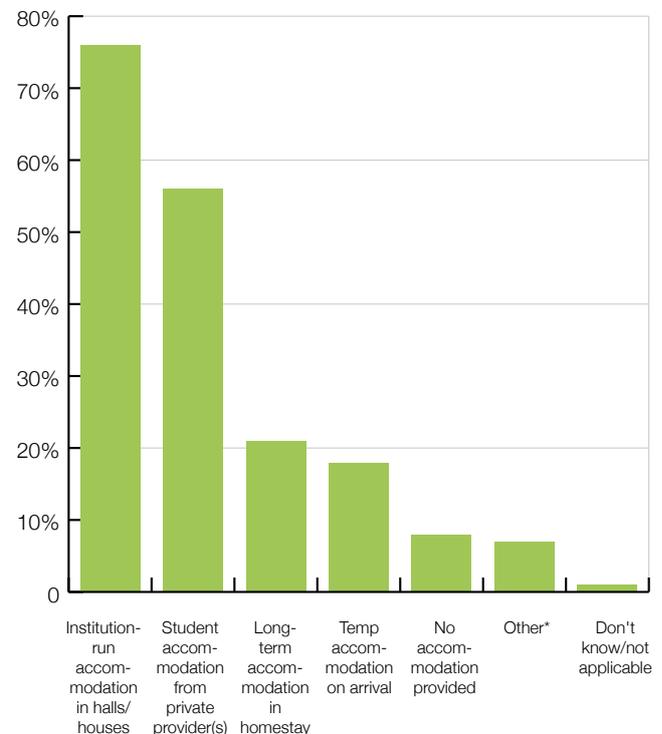
Examples of this include:

- a self-accreditation scheme run in partnership with several universities and the local council to ensure students have access to high quality, well-managed accommodation
- volunteers view private accommodation on behalf of students (at the start of the term only)
- homestay accommodation
- referral to external agencies for housing rights advice (eg Shelter)
- city-wide accommodation website for universities in the city

### Changes since 2010-11

The 2010-11 survey did not ask about accommodation from private providers but in 2018, this represents the second largest type of accommodation available to international students.

**Fig 6 What accommodation does your institution provide to international students?**  
(tick all that apply)



\*Other\* accommodation types included on-campus hotel, short-term institution accommodation, and links to private sector housing partners

## Did you know?

As international students are rarely able to provide a housing guarantor in the UK, they are disadvantaged in the private housing market. Many are required to pay large deposits and/or rent in advance – sometimes for the duration of their stay. For this reason the NUS encourage all institutions to become guarantors for their students. More information on the NUS Connect website (students' unions need to log in): <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/how-to-campaign-for-university-guarantor-schemes>

Read an earlier version which outlines the scheme at: <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/housing-how-to-university-guarantors-scheme>

## CASE STUDY International students and accommodation: University of Sussex

Funded through the UKCISA Grants Scheme, the University of Sussex carried out research in 2017-18 into the experience of international students renting in the private sector. This highlights many of the additional barriers faced by international students including the challenges of making decisions on properties when they are based overseas and being unaware of their housing rights. You can read the full report at [www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

## CASE STUDY Housing guarantor scheme: University of Sussex

The University of Sussex has offered a guarantor scheme since a successful pilot in 2017. A maximum of 20 students each year can use it. It is open to all students but predominantly used by international students who don't have a UK guarantor.

The scheme is open for a limited period each year and there are various rules relating to the maximum cost of rent and eligibility. Successful applicants have to pay a one-off £50 fee and the accommodation must be found through the University's approved listings.

Advisers at the University of Sussex noted that while just a small number of students have used the scheme, they valued having a service that they could refer students to if they were struggling.

## 2.4 International Student Support

### English language

The majority of institutions (61%) provide free in-sessional English or study skills classes for international students.

### Student safety (Fig 7)

#### Under 18s

The chart below illustrates the extensive procedures that are in place for under-18s.

#### Emergency support

69% of institutions provide a 24 hour emergency telephone number and 62% of these provide it throughout the year.

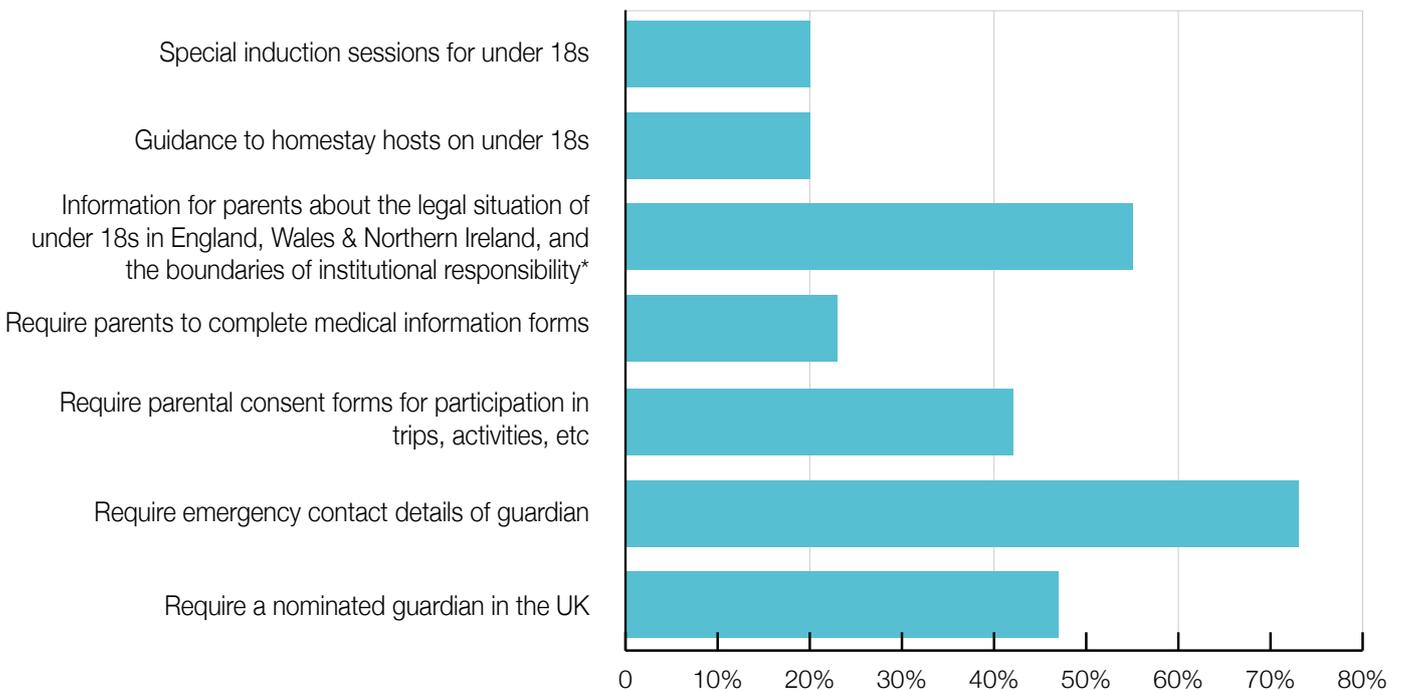
Over three quarters of institutions offer safety briefings to all students, with 8% offering these specifically for international students (see Figure 8 below)

#### Year-round support (Fig 8)

Support for international students is available throughout the year with the majority of activities offered to all students. 95% of institutions offer teaching and learning support, 94% provide advice on student wellbeing, 95% have a university counselling service and more than 80% offer advice on plagiarism/academic issues. The one area of support where more focus is given to international students is in workshops on adapting to a new culture (44% for international students only).

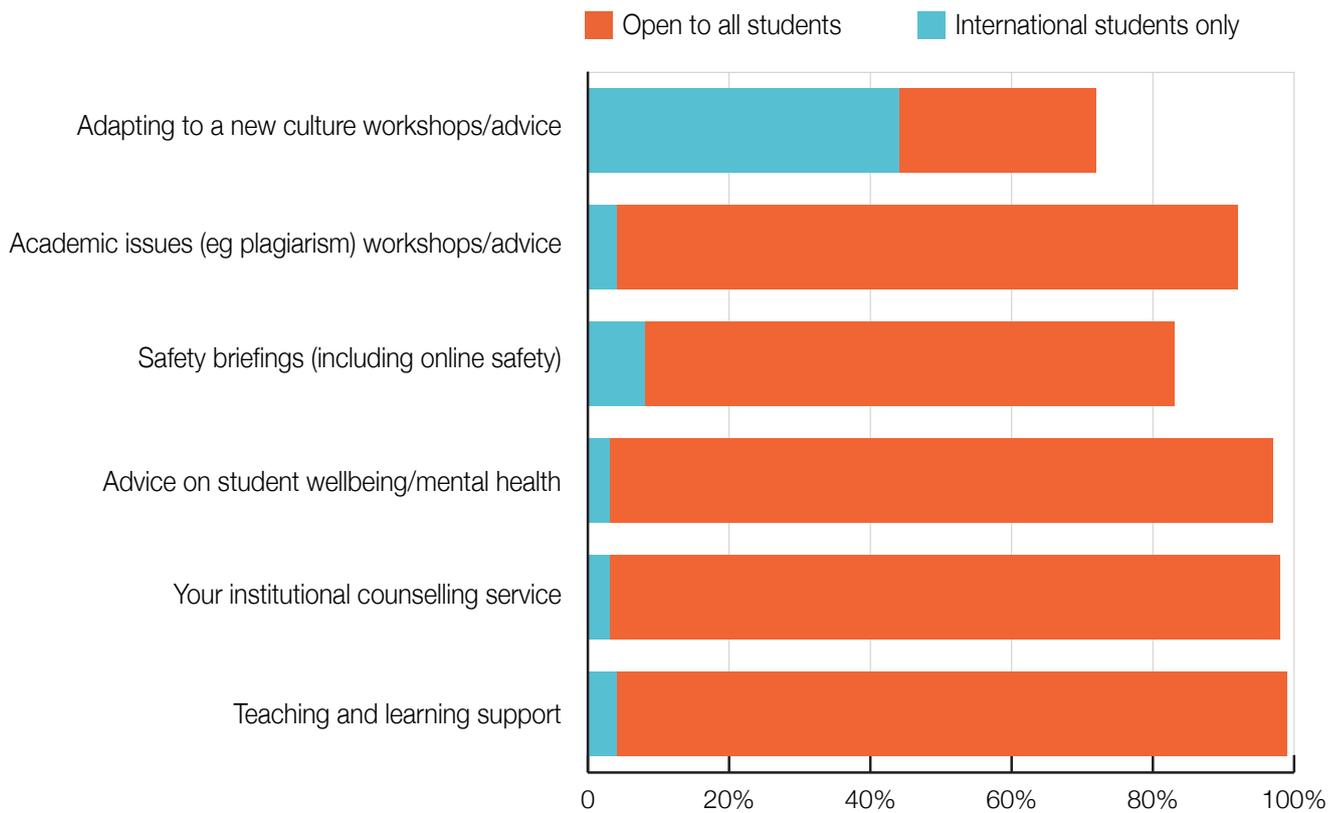
Respondents also listed examples of other kinds of support for students. These included peer support, dedicated disability team and a 'Global Lounge'. The Global Lounge provides a range of cultural and social events for all students that promote integration and the development of an international perspective. International students have opportunities to work in the Global Lounge year-round as a way to enhance their employability.

**Fig 7 Which of the following procedures does your institution have in place for under 18s?**  
(tick all that apply)



\* the question on legal information, of course, does not apply to Scottish institutions.

Fig 8 What kinds of support do you offer during the year?



**CASE STUDY**  
**Student safety:**  
**Manchester**

The UKCISA Grants Scheme funded the Manchester International Safety Campaign. The project raised awareness among international students on safety issues and included a short video highlighting dangers to avoid. You can read the full report and find a link to the video at: [www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

**CASE STUDY**  
**Student safety:**  
**University of Sheffield**

The University of Sheffield invites the local police to run presentations during the Orientation Week programme. The dedicated Sheffield University police officer works with a member of the University security team to inform international students about simple ways to protect themselves and their property. This is followed up with a 'safety fortnight' early in the first term. Students can have their bikes and laptops safety-marked and information is disseminated to raise awareness of other issues, for example drink spiking, online security and university safe schemes. One such scheme is the women's minibus which runs seven nights a week during term time and goes from the students' union building to anywhere the student lives within a two mile radius of the University. Another scheme is the Safe Taxi Scheme. This allows any students unable to pay a taxi fare on the night to hand in their student card to the taxi driver and pay later at the students' union in order to have their card returned: <https://su.sheffield.ac.uk/advice-support/safety/safe-taxi-scheme>

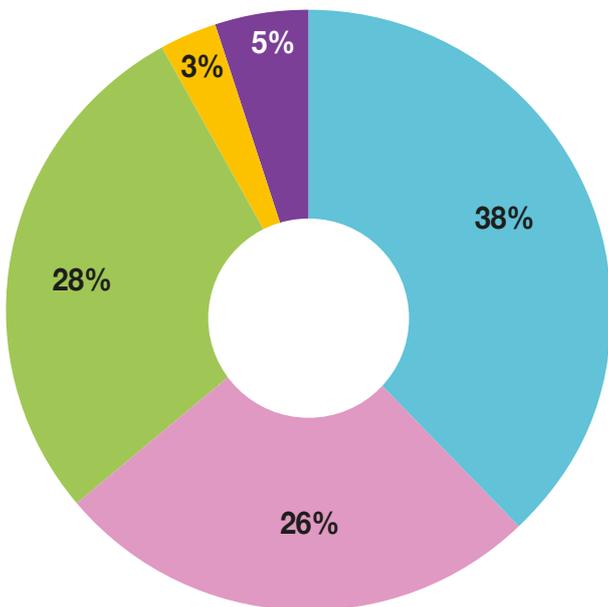
## 2.5 Immigration advice and compliance

### Provision of advice and compliance roles

An important addition to the questions in the 2018 survey relate to the provision of immigration advice and compliance as we were aware that many members were keen to gauge the level of support in this area with the emergence of immigration compliance duties following the introduction of Tier 4. To ascertain differences in provision at different times in the international student journey, we surveyed institutions about provision during the admissions process and for students continuing at institutions. However, as there was no significant difference between the allocation of resources at either time, the data presented here illustrates how resources are allocated throughout the year.

Figure 9 shows that the majority of institutions (38%) separate advice and compliance support into different teams; one quarter work within the same team and in just over one quarter of institutions, the same member of staff is responsible for both services.

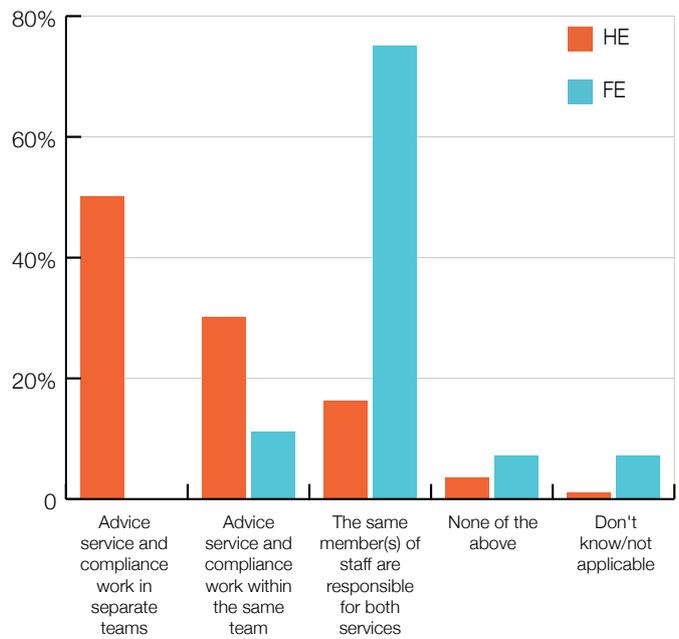
**Fig 9** How does your institution organise the provision of immigration advice and compliance?



- Advice service and compliance work in separate teams
- Advice service and compliance work within the same team
- The same member(s) of staff are responsible for both services
- None of the above
- Don't know/not applicable

When comparing responses between FE and HE institutions it is evident that FE have far fewer resources with 75% of respondents confirming that the same member(s) of staff are responsible for both services. (Fig 10)

**Fig 10** How does your institution organise the provision of immigration advice and compliance (FE and HE comparison).



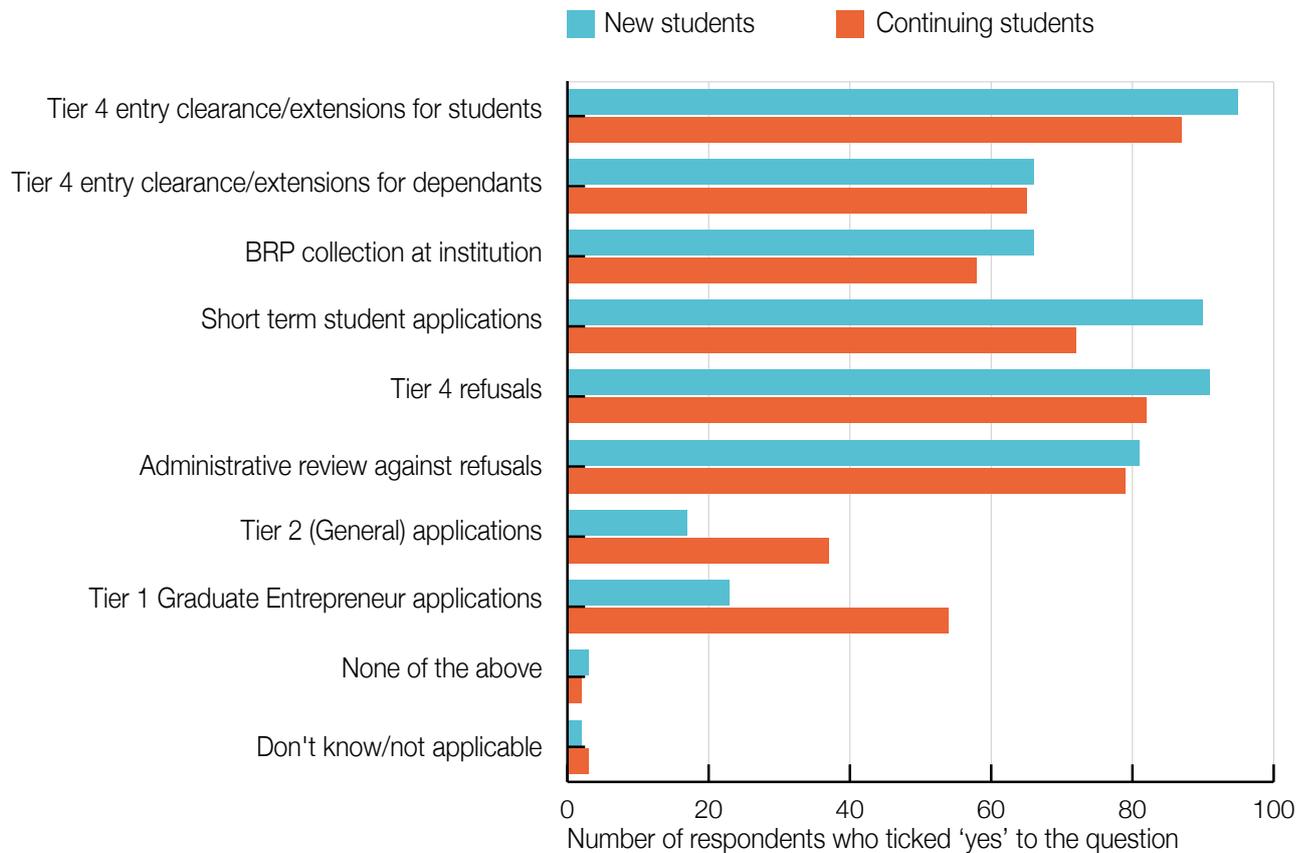
We had also hoped to ascertain the level of resourcing in institutions for advice and compliance, however the data in this section was very unclear and in the open comments at the end of the survey, a number of institutions noted they had difficulty in answering questions about the number of full-time equivalent staff involved in immigration compliance as so many staff in the institution in different departments were involved. When examining student numbers in relation to the responses on compliance provision, it was also impossible to establish any useful patterns to link the number of compliance staff with the number of international students.

The fact that it has not been possible to obtain a clear picture in this area is, in itself, an interesting finding and may indicate that although compliance roles have become more established in the sector over the past few years, this is still an area which is evolving.

### Range of immigration advice (Fig 11)

The vast majority of members provide a full range of Tier 4 immigration advice for both new and continuing students. (By 'continuing students' we mean students who are already enrolled at the institution and are extending their stay in the UK.) The chart on page 15 illustrates this range. This also shows that fewer institutions are resourcing advice on Tier 2 for continuing students but over 50% are advising on Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur. It is interesting to note, also, that a small number of institutions are advising on work options for new students (possibly before they even arrive in the UK).

**Fig 11 Does your institution provide advice/assistance on any of the following areas of immigration for new and continuing students? (tick all that apply)**



### Changes since 2010-11

The range of advice topics in 2018 contrast greatly with 2010-11 so figures are not comparable but it is interesting to note how this area of advice has changed. In 2010-11 topics included the Student Batch Scheme (where advisers submitted groups of student visa applications to a dedicated team at the Home Office), application 'rejections' (when mandatory elements of Tier 4 applications had errors, for example incorrect photos or documents missing, and applications were returned as 'invalid') and, of course, Post Study Work.

### Issuing CAS (Fig 12)

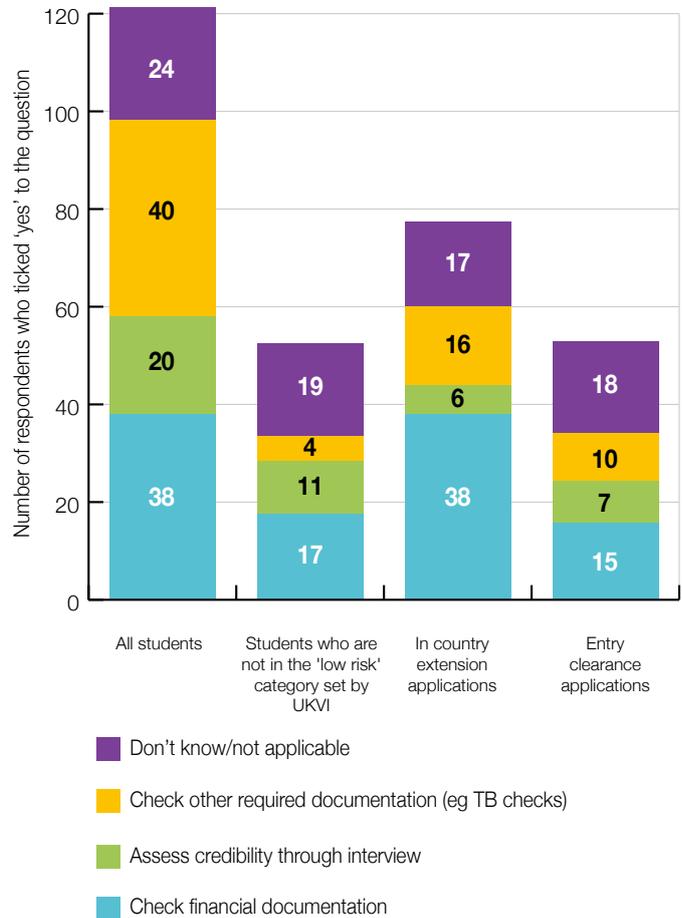
A range of departments issue CAS but admissions teams rank the highest (58%) followed by compliance teams (52%) with 15% of international student advice teams holding this responsibility. Examples of 'other' teams issuing CAS include pathway providers, departmental administrators and one 'CAS team within the immigration advice service'.

Not all institutions were able to answer the question on pre-CAS checks but it is clear that in a number of institutions considerable work is done to ensure that students have the required documentation even before institutions issue a CAS for students to submit with their Tier 4 application. Notably, when checks are done, the majority of respondents do these for all students and not just those deemed by UKVI to be 'low risk'. Figure 12 illustrates this.

### Premium Account Service

70% of respondents are signed up to the Premium Account Service. Those who have not signed up tend to be further education colleges and smaller institutions.

**Fig 12 Before issuing a CAS, which of the following do you do to ensure students have the correct documentation? (tick all that apply)**



## 2.6 Police registration

55% of institutions work with the police to help those students who are required to register with the police to do so either by arranging on-campus visits or facilitating appointments. 30% make no special arrangements. One of the 'other' arrangements includes advising students how to register online (see 'Police registration systems' below).

We followed up with respondents who helped with arrangements to ascertain if facilitating appointments meant students registered beyond the seven day deadline. Half confirmed that between 90-100% students then registered late. This highlights the difficulties in the UK for police registration to take place within the legally required time limits, despite the resources deployed by institutions to facilitate registration.

### Police registration systems (Fig 13)

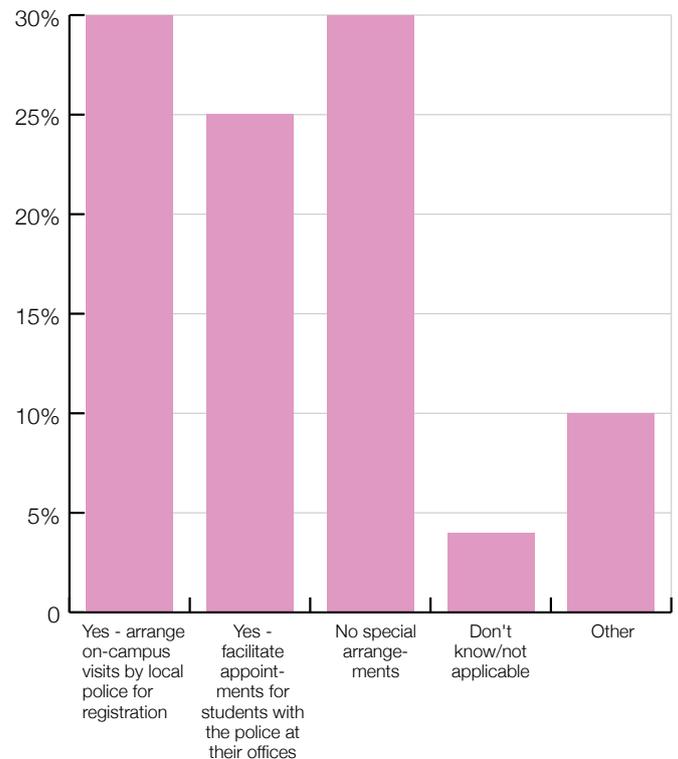
The answers to this part of the survey highlighted the range of ways that students can register with the police across the UK from submitting paper forms in advance, presenting in person, or the police officer attending campus (several respondents noted that only 1-2 staff are available to service wide areas with many students).

Institutions in South Yorkshire and in Sussex explained that students are able to book appointments online allowing students to attend an appointment at a later date, pay and collect their certificate.

The majority of respondents commented on the 'relaxed' approach of the police and that the majority of police interpreted the registration date as the date when students submitted online or submitted paper documents in advance, rather than the actual date when they attended the appointment and obtained their certificate. Several institutions also noted a common additional problem with police registration: the number of students issued with BRP cards containing errors (where the requirement to register with the police is missing) and needing to have this corrected creates yet more delays in the process.

The data from the survey compounds the argument which UKCISA, along with many other institutions and sector bodies, has made for many years that the system does not work and does not provide a warm welcome to those students required to register. Given the data now readily available to UKVI through the Tier 4 system, it is time to review this again with a view to discontinuing the need for registration altogether.

**Fig 13 Does your institution have any special arrangements for police registration?**  
(tick all that apply)



## 2.7 Social activities

40% of respondents confirmed they have an ‘international student experience officer’ or similar dedicated role. This role, particularly in HE institutions may have emerged as the tasks of ‘international student adviser’ (which would previously have encompassed pastoral and social support) have become increasingly focussed on immigration advice work.

The majority of institutions do not segregate students when running social activities. Figure 14 illustrates the range of social activities on offer and notably almost 60% institutions now run a form of Global Week/International Week which is open to all students. The kind of activities which are aimed exclusively at international students include HOST visits (35%), arranging trips (15%) or weekend/evening social activities. (14%).

### CASE STUDIES UKCISA Grants Projects: social activities

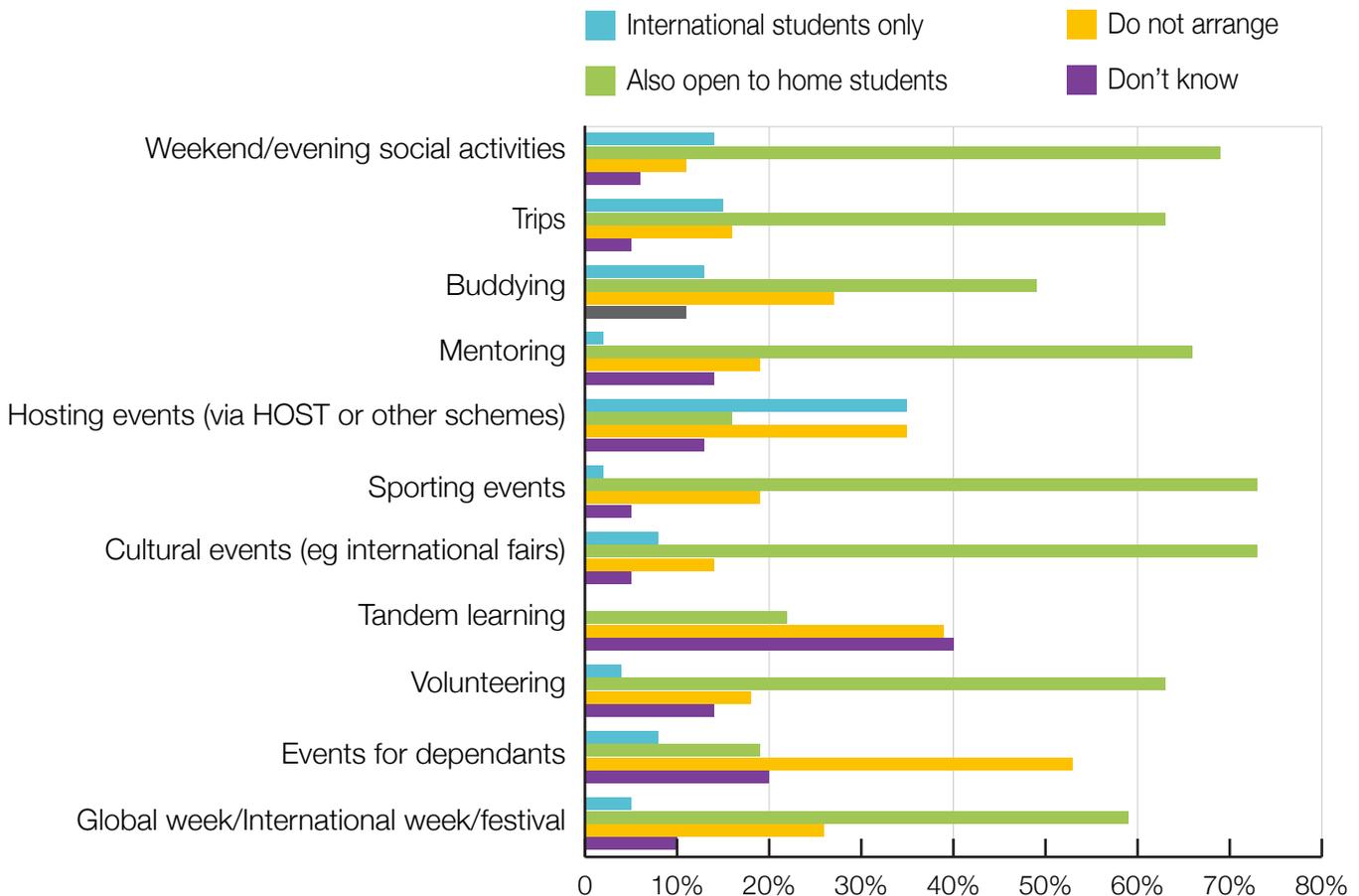
**York St John:** Grassroots internationalisation

**University of Worcester:** Student-led friendship groups

**Newcastle College:** Global Society

You can read the full reports at:  
[www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

**Fig 14** What activities and support does your institution arrange for international students, and which are also open to home students? (tick all that apply)



### Did you know?

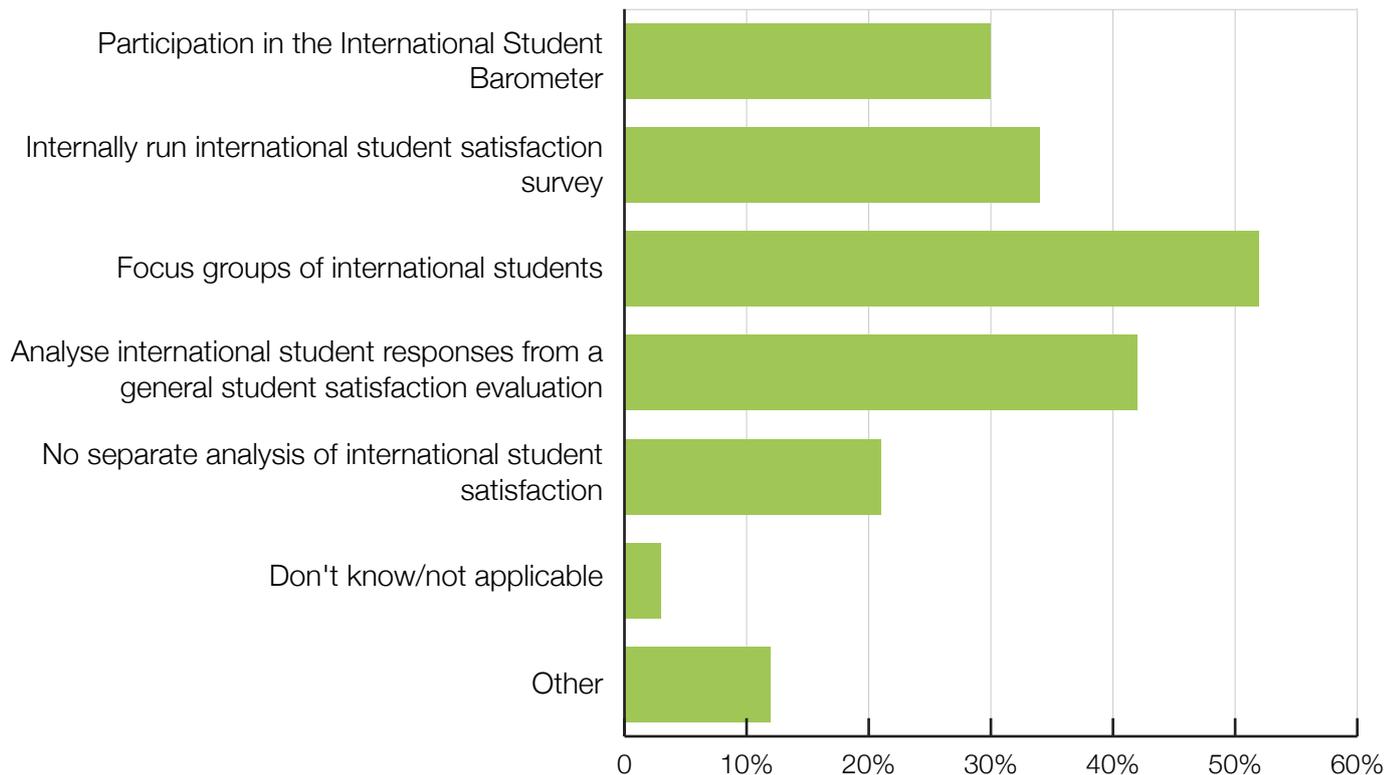
HOST UK arranges weekend (and Christmas) homestay visits for international students with families in their homes across the UK. You can find out more at: [www.hostuk.org](http://www.hostuk.org).

Also see the UKCISA blog for students:  
[www.ukcisa.org.uk/blog/6287/Enjoy-the-ultimate-British-experience](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/blog/6287/Enjoy-the-ultimate-British-experience).

## 2.8 Student representation (Fig 15)

Only 26% of respondents have an international student committee within the institution or the students' union. However, most institutions seek feedback from students through a range of methods. Focus groups of international students are the most common method (52%). 42% of respondents analyse the whole student group rather than selecting international students only.

**Fig 15 How does your institution seek international student feedback?**  
(tick all that apply)



### CASE STUDY Lincoln University Students' Union

Lincoln University students' union was funded through the UKCISA Grants Scheme to carry out research: *Are students' union's activities, events and opportunities accessible and used by international students?* The extensive report on the findings examines the range of activities in the students' union, barriers to international student engagement and offers practical solutions for the sector to encourage more international students to benefit from the many activities and support provisions in the union. You can read the full report at [www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

### Students' unions and international students

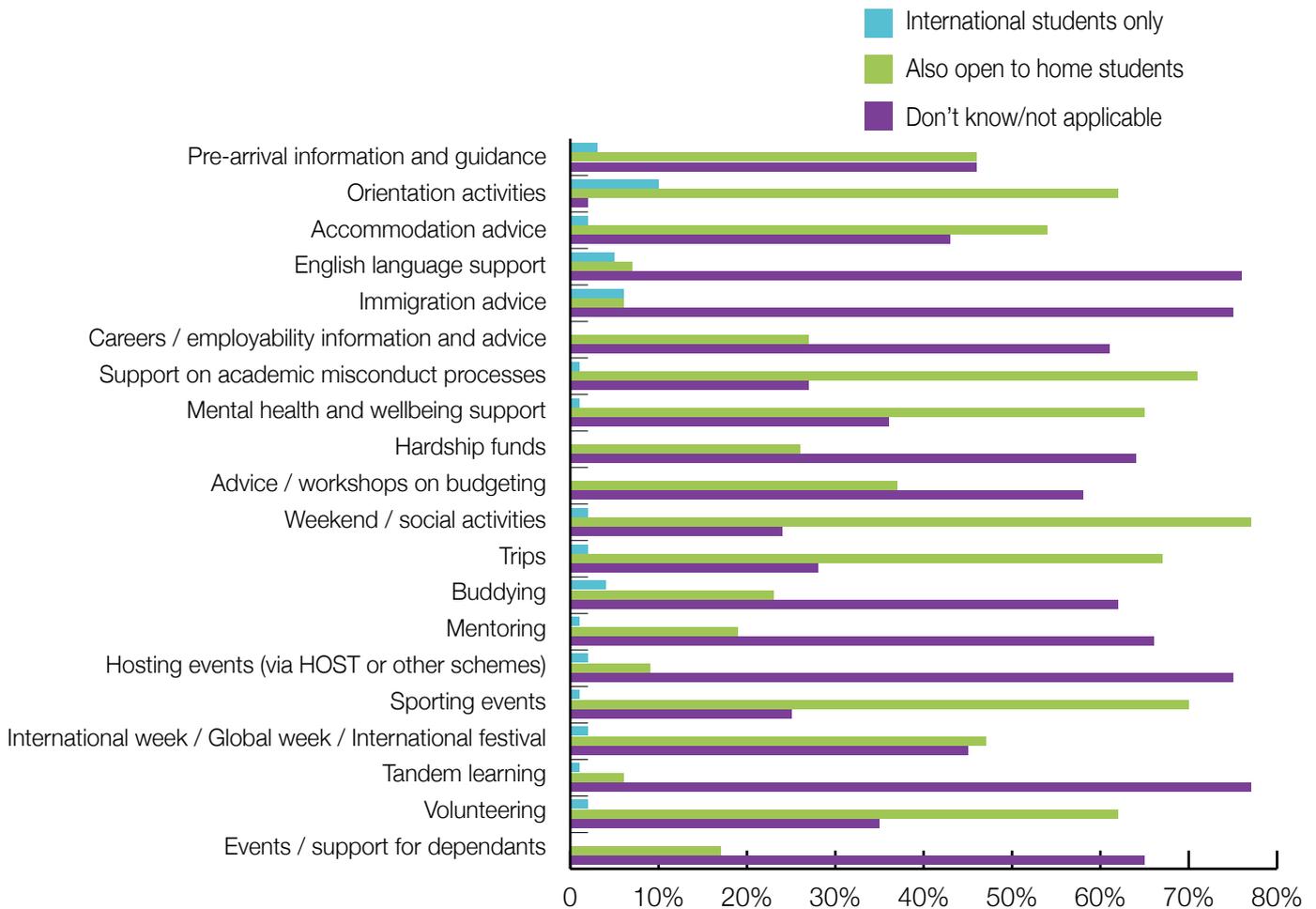
(Fig 16)

With 118 students' unions in UKCISA's membership, specific questions about students' union activity were inserted into the 2018 survey. The responses illustrate that students' unions offer a vast range of activities to support students during their studies. The majority of activities are open to all students with the most common being weekend/social activities, support on academic misconduct processes, sporting events, trips, mental health and wellbeing support, volunteering and orientation activities.

Figure 16 also highlights how few students' unions now offer immigration advice.

45% of respondents confirmed the students' union has an elected International Students' Officer but of those, only 17% are full time sabbatical posts.

**Fig 16 What support does your students' union provide for international students?**  
(tick all that apply)

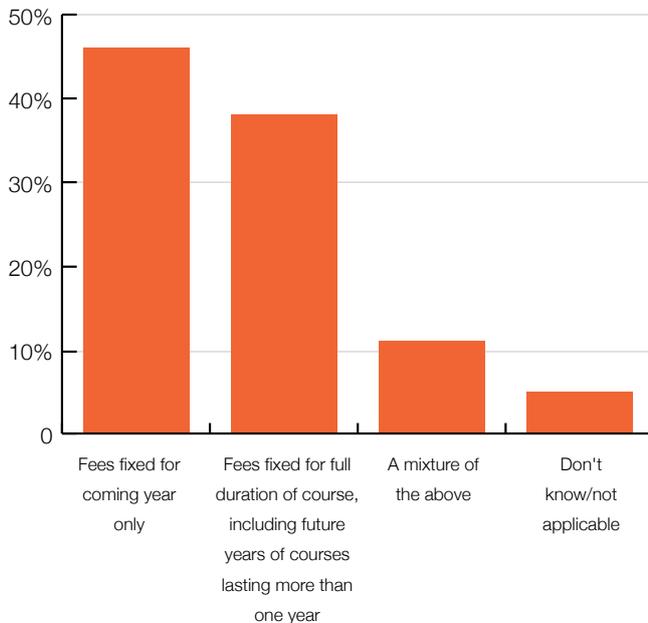


## 2.9 Finance

### Fee levels (Fig 17)

84% of institutions fix fee levels ahead. Almost half (46%) fix fee levels for international students for the coming year only and 38% of institutions fix fees for the full duration of the course.

**Fig 17 How far ahead are fee levels fixed for international students?**



### Deposits

56% of respondents confirmed that international students are required to pay a deposit and one quarter confirmed that they require deposits in certain circumstances. These circumstances include deposits for all or certain postgraduate courses, for certain departments, for non-EU students or only for students requiring a Tier 4 visa.

Only 14% of institutions do not require international students to pay a deposit.

### Instalments

Almost three quarters of institutions allow students to pay their tuition fees in instalments (71%). 14% require students to pay their full fees prior to starting the course. There is also a range of 'other' options where instalments are only offered to certain student groups such as three-year undergraduate courses or returning students. 9% only allow students to pay in instalments by special arrangement, for example when in financial hardship.

### Budgeting (Fig 18)

The majority of institutions provide advice on budgeting using a range of resources.

NB The International Student Calculator is no longer supported and updated (although the website is still live). 'Other' resources which institutions find useful include:

- Blackbullion – a website written for students and universities: [www.blackbullion.com](http://www.blackbullion.com)

### Changes since 2010-11

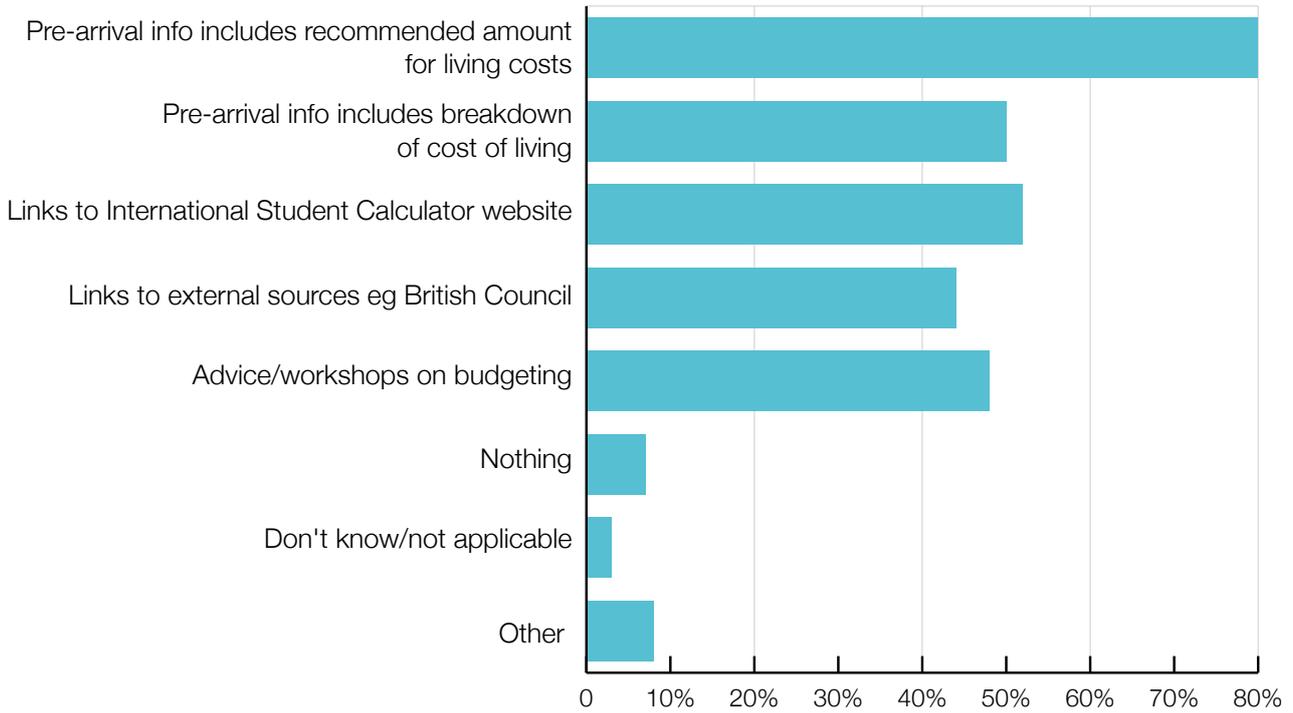
It would appear that more institutions are fixing fees for the full duration of the course: just 26% of those who responded to our 2010-11 survey did so.

- The Money Advice Service – a website offering useful advice on loans and budgeting [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en)
- Money Saving Expert – offers a wide range of financial advice: [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com)
- Other institutions use their own money guide

### Hardship fund (Fig 19)

38% of respondents provide a hardship fund open to all students and 27% offer one dedicated to international students with 16% offering financial support in exceptional circumstances. 16% do not offer any financial support at all. Of those who provide a hardship fund, the majority (85%) do not require students to pay funds back.

**Fig 18** What help and information does your institution provide with budgeting? (tick all that apply)



**Fig 19** Does your institution provide a hardship fund for international students? (tick all that apply)



## 2.10 Employment

### Working during studies (Fig 20)

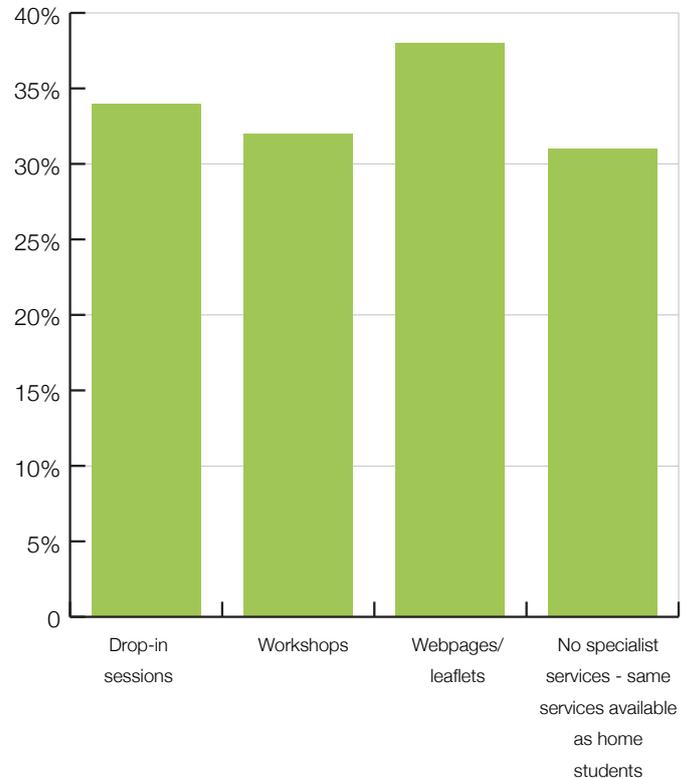
HE public institutions (whose Tier 4 students have permission to work during their studies in the UK) were asked how they provide support to students to find part-time work. The most common format is through websites and leaflets (38%), followed by drop-in sessions (34%) and workshops (32%). However, 31% of respondents do not provide specialist international student services and offer the same service to all students. Some 'other' examples of support are through institutional job shops, one to one advice and providing job opportunities on site.

### Working after studies (Fig 21)

Although, there is less provision for advising on the immigration rules relating to working after study in the UK (compared to provision for Tier 4 – see Figure 11 on page 15), there is a range of support to advise students on the practical aspects of finding work after study. The most common support activity is to provide information or run workshops on working in the UK after study. One third refer to a database of overseas vacancies such as Gradlink <https://www.gradlinkuk.com>. 31% run workshops about working in other countries after study. Given the attention in the sector on the importance of post study work options for international students, it is perhaps surprising that only 19% of the respondents have specialist international careers advisers and 29% provide the same service to all students. Of the 11% who offer 'other' forms of support, these included:

- careers fairs in China
- international student careers weeks
- one-to-one support on Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur
- subscribing to the Going Global website <http://www.goinglobal.com> which offers international career and employment resources.

**Fig 20 Does your institution provide specialist help for international students seeking part-time work while studying eg on employment regulations, writing a CV, NI numbers, etc?**  
(tick all that apply)



### CASE STUDY University of Bristol

The University of Bristol has developed two factsheets for returning international graduates on the job markets in China and Hong Kong, and India. These provide information on the main sectors and employers, what employers are seeking from UK-educated international graduates, and those countries' recruitment processes. The factsheets were informed by country visits, alumni feedback and international students themselves, who led the research and took part in focus groups and surveys.

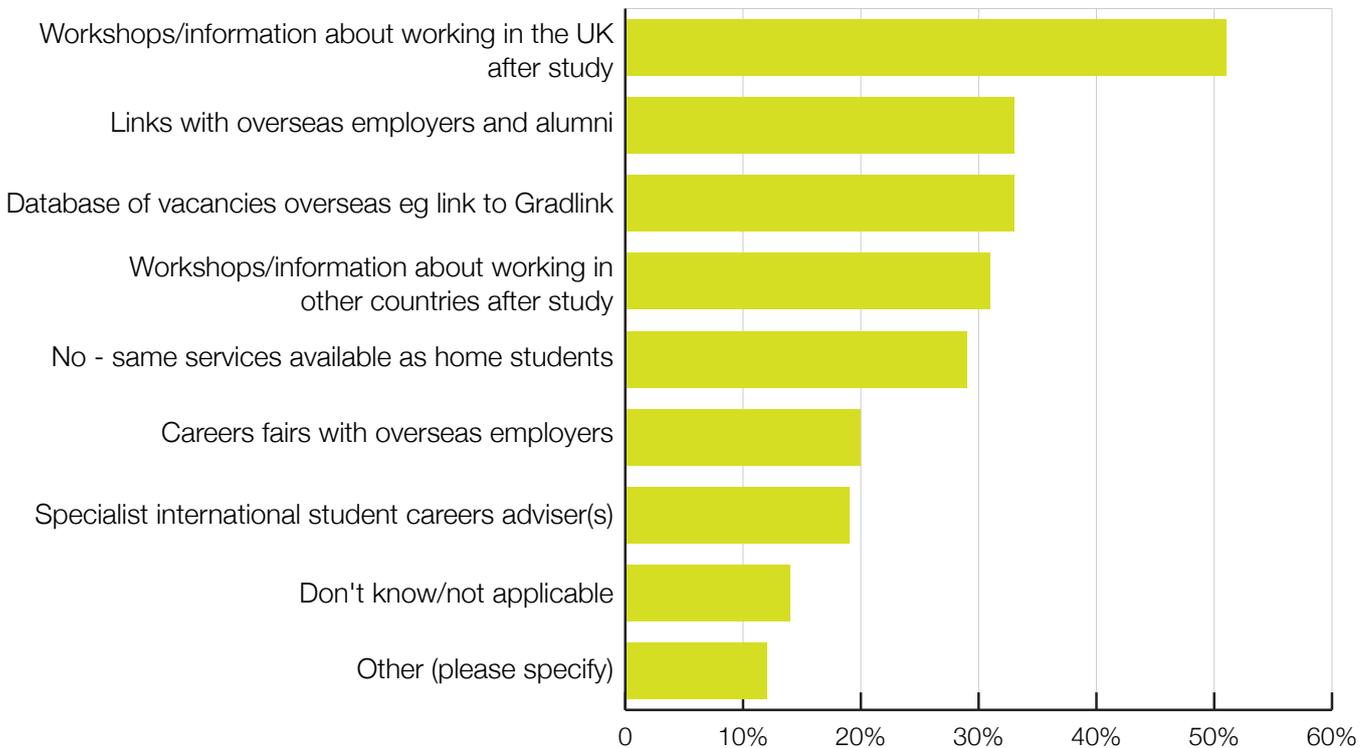
[www.bristol.ac.uk/careers/international](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/careers/international)

### CASE STUDY Prepare2GetAhead University of Warwick

The University of Warwick created an online hub to help all students make the most of their time in the UK. It was created by a team of experts in international education as well as international employers. It helps students to start thinking about their future during their studies, to help students discover more about themselves to help them decide on their career. The **Prepare2GetAhead** website provides information, quizzes and downloadable templates to help students plan their careers.

<https://www.prepare2getahead.co.uk/>

**Fig 21 Does your institution provide specific help to international students to find post study work?**  
(tick all that apply)



## CASE STUDIES

### International student employability

Through the UKCISA Grants Scheme, UKCISA has funded several employment related projects and research:

**Bournemouth University:** Employment for international students whilst studying in the UK

**Canterbury Christ Church University:** Career Start Canterbury

**Edinburgh College:** Volunteer for Success

**University of Essex:** Using Design Thinking to enhance the international student experience and their understanding of employability

**Midlands Universities:** Developing your Global Career – a week of virtual employability events

**University of Portsmouth:** Generating international student internship opportunities with local SMEs

**University of Sheffield:** Preparing for Placement

All reports are available to download and read at [www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

The **University of Warwick** has also designed a website, **Innovate2GetAhead** to support students who want to develop their own business ideas after their studies.  
<https://www.innovate2getahead.co.uk/>

## 2.11 Returning home

Less than a quarter (22%) of respondents provide support for students to aid their transition home. Those who do offer advice and support listed the following activities:

- Pre-departure briefings and workshops
- Drop-in advice sessions
- Social events
- Leaflets
- Web advice
- Newsletters
- Links to the alumni network
- Careers information (usually access continues to the careers service after graduation)

Several respondents confirmed that they refer students to the information on the UKCISA website about going home. See [www.ukcisa.org.uk/GoingHome](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/GoingHome)

### Graduation

The majority of institutions do not run graduation ceremonies overseas (63%). Of those who do run them, 6% offer the option for students to graduate at home even if they have studied in the UK and 22% run ceremonies for students who have studied for programmes delivered overseas. The top countries for holding ceremonies overseas are: China, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

### CASE STUDY University of the West of Scotland

In the Spring term, UWS runs a workshop to prepare students for returning home covering:

- a brief overview of reverse culture shock
- how students can prepare to return home (helping students reflect on changes in them; socially, emotionally and physically and to think about readjusting to life at home)
- support when students are home (dealing with expectations of family, friends, support available from UWS)

## 2.12 EU students

An important objective of the 2018 survey was to assess the preparations in place at institutions for Brexit. As the survey ran earlier in the year, we followed up with a sample of institutions in October 2018 to ascertain any changes to this picture. See the update below.

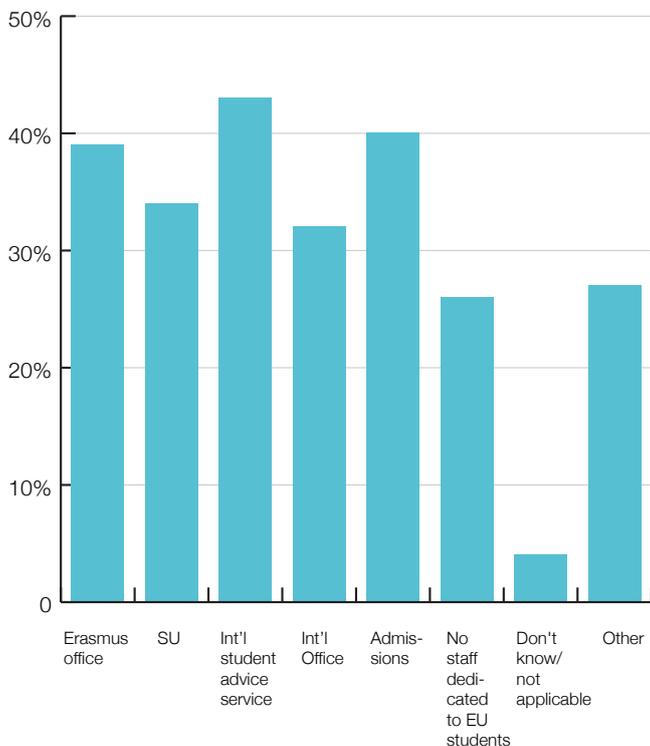
### EU support (Fig 22)

Institutions were asked to indicate which departments currently provide support and advice to EU students. International student advisers (43%), admissions (40%) and Erasmus staff (39%) are the departments providing most support but it is clear that a broad range of staff across institutions have some level of responsibility for supporting EU students. 'Other' departments included:

- student services
- course administrators
- welfare advisors
- study abroad unit
- financial advice team
- registry

However, just over one quarter (26%) of respondents confirmed that currently no staff are dedicated to supporting EU students. This may mean that responsibility is held across the institution or that there simply is no specific provision at all.

**Fig 22 Who currently provides support to EU students?**  
(tick all that apply)



### EU services (Fig 23)

Institutions were also asked which services they currently provide to EU students. The majority support students on the Erasmus scheme (65%) followed by advice on EU-related immigration (49%). Figure 22 illustrates the range of services currently available. It shows that 12% currently provide no specific services for EU students although several institutions noted that advice for EU students was currently part of general advice available to all students.

'Other' services included:

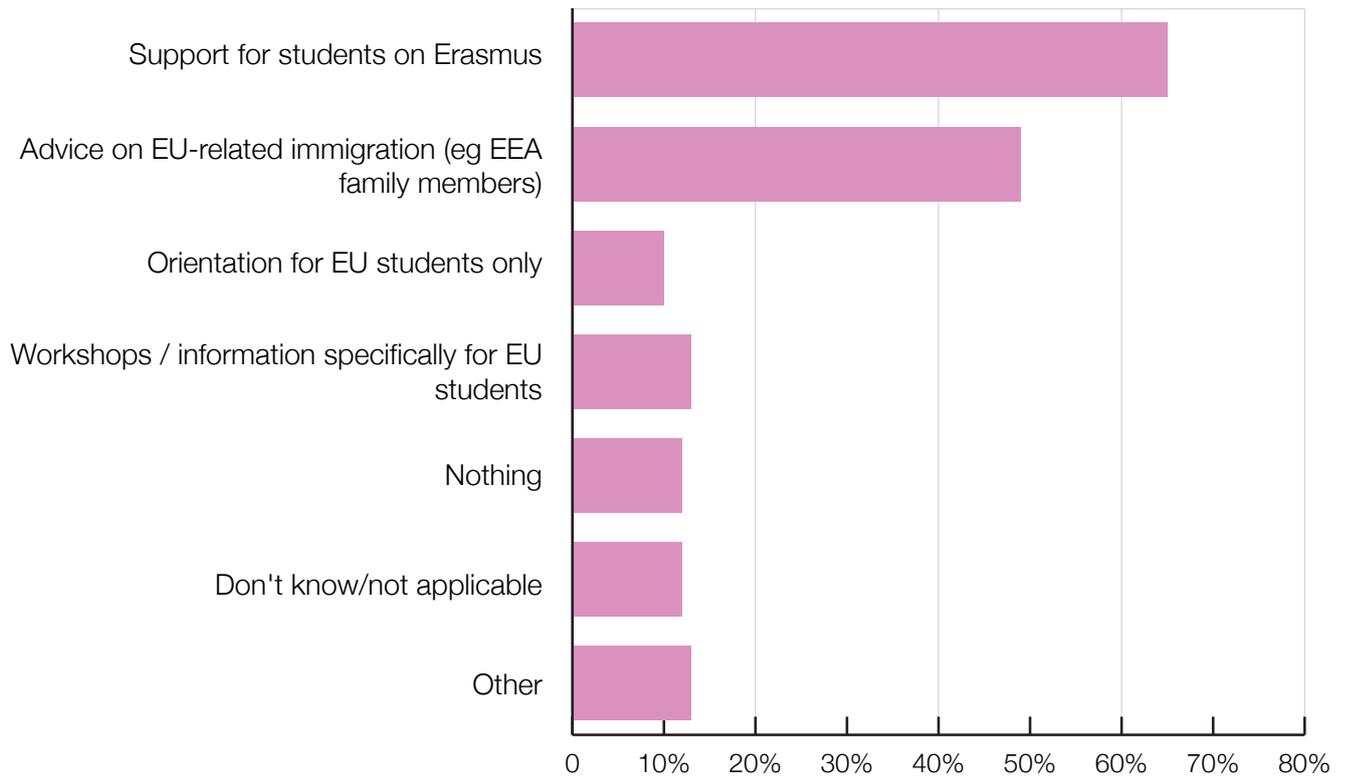
- funding and finance
- information on Brexit
- advice on Comprehensive Sickness Insurance
- advice on migrant workers
- WhatsApp groups

### Did you know?

You can find comprehensive up to date information, 'UKCISA advice for students on post-Brexit rules and entitlements' for EU students on the UKCISA website. In November 2018 UKCISA published an outline of the current plans for legislation that will apply to all EU nationals. This information which will be regularly updated as the position changes and will help staff in institutions deal with the major concerns students have over Brexit.

[www.ukcisa.org.uk/Brexit](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Brexit)

Fig 23 What services do you currently provide for EU students? (tick all that apply)



### CASE STUDY

#### The University of Stirling Students' Union

The University of Stirling Students' Union were funded with a UKCISA Grant in 2017-18 to carry out research into the impact of Brexit on students at the University. One of the key findings was how voting patterns in the UK influence students' perceptions of how welcome they feel in the UK. EU students studying in Scotland still felt welcome but had more negative perceptions of England where they said they were less likely to consider further study. The full report is available on the UKCISA website at [www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme)

## Brexit planning (Fig 24)

Institutions were asked what provisions they are making for EU students post-Brexit and it is clear that the majority (63%) are waiting to find out what support students might need before taking any action. 35% respondents anticipated no additional resources for the two departments most likely to be involved in advising EU students, namely international student advisers and Erasmus staff. 'Other' activities included planning by senior staff in institutions including the establishment of strategic teams and new recruitment roles to support recruitment of EU students.

## EU students' concerns (Fig 25)

We asked institutions what the main concerns were among their students about Brexit (with the option to tick any that applied). It is clear that these are wide-ranging with only 6% reporting that there were no major concerns. The greatest concerns were over the right to remain in the UK after study (70%) and feelings of uncertainty (71%). Both of these clearly pose a challenge for staff working with EU students while the situation remains so unclear.

## Update on provision for EU students

At the time of writing this report (October 2018) several months after the survey ran, the situation appears to have changed little. The case studies (from October 2018) offer two illustrations of the thinking on this and steps in preparation for increased demand for advice from EU students.

### Institution 1

'As there is still no agreement in place there is little we can currently do. Brexit is on all our minds and it's a standing item on many agendas but we are waiting for a steer from the government as to what the future for EU students will be. Without firm details, it is impossible for us to present a business case to the University for more staff.'

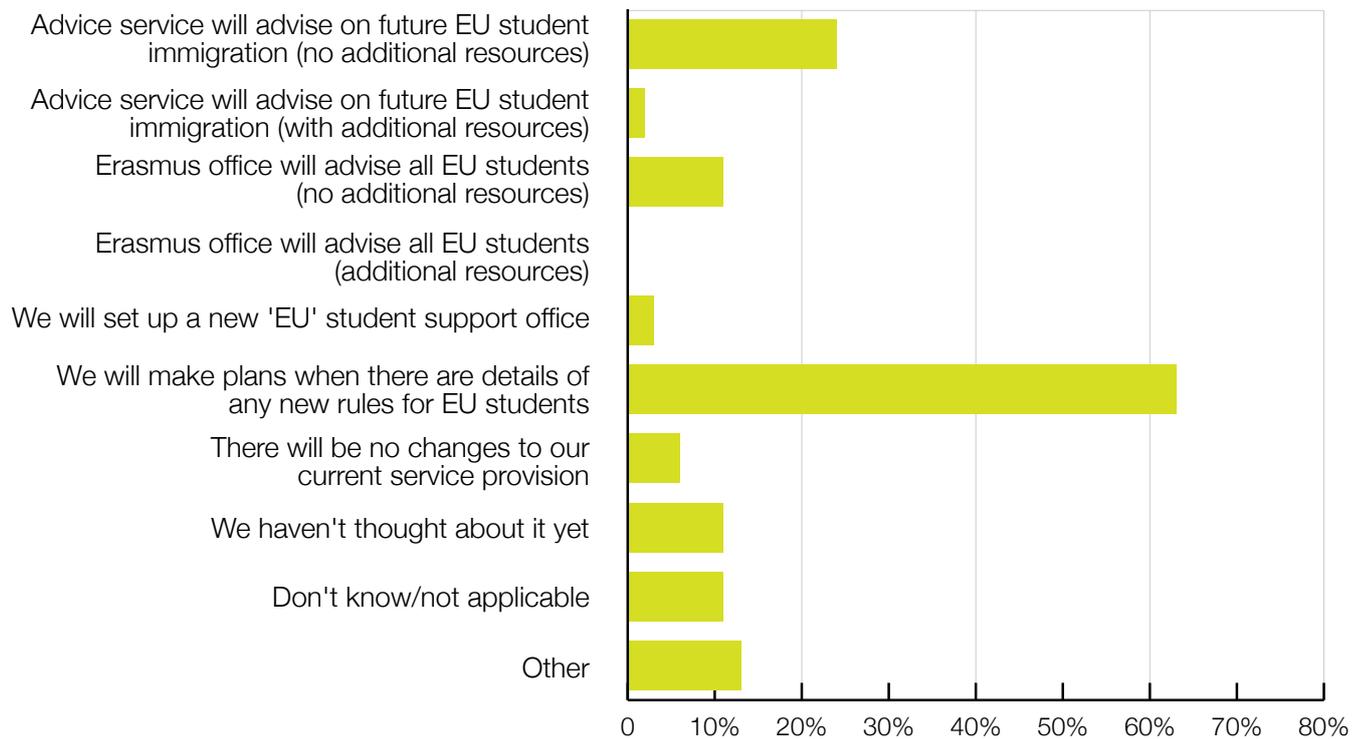
### Institution 2

'We are still very much in the planning stage and we have not yet allocated any extra resource but this has not been ruled out for the future. The need for additional resources within international students support (and, potentially, compliance) has been flagged on our Brexit risk register. So far it has been agreed that the immigration advice team will:

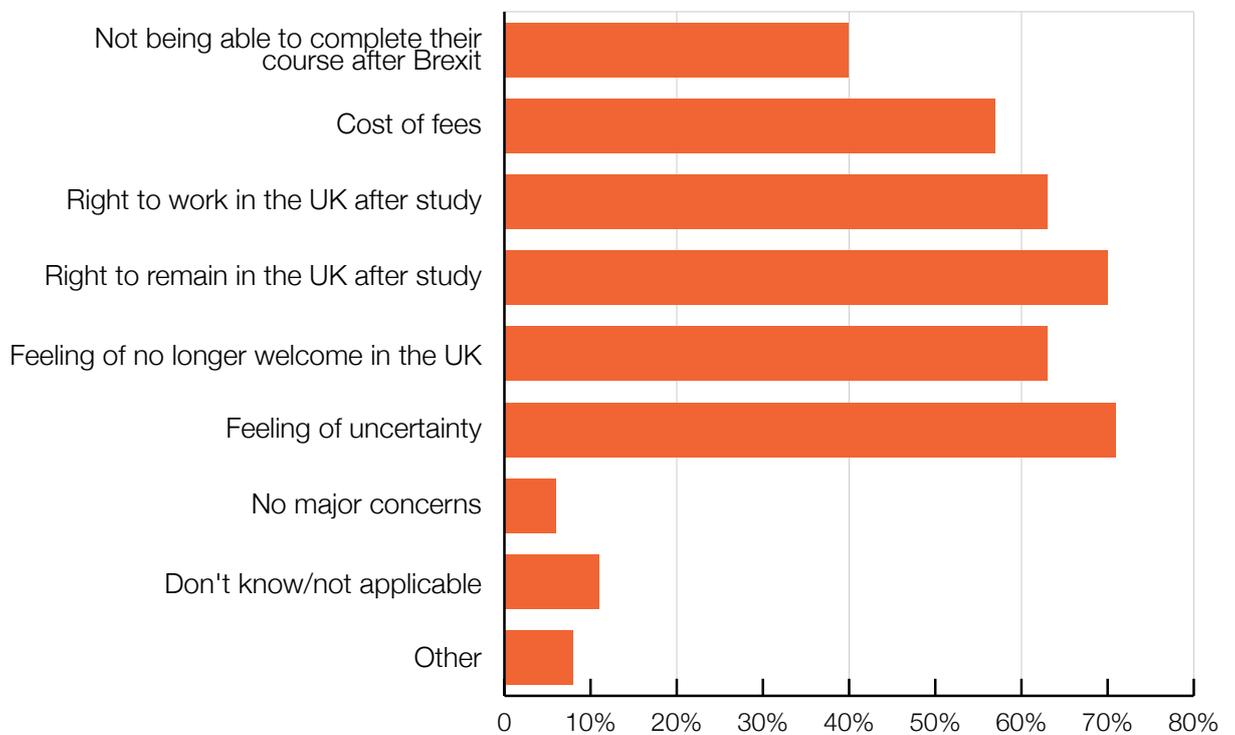
- produce web information for new and continuing students on immigration arrangements during the implementation period
- provide information and advice to EU students on applying for settled and pre-settled status

We feel that this is necessary as our students coming to the UK to study during the implementation period will need to do this. In part we feel we need to promote the message that it is still possible to come to the UK and that the process for doing so should be relatively straightforward. Our future planning will of course depend on what we find out in terms of post Brexit plans.'

**Fig 24** What provisions are you making for EU students post-Brexit? (tick all that apply)



**Fig 25** What are the main concerns of potential and/or current EU students at your institution? (tick all that apply)



### 3. Conclusions

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It is clear from the responses to the survey that the support available for international students in the UK remains extensive and well-developed. We should be proud of what the sector does to ensure that international students, who choose to come to the UK, have the best possible experience. And it is crucial that we continue to do everything we can to maintain and develop such an excellent level of support.

Although comparability with earlier studies is not possible, we can see at least two trends in the sector in recent years. Firstly, and unsurprisingly, is the move towards digital communication, which is extremely valuable, particularly before students reach the UK. Secondly, it appears that in some areas (the welcome and social activities), there is a move towards providing services open to all students. We hope this represents a positive trend, making student communities feel more inclusive, and that the growing number of international student experience roles ensure the needs of international students are considered and met as part of the whole.

Where specific dedicated support is required, for example in immigration advice and compliance, there is a range of systems in place but there is no clear picture of the actual level of support in different institutions. This may mark the greatest impact of the introduction of the points based system for immigration and the subsequent changes as responsibility for ensuring students comply with the student immigration rules is now held across institutions in addition to those with full-time responsibilities.

Police registration remains a logistical headache for many, does not offer the kind of welcome to international students that we wish to provide, and despite extensive support from the sector, it is evident that this system simply does not work and should be abandoned.

If there is one area that the sector could improve on, this may be in the provision of advice for students on working during and after studies. This is particularly important in the absence of an easy-to-understand and easy-to-access post study work visa, as international students (and in the future this may include EU students) who want to remain in the UK have to navigate complex Tier 2 rules and those who plan to return home have to start their search at a distance.

The prospect of Brexit has created huge uncertainty across the sector for students and staff but even at this late stage, it remains extremely difficult to plan for.

UKCISA is proud to support a sector which works so hard to support international students and we will continue to provide advice, information, training and moral support as we head towards an uncertain future.

## 4. 10 recommendations

### 1. Use this report

We encourage institutions to analyse the full report to look at what the sector is doing – are you in line? Are you doing better? Could you do more? Are you strong in some areas but need to improve in others?

### 2. Read the reports on projects and research

We also strongly encourage you to read the 50+ reports on projects and research funded through the UKCISA Grants Scheme which provide a host of great ideas with practical suggestions to benefit international students across the whole sector.

### 3. Pre-arrival

Maintain and develop ways to enable prospective international students to make contact with current international students to help alleviate concerns about studying abroad. This is vitally important as the UK leaves the EU, when students with concerns about how welcome they are in the UK need even greater re-assurance.

### 4. Arrival in the UK

Consider what your institution can do to ensure that students feel supported during their first days in the UK – either through airport collection or events and opportunities at the institution. Is it time to review welcome activities to ensure international students are part of the whole student community? And are you confident about the welcome and support for students arriving outside of the main term times?

### 5. Accommodation

Consider supporting the NUS campaign to become a housing guarantor for international students to alleviate one of the barriers to international students entering the private rental sector.

### 6. Advice and compliance

Continue to ensure that the right structure and adequate level of resource is in place for your institution to ensure students are given the correct advice while protecting the institutional Tier 4 licence.

### 7. Social activities

Ensure that international students are encouraged to join in activities which are open to all students and that they are welcomed in.

### 8. Student employment

Consider what more you can do to support international students to navigate the immigration rules on working during and after study and provide adequate support on the practicalities of applying and finding employment in the UK and overseas.

### 9. The EU and Brexit

In the absence of details of the post-Brexit immigration regime, consider the resource implications of the likely increase in demand for immigration advice from EU students. Keep up to date with any announcements on new rules and regulations and disseminate these as quickly as possible to students who are eager for facts. Do whatever you can to re-assure students that they are, and will continue to be, welcome in the UK.

### 10. Make the most of your UKCISA membership

Continue to use our website and direct students to the range of resources, log in to the members area, read our e-news, take part in our online discussion forum, use our online manual, come to our training and join us at our annual conference in Keele 2019. We are here to support you and your students and we plan to be here for at least another 50 years!

The UK Council for International Student Affairs is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

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UKCISA gratefully acknowledges the financial support it receives from the Department for Education, and from the Scottish Government.



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