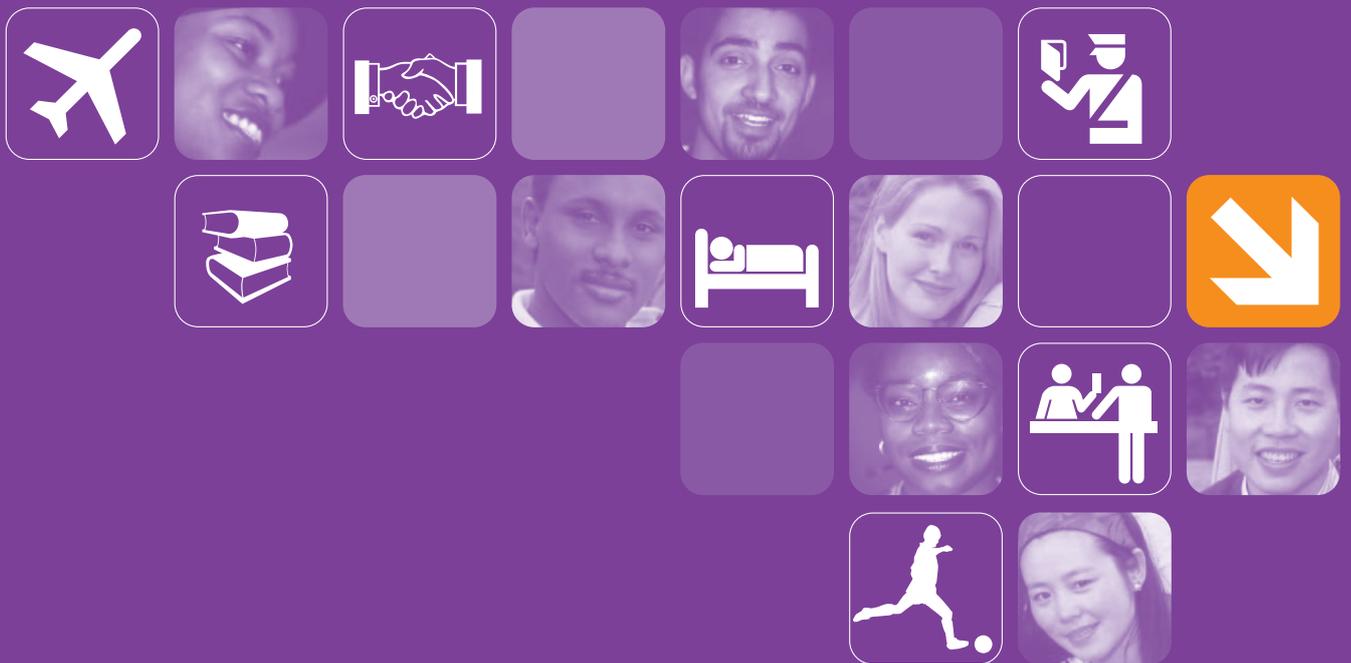


# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN UK UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES BROADENING OUR HORIZONS

REPORT OF THE UKCOSA SURVEY



In association with British Council, Universities UK,  
and the Standing Conference of Principals

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 advisors 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 2004

ISBN 1 870679 39 3

# CONTENTS

List of tables and figures	4
Acknowledgements	5
Preface	6
Key findings	9
<b>A. Background to the report</b>	<b>13</b>
The Policy issues	14
Previous research	15
<b>B. About the study</b>	<b>17</b>
Methodology	18
Demographics of the respondents	19
Additional data about the respondents	20
<b>C. Findings</b>	<b>23</b>
Chapter 1: The academic experience	25
Chapter 2: Students' concerns about studying in the UK	29
Chapter 3: Pre-arrival information and support services	37
Chapter 4: Finance and hardship	45
Chapter 5: Employment, immigration and the "official welcome"	55
Chapter 6: Accommodation	59
Chapter 7: Social integration, leisure and students' perceptions of the UK	65
Chapter 8: Students' overall satisfaction with their stay in the UK	73
<b>D. Conclusions</b>	<b>77</b>
Bibliography	79
<b>Appendix A: Further statistical data from the survey</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Appendix B: Survey questions</b>	<b>85</b>

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1:	Respondents by institution-type	19
Table 2:	Respondents by level of study	20
Table 3:	Location of respondents' previous experiences of study abroad	21
Table 4:	Proportion of respondents accompanied by dependants	21
Table 5:	Take up of language and study skills classes	42
Table A1:	Top 20 countries of domicile of respondents, compared to top 20 countries of origin for international students in the UK	82
Table A2:	Distribution of respondents by location of UK institution	83
Table A3:	Respondents' subjects of study (higher education)	83
Table A4:	Respondents' subjects of study (further education)	84
Table A5:	Length of time respondents had spent in the UK	84
Figure 1:	Satisfaction with academic experience	26
Figure 2:	Satisfaction with course by students' region of origin	27
Figure 3:	Students' concerns before and after arrival	30
Figure 3a:	Pre-HE students' concerns	32
Figure 3b:	Undergraduates' concerns	32
Figure 3c:	Taught postgraduates' concerns	33
Figure 3d:	Research postgraduates' concerns	33
Figure 4a:	Satisfaction with pre-arrival information (EU)	38
Figure 4b:	Satisfaction with pre-arrival information (non-EU)	39
Figure 5:	Satisfaction with institutional support services	40
Figure 6a:	Sources of funding for fees	46
Figure 6b:	Source of funds for living costs	47
Figure 7:	Perceptions of hardship by region of origin	50
Figure 8:	Main reasons cited for hardship	51
Figure 9:	Reasons given why it was difficult to find work for EU and non-EU students	56
Figure 10:	Type of accommodation initially offered, by level of study	60
Figure 11:	Satisfaction with aspects of accommodation	62
Figure 12:	Contact with other students	66
Figure 13:	Satisfaction with recreational facilities	68
Figure 14:	Participation in extra-curricular activities	69
Figure 15:	Responses to statements about mixing with British people	70
Figure 16:	Overall satisfaction with stay in the UK	74
Figure 17:	Satisfaction with stay in the UK by respondents' region of origin	75

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UKCOSA's thanks and grateful acknowledgements go to:

- British Council, Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) for co-funding the survey.
- STA Travel for donating travel vouchers for the survey prize draw.
- The many individuals who commented on drafts of the survey questionnaire and the initial report including: Suzanne Alexander and Jane Lowther of the British Council; Catherine Marston of UUK; Steve Phillips of SCOP; Jo Clough of the Association of Colleges; Gillian Court of the Churches Commission for International Students; Judith Barnett of the Association of International Student Advisers; Simon Kaufman of UCAS; Agnès Gautier of the National Union of Students; Jane Artess of the Higher Education Careers Service Unit; Tricia Walker; David Cannon and Claire Barrell.
- All those college and university staff who circulated details of the survey to their students and generated such a high number of responses.
- Justin Alderson at Aurora Market Research for the design of the online questionnaire and processing of the data

I would also like to thank my colleagues at UKCOSA – especially Clive Saville and Dominic Scott – for their invaluable support and advice.

While many people have contributed to the report, the fault for any errors and omissions lies solely with the author.

### **Beatrice Merrick**

*Director of Services & Research, UKCOSA*

October 2004

## PREFACE

International students are vital to the current and future health of UK further and higher education: the international diversity on our campuses enriches the environment for all staff and students. Additionally, they bring in fee income, make viable courses which would otherwise close for lack of numbers, and constitute a very significant proportion of the research student population whose work is vital to maintain and renew our academic communities. They contribute to the UK economy more widely, not just to the education sector, through their spending in local communities. They provide a pool of highly skilled labour on which both universities and UK businesses call to make up for skill shortages in the domestic market. Perhaps most importantly, their familiarity with the UK will allow them to influence others – positively or negatively, depending on their experiences – both in their home countries and wherever else in the world they go. Over and above our responsibility to ensure a higher quality of experience for all of our students, as future partners in diplomacy, trade and cultural exchange, and as people likely to become influencers and decision-makers, we should take very seriously the question of whether international students' experiences of the UK are positive.

The recent British Council report, "Vision 2020", shows that there is potential for a tripling of the number of international students coming to the UK over the next 15 years. That presents an enormous challenge to institutions if they are to enhance or even just maintain the current high satisfaction ratings international students have given in the survey. Yet, Vision 2020 also makes clear that the market is volatile, and increases are dependent on the UK maintaining its competitive edge. Recent OECD figures suggest our European neighbours are already catching up.



We hope that the UKCOSA survey of international students will become a regular benchmarking event, allowing us every few years to gauge our success in continuing to provide the high quality experience for which international students come to the UK.

In this first UKCOSA survey there is much for the sector to congratulate itself on: international students' experiences of studying in the UK were extremely positive. Respondents were very satisfied with the experience overall, and particularly with key components such as the quality of teaching and academic facilities.

Nevertheless, the report also shows that there is no room for complacency. As we recruit from new markets without a history of mobility to the UK, we must look again at our pre-arrival information to ensure students' concerns and uncertainties are addressed, and that prior knowledge of

the UK is not assumed. We must ensure that support services are resourced to keep pace with the growing numbers, so that students can be supported through the inevitable challenges of studying abroad.

We must also address the key issue of integrating international students with UK students and residents, so that they will be part of social networks which can help them adapt to their new environment, and so they will gain a rounded picture of British people and culture.

Conversely, home students should be encouraged to mix with international students to enrich their experience, and to engage with the multiplicity of cultures and languages in their institutions, to develop their sense of being global citizens and equip them to work in an increasingly globalised world.

Government also has a role to play in ensuring students' experiences of the British systems of immigration and employment regulations demonstrate the fairness and efficiency for which the UK would want to be known abroad. It needs to put in place the regulatory framework which allows students to gain the academic, vocational and professional qualifications and experience merited by their investment of time and money in the UK, and which can best contribute to their future career success.

Many of the survey respondents wrote of the benefits they gained from studying in the UK: good academic qualifications, a better knowledge of the English language, an enhanced understanding of British and other cultures and greater independence and maturity. The title of this report, 'broadening our horizons' however, describes not their experiences but ours: international students can "open a window on the world" for us, as Tony Blair

expressed it in launching the Prime Minister's initiative in 1999. In recognition of this, we want to make international students truly feel welcome and valued in our colleges and universities.

**Dame Alexandra Burslem,**

*Chair of UKCOSA's Board of Trustees*

*“Broadened my horizons beyond expectations, with the people I have met coming from so many different backgrounds, cultures... [it] also gave me ideas, and self-exploration, knowing more what I want to do, changed my direction in life.”*

**Lebanese male postgraduate**

*“Life in the UK is difficult and stressful due to financial difficulties and studying. but I am gaining valuable experience, which I could never get if I am still in my home country, overall, there is no regret ever to come to study in the UK!”*

**Chinese female undergraduate**

*“Apart from the education as such I will understand the feelings of immigrants in my own country better and I will also have a perspective on the issues back home.”*

**Swedish male postgraduate**

*“My University has a very good support system for international students, which I think is especially helpful for those who are non-native English speakers.”*

**US female postgraduate**

*“Unfortunately, there were no UK students in my MSc, so I didn't get to meet anyone from UK, apart from my 2 flatmates...”*

**French female postgraduate**

*“[There should be] greater opportunity for work experience in Engineering and Science related courses to back up education received. Most of my friends in the US have benefited from this.”*

**Nigerian male postgraduate**

*“UK people are overall very helpful, friendly and fun to hang out with when they are sober.”*

**Malaysian male undergraduate**

**Some comments by survey respondents about studying in the UK**

# KEY FINDINGS

## KEY FINDINGS

### THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

1. Respondents gave high satisfaction ratings to their course in general, with 87% being satisfied or very satisfied. The ratings were slightly higher among undergraduates (91%) than among postgraduates (85%).
2. Lectures, seminars and academic support systems were all highly rated, as were library and computing facilities.
3. East Asian students showed lower levels of satisfaction with teaching and academic support than other groups although still 81% were satisfied or very satisfied with the course overall.

### STUDENTS' CONCERNS ABOUT STUDYING IN THE UK

1. Students' two main concerns before arrival were accommodation and finance
2. Concern about accommodation decreased dramatically after students' arrival.
3. Finance and balancing paid work with study fell initially as concerns, then rose again later in the year. Finding suitable part-time work remained an issue for 20% of students even by the time of the survey (April/May).
4. For those for whom English was a foreign language, over 50% were concerned before arrival about language and just over 20% still noted this as an issue at the time of the survey. Concerns were much higher for students from some countries.
5. Concerns about homesickness and isolation and about difficulties in mixing with UK students remained higher than many other issues towards the end of the year, although in general the number of students' concerns fell.

### PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

1. Students' level of satisfaction with pre-arrival information is relatively high
2. The two areas where respondents most wanted more or better information were finance and accommodation

3. 7% of non-EU students said they had not received pre-departure information about immigration, and 23% were dissatisfied with the information they had received. There appeared to be a correlation between satisfaction and language competence.
4. 70% of respondents had used their college or university's advice service, while 50% had made use of their Students' Union advice service. This was a large increase compared to previous surveys. Satisfaction levels with these services were high.
5. Nearly 80% of students attended an induction or orientation session, and 81% of those who attended found them helpful.
6. Take up of study skills classes was higher than of English classes, and they received higher satisfaction ratings. There were variations in the extent of take up by level of study, country of origin, type of institution and subject of study.
7. Use of careers services varied by level and subject of study, and there were variations by region of origin in take up and levels of satisfaction.
8. Use of chaplaincies correlated with differences in region of origin and extent of integration with UK students.
9. Many students saw free access to NHS services as a benefit of studying in the UK

### FINANCE AND HARDSHIP

1. Over 70% of students were paying fees and living costs from their own or their families' resources, except for research postgraduates, the majority of whom were funded by scholarships from other sources.
2. 17% of students received funding from a UK source
3. 64% of EU respondents and 47% of non-EU respondents said they were satisfied with the value for money of their course, compared to 58% of UK students in a UNITE study, and 40% in a survey of international students in New Zealand.

4. There appear to be correlations between language level, integration with UK students and satisfaction with value for money.
5. 23% of respondents considered that they did not have enough money to live on. Students with dependants and research students were particularly likely to report hardship.
6. Those whose funding came from a mixture of self-funding and other sources were slightly more likely to encounter hardship than those who were fully funded by external sources or were fully self-funded.
7. The two main reasons given for financial difficulties were the cost of living being higher than students had budgeted (72%) and exchange rate fluctuations (50%).
8. Only 35% of students had taken out medical insurance, and only a quarter had possessions insurance.
9. Students were vocal about the problems they had encountered in opening accounts with UK banks.

### **IMMIGRATION, EMPLOYMENT AND THE “OFFICIAL WELCOME”**

1. 36% of non-EU students reported having needed to apply for an extension to their visa. Over half (56%) had made the application with help from an adviser in their institution, and their experience of the process was more positive than that of students who applied independently. There were many complaints about the introduction of charging for extensions.
2. Just over half of all students had undertaken paid work since coming to the UK. Over 60% of non-native speakers of English said that employment helped their English.
3. 64% of non-EU students compared to 26% of EU students found it hard to find work.
4. 31% of non-EU and 10% of EU students had problems such as being told (incorrectly) that they could not work until they had obtained a National Insurance number. 26% of non-EU students and 3% of EU students said employers were unsure whether the student was allowed to work.
5. 5% of students felt that they had been discriminated against by employers.
6. Students wanted more opportunities for work experience after studying.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

1. Three-quarters of students in HE were offered institution managed housing at the beginning of their stay, an increase since previous studies. There were differentials by type of institution and by level of study. 85% of undergraduates but only 65% of research students were offered institution managed accommodation.
2. 37% of students in FE colleges were offered institution-managed accommodation and 31% were in home stays.
3. Students in institution-managed accommodation were slightly less likely than the average to encounter hardship, while those in the private rented sector were more likely to. Students in homestays were the least likely to have financial problems.
4. Nearly half of all students with an accompanying spouse or child reported problems finding suitable accommodation when they first arrived, and 14% still had problems by the time of the survey
5. Four out of five students were happy with the quality of their accommodation at the time of the survey, with satisfaction rates higher in the private rented sector.
6. 45% of students were dissatisfied with the cost, and more were satisfied with cost in the private sector than in institution-managed housing
7. 26% of respondents (32% of taught postgraduates and 35% of pre-HE students) were dissatisfied with the level of integration with UK students in their accommodation.
8. The most common problems cited were difficulties with others in their accommodation, having to move out during vacations and having an inflexible contract. 26% of students (33% of undergraduates) in institution-managed accommodation complained about having to move out during vacations.
9. About 10% of students reported problems with their landlord; 14% of students in private rented accommodation complained of having difficulties getting their deposit returned.

## **SOCIAL INTEGRATION, LEISURE AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE UK**

1. International students with UK friends were more likely to be satisfied overall with their stay in the UK: 93% compared to 86%.
2. 59% of students (70% of taught postgraduates) said most of their friendships were with co-nationals and other international students, rather than including UK students.
3. International students were more likely to include UK students in their social circle if they were women, if they were younger, if they had no dependants, and if they were undergraduates, or were studying science or medicine.
4. Students from East and South-East Asia were considerably less likely to have UK friends than average and students from the EU (except Greece), North America and Sub-Saharan Africa were more likely to have UK friends. Only 15% of Chinese students said they had UK friends.
5. Students who had participated in any type of activity on campus (e.g. joining clubs or societies, doing sport, drama, music, or volunteering) were more likely to have UK friends than those who had not.
6. Students wanted more opportunities to mix with UK students and with local communities, but found the latter particularly hard.
7. A small number of students reported experiencing racism, but some commented positively on its absence.

## **STUDENTS' OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THEIR STAY IN THE UK**

1. 89% of respondents described themselves as satisfied or very satisfied with their stay in the UK
2. The most commonly listed benefits included their academic experience, improving their English, becoming more independent, meeting people from all over the world and learning about the UK and other cultures.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The research results appear to show very high rates of satisfaction with the academic experience and in general high levels of satisfaction with student support and the wider experience of living in the UK. However, there is plenty of scope for institutions, other agencies and government to improve different facets of the experience for international students.

**INSTITUTIONS** will want to benchmark their own performance against the points raised in the report, which cover a wide range of topics, including teaching and learning issues, language and study skills; resourcing and take up of support services; provision of information pre- and post-arrival; policies relating to fees and financial support; accommodation issues; and integration of international and UK students.

**GOVERNMENT** might consider addressing topics such as information about and process of issuing of national insurance numbers; better publicity for employers about working regulations and rewording of stamps and vignettes in passports; and proceeding with caution in imposing additional charges e.g. for visa extensions.

**OTHER AGENCIES** will, according to their remit, wish to consider some issues such as providing improvements to pre-arrival information on immigration issues; national initiatives on training for academics; consideration of the availability of data to inform policies; and the need for regular monitoring of the experiences of international students to ensure the UK continues to provide world class support.

This report provides a starting point for all concerned to review and develop the many processes, procedures and services which affect the experiences of international students in the UK. We hope that by the time of the next UKCOSA survey, satisfaction ratings will have reached an even higher level.

**A.**

**BACKGROUND  
TO THE REPORT**

## BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This UKCOSA survey is the first attempt since the HEIST survey in 1994 (Allen & Higgins 1994) to provide a wide-ranging picture of the experiences of international students in the UK. In the interim much research has focused on students' decision-making process prior to coming to the UK, but there has been no large scale study of international students experiences and perceptions after arrival. We hope this research will spark interest in further studies focusing on some of the questions raised, as well as being the first of a series of regularly conducted surveys which allow benchmarking over time.

### THE POLICY ISSUES

International (i.e. non-UK domiciled) students make up 13% of all students (16% of full-timers) in UK higher education (HE), and bring in over a billion pounds in fee income annually (HESA, 2004; Johns, 2004), without even taking into account off-campus spending. Yet domestic education policy largely ignores them; the recent Higher Education Act 2004, for example, makes no mention of international students in setting out policies relating to fee levels, fair access and student complaints. The agenda on research student training is driven mainly by the Research Councils, with a focus on the needs of the UK, despite the fact that a third of postgraduate research students in the UK are from other countries. Surveys of the UK student population rarely focus on the different expectations and experiences of home and international students.

International student policy has tended to be set with reference to different priorities than for home students: generating export earnings, attracting and retaining skilled migration and labour, and developing trade and diplomatic relations. The aim of the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI), launched in 1999, was to increase the number of international students choosing a UK education; recognising their importance in developing international relations and providing significant benefits to the UK economy. The key elements of the PMI involved streamlining entry procedures and work rules for international students, investment in the Education UK

brand and marketing campaigns, and increasing the number of Chevening scholars. The recent *Vision 2020* report (Böhm et al 2004) focused mainly on supply side questions, predicting potential for international student numbers to continue to grow, perhaps dramatically. Those involved in the promotion of UK education, however, are increasingly asking how well the realities match up to the marketing. The *Vision 2020* report recognises that quality is key to the future (ibid p 67). We must not take for granted that UK education offers international students a good "product", or concentrate only on "selling". If we are to continue recruiting international students successfully then the experience has to compare favourably to the expectation generated by the promotion, whether that promotion is undertaken at a national level by the Education UK brand, or at a local level by individual institutions. Now that the PMI is coming to the end of its first phase and the impact and future development of the Education UK brand is being considered, it is timely for us to turn the spotlight on the level of satisfaction with the student experience, to see whether it does match up to what the marketing now claims, and whether promotional materials reflect the reality.

Although international students' choices and actions combine to have great impact on UK education, international students have almost no collective voice to lobby for their interests: indicative of this, 2004 is the first year in which NUS has ever elected an international students' officer and committee. UKCOSA (formerly the UK Council for Overseas Student Affairs, now the Council for International Education) is one of the few organisations in the UK with a mandate to act solely in the interests of international students, and hence we undertook this survey, with support from British Council, Universities UK and SCOP, to give a platform to the voices of international students, to assess how well their experiences studying in the UK lived up to expectations and to identify areas where the international student experience could be improved.

**The aim of the survey was to gain information about the experiences of international students studying in the UK, in order to identify areas where institutions could improve the experience of international students through more appropriate support, better information and preparation, or other means. The survey's findings were intended to help identify positive experiences as well as areas to target for improvement.**

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The results of the UKCOSA survey will throughout this report be set against the results of other studies. Leonard, Pelletier & Morley (2003) found that research on international students is limited – usually small-scale, and often unpublished. Satisfaction surveys conducted by institutions among their international students are rarely published; it is therefore hard to tell how widespread or frequent they are. However, there have been several larger-scale surveys in the UK and other countries which allows us to benchmark our findings.

Those studies most frequently drawn on here include the HEIST report (Allen & Higgins, 1994), which surveyed international undergraduates at a range of British universities. Some comparisons can be made over a longer timescale with reference to a study by the Overseas Student Trust (Williams, Woodhall & O'Brien, 1986) which covered both undergraduates and postgraduates, and included a small number of colleges as well as universities and polytechnics (as they then were). More recently, the British Council has commissioned several pieces of research into international students' attitudes and perceptions from MORI (2002 and 2003a) and has been associated with a longitudinal study by the University of Kent (Eller et al 2004a and b). Other studies have been conducted on a regional basis, for instance in Scotland (Hall et al 1998) and the East Midlands (Rawson 2004).

We have made relatively few attempts to compare with the experiences of domestic students in the UK, although studies by UNITE (MORI 2003b) and one NUS survey (NUS 2004) are quoted. Further work is needed to see

which regular studies of UK students could usefully make comparisons between home and international students, and to encourage this type of distinction to be looked at as a matter of course.

For international comparisons we will draw on several studies. The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE, 1999) conducted a survey of international students in colleges and universities in Canada entitled "Canada First", and Australian Education International produced "Why Choose Australia?" (AEI, 2003), and a study of the experiences of international students (Smith et al, 2002). A survey of international students in New Zealand has been published more recently (Ward & Masgoret, 2004), and builds on the first author's comprehensive literature review of the impact of international students on domestic students, institutions and host communities (Ward, 2001). Reports from the other major English-speaking countries where international students study allow us to distinguish those features of the student experience which are not particular to the UK, and also to benchmark against some of our "competitor" countries.

Many of the previous surveys have focused on the factors which influenced international students' choice of study destination, rather than on their experiences while studying. Since we are interested in the latter rather than the former, we will note only one finding relating to decision-making: the role of alumni in promoting their institution and country of study. The 1994 HEIST survey noted that friends and family members who had studied abroad were important influences when recommending their *alma mater* to other students (Allen & Higgins 1994, p20). 39% of respondents had a family member who had been educated in the UK. Mullins et al (quoted in Ward & Masgoret, 2004) noted that recommendations from other students were amongst the most influential factors in choice of universities, and another Australian study (AEI, 2003) found that people who had studied in the country were the second biggest influence, after family members. These findings make clear that it is vital for institutions to put in place measures to ensure international students have positive experiences while studying in the UK, to ensure that they will be enthusiastic ambassadors for the institution and for the UK as a whole. Both the business case and the moral argument underline the need to ensure

international students receive the best possible experience in the UK.

The UKCOSA study is consistent with many of the findings in these other studies. International students' overall level of satisfaction with the experience of studying abroad – both academically and more generally - is high in most studies. However, there are some key – and interrelated – points where institutions could help make that experience still better, to the benefit of both students and institutions. Key themes for improvement which emerge are about finance, accommodation, social integration, support and information. We shall consider all of these in more detail below.

**B.**  
**ABOUT**  
**THE STUDY**

## ABOUT THE STUDY

### METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the survey international students were defined as all students not domiciled in the UK, including students from elsewhere in the EU. UKCOSA includes both EU and non-EU students in its remit on the basis that all non-UK students face similar issues in adjusting to life in the UK, and works with institutions to ensure that all non-UK students have access to the support they need, regardless of the level of fees they pay.

It was decided that those eligible to respond should include all students in public sector UK colleges and universities who were studying for a full degree. Private sector institutions were excluded because it was not thought likely that sufficient responses would be received to make useful comparisons. Exchange and study abroad students were excluded because their experience was considered to be substantially different in nature, e.g. they may continue to see their home institution as their primary source of support.

The questionnaire for the survey was drawn up with some reference to the HEIST survey (Allen & Higgins 1994), and other research on international students. It was much modified, however, to focus more on the student experience and less on decision-making before admission. Comments on the questionnaire were received from a range of individuals and organisational representatives (see acknowledgements), as well as from those with experience of survey design. Due to the overlap with past questionnaires the questionnaire was not piloted.

The questionnaire was conducted purely on line, via a link from the UKCOSA website. It was decided that an online survey using Confirmit software (which carries out the processing of responses) was the best method of handling a large volume of data, while also providing a user-friendly interface to both respondents and researcher. To have restricted access to the online survey to a pre-picked sample, it would have been necessary to obtain email addresses of a suitable group of students. It was thought that this would be very time-consuming and difficult to achieve, given data protection restrictions and the difficulties for institutions in providing email addresses.

The sample was therefore obtained by issuing a general invitation to students via their institution of study, and then weeding out students who did not fit the criteria set out above. It was not possible to check that respondents' demographic details were accurately or truthfully entered, but the match between the data received and the international student population as a whole suggested that the data were generally reliable.

It was agreed that participation in the survey would be open to international students at all publicly-funded further and higher education institutions. Information about the survey was sent to UKCOSA members via email messages on UKCOSA's email discussion list and a mailing to members which included copies of a letter and posters aimed at students. Institutions were asked to publicise the questionnaire to their international students by forwarding the email request from UKCOSA, sending out copies of a letter and putting up posters. The survey was also publicised by the Association of Colleges to its members. Students were offered an incentive of being entered into a prize draw for travel vouchers generously provided by STA Travel. Institutions were offered feedback as an incentive: those who generated more than 40 replies received a summary of the response data for their institution.

The survey was launched in mid-April 2004 with a stated closing date of the end of May 2004. This period was chosen to ensure that students had settled in well and passed the "winter blues", and to catch them before they were immersed in examinations or had left the institution. After two institutions generated large numbers of responses within the first two days, filters were applied to the on-line survey to limit the number of responses received from students at any single institution to around 200. This was intended to ensure that the results would include a broad spread of institutions and regions. A cap was also applied to numbers from the HE sector as a whole, in the hope of gaining better balance between FE and HE students.

The demographics of respondents were monitored periodically while the survey was in place, and institutions

were asked to help rectify imbalances, e.g. by encouraging more replies from FE students or from students from certain EU countries – although these requests had only limited results.

In all 4796 valid responses were received. There were 4580 responses from students at 116 higher education institutions (HEIs) and 216 responses from 65 colleges of further education (FE). The largest number of responses from any FE college was 18, and the largest from any HEI was 241.

Most responses seem to have been generated by those institutions which were able to pass on information about the survey by email, since this would have meant students were able to go straight to the survey from the clickable link. Although there might have been some concern about this biasing the survey towards international students in institutions which were better-resourced or more closely in touch with their international students, this is not apparent as the survey results do not appear to be out of step with other studies' findings.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Despite the fact that the sample was not pre-selected, the profile of respondents gives us a very reasonable match to that of international students in general, and we can therefore have a good level of confidence in the representativeness of the study's findings. The demographics of the respondents are discussed below.

Respondents came from 150 different countries, with a good match to the most common sending countries from which the UK's international students come. Details are given in Appendix A. China, Malaysia, the US, Canada and

India were somewhat over-represented while many EU countries – e.g. Greece, France, Ireland, Spain – were under-represented. The ten most common countries from which respondents came each provided over 100 responses; for some others response numbers were too low to allow statistical differences by country to be measured. The report therefore groups responses by region of country of origin in many cases to consider where geographical or cultural factors appear to be active.

Although the survey was promoted to students in both further and higher education, the response from further education students was low (only 216 valid responses). The small number of responses from FE means it is not possible to generalise too widely from these findings, although we will note where trends differ by level of study in a number of areas. Since some students in FE institutions were undertaking HE level courses (e.g. undergraduate degrees) and some in HEIs were taking pre-HE courses (e.g. foundation programmes), there was not a direct match between pre-HE students and students in FE institutions. Within the report, the category of "Pre-HE" is used for students studying English language courses, vocational qualifications, foundation programmes and A levels.

Pre-1992 universities were somewhat over-represented (see Table 1) compared to other types of higher education institutions. Some differences by sector were found in the results, and will be discussed, but in general comparisons will only be made between the pre- and post-1992 universities, as numbers from the FE and HE college sectors were too low to be used with confidence. Respondents came from institutions across England, Scotland and Wales, but unfortunately no replies were

**Table 1: Respondents by institution-type**

Type of institution	No. of respondents	% of HE respondents by type of HEI	% HE international students by type of HEI	No of international students by type of institution*
Pre-1992 university	3,529	80%	63%	166,000
Post-1992 university	757	17%	31%	80,000
HE college sector	103	2%	6%	16,000
Further education	216	N/a	N/a	86,000

\*Figures for international (i.e. non-UK) students in UK higher education are from the Higher Education Statistics Agency figures for 2002/03. Those for further education are for 2001/02 from the LSC, ELWA and SFC, and are known to be less reliable.

received from students in Northern Ireland. The regional distribution of respondents can be found in Appendix A.

Students were distributed by level of study approximately in line with the international student population as a whole. Postgraduates were very slightly better represented than undergraduates, perhaps due to the timing of the survey, but as Table 2 shows, the balance is in keeping with the distribution of international student numbers.

The top three subjects of study among HE respondents were business & administrative studies, social, economic & political studies and engineering & technology. The full range of subjects studied were represented by respondents, in approximate proportion to their popularity among international students (see Appendix A). The top three subjects among FE respondents were English language, science, computing & mathematics and business administration.

44% of all respondents were male, and 56% female, for respondents in both HE and FE. Men were slightly under-represented compared to the total HE international student population, where 53% are male and 47% are female, but the proportions were correct for FE where 56% are female. The difference in gender distribution in HE may be linked to some of the differences in subject

distribution between the sample and the total population of international students in HE.

The average age of respondents was 25, with students on pre-HE level courses averaging 21, undergraduates averaging 22, taught postgraduates averaging 26 and research postgraduates averaging 29.

### ADDITIONAL DATA ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

The survey asked students to provide information about several additional topics: their knowledge of English, their previous experience of study abroad, and whether they had accompanying dependants. None of these pieces of information is routinely collected by institutions, let alone at national level, but all three could impact on students' experiences of the UK and on the services institutions need to provide. There is a balance to be struck between maintaining students' privacy, minimising the data collection load for institutions and generating data which can help in the formulation of both national and institutional policy. The UKCOSA study attempts to determine the areas where these factors are influential; it is hoped that this will help to indicate what information could usefully be collected in future.

**Table 2: Respondents by level of study**

Level of study	No. of respondents	Subtotals	Percent of sample	Proportion of international students by level in HE
English as a Foreign Language (incl "English Plus")	55		1%	
A levels, AS levels or a Foundation course	137		3%	
Vocational course at a further education college	24		0%	
<b>Sub-total FE</b>		<b>216</b>	<b>5%</b>	
Undergraduates	2,109	2,109	44%	49%
Taught postgraduate degree	1,419		29%	
Research postgraduate degree	1,052		22%	
Sub-total PG		2,471	51%	51%
<b>Sub-total HE</b>		<b>4,580</b>	<b>95%</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,796</b>		<b>100%</b>	

**Table 3: Location of respondents' previous experiences of study abroad**

Previous location	Number	% of those who had studied abroad before
Other course in UK	903	52%
USA	244	14%
France	60	3%
Singapore	58	3%
Australia	57	3%
Germany	54	3%
Canada	52	3%
China	46	3%
India	27	2%

English was the first language of 20% of students; a further 35% had experience of education through the medium of English in their home country (these we will refer to as having had English as a second language) and for 45% English was a foreign language. English was a first language for 25% of undergraduates compared to 16% of postgraduates. This is similar to the OST survey of both undergraduates and postgraduates (Williams et al, 1986) which found that 20% of students had English as a first language, and the HEIST survey (Allen & Higgins, 1994) which found that 30% of undergraduate students did. We might have expected some variation over these periods of time, given the changes in principal sending countries over this period, although in fact there appears to be a degree of stability in the overall patterns. Students' level of familiarity with English appears to correlate with differences in their experiences and should be included as a variable in future studies.

36% of respondents had studied outside their home country before their current course, 18% in the UK and 5% in the USA. Not surprisingly, this varied by level of study: only 21% of pre-HE students had previously studied abroad, but 49% of research postgraduates had done so. Whereas the 1994 HEIST survey found that 27% of undergraduates in their survey had previously studied in the UK, only 15% of our undergraduate respondents had (although 31% of research postgraduates), perhaps indicating changing patterns of study worth exploring further. Students from the EU and elsewhere in Europe were more likely to have studied abroad previously than students from other regions. This may explain why English speaking destinations did not completely dominate the list of destinations: France and Germany as well as Australia and Canada and Singapore each had been a previous destination for 3% of students who had studied abroad. Previous experience of study outside the home country did not show up as a significant factor in our study, although other studies have shown it to be salient.

Students were accompanied by a spouse in 9% of cases, and by children in 4% of cases. Men were more than twice as likely as women to be accompanied by a spouse and children (6% of men as against 3% of women were accompanied by one or more child), while women were more likely than men to be accompanied by children but no spouse. 42% of those accompanied by their spouse were also accompanied by one or more children.

The likelihood of students bringing a spouse or child increased significantly when the student was over the age of 30: 30% of those aged 31 or older had accompanying children, and 39% had an accompanying spouse.

**Table 4: Proportion of respondents accompanied by dependants**

Number of respondents accompanied by:	Males	Females	All	As % of sample
Spouse only	119	119	238	5%
Spouse + children	121	53	174	4%
Children only	7	17	24	0.5%
<b>Total with accompanying dependants</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>9%</b>

Research postgraduates were most likely to bring accompanying dependants: 15% had accompanying children and 27% had an accompanying spouse. The last studies to investigate the number of students with accompanying dependants were the OST surveys, which found that 12% of students brought dependants in 1985, down from 20% in 1980. This may have been because the age range of students in the OST surveys was higher than in the UKCOSA one, with a slightly larger proportion of postgraduates, since older students are more likely to be accompanied by dependants.

We shall consider below the likely impact on the student's experience of being accompanied by dependants. Although there is little need for such data to be collected at national level, scholarship awarding bodies may well want to collect such data to inform their policies and budgeting, and institutions might consider whether they should collect it at least periodically to assess the number of students who are accompanied by dependants and then explore what additional support services might be needed.

# **C.**

# **FINDINGS**





## CHAPTER 1

# The academic experience

*“I have been studying at an excellent University, doing a course I have always wanted to, taught by a brilliant and helpful staff, and have gotten to interact and form relationships with a large number of people with diverse backgrounds. My eyes have opened up to the world.”*

**Indian male postgraduate**

# CHAPTER 1

## THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

We find that for most international students studying in the UK is a very positive experience. Respondents gave high satisfaction ratings for their courses in general, with 87% being satisfied or very satisfied (see Figure 1). The ratings were slightly higher among undergraduates (91%) than among postgraduates (85%). This is lower than the satisfaction level of 90% in the 1986 OST survey, but it compares favourably with the UNITE report for 2003 (MORI, 2003b), which found that 83% of (UK) students were happy with their course. The UK cannot be complacent, however. In the Canadian study (Walker, 1999) around 80% of students were satisfied with course facilities. The New Zealand survey (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) found that over 90% of respondents rated their courses as average, good or excellent. Given that the course of study could reasonably be assumed to be the most important aspect of international students' experience, this 87% satisfaction rate for the UK is very positive.

The quality of teaching is clearly an important part of this: an Australian study (Smith et al, 2002) found that students' opinion of their educational experience appeared to be most affected by their experience with teachers. In our survey 84% of undergraduates, 78% of taught postgraduates and 76% of pre-HE students were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of lectures. 78% of pre-HE students, 77% of undergraduates and 75% of taught postgraduates were happy with the quality of small group teaching such as seminars.

Academic support (e.g. tutorials) was also highly rated, 81% of research students, 69% of taught postgraduates, 75% of undergraduates and pre-HE students found that academic support was satisfactory or very satisfactory.

Figure 1 Satisfaction with academic experience



There were also very positive ratings of course content and its relevance for future career plans (see Figure 1). Given the diversity of students' interests and career plans, this is encouraging, and suggests that for the most part international students are being counselled towards the most appropriate courses. However, it would be interesting to explore these questions again with graduates some years into their careers, to see how their assessment of course relevance and usefulness changes when tested against the realities of employment.

Library and computing facilities were particularly well regarded by respondents to the UKCOSA survey, and consistently across levels, with a third of students being very satisfied with these facilities, and a further 48% being satisfied with them. North American students were the least satisfied group on this topic. Their lower assessments of teaching facilities, however, contrasted with their higher than average rating of the teaching itself.

Although satisfaction with the academic experience is high, there is some variation by region, with students from East Asia being slightly less positive than other students. North American students were slightly less satisfied with library, computing and departmental facilities than were East Asian students, but in every other category, the latter showed lower levels of satisfaction than other students – although still 81% were satisfied or very satisfied with the course overall. Further research would be needed to investigate whether this is related to the language issues which we will consider in Chapter 4. Institutions might also wish to explore whether satisfaction levels are linked to differences in educational culture between students' own country and the UK, which may make the transition harder for some students than others. Institutions might explore what more could be done to address students' expectations before arrival, and to mediate the transition to education in the UK.

**Figure 2** Satisfaction with course by students' region of origin



***“The amount of support and care shown by my teachers, tutors and all academic staff...It is really excellent and I am very happy to say that I am grateful for all the care they have shown us and hope to keep getting such attention for the rest of my course here.”***

Indian male undergraduate

***“I had a wonderful supervisor who took care of me well enough and provided every support needed by me and my family”***

Malaysian female postgraduate

***“Lecturers are not really helpful and never have time for the students. When you try to ask them questions, you can tell that not all are willing to offer their time to help.”***

Singaporean male undergraduate

***“Lecturers/supervisors should not make assumptions about other peoples’ culture and use it against them.”***

Kenyan male postgraduate

***“There should be more support in explaining what is expected of students. International students who are not aware of the UK system do not know what is expected and instructors and other staff do not help.”***

US female postgraduate

In the open questions at the end of the survey, some students wrote positively about the support received from tutors and academic staff, while others were less complimentary. As mentioned above, the crucial relationship between student and teacher will be one of the most decisive in colouring students’ views of their UK experiences. Adequate support for academic staff in cultural awareness and understanding international students’ needs and backgrounds is vital, and yet opportunities to exchange such expertise are not always systematically provided by institutions. The certificated programmes for new lecturers which are increasingly the norm are an important opportunity to share with new staff the expertise of those who have worked extensively with international students. Those with responsibility for teaching and learning development in institutions and national agencies might encourage the development of suitable modules e.g. on the teaching and learning styles with which international students may be familiar, and how both students and staff can learn to adapt to and make use of other styles.

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Respondents showed high satisfaction ratings with their course in general, with 87% being satisfied or very satisfied. The ratings were slightly higher among undergraduates (91%) than among postgraduates (85%).
- Lectures, seminars and academic support systems were all highly rated, as were library and computing facilities.
- East Asian students showed lower levels of satisfaction with teaching and academic support than other groups although still 81% were satisfied or very satisfied with the course overall.



## CHAPTER 2

# Students' concerns about studying in the UK

*"I expected a lot of racial prejudice, due to the fact that I am Muslim. I was surprised to find that there are many Muslims [here], and the locals here can accept our religion and respect our teachings."*

**Malaysian male undergraduate**

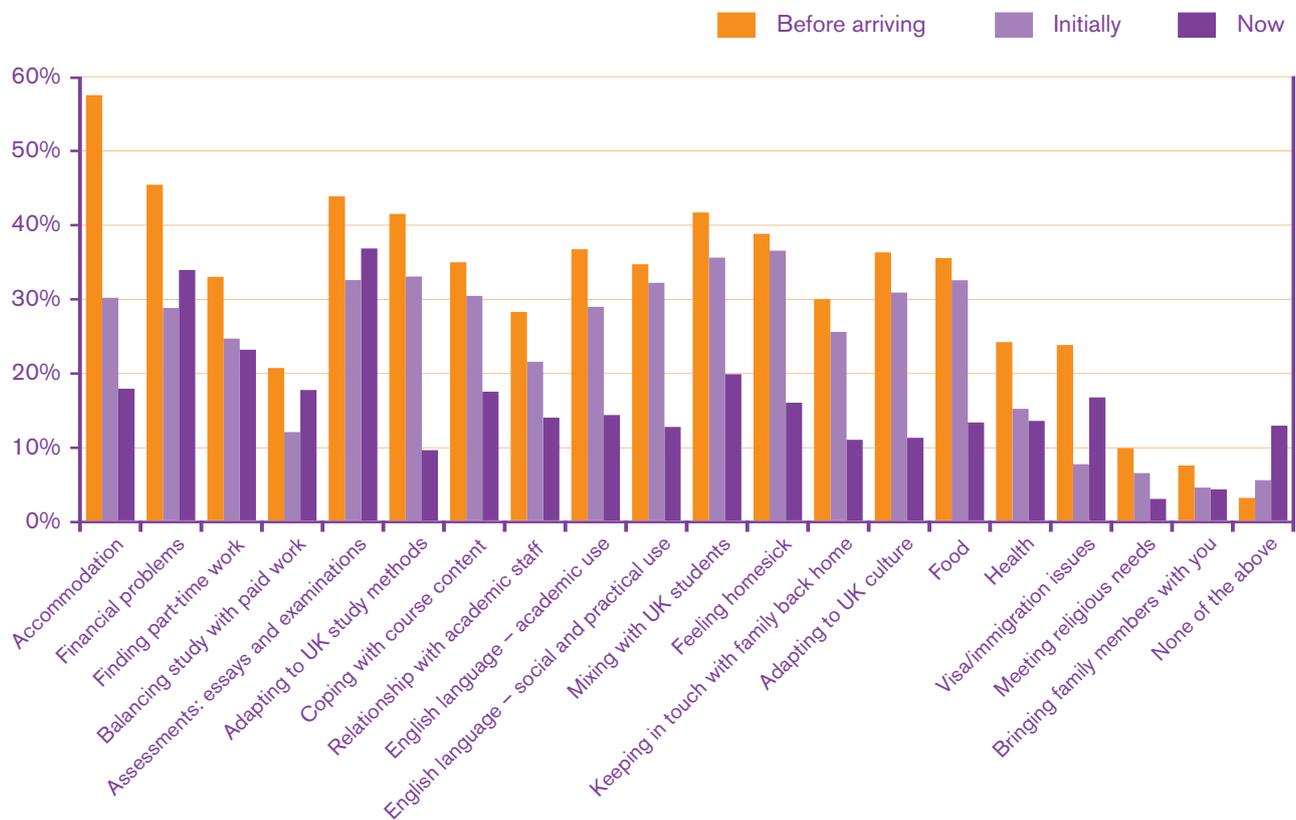
## CHAPTER 2 STUDENTS' CONCERNS ABOUT STUDYING IN THE UK

Studying abroad is inherently a challenging process – students must research their choice of destination, plan for departure, and adapt to a new culture and education system. It is therefore not surprising that it involves a certain amount of worry and uncertainty. We explored these concerns with students to establish which are already dealt with well, and which could benefit from further attention. We asked students about their concerns in the period before they left for the UK, when they first arrived, and at the time of the survey (at the beginning of the summer term).

Students' two main concerns before arrival were accommodation and finance (see Figure 3) – as we will see in Chapter 3, also the areas where there seems most scope for improvement in pre-arrival information.

Concern about accommodation decreased dramatically after students' arrival. As was found in the HEIST survey (Allen & Higgins 1994), where accommodation also topped the list of concerns, accommodation was the topic where there was the

Figure 3 Students' concerns before and after arrival



biggest discrepancy between students' concerns and the situation they found on arrival. It is important that institutions understand the significance of this issue for students, and do more to provide reassurance in the majority of cases where the institution is in fact going to provide accommodation for the student. Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs suggests that human beings' physiological needs (such as food and housing) and "safety" (a stable, predictable environment), must be met before they can focus on higher level needs such as self-development. This indicates why students need to be confident about meeting their basic needs of finance and accommodation and feeling secure within the unfamiliar environment of their place of study, before they can concentrate on their studies.

Of course, there will remain a significant minority of students who cannot be given this reassurance: research students were the most concerned about accommodation pre-arrival, and this concern may be linked to the fact that while 85% of undergraduates were offered institution-managed accommodation, only 65% of research postgraduates were (see below Chapter 6). In these cases, institutions might consider whether there are other ways in which they can provide reassurance, e.g. by easing the process of finding private sector accommodation through advice and support, placement services or guiding students to websites and other resources.

One issue for future research is to establish what international students' concerns about accommodation are: is it uncertainty as to whether they will be offered a room at all, or lack of information about what type of accommodation they can expect or where it will be? Institutions will need to know more about these concerns if they are to provide the appropriate information to address them.

Before arrival undergraduates and taught postgraduates were more worried than pre-HE or research students about adjusting to UK study methods, although by the time of the survey (April/May) they were more confident than pre-HE students, and only slightly less confident than research students about study methods. We found that by April/May students were showing much less concern about course content than earlier in the year. The HEIST survey (ibid p 64) asked a similar question, but was carried out in November/December, at which time they found course content was still of much greater concern to students, suggesting only a gradual rather than a sudden change in levels of concern about this issue.

Both in the HEIST survey (ibid) and in ours, finance rose to prominence again as a concern later in the year, having decreased as a concern on first arrival. Responses show that balancing paid work with study was also a concern that increased again later in students' stay, after having decreased after arrival. Finding suitable part-time work remained an issue for 20% of students even by the time of the survey (see section on employment below).

As we might also expect, students were in a state of pre-exam nerves at the time of the questionnaire, and concerns about assessments had grown in importance since their arrival, although other academic matters such as use of the English language and coping with course content had decreased considerably.

***“Well before I came I thought that all British people were very serious kind of dry very stiff culture, and that they were kind of racist, also I was worried that I would not make any friends (British) but since my arrival every thing was different the people very polite, very patient because my English wasn't very good at the time, in university I met a lot of new friends, the staff were wonderful and it exceeded what I was expecting.”***

**Mexican male undergraduate**

Figure 3a Pre-He students' concerns

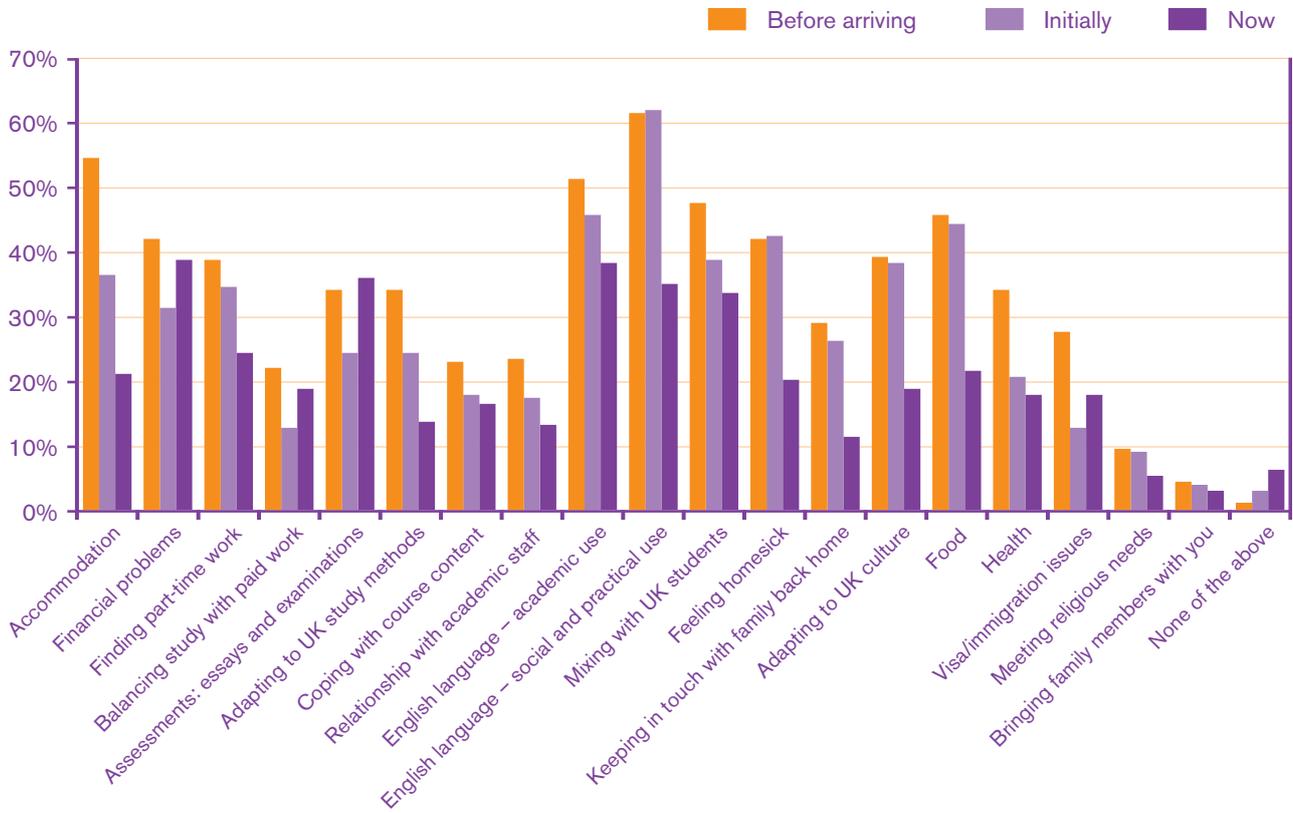


Figure 3b Undergraduates' concerns

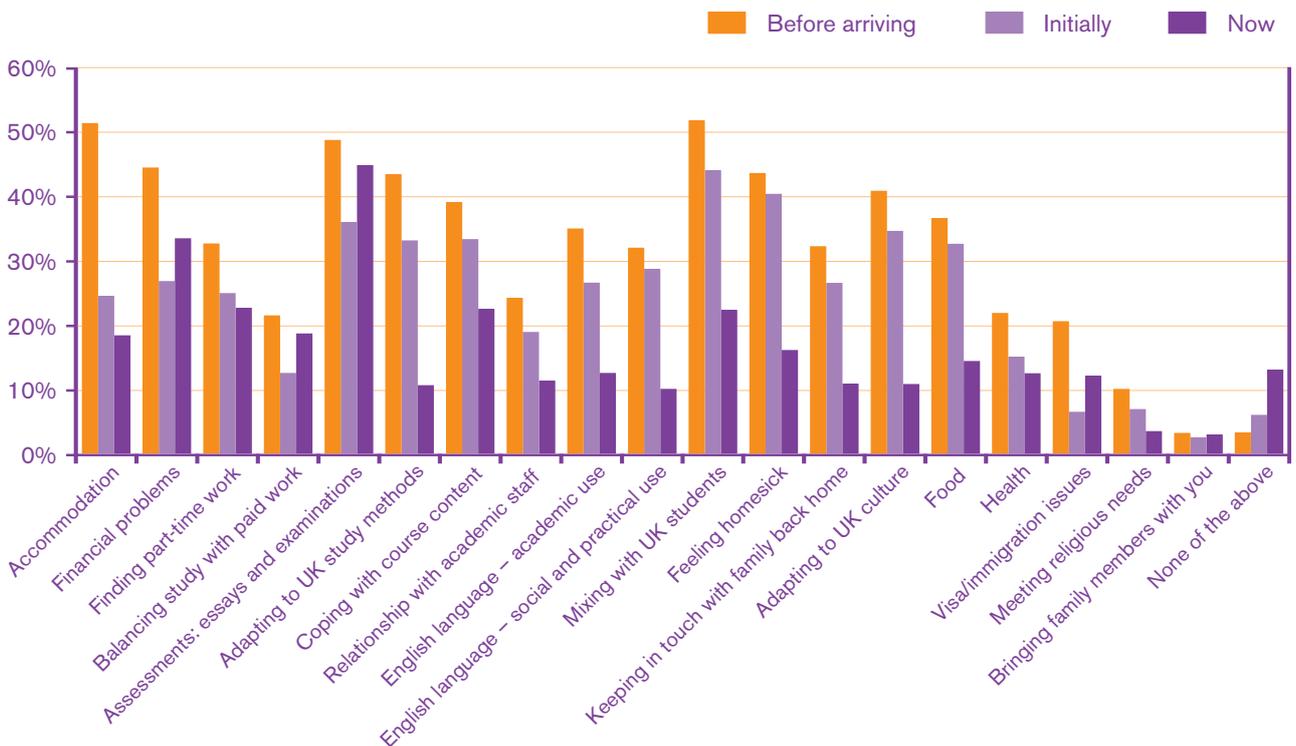


Figure 3c Taught postgraduates' concerns

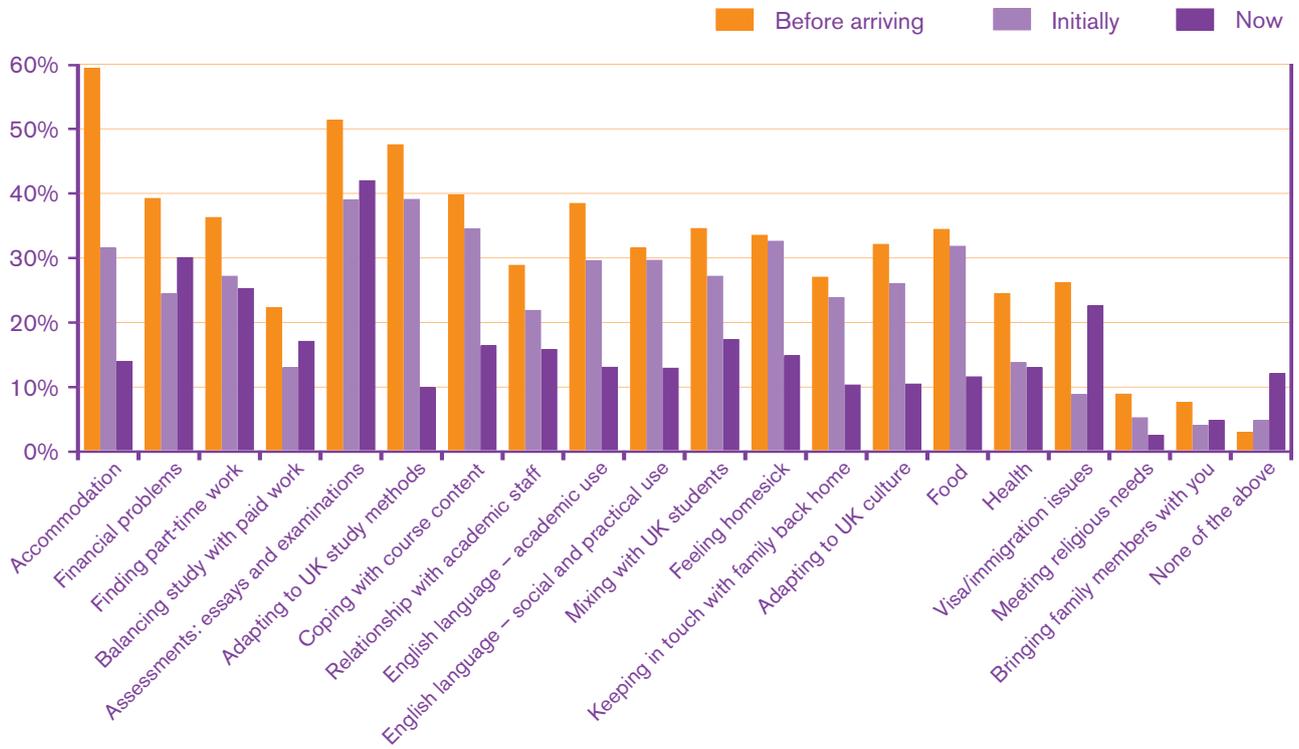
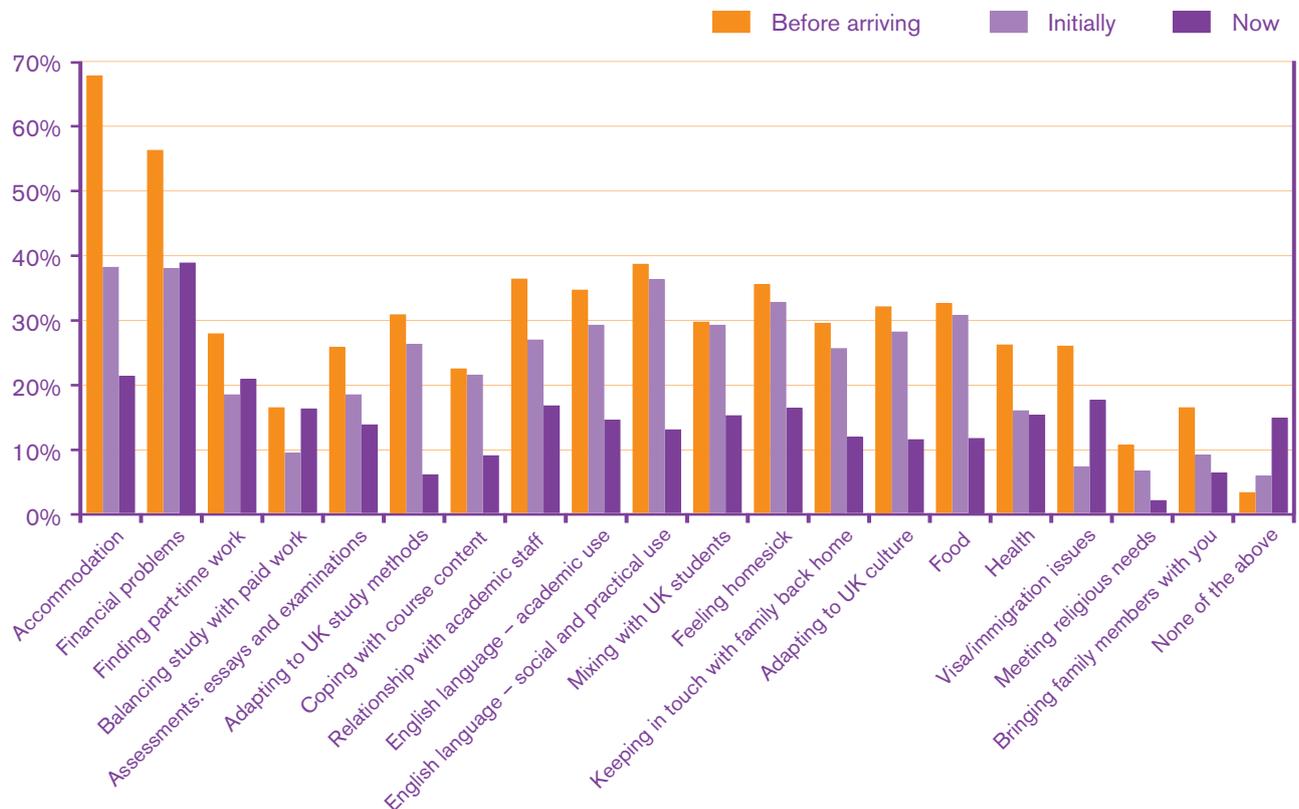


Figure 3d Research postgraduates' concerns



Concerns over language differed very much according to students' background. Just over a quarter of non-native speakers who had studied in English in their home country had concerns about language before departing, but this had fallen to 9% by the time of the survey. For those for whom English was a foreign language, over 50% were concerned before arrival and just over 20% still noted this as an issue at the time of the survey. In the case of Chinese students, a third were still concerned about their level of English for both social and academic purposes at this point, and half of the Japanese respondents, 45% of Thai students and 29% of Taiwanese students were still concerned about their academic English. This is consistent with the HEIST survey which noted that language concerns were greatest for Taiwanese and Japanese students (Chinese students were not included in the HEIST survey due to their much lower numbers in UK higher education in 1994, whereas now they make up 13% of international students in the UK).

MORI (2003) found that institutions were most likely to feel that language competence was the main difficulty for international students while students generally thought language was not much of a problem. Our results, however, show students having very different views depending on their country of origin. Whereas the MORI poll may have found that on average international students did not see language as a major problem, our results show that for particular groups it is of great concern. The perceptions of staff who put this high on their list of concerns were no doubt influenced by their experience of those groups for whom language was a difficulty, rather for some notional "average" international student. This underlines the importance of institutions and policy-makers taking into account the heterogeneity of the international student population, and finding ways of meeting a diversity of needs.

For some students immigration issues were a concern which increased again towards the end of their stay; this might be about extending their student visa, or concerns about obtaining permission to stay in the UK to work after graduating.

Concerns about homesickness and isolation and about difficulties in mixing with UK students remained higher than many other issues towards the end of the year, suggesting that for a proportion of students these issues were never really resolved. The HEIST survey also noted that mixing with UK students remained a concern for students throughout their course of study. Although their research suggested that feelings of loneliness declined in later years of the course, we found no correlation between integration and the length of time spent in the UK. We also found that undergraduates and pre-HE students were more concerned than postgraduates about mixing with UK students and about homesickness. Those with previous experience of study outside their own country rated these concerns lower than those who had not. We will consider the issue of integration further in Chapter 7.

We should also note that by the time of the survey, 13% of students reported that none of the issues listed was of concern to them, whereas only 3% had had no concerns before arrival, and the number of issues which students were concerned about had on average halved by this time. This shows that students do work through many of the issues that concern them initially, although there is an ongoing need for support services throughout their studies, for those for whom problems persist, and where the concerns change over time.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Students' two main concerns before arrival were accommodation and finance
- Concern about accommodation decreased dramatically after students' arrival.
- Finance and balancing paid work with study fell initially as concerns, then rose again later in the year. Finding suitable part-time work remained an issue for 20% of students even by the time of the survey.
- For those for whom English was a foreign language, over 50% were concerned before arrival about language and just over 20% still noted this as an issue at the time of the survey. Students from some countries had significantly higher levels of concern about language.
- Concerns about homesickness and isolation and about difficulties in mixing with UK students remained higher than many other issues towards the end of the year, although in general the number of students' concerns fell.





## CHAPTER 3

# Pre-arrival information and support services

*“So many support systems in place here for students. I’ve programme tutor, year tutor, module tutor, personal tutor, international student advisor, student services... So much different when compared to back home.”*

**Malaysian female  
undergraduate**

## CHAPTER 3 PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

### PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Students' level of satisfaction with pre-arrival information is relatively high, although we should note that the recent MORI study (2003) found that there was scope for improving the amount, accuracy and timeliness of information both the British Council and institutions provided for students. The HEIST survey noted a link between the areas where students experienced problems and those where they felt ill-prepared. Better information about costs would help students with budgeting and fuller information about accommodation options would help students make more appropriate choices. In both cases, pre-arrival information could also have an important role in helping to manage expectations and alleviate anxiety.

As we can see in figures 4a and b, the two areas where respondents seemed most to want more or better information were finance and accommodation, tying in with the areas about which we saw they had most concern in Chapter 2. The HEIST survey noted that the demand for better information about accommodation had been flagged up by previous reports as well as its own. That this is still an area of weakness identified by respondents to the UKCOSA study suggests the need for a step change in institutions' approach to this issue. Students from East Asia and the Middle East and North Africa were the least satisfied with information on this issue. Institutions might explore whether this reflects less familiarity with the UK and in particular with norms for institutional housing provision, and whether information about accommodation needs to be tailored specifically to international students to avoid making assumptions about students' existing knowledge levels.

Figure 4a Satisfaction with pre-arrival information (EU students)

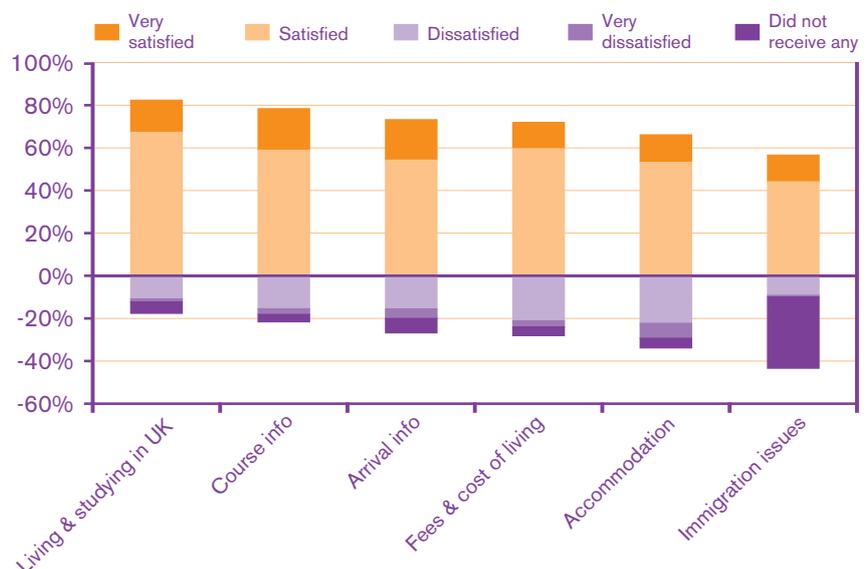
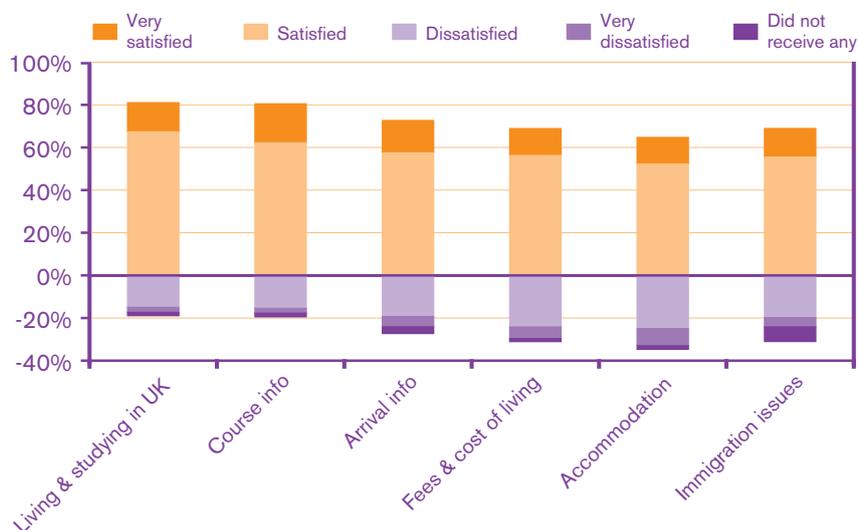


Figure 4b Satisfaction with pre-arrival information (non-EU students)



Although it is unproblematic that EU students sometimes had not received immigration information, it is of more concern that 7% of non-EU students said they had not received pre-departure information about immigration, and 23% were dissatisfied with the information they had received. There appeared to be a correlation with language ability: native speakers of English were significantly more satisfied, and speakers of English as a foreign language were significantly less likely to be satisfied with the information than those for whom English was a second language. All those who produce pre-arrival information on immigration procedures need to explore whether the language used is sufficiently clear and easy to understand, and institutions need to ensure that all students who need such information do receive it.

The HEIST survey (Allen & Higgins 1994) found that students considered pre-arrival information about course content and fees to be the most important. In this context, it was encouraging to see that information about courses was one of the areas about which students were most satisfied. However, institutions should find ways to improve the information on both fees and cost of living, as a quarter of students were dissatisfied with the information they received on these topics. The survey data suggest some institutions are doing better than others at providing such information. The issue needs to be addressed at institutional level, particularly because of the need for locally-based information.

### SUPPORT SERVICES

The Canadian report notes research suggesting under-use of support services by international students but in its own surveys had found that if anything international students made more use of them than home students (Walker 1999). The New Zealand study (Ward & Masgoret 2004) noted that students often found informal sources of support easier to access than formal ones. Our survey suggests that our respondents were generally aware of services being available, so where they did not

***“[There was] more help from University than I thought I could get.”***

Chinese male postgraduate

***“I found the libraries and other careers advisory service really helpful. they helped me out with my CV and helped my cause of finding employment.”***

Indian male postgraduate

**“The International Students’ Office of the University is really a bridge connecting the students together. And provides very useful information to the international students who first come to the UK.”**  
 Chinese female undergraduate

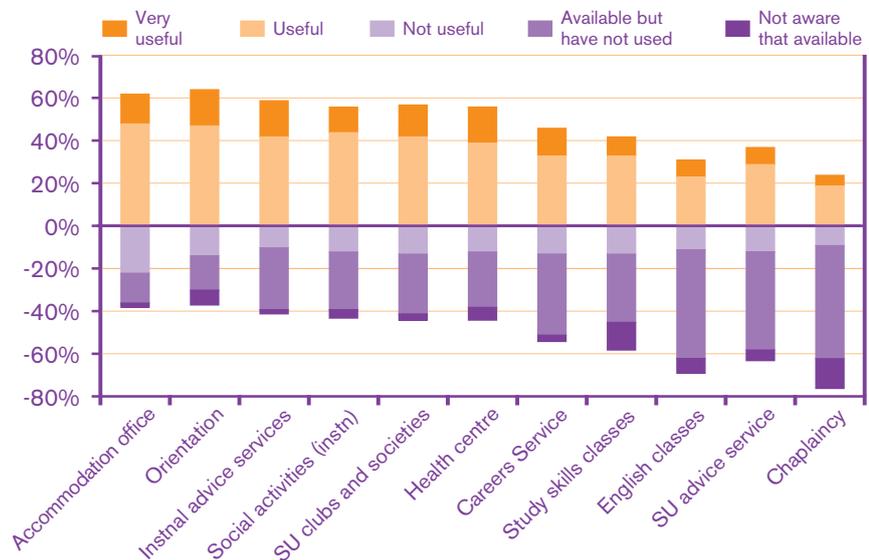
**“The importance of an international office should not be taken lightly. I’ve settled in so much faster because of what they did for me.”**  
 Botswanan female undergraduate

**“Foreign students should be given more support. The institution should realise that foreign students not only contribute a great deal to the local economy and university finances but also sacrifice a great deal to come to a foreign country for the sake of education and hope of a pleasant experience.”**  
 Malaysian male undergraduate

**“I have ... acquired tremendous access support to do a course despite having a disability, something that I was not getting appropriately anywhere else in the world.”**  
 Pakistani male undergraduate

**“There is not much support for families. People with children like me are in a very unequal condition because of difficulties with childcare.”**  
 Colombian female postgraduate

**Figure 5** Satisfaction with support services



use them it was presumably a matter of choice or lack of need, although there may be an issue about perceptions: what do they see the service as being for and do they consider it is accessible? It is also worth remembering that many international students are highly able and motivated, and in many cases will be flourishing without additional support. The British Council’s International Student Awards provide excellent case studies of some of these high achievers.

Students’ self-sufficiency clearly emerges from responses to another set of questions in our survey. Respondents were asked who they would speak to about an academic problem. Most students would seek advice from more than one source. Interestingly students were as likely to talk to friends and fellow students (67%) as to talk to their personal tutor or supervisor (62%). They were equally likely to talk to family (35%) as to talk to their course leader (33%) or another member of academic staff (32%). Students were most likely to discuss financial problems with their family (80%) or friends (39%). Only 16% said they would discuss them with a personal tutor and 13% with an adviser. When it came to personal problems, the overwhelming majority of students would discuss these with friends (85%) or family (71%) rather than seek help within their institution. Only 14% would approach a personal tutor, and 8% an adviser.

However, despite a preference to sort things out with friends and family if they can, most respondents had made use of support services at one time or another: 70% had used their college or university’s advice service, while 50% had made use of their Students’ Union advice service (a very high figure considering that many unions no longer offer advice). This is a vast increase since 1986, when the OST survey (Williams et al 1986) found that only 11% had consulted an international student adviser (ISA) and 16% a student welfare officer. In the more recent Canadian study (CBIE 1999) 56% had been assisted by an international student adviser. Use of support services was higher in post-1992 universities, prompting questions about

whether this reflects student need or service accessibility, and if the latter whether it shows differences in institutional cultures or a leaning towards different ways of organising services. Women were less likely than men to have used the services listed, except for health centres, which women were more likely to have used than men.

The implications of this increasing level of service usage are clear: as international student numbers grow, and as each student makes more use of support services, the resources devoted to student support need to be increased proportionately if student satisfaction is to be maintained. Under-resourcing of support services is likely to impact negatively on future recruitment, while those institutions who provide good support services will see the benefit from more satisfied students.

The level of resource is key in ensuring that students not only have access to support services, but are satisfied with the help they receive. Our data show that in most cases, students who did use the support services available to them were satisfied. 86% of users were satisfied or very satisfied with institutional advice services; 76% with those of their students' union. 82% were satisfied with social activities organised by the institution and 81% with students' union clubs and societies. 82% were satisfied with health centres, 78% were satisfied with their careers service, 74% with chaplaincies and 73% with their accommodation offices. Hall et al (1998), in a survey of international students in Scottish institutions, found lower satisfaction over advice regarding immigration and funding. These lower satisfaction rates were perhaps unsurprising for areas where students will sometimes find they cannot be offered what they want, but were not particularly evident in our study.

The proportion of students using accommodation offices who were dissatisfied was greater than for other services, and also appeared to show a slight dip in satisfaction compared to the HEIST survey. Satisfaction rates with accommodation offices were higher for students in institution-managed accommodation than for those in the private rented sector. Yet, satisfaction rates relating to accommodation offices were similar in the Canadian survey (69% - Walker 1999), despite the fact that only a third of their students received housing in university residences. The fact that accommodation offices were rated lower than many other services perhaps reflects that they cannot provide for all their students, and also the difficulties of meeting the needs of students while still meeting room occupancy targets. However, student responses in the open section of the survey suggested that accommodation officers were sometimes less customer-friendly than other staff they dealt with, so institutions need to make sure accommodation staff understand the needs and circumstances of international students, understand their importance to the institution and have cross-cultural awareness training to help them communicate more effectively with students (which is particularly important for any front line staff potentially dealing with students under stress).

It is encouraging that nearly 80% of students attended an induction or orientation session, and 81% of those who attended found them helpful. This is quite an improvement compared to the HEIST survey when only 66% of students were found to have attended one. It compares with 44% of respondents to the Canadian survey who

***“Accommodation office should be better staffed and equipped with dealing with the vast number of applicants every year as there is one too many frustrated and angry student who have been mistreated on this issue.”***

Female Malaysian undergraduate

***“Universities should keep a closer eye on the Accommodation Office, as they tend to focus a lot on gains and very, very little (in my experience, and some of my acquaintances) on student complaints”***

Female Spanish postgraduate

***“I didn’t expect UK people, especially University staff and accommodation staff to be friendly and most of them being helpful. This is something different from my country.”***

Female Malaysian undergraduate

had attended an orientation (CBIE 1999), and 58% in the 1998 Australian survey. EU students were less likely to attend an orientation than non-EU students, being more likely to have opted out and also more likely not to know whether the institution offered an orientation. Taught postgraduates were more likely to attend than undergraduates, and research postgraduates were least likely to attend, in some cases from choice and in others from lack of knowledge about whether an orientation was offered. Research students who arrive at times other than the start of the academic year are likely to miss out on the main orientation programme, and not all institutions offer orientations at other times. Students in post-1992 universities were more likely to have attended an orientation than those in pre-1992 universities. Students who had attended an orientation programme tended to have lower levels of concern than those who had not been offered the chance to attend one. Those who were offered an orientation but did not take it up usually had lower levels of concerns than those who attended, indicating that their decision not to attend was well-founded.

Our survey found higher take up of study skills classes than of English classes, and higher rates of satisfaction with them (see Table 5). Students on pre-HE level courses were most likely to use and to appreciate language and study skills courses and postgraduate students were significantly more likely than undergraduates to take, and appreciate, them. Students from China, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Iran, Mexico and Nigeria were significantly more likely to take up study skills classes, and those from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, Iran and Spain were more likely than others to take up English language classes. Students taking up language and study skills courses were more likely than those who didn't take such courses to have expressed concerns about using English. Students in Business Studies and Computer Science – both subjects with large clusters of international students - had a higher than average tendency to take language and study skills classes. Students in post-1992 universities were more likely than those in pre-1992 universities to take up such classes; this suggests further research might be undertaken to see whether post-1992 universities have in place support systems for “non-traditional” students which are also effective in meeting the needs of international students, and if so whether these might provide models of good practice.

Nearly 60% of students had used their institution's careers service. Take-up was lowest for research postgraduates (50%), who would have less need for careers advice if continuing in academia or returning home to work for a sponsor, and

**Table 5: Take up of language and study skills classes**

	English as first language	English as second language	English as foreign language
Take up of study skills classes	32%	58%	62%
Found useful by (% of all respondents)	22%	46%	48%
Take up of English classes (e.g. EAP)	11%	40%	58%
Found useful by (% of all respondents)	8%	31%	43%

highest among taught postgraduates (65%), who in many cases were studying subjects with a strong vocational focus. Students of engineering and business studies were more likely at all levels to have used the careers service than those studying medicine or humanities. 82% of undergraduates who had used their careers service were satisfied with the service they had received, and so were 75% of postgraduates and pre-HE students. Students from Central and South Asia (76%), Sub-Saharan Africa (67%) and East Asia (65%) were most likely to use their careers service. Students from the EU and elsewhere in Europe, South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa expressed the highest levels of satisfaction. Students from the Middle East and North Africa, North America and East Asia were less satisfied than the average.

A third of students had used their institution's chaplaincy or multifaith centre. Students from Western countries were less likely to use chaplaincy services on the whole, while Chinese students were slightly more likely to. Students who counted UK students among their friends were less likely to use chaplaincies, raising interesting questions about the potential role of chaplaincies in helping international students to integrate with the wider community: do students with fewer UK friends seek out the chaplaincy as a potential social support network and, if so, how effective is it in putting them in touch with UK students or the local community?

Two-thirds of students with accompanying children reported having faced problems with support arrangements. 35% reported having problems finding finance to bring their family with, 34% mentioned problems arranging childcare, 22% had problems arranging schooling and 15% reported problems with healthcare.

Although the survey only asked about the support services provided by institutions, some students commented on the availability of healthcare from the NHS. Many students were very positive about the availability of free healthcare, and cited it as one of the benefits they had encountered, and in some cases not expected, from the UK. However, some students were disappointed with the standard of care available from the NHS.

Many of the areas identified for improvement here and in previous studies are not necessarily unique to international students. However, some international students face steep learning curves in adapting to UK education, and may therefore be particularly vulnerable if adequate support services are not in place. Systems to monitor the progress of international students might not only help institutions identify the main hurdles and barriers encountered by international students, but also help to identify systemic weak points relevant to a wider range of students.

***“Free medication funded by the NHS was not expected in my home country.”***

Thai female undergraduate

***“Have had a hard time with the healthcentre at my university, and the NHS in general.”***

Norwegian female undergraduate

***“I feel relaxed since my health is covered by NHS, so I can devote all my concentration to my studies.”***

Mexican male postgraduate

## KEY FINDINGS

- Students' level of satisfaction with pre-arrival information is relatively high
- The two areas where respondents most wanted more or better information were finance and accommodation
- 7% of non-EU students said they had not received pre-departure information about immigration, and 23% were dissatisfied with the information they had received. There appeared to be a correlation between satisfaction and language ability.
- 70% of respondents had used their college or university's advice service, while 50% had made use of their Students' Union advice service. This is a large increase compared to previous surveys. Satisfaction levels with these services were high.
- Nearly 80% of students attended an induction or orientation session, and 81% of those who attended found them helpful.
- Take up of study skills classes was higher than of English classes, and they received higher satisfaction ratings. There were variations in the extent of take up by level of study, country of origin, type of institution and subject of study.
- Use of careers services varied by level and subject of study, and there were variations by region of origin in take up and levels of satisfaction.
- Use of chaplaincies correlated with differences in region of origin and extent of integration with UK students.
- Many students saw free access to NHS services as a benefit of studying in the UK



## CHAPTER 4

# Finance and hardship

*“I am satisfied with the quality of the UK’s education system. However, tuition fees and the living cost, especially in London, is too much for me to afford. I have to struggle to find a part-time job to balance my budget without giving serious affect to my study.”*

**Chinese male postgraduate**

## CHAPTER 4 FINANCE AND HARDSHIP

### FINANCE

It is very clear from the survey responses that international students were acutely aware of the cost of their education, not surprisingly given that 71% were paying their own fees, wholly or in part (62% of EU students and 74% of non-EU students). Scholarships from the government of their home country were the next largest source of support, followed by scholarships from UK colleges or universities. For EU students, UK sources of funding were marginally more common than home government sources, because of the many EU nationals who qualify to have their fees paid on the same basis as UK students.

There was a dramatic difference between sources of funding at different levels of study: 95% of pre-HE students were paying their own fees, as were 85% of undergraduates and 79% of taught postgraduates. However, only 30% of research postgraduates were, while 23% were funded by their home government, 24% by UK government sources and 31% by institutional scholarships.

79% of respondents were paying living expenses wholly or partly from their own or their families' resources, and again the second largest source of support was the home government, although more common for EU students (20%) than non-EU students (12%). Non-EU students were more likely than EU students to receive support for living costs from a UK government source, in contrast to the situation for fees. Research students were much more likely than other groups to be funded for living costs, with only 45% needing to find support from their own or their families funds.

Figure 6a Sources of funding for fees

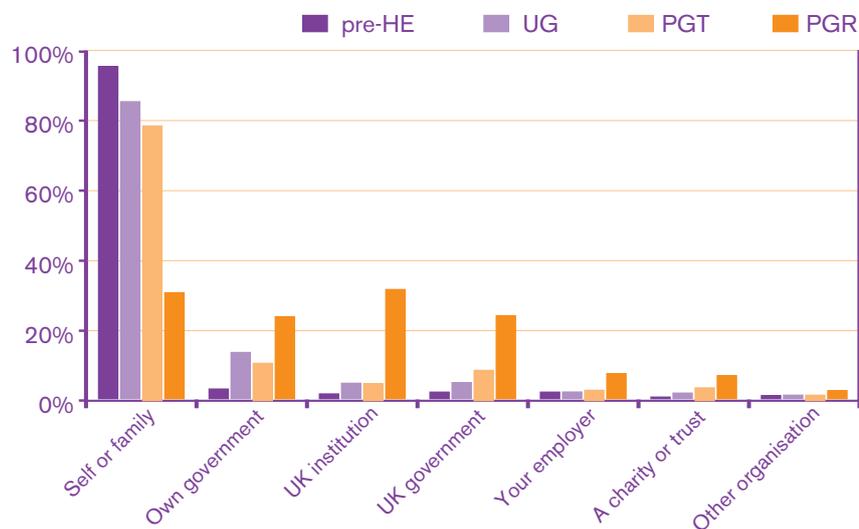
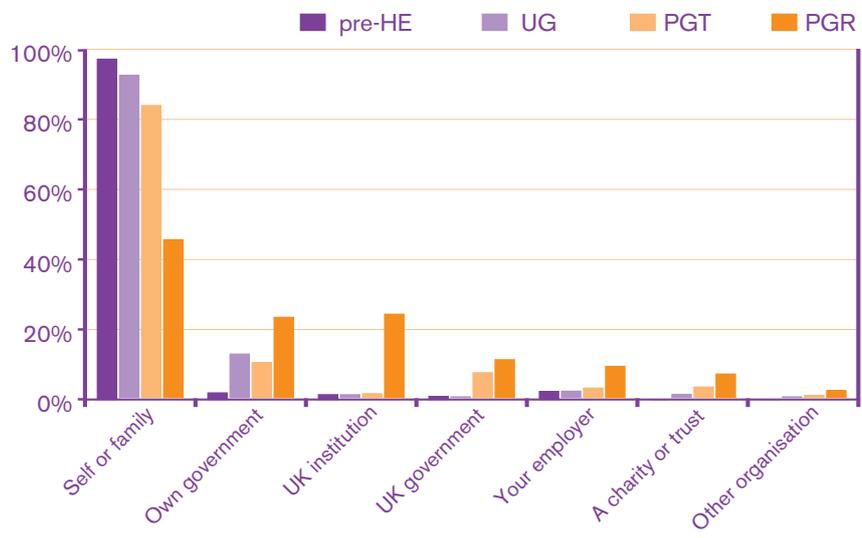


Figure 6b Source of funds for living costs



Only 17% of respondents received any form of support from UK sources (i.e. the UK government or their institution), compared to 25% in the OST survey (Williams et al 1986), which is consistent with the known fall in scholarship provision over the period (cf CEC/UKCOSA 2000). HESA data provide only a limited tool for monitoring funding sources over time because they only note who has paid the institution, not where the money came from, and in any case do not cover sources of funding for living costs. Institutions, agencies and government might consider whether the data currently available are adequate for an understanding of funding trends and their implications for institutional and government policy.

The need to self-fund applies to the majority of international students throughout the world: in New Zealand, 80% of tertiary students were being funded by their parents (Ward & Masgoret 2004), in Australia 68% of higher education students were funded by self or family and 13% received an Australian government scholarship (Smith et al 2002). In Canada, 61% of international students were funded wholly or partly by their family (CBIE 1999). In the US 64% of students were self-funded, while 24% of international students received funding from a US source; at postgraduate level the figures were 51% self-funded and 38% institution funded (Open Doors 2004). Students are sometimes thought to perceive the UK as somewhere where it is harder to get a scholarship than in the US; our figures suggest that perception would bear further investigation, in particular if looked at by level of study.

**PERCEPTIONS OF VALUE FOR MONEY**

The fact that international students and their families are, by and large, paying for their education perhaps makes them particularly conscious about what they are getting for their money. It was notable that when we asked students how satisfied they were with various aspects of their courses, the responses were very positive, as we have seen above. Yet, much lower proportions - 64% of EU students and 47% of

***“Coming from a country where education is free for everybody I expected more benefits from paying fees, e.g. excellent computer facilities or a good library - none of which I encountered here in the UK. I wonder where my money is going... I very much enjoy my stay here because of the excellent lecturers and the interesting co-student - not because of the facilities or the quality of service at this university.”***

**German female postgraduate**

non-EU students said they were satisfied with the value for money of their course, a difference which we might assume is linked to fee levels, particularly given that EU taught postgraduates, who are the most likely group to be self-funding, were the most dissatisfied group among EU students. By contrast with the 64% of non-UK EU students who were satisfied with value for money, the 2003 UNITE survey found that only 58% of UK undergraduates thought UK higher education provided value for money. Non-EU students pay far higher fees, and not unnaturally were more critical. Non-EU research students were the most satisfied with the value for money of their programmes; they were also the group most likely to be receiving financial support for their studies, and students receiving financial support were significantly more satisfied with the value for money of their courses than those who were self-funding.

Comparing these results with the OST survey, we find that in 1986 a much higher figure of three-quarters of students thought they were getting very or fairly good value for money. This may reflect the fact that a higher proportion (25% as opposed to 17% in the UKCOSA survey) were receiving financial support from UK sources, or it may be related to above-inflationary increases in fee levels since 1986, or the changes in the relative rate of fees paid by international students in the UK compared to those paid in other countries, or to perceptions of how overseas and home fee rates compare.

Not many international comparisons are available, but the recent New Zealand survey (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) found that only 36% of students thought New Zealand education was value for money (40% for tertiary education); 22% thought it was not and 41% were unsure. This is a far lower level of satisfaction than expressed by international students in the UK.

Interestingly there also seems to be a correlation between levels of satisfaction with value for money and whether English is a first, second or foreign language for the student: 59% of native English speakers were satisfied with value for money compared with 54% of those for whom English was a second language and 43% of those for whom it was a foreign language. The correlation may be with some other factor such as the level of affluence of the home country, but if language is a factor, this supports Eller et al's (2004) findings about links between language competence, integration and satisfaction and suggests that helping students to raise their language competence and to integrate with UK students could help raise their satisfaction levels. Ward and Masgoret also note that in two Australian studies, views on “value for money” were found to be linked to students' general level of satisfaction and feelings about the student experience.

Of course, we may also question whether students were really making judgments about value for money, or were simply reflecting concerns about cost, affordability or comparative pricing. The value of their studies in the UK would only really become evident some years after graduating when they were able to judge whether a UK qualification had helped them to gain better jobs or improve their earning power.

The quality of education and of the wider student experience, students' prior expectations, concerns about finance, affordability and hardship all potentially impact

on perceptions about cost and value. Institutions might need to think more carefully in future about how they inform students about what they are getting for their money. At a time when institutions are giving thought to the package they will present to full-time home undergraduates after the introduction of variable fees in 2006, there is a need also to consider what is presented to overseas fee-payers. One aspect which should be taken into account is the need to explain the differences in fee levels. Respondents to our survey sometimes seemed unaware that home students' fees were subsidised by the UK government, and thus mistakenly thought institutions were getting two or three times as much money to teach international students compared to UK students.

Bench fees and hidden extras also caused respondents to feel they were paying too much, a finding also reported by Hall et al (1998). When considering whether to charge bench fees, institutions should be following guidance such as the Quality Assurance Agency's *Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Programmes* (QAA 1999), which makes clear that any such charges should be explicit and up front.

What is at issue here is not only the amount of money, but also the way that expectations are managed. Some students already feel that they are being treated as "cash cows", both by institutions and by government, and this perception is potentially damaging to the UK's ability to attract future students. The message from the survey seems to be that courses were on the whole of good quality, but that there was real sensitivity about cost. Institutions should be ensuring that decisions on overseas fees are not taken by finance officers without the involvement of international office staff and international student advisers, to ensure the likely effects on current and future students are considered, as well as the effects on institutional budgets.

The *Vision 2020* Report (British Council 2004) suggests that numbers of international students coming to the UK might still rise in the short-term even if there was an increase in fee levels. Our survey suggests that caution should be exercised in making such assumptions to ensure that the UK does not price itself out of the market.

## FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Just over three-quarters of respondents considered they had enough money to live on and pay their fees, while 23% thought they did not. There was no sign of a correlation between source of funding and whether students had enough money, except for the small number who received funding from a trust or charity, who were significantly less likely to encounter hardship.

Students with an accompanying spouse or child were significantly more likely to encounter hardship than those on their own. Very few self-funded students brought dependants with them, so the problem appears to be with students trying to support themselves and their dependants on a scholarship which, in the majority of cases, will only have been intended for single students.

***"I think the fees are too much higher than for home students, it gives a feeling that I am financing other students' education which doesn't seem fair. and I don't see how the large increase every year can be justified by inflation. "***

Norwegian female undergraduate

***"I paid £14,000 for 1 year MSc while British and Europeans did £3-4000. It is unfair to impose 3-4 times high tuition fee on foreign students.***

Japanese male postgraduate

***"In my case, we, architecture students required to use loads of materials and softwares, but despite of fortune tuition... our department doesn't provide us anything at all, not even a paper, a pencil!!!***

Female Japanese undergraduate

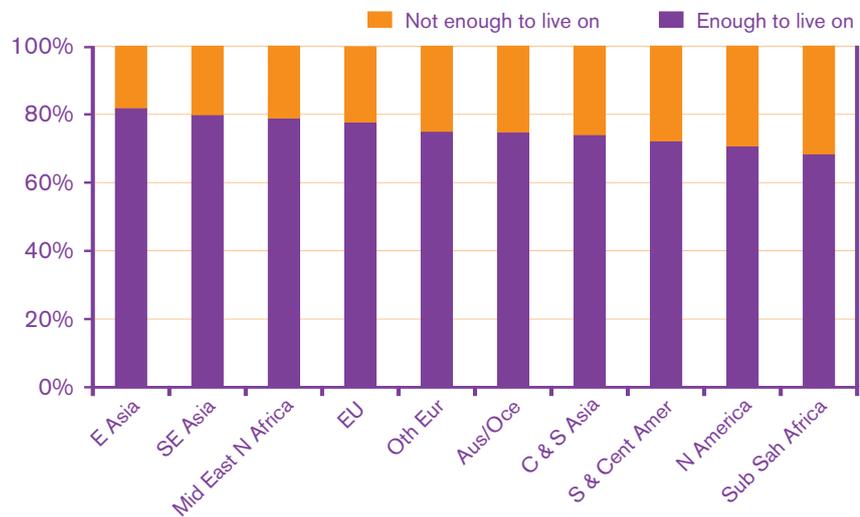
***"It makes me feel bad to get charged for everything all the time. Why cannot I pay a big amount of money and then enjoy life rather than being charged 5 times a day in small increments?"***

Hungarian female postgraduate

***"Fees are very expensive I knew that before I came here but a lot of the activities sports, societies, and other facilities are not included within the tuition fees and have to pay extra for those."***

Mexican male undergraduate

**Figure 7** Perceptions of hardship by region of origin



Research students encountered more financial problems than students at other levels, despite being more likely to be funded, perhaps because of the unpredictability of the length of study. This would fit with the experience of the Churches' Commission for International Students (CCIS), which found that the commonest reason for application to their hardship fund was “overrun” of PhDs (Court 2001). Institutions might try to give more realistic time estimates for PhDs rather than relying on standard or notional periods, and might also improve their dialogue with sponsors to ensure institutions are aware of the limits on students' funding, and that sponsors are made aware of the real times taken for doctorates. Funders may have to commit to funding students for more than three years, or make clear up-front that students will have to find the funds for any additional time.

Students were more likely than average to report financial problems if they came from sub-Saharan Africa or North America. Students from East Asia were less likely than other students to report insufficient funds. In all these cases it was students' own judgment as to whether they had enough money, so perceptions and expectations are as much an issue as funding.

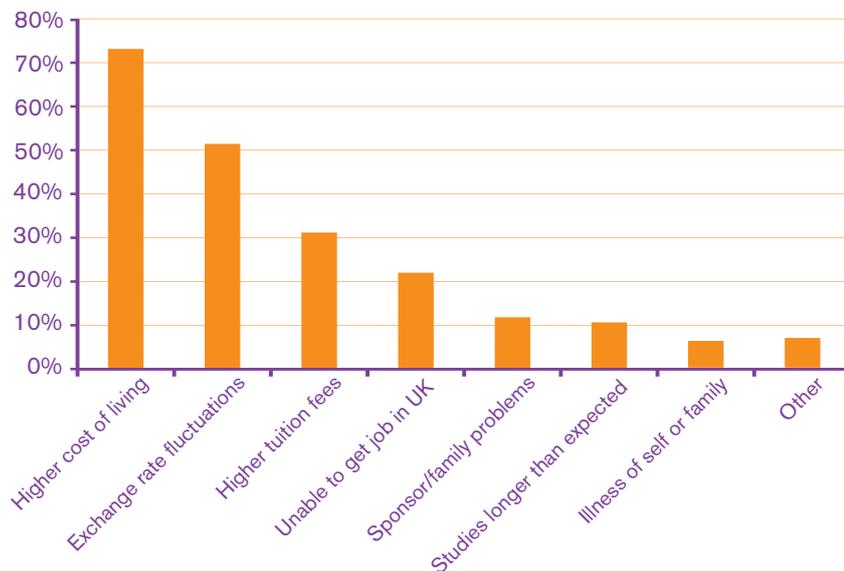
Our data did not show statistically significant differences in hardship according to location within the UK, except for students in Wales who were significantly less likely to encounter financial problems than students elsewhere (16% of students as opposed to an average of 23%). Students in London, the South East and the East of England were on average marginally – but not significantly – more likely to claim they did not have enough to live on. Students in pre-1992 universities were less likely to report financial hardship than those in post-1992 universities; the latter were also more likely to work part-time during their studies.

***“I was given great help when my country went bankrupt and money was blocked at home, so that I eventually was unable to receive funds from home.”***

**Female Argentinian postgraduate**

It is sometimes a concern to UK institutions that international students who receive part-scholarships are tempted to take these up without making adequate arrangements to finance the remaining costs. It is of note that 80% of respondents

Figure 8 Main reasons cited for hardship



who had their fees paid by their home government also received funding for living costs, as did two-thirds of those receiving funding from companies or charities. However, just under half of students receiving support for fees from a UK institution or UK government source did not get any support from these sources for living costs. The data did show that those whose funding came from a mixture of self-funding and other sources were slightly more likely to encounter hardship than those who were fully funded by external sources or were fully self-funded.

The main reasons cited for hardship were the cost of living being higher than students had budgeted (72%) and exchange rate fluctuations (50%). These two factors clearly can be linked, but given that only just over half of those who under-budgeted on living costs said they had problems with exchange rate fluctuations, institutions need to think about how they can help students to plan their finances more realistically. Nearly 60% of those who found tuition fees were higher than they budgeted for, were also affected by exchange rate fluctuations. It is interesting to note that some institutions have considered arrangements which peg fees to local currencies to provide students with a guaranteed maximum cost. In this context, we also commend the practice of institutions who set fee rates for students for the entire course at the time of entry to allow for more certainty in budgeting for the full period of study.

Not surprisingly, it was mainly research students who encountered hardship as a result of their studies lasting longer than expected. Higher tuition fees than expected were more likely to cause hardship for undergraduates who, as we have seen, were more likely to be paying their own fees, and who were more likely than students on one year Masters programmes to be hit by unexpectedly large year on year increases and the impact of exchange rate fluctuations over a period of years.

***“Tuition fees are ridiculously high and they keep going up each year by a considerable amount.”***

Japanese female FE student

***“The bank I was with ... failed to open my account for nearly a month despite promising they'd do it in two weeks when I went to open the account. This meant the limited amount of English money I had with me when I came here ran out, and my family had to send me some more by airpost “***

**Irish male undergraduate**

***“I was not able to open a student account.... The [bank] still now does not allow me to have a debit card so if I only had their bank account I would be forced to take money out (regardless of how dangerous taking money out at night could be) as my card cannot be used to pay anywhere.”***

**Spanish female undergraduate**

***“It is quite frustrating to have to live off your credit card, or to have to take out £300 at a time when going to the cash machine, because otherwise you would get charged so much every single time you use it for small amounts. You also feel excluded at some point.”***

**German female undergraduate**

***“My husband came to UK later. He cannot get a bank account because of no address certification. (He lives with me and all certifications are mine)”***

**Chinese female postgraduate**

There seemed to be some regional variations in the factors causing hardship. Students from sub-Saharan Africa were particularly vulnerable to finding that money promised by sponsors or families did not materialise. Students from East and South-East Asia and North America were particularly likely to have been hit by exchange rate fluctuations. Students from China were more likely than other students to have underbudgeted on tuition fees but less likely to underbudget on cost of living. Students from South Asia were more likely than other students to have been short of money because of not being able to find a part-time job. EU students were the most likely to have underbudgeted for the cost of living.

In response to all these issues, institutions need to ensure that they have suitable systems in place not only to prevent avoidable hardship (including good pre-arrival information for students) but also to mitigate situations where students were in need through no fault of their own e.g. being flexible about payment of fees and providing hardship funds. A UKCOSA survey of institutions in 2002 found that only 69% of HE institutions, but an even smaller 11% of FE colleges had hardship funds available for international students (UKCOSA, 2002).

## **INSURANCE**

For 6% of students, illness of self or family was a contributing factor in financial hardship. Although affecting only a very small number of students, the expenses caused by illness which are not covered by NHS provision can be considerable, and it is therefore of concern that only 35% have taken out medical insurance. Students from China, Taiwan, Japan and some European countries were more likely to take out insurance than other students, although even then the highest take up rate was 57% (Norway). Take up rates were lowest for students from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Australasia and the Americas. We would strongly encourage institutions to promote the benefits of insurance to students, who may not realise the limitations of NHS cover, or consider the additional expenses incurred where relatives need to visit, repatriation is required or portions of the course need to be repeated.

Institutions have a difficult path to tread in promoting personal safety and security to students, but given that all students are sometimes at risk of muggings and burglary, particularly at the beginning of their stay, it was of concern that only a quarter of respondents had taken out possessions insurance. More undergraduates than postgraduates had possessions insurance, and students in university halls of residence were more likely than those in the private sector to have taken this out. It may be that institutions target information about insurance to those in halls, or that they offer group policies included in the rent. Steps to ensure more students take out insurance would be advisable, not least as a step to reduce the risk of hardship if problems do occur.

## **BANKING**

The problems international students have in opening UK bank accounts have been frequently and extensively reported to UKCOSA by member institutions, and efforts to address them are ongoing, so we did not ask students about their experiences with banks. However, quite a few students raised the issue of banking problems in the open section of the questionnaire. In some cases respondents reported that

problems and delays in being able to open bank accounts had caused temporary hardship, while in other cases they had imposed extra costs or raised safety issues. For some respondents, problems with banks simply added to negative perceptions of the UK.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Over 70% of students were paying fees and living costs from their own or their families' resources, except for research postgraduates, the majority of whom were funded by scholarships from other sources.
- 17% of students received funding from a UK source
- 64% of EU respondents and 47% of non-EU respondents said they were satisfied with the value for money of their course, compared to 58% of UK students in a UNITE study, and 40% in a survey of international students in New Zealand.
- There appear to be correlations between language level, integration with UK students and satisfaction with value for money.
- 23% of respondents considered that they did not have enough money to live on. Students with dependents and research students were particularly likely to report hardship.
- Those whose funding came from a mixture of self-funding and other sources were slightly more likely to encounter hardship than those who were fully funded by external sources or were fully self-funded.
- The two main reasons given for financial difficulties were the cost of living being higher than students had budgeted (72%) and exchange rate fluctuations (50%).
- Only 35% of students had taken out medical insurance, and only a quarter had possessions insurance.
- Students were vocal about the problems they had encountered in opening accounts with UK banks.





## CHAPTER 5

# Employment, immigration and the “official welcome”

*“Through doing casual work, I got to meet people from the UK society other than UK students and this provided me with wide insights about people and how they live.”*

**Zambian female postgraduate**

## CHAPTER 5 EMPLOYMENT, IMMIGRATION AND THE “OFFICIAL WELCOME”

### EMPLOYMENT

Just over half of all students had undertaken paid work since coming to the UK. Taught postgraduates were slightly less likely than other groups to have worked (47% had worked), and research postgraduates were the most likely to have worked (60% had). In future research it would be worthwhile asking students more about the type of work they had undertaken to see whether the higher rate of work among research students related to teaching and research assistantships. Students in post-1992 universities were more likely to have worked than those in pre-1992 universities, but they also appeared to find it harder to find work. Students from non-EU countries were slightly more likely than EU students to have worked (53% compared to 46%).

58% of students had made use of their university’s careers service or student employment office in seeking part-time work, and 60% of those who had done so found the service helpful. Research postgraduates were less likely to have used their careers service, and most likely to have done work related to their future career, which may mean many worked as teaching or research assistants.

Only 29% of students had found work related to their programme of study or future career plans. However, as well as financial benefits of working, 61% of students for whom English was a second language and 67% of those for whom it was a foreign language considered that working had helped to improve their English.

For 58% of students, it was hard to find work. Students who had found it difficult were more likely to have used their student employment service, although 31% of

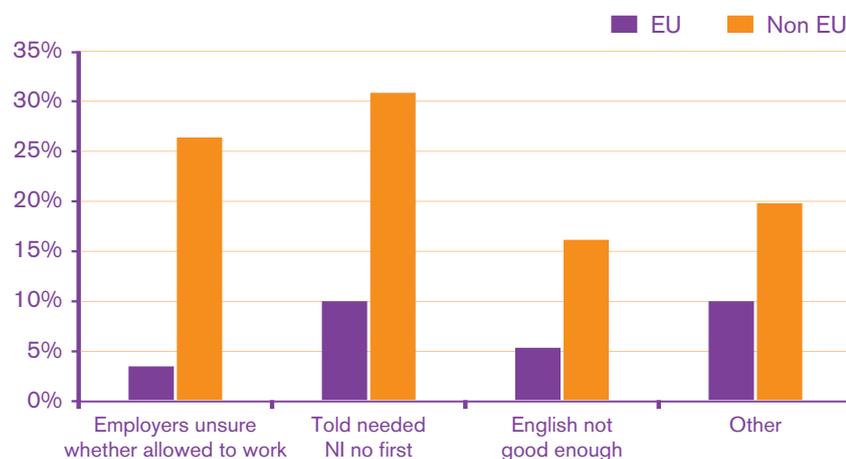
**“[I] over-worked and 'donated' a quarter of the money in tax, thanks to the complex process of getting a permanent NI number”**

Indian female undergraduate

**“Finding work was extremely difficult: I was told that I needed a permanent National Insurance Number to be hired, but was told by the National Insurance people that I needed a job to get a number. I was told by our Career Services people that that was illegal; but I am here to earn a degree, not to challenge/change the system on my own. It was nearly a full-time job to get a number and/or a job. This was very disappointing to me, as we were told it would be a simple process.”**

US female postgraduate

Figure 9 Reasons given why it was difficult to find work for EU and non-EU students



them still had not. Students from non-EU countries found it very much harder than EU students to find work: 64% of non-EU students compared to 26% of EU students.

Many of the barriers to getting work were perceived to lie not in a shortage of suitable jobs, but in employers' unwillingness to employ international students. The most commonly cited reasons (for 31% of non-EU and 10% of EU students) were problems with National Insurance numbers, e.g. students being told they could not work until they had obtained one. 26% of non-EU students and 3% of EU students said employers were unsure whether the student was allowed to work. Both of these problems could be remedied by better information for employers. The findings tally with research done by Loughborough University Careers Service (2004) indicating that employers are often unclear about the regulations regarding employment of international students both during and after their studies. Having put in place the system to allow international students to work during study, government now needs to ensure that it is widely understood: stamps and vignettes in passports need to be worded unambiguously, and clear information needs to be available to employers. Both government and institutional careers services may need to engage actively with employers to raise awareness on this issue.

The erroneous belief that students could not work without a National Insurance (NI) number was compounded by the difficulty in obtaining one. Thirty per cent of students found it difficult to find out even how to apply for one, and only just over half said it was easy to find out how to apply. 27% of students who had worked had had to wait more than six weeks to get one, and 9% had been unable to obtain one at all. 29% of those who had worked reported that they had not tried to obtain one.

Students also reported their perceptions of experiencing prejudice against non-British applicants ranging unwillingness to accept students' language capabilities, overseas qualifications or experience, to racism or discrimination. Five per cent of the students reported feeling that they had experienced discrimination from employers. Students from East Asia, South-East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa were most likely to report discrimination.

We did not ask about students' plans for work after graduating, but this was an issue some students spontaneously raised, and deserves further investigation. It may be that news of the Fresh Talent initiative and Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme had raised expectations among students, who were faced with the uncertainty as these much-trailed schemes were delayed or failed to live up to expectations.

Working during and after study is important to international students not just for financial reasons, but because it provides experience which may give them an edge in the job market after returning home. It needs to be clear to students before they come to the UK what opportunities for employment they will have during and after study. This can best be achieved where there is a clear framework set by government, which allows institutions and agencies to provide accurate information to international students, and which ensures employers understand and can make use of the opportunities provided to employ international students.

***“I thought that it would be easy to find work in the UK after the completion of my studies. However this is not the case.”***

Indian male postgraduate

***Although I know it is difficult, it would be good if there were employment opportunities for international students so we could show how valuable we can be. Work permits' limitations do not allow equal opportunities.***

Mexican male postgraduate

***“Having been to UK it would be good experience working in UK for about 2yrs time. But I have understood that the visa restriction restricts us from working in an industry after the course. This would be good help for any international student as the amount of money invested in education is quite high and working in the UK industry after the course in the similar line of course is very advantageous “***

Indian male postgraduate

***“I don't think it is fair for home office to charge £150-250 for visa extension.”***

Chinese female undergraduate

***“it is very expensive to renew visas now and it was difficult for me to come up with enough money...this is a source of stress for international students; we don't have loads of extra cash lying around to pay fees that suddenly come into existence with no warning.”***

US female postgraduate

***“The new Home Office fees for student visa extensions (250 pounds for application in person) are outrageous. Britain tries to attract foreign students and then rip them off in this way. And they claim that this fee covers their costs only. Besides they are reluctant to extend visas for more than a year because they are looking forward to your next cheque for £250. I felt myself like a sheep to be fleeced.”***

Turkish female postgraduate

***“Whenever we came back from home country, immigration staff / customs are very impolite and disrespect to international people. They asked questions like inspecting criminals and gave us very very bad and unfriendly impression.”***

Female postgraduate from Hong Kong

## IMMIGRATION

We asked all students about whether they had had to extend their Leave to Remain in the UK since coming to the UK to study. 36% of non-EU students reported having needed to apply for an extension. Over half (56%) had made the application with help from an adviser in their institution; 30% applied for an extension on their own from within the UK and 12% applied from back in their home country. Just under 1% made use of a lawyer or other paid adviser to help with their application.

Views were mixed on whether the process of applying for an extension of leave was straightforward and efficient. 38% agreed, 28% neither agreed nor disagreed and 34% disagreed (20% of whom strongly disagreed). Those who had extended their visa while in their home country, or in the UK with help from an international student adviser at their institution were more positive about the process than those who had used a paid adviser such as a lawyer or had applied for the extension independently. While it is encouraging to note that students find the process easier when done through their international student adviser, it has to be recognised that the mechanism by which this is done – the Home Office's special student Batch Scheme - requires institutions to take on a significant extra administrative burden in handling and checking students' applications, taking up staff time which could otherwise be spent helping to improve other aspects of the international student experience.

A couple of students commented negatively on the way they were treated by immigration officials but a much more widespread complaint was on the question of charging for visa extensions. Despite the fact that we had not raised this issue, students were very vocal about it in the open comments section of the questionnaire, particularly research postgraduates who were one of the groups most likely to be required to make extensions because of the uncertain duration of doctoral degrees. It would appear that the introduction of charging – perhaps particularly in its first year when it was introduced suddenly and without consultation – has left students with a very negative impression of the “official welcome”.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Just over half of all students had undertaken paid work since coming to the UK. Over 60% of non-native speakers of English found that employment helped their English.
- 64% of non-EU students compared to 26% of EU students found it hard to find work.
- 31% of non-EU and 10% of EU students had problems such as being told they could not work until they had obtained a National Insurance number. 26% of non-EU students and 3% of EU students said employers were unsure whether the student was allowed to work.
- 5% of students felt that they had been discriminated against by employers.
- Students wanted more opportunities for work experience after studying.
- 36% of non-EU students reported having needed to apply for an extension to their visa. Over half (56%) had made the application with help from an adviser in their institution, and their experience of the process was more positive than that of students who did so independently. There were many complaints about the introduction of charging for extensions.



## CHAPTER 6

# Accommodation

*“Accommodation is a crucial part of a student's life – especially a foreign one – and if anything goes pear-shaped, the student can feel very isolated.”*

**Spanish female postgraduate**

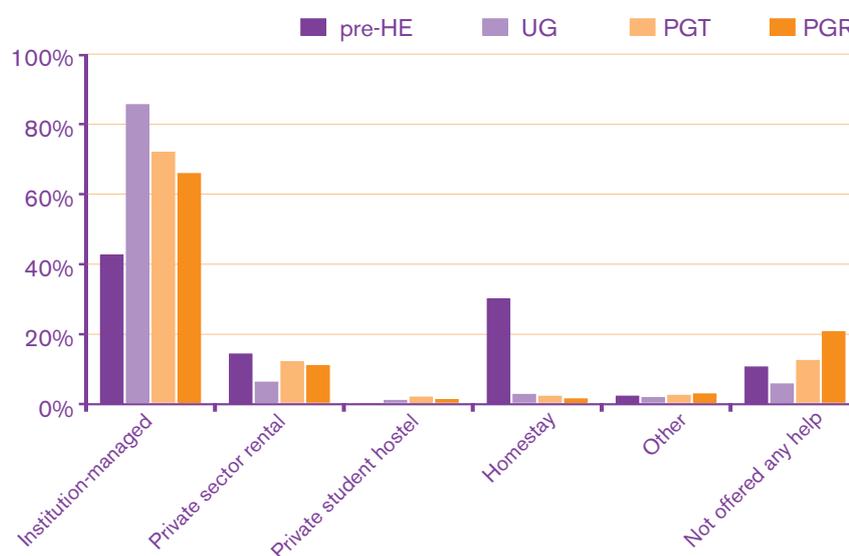
## CHAPTER 6 ACCOMMODATION

As we have seen in Chapter 2, accommodation featured highest on students' list of concerns before arrival. If the anxiety was about whether students would be housed, then it was perhaps unnecessary since three-quarters of students in HE were offered university housing at the beginning of their stay. 85% of undergraduates were offered institution-managed housing - a big increase on the 70% recorded in the HEIST survey. There have been improvements across the board, although there were still differentials by type of institution: we found 90% of undergraduates in the pre-1992 universities were offered institution-managed housing (76% in the HEIST survey), 72% in post-1992 universities (60%) and 73% in HE colleges (63%). This is a significant improvement for students on which all sectors can be congratulated.

Research postgraduates were the least likely group to be offered help, with 20% claiming they had not been offered any assistance, compared to 12% of taught postgraduates and 5% of undergraduates. Only 65% of research postgraduate were offered institution-managed accommodation when they first arrived. In total about 10% of students were in private accommodation which the institution offered some help in finding.

Only 37% of students in FE colleges were offered institution-managed housing, but 31% were offered homestays, which may be a good alternative, particular for young students and those in English language classes who would otherwise have little contact with British people.

Figure 10 Accommodation arranged on arrival by level of study



Certainly, institution-managed accommodation is not the only way to provide students with satisfactory accommodation. Although in the Canadian survey (Walker 1999) 42% of students cited accommodation as a problem, perhaps reflecting the fact that only 20% were in university residences, by contrast in the New Zealand survey (Ward & Masgoret 2004), most students were satisfied with their accommodation, even though the majority were not in university residences. Only 13% of tertiary students were in student hostels, 53% were renting privately and 25% were in homestays. Those in student hostels were the least satisfied with their accommodation.

By the time of the UKCOSA survey, which may not have been in the same year as students first arrived, 51% of students (70% of those in their first year in the UK) were still in institution-managed accommodation. The figures varied by level: 56% of undergraduates and taught postgraduates, but only 34% of pre-HE or research postgraduates were in institution-managed accommodation. 43% of respondents were in privately-rented accommodation (59% of research students). 3% were in homestays with British families (19% of pre-HE students), and the rest were living with family or friends or had made other arrangements.

While we would expect to find some regional variations, the data did not allow many statistically significant differences to be identified. Students in Humberside were less likely to be in institution-managed housing, but more likely to be in the private rented sector. Students in London were less likely than other students to be in institutionally managed housing, and more likely to be living in a private student hostel or with family or friends. London students were no more likely than other students to be in private rented accommodation which may partly explain why the data did not show them to be any more likely to be encountering financial hardship. Students in institution-managed accommodation were slightly less likely than the average to encounter hardship, while those in the private rented sector were more likely to be short of money - although comments from students indicated that in some cases institutions were charging higher rents than the private sector, which would seem to be supported by the recent NUS study of rents (NUS 2004). Students in homestays were least likely to have financial problems; it would be interesting to explore whether this was because they tend to be good value or because they make budgeting easier for students.

Students with accompanying dependants reported more problems than single students with finding accommodation. Nearly half of all students with an accompanying spouse or child reported problems finding suitable accommodation when they first arrived; this is an improvement on the HEIST survey when 69% of students reported difficulties in finding something suitable. However, it still leaves scope for improvement. By the time of the UKCOSA survey, 86% had found somewhere suitable, but 14% still had not.

The only question in our survey to ask anything related to disability was in the accommodation section; 1% of students reported difficulties with accommodation relating to absence of suitable adaptations for a disability. This topic requires further investigation as we did not establish how many students in our survey had a disability, nor investigate the other ways in which this affected their experience.

***“Universities of [name of city] have the problem of providing accommodation to the Postgraduate students with families and they are left to their own devices which is difficult especially at the time of the arrival.”***

Pakistani male postgraduate

***“I found that the university offered a great deal less support to students who were married, in terms of accommodation and even general advice. We were not offered a realistic view of living in the UK because the university expected most students to be living in residence and therefore have a different lifestyle. There needs to be something for international couples!”***

Canadian female postgraduate

**“[One benefit was] great flatmates (communal flats can be perfect accommodation)”**  
 German male postgraduate

**“Providing cheaper accommodation and easier access to it would be the best to do for (international) students in [name of city].”**  
 Dutch female postgraduate

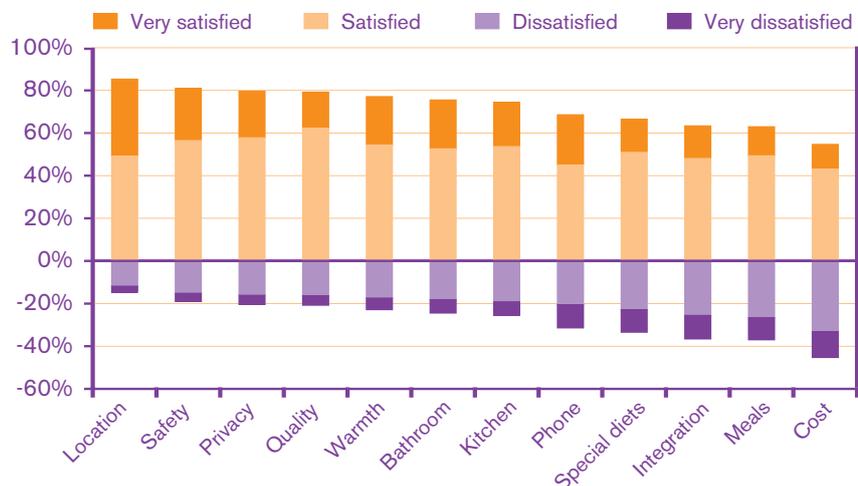
Four out of five students were happy with the quality of their accommodation at the time of the survey. This compares favourably to the three-quarters of respondents to the HEIST survey who were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation. In both the UKCOSA and previous studies (Allen & Higgins 1994, Hughes 1990) satisfaction was greater among those living in rented houses than in halls of residence. Hughes suggests a number of reasons including that a greater degree of choice was involved.

45% of students were dissatisfied with the cost of their accommodation (see Figure 11); respondents were more satisfied with cost in the private sector than in institution-managed housing. Comments in the open section of the survey indicated that some students thought institution-managed housing should be subsidised rather than full cost.

Students from China, Greece and Germany were less satisfied than average with the cost of accommodation and students from India, Norway and the USA were more satisfied. Not surprisingly, students were more likely to be critical of the cost of accommodation if they had also said they did not have enough to live on, but even those who did have enough to live on were dissatisfied with the cost of accommodation in 43% of cases. Students were more satisfied than average with the cost of accommodation in the North East, and less satisfied in the South East of England.

For those in catered halls of residence, two-thirds were happy with the standard of meals and the same proportion with availability of food for those with special diets. In general, 46% of students were happy with the level of integration with UK students in their accommodation, 26% were dissatisfied with this, and 27% said the question was not applicable (the majority of whom were in private rented accommodation). We know that 35% of respondents in halls of residence were living with a mix of UK and other international students and 7% were living only with other

**Figure 11** Satisfaction with aspects of accommodation



international students. We do not know the proportion of students in private accommodation who were integrated with UK students, but there were no data to indicate students in private accommodation were any more or less satisfied with their degree of integration. An above average figure of 32% of taught postgraduates and 35% of pre-HE students were dissatisfied with the level of integration.

The accommodation-related problems most often cited by respondents were difficulties with others in their accommodation, having to move out during vacations and having an inflexible contract. 26% of students in institution-managed accommodation complained about having to move out during vacations. Interestingly 33% of undergraduates, compared to 15% of postgraduates, complained about this, presumably because undergraduates were more likely to be given termtime-only tenancies on the assumption that they were more likely to go home during vacations, which may not be the case for international students.

Homestays proved the most flexible arrangement, with only 7% complaining about inflexibility of the contract, compared to nearly a quarter of those in institution-managed or private rented housing. About 10% of students reported problems with their landlord, and other complaints included high costs, poor quality accommodation, poor standards of cleaning and hygiene, inadequate security and noise. Of those in private rented accommodation, 14% complained of having difficulties getting their deposit returned. International students will usually be unfamiliar with UK law and practicalities relating to renting private accommodation, and it is therefore particularly important that institutions provide them with access to relevant information, advice and support if students need or choose to find private sector accommodation.

28% were dissatisfied with lack of access to an international telephone line. HEIST found that safety, price, warmth, not having to move out during vacations, privacy and access to an international telephone were the six most important features for international students about accommodation. It appears that three of these factors – cost, telephone access and not having to move out in vacations – could still be better met.

Many of the issues raised by survey respondents reflect complaints common to all students, but there are particular issues facing international students which institutions need to consider in the context of their own housing policies. One is about whether students are given adequate and accurate information about their options in reasonable time to allow them to make informed choices before arrival. Another is whether accommodation options take account of international students' needs (e.g. not having to move out during vacations, having access to storage facilities, the option of living with students of similar age and level). There is also a dilemma for institutions: if home and international students want different kinds of tenancies, how can the institution accommodate the needs of both, while encouraging integration within accommodation?

This takes us on to our next topic: helping international students integrate with British students and wider British society.

***“I hate the way accommodation office arrange [for] the Eastern students [to] live together and English students live in their culture. I come here to learn something new... not everything I have already know!!”***

**Thai female postgraduate**

## KEY FINDINGS

- Three-quarters of students in HE were offered institution managed housing at the beginning of their stay, an increase since previous studies. There were differentials by type of institution and by level of study. 85% of undergraduates but only 65% of research students were offered institution managed accommodation.
- 37% of students at FE colleges were offered institution managed accommodation and 31% were offered home stays.
- Students in institution-managed accommodation were slightly less likely than the average to encounter hardship, while those in the private rented sector were more likely to. Students in homestays were the least likely to have financial problems.
- Nearly half of all students with an accompanying spouse or child reported problems finding suitable accommodation when they first arrived, and 14% still had problems by the time of the survey
- Four out of five students were happy with the quality of their accommodation at the time of the survey, with satisfaction rates higher in the private rented sector.
- 45% of students were dissatisfied with the cost, and were more satisfied with cost in the private sector than in institution-managed housing
- 26% of respondents (32% of taught postgraduates and 35% of pre-HE students) were dissatisfied with the level of integration with UK students.
- The most common problems cited were difficulties with others in their accommodation, having to move out during vacations and having an inflexible contract. 26% of students (33% of undergraduates) in institution-managed accommodation complained about having to move out during vacations.
- About 10% of students reported problems with their landlord; 14% of students in private rented accommodation complained of having difficulties getting their deposit returned.



## CHAPTER 7

# Social integration, leisure and students' perception of the UK

*“UK people are overallly very helpful, friendly and fun to hang out with when they are sober.”*

**Malaysian male undergraduate**

## CHAPTER 7

# SOCIAL INTEGRATION, LEISURE AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE UK

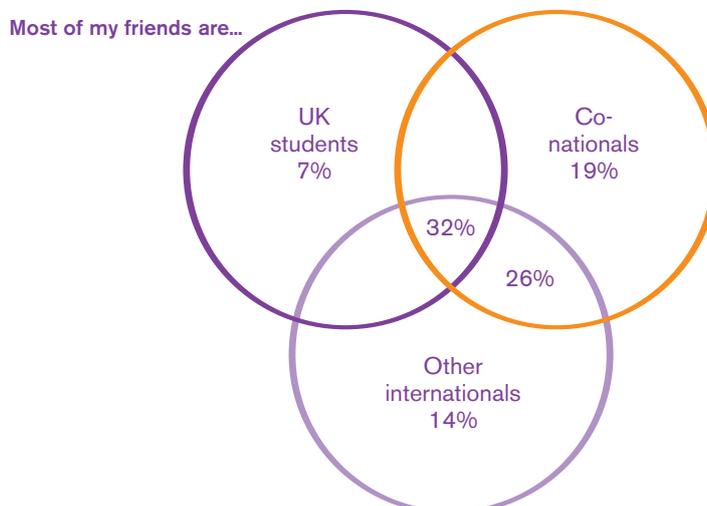
### INTEGRATION

The difficulties of ensuring that international students integrate – socially and in classes - with home students is a recurring theme both in our study and in many others, raised by both students and staff. The lack of opportunities to mix with a wider cross-section of British society is also widely noted.

At the time of writing, Eller et al (2004) are engaged in longitudinal research exploring changes in students' attitudes over time. They are also exploring the link between the positiveness of international students' evaluations of the UK and easing inter-group contact between them and home students. Initial results have found that more favourable attitudes to Britain are linked with improved knowledge of Britain and the British, greater proficiency in English and spending more leisure time with British people. This is supported by our results, which showed that international students with UK friends were more likely to be satisfied overall with their stay in the UK: 93% compared to 86%.

Eller et al (ibid) also found that 67% of students' contact with British people was at the university they attended, with only 17% occurring during extra-curricular activities. This may explain why international students studying science and medicine were more likely to have UK friends than those studying humanities: greater class contact

Figure 12 Contact with other students



time presumably gives greater opportunities for getting to know fellow students, although in the case of engineering this is not the case, presumably because of the very high proportion of international students.

We found (see Figure 12) that international students were much more closely integrated with co-nationals and other international students, with 59% counting most of their friendships in one of these categories. Only 32% counted their friends as a mixture of UK and international students, and only 7% were friends mainly with UK students rather than international students.

Women were slightly more likely than men to have UK students in their social circle. Younger students were significantly more likely than older students: 47% of 18 to 21 year olds had UK friends compared to 30% of those over 31. Students with dependants were significantly less likely to have UK friends. Students from East and South-East Asia were considerably less likely to have UK friends than average and students from the EU (except Greece), North America and Sub-Saharan Africa were more likely to have UK friends. Only 15% of Chinese students said they had any UK friends. This fits with the idea that students mix more easily when there is a perceived closeness of culture (e.g. between British and other Western cultures) or where the number of incomers is small, and therefore less likely to be perceived as threatening (see Ward 2001). It is a major concern that two of the largest national groups on campus (Greek and Chinese students) mainly socialise with fellow nationals or other international students on campus.

Language may also be an issue, with two-thirds of native English speakers having UK friends, compared to 36% of speakers of English as a second language, and 29% of those for whom it is a foreign language.

Students at pre-HE level were least likely to have UK friends, understandably since they were often on EFL and Foundation courses aimed solely at international students. However, 70% of taught postgraduate students had no UK friends, probably reflecting the high proportion of international students in their classes. 59% of research postgraduates and 51% of undergraduates had no UK friends. Students in subjects with large concentrations of international students such as business, engineering and computing were also less likely to have UK friends. Students in the HE college sector were better integrated than those in other sectors; although the figures in our sample were small, this would be consistent with the idea that it is easier for international students to mix when they are present only in small numbers.

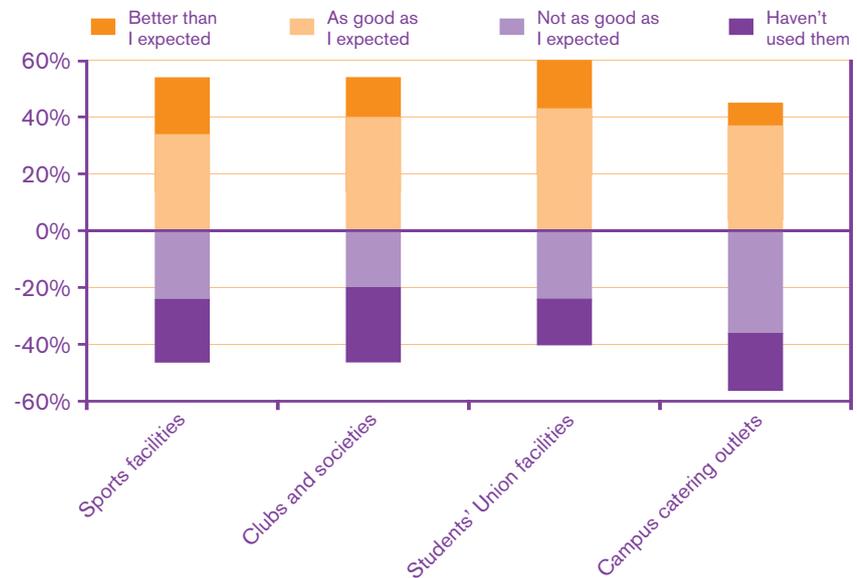
Hall et al (1998) found in their Scottish study that failure to integrate was often put down to study pressures – something that is echoed in a few students' comments in our study, but which did not clearly emerge from the quantitative data.

Students who had participated in any type of activity on campus (e.g. joining clubs or societies, doing sport, drama, music, or volunteering) were more likely to have UK friends than those who had not. It is perhaps important to emphasise to international students that their UK peers often expect to make friends through such activities rather than through class contact. Length of time in the UK seemed to have only a

***“Tell us how to mix with UK people properly...because in fact there's lots of barriers to get close to them. Sometimes UK students underestimate international students' capabilities, and it's hard to work in a team with them because they always feel that they are in the right side in term of opinion and the way of thinking.”***

**Indonesian female postgraduate**

**Figure 13** Satisfaction with recreational facilities



marginal effect, with the percentage of students who had UK friends increasing from 38% within the first year to 42% after two years, and in fact dropping to 35% when they had been here between one and two years. 42% of students who did not consider that they had any UK friends, nevertheless said that they did not prefer mixing with their co-nationals; i.e. the lack of integration was not a conscious choice.

We should note that just under a quarter of students said they preferred to mix with people from their own country and culture. This can be put in context by the East Midlands study (Rawson 2004) which reported students wanting more opportunities to network with co-nationals, perhaps across the region, for support – particularly where they were a small group on campus. Students who were surrounded by co-nationals, on the other hand, wanted opportunities to mix with the wider student population. A study conducted by the University of Nottingham (Humphrey, Harris, Ward & Levine 2001) noted the important role of co-nationals in providing support networks, but also found that students regretted when this prevented them from forming friendships with UK students. This raises questions about the limitations which support networks will have if they consist mainly of co-nationals and other international students, whose familiarity with UK systems is likely to be lower than that of UK students.

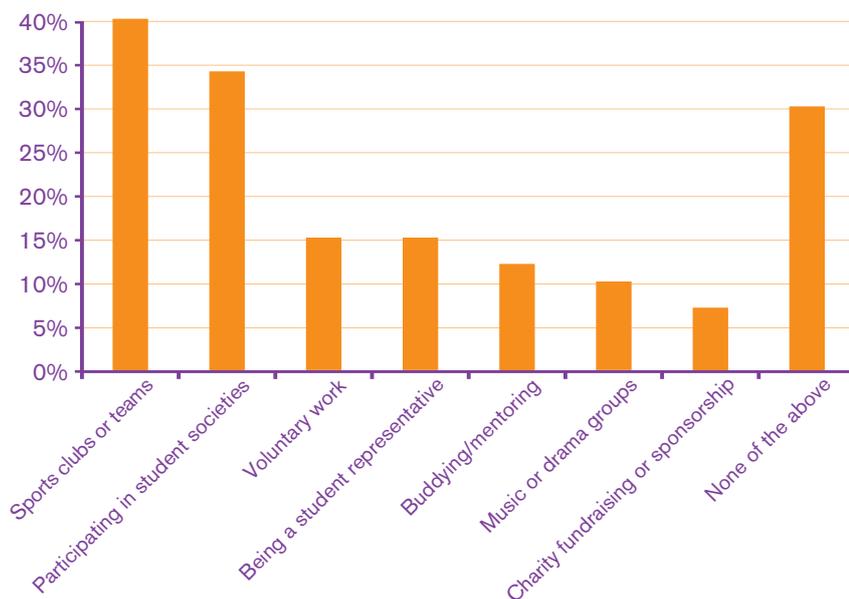
When we asked respondents whether they found UK students hard to get to know, 43% agreed, although 60% also agreed that UK students were friendly when one did get to know them. Making contacts outside the institution was even harder: more than half of students agreed that it was difficult (see figure 15). 59% of students wanted more chance to experience UK culture and family life. In all cases, not surprisingly, those who had UK friends rated contact with British people more positively.

A number of respondents commented negatively about the prevalence of heavy drinking and the role of alcohol in social activities in the UK. It is clear that some international students find the drinking culture in the UK a barrier to integration. This also comes up for example in the MORI report (2002) and the report on students in the East Midlands (Rawson 2004). It is not a topic that is mentioned in any of the competitor country studies, although the wider issues of integration feature across all countries.

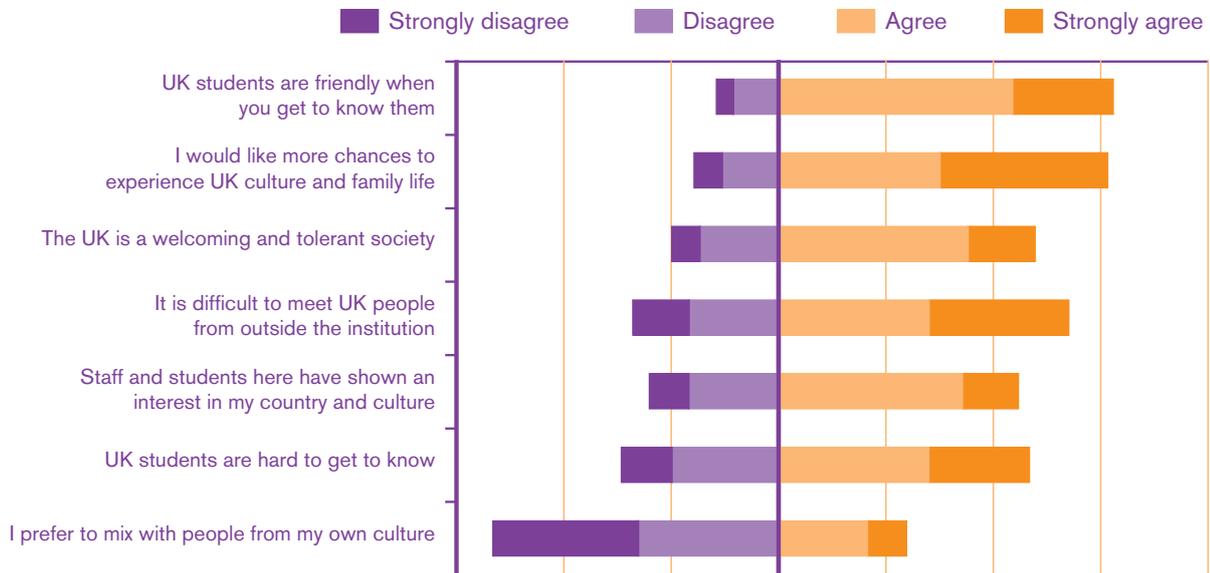
Just over half of respondents found campus sports facilities and clubs and societies to be as good as or better than they expected; while a quarter found them to be worse (see Figure 13). 60% found students' union facilities to be as good or better than expected, and a quarter found them to be worse. Campus catering outlets were found to be worse than expected by 36% of students.

Having noted that participation in campus activities increased the likelihood of students forming friendships with UK students, it is worth noting that around 20% of international students had not used any of their institution's sports facilities, joined clubs and societies or used students' union facilities. When we asked students about the activities they had been involved in while studying in the UK, 30% had not been involved in any of those listed (see figure 14). Students who were short of funds were overall slightly less likely to participate in campus activities, mainly through lower rates of participation in sports or student societies, though they were slightly more likely to be involved in voluntary work or fundraising. Similarly, although students who were working were slightly less likely to have undertaken extra-curricular activities, they were significantly more likely than the average to do fundraising or voluntary work, be a student representative or a mentor.

**Figure 14** Participation in extra-curricular activities



**Figure 15** Responses to statements about mixing with British people



Postgraduate students, and research students especially, were less likely than undergraduates to make use of organised social activities or students' union facilities at their institution. North American, EU and South-East Asian students were more likely to get involved in campus activities and students from Latin America, East Asia and the Middle East were less likely to. It would be interesting to explore whether there were particular barriers for these groups, or interests which were not adequately provided for.

Participation in sport and student societies were the most popular options, but students were also involved in voluntary work and fundraising, acting as buddies and mentors and as student representatives. The latter is particularly important in ensuring institutions receive feedback from international students as well as from the majority home student population, so to find 15% of international students had been a student representative of some kind is encouraging.

***"I have experienced a "Berlin" wall of prejudices from UK students - something that everyone knows about but no-one dares to talk about because it is sort of a taboo - which in turn results in tacit compliance and a minimum of (social) interaction between UK and international students."***

**Danish female undergraduate with South Korean origins**

Students were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about their perceptions of the UK and its people, and about their own preferences and experiences. The spread of answers is shown in Figure 15. 46% of students agreed that the UK was a welcoming and tolerant society; 19% disagreed.

A number of students wrote in the open questions at the end of the questionnaire about their experience of discrimination or about the perceived smugness and superiority of the British; others wrote that they had expected to find racism and been pleasantly surprised not to. Some wrote very positive comments about the UK's anti-discrimination laws while others were scathing about their ineffectiveness. HEIST noted a particular problem of tension between UK and international students. Comments in the open section of our survey suggest that some international

students still feel UK students have negative views towards them, ranging from superiority to indifference to outright hostility. As we have seen in Chapter 5, 5% of students who had worked in the UK felt that they had experienced discrimination from employers.

We might note that in the OST study in 1986, a quarter of students thought that they had been mistreated because of race or nationality. The questions asked were not comparable, so we cannot establish with any certainty whether the proportion of students experiencing of racism or discrimination in the UK has fallen, but there is no sign of a dramatic alteration in the situation over the intervening two decades.

While the evidence of the survey seems to be that only a small minority of students experienced racism while in the UK, and that not all of this was experienced from staff or fellow students (although some is), institutions need to consider how they can meet their obligations under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) to ensure racism on campus is tackled effectively, including working with employers who recruit on campus or through student job shops. Institutions should also consider whether introductory talks and local area information for international students should include information about where to go for support if students do encounter racism or other harassment either within or outside the institution.

However, the most significant issue for institutions to tackle is that of helping international students to integrate. The problems should not be overstated: very many students said that the friends they made while studying in the UK were one of the most positive aspects of their experience. However, we must recognise that for some groups of students it is harder to form friendships with UK students. Helping international students integrate with their UK peers should not mean asking them to compromise their own culture or values, but instead help them get to over the barriers to getting to know British people as individuals and forming friendships across cultures. This is equally important for British students who need to be encouraged to benefit from this unique opportunity in their life to mix within this “world in microcosm” and to develop the cross-cultural awareness and knowledge of other countries which will stand them in good stead for future employment, as well as building their awareness as global citizens.

***“Its diversity has surprised me at times, yet its stuffiness regarding many other countries does not cease to amaze me. I have been particularly impressed with the way the UK accepts, even encourages any kind of dress style, attitudes and activity (at least in the big cities), yet seems to have a deep-rooted hostility (or ignorance) towards the rest of Europe.”***

Female Finnish undergraduate

***“English people, some of them are arrogant. You have to know that we come to your country not to beg money from your society, but to get some knowledge. We pay much money on it.... Don't see us like a second class people.”***

Malaysian male postgraduate

***“Mature English people are more friendly and polite but sometimes still show superiority. Younger students are normally not interested in mixing with overseas students and assume you can't understand English anyway. In group work, overseas students tend to be left out and form their own group.”***

Female postgraduate  
from Hong Kong

## KEY FINDINGS

- International students with UK friends were more likely to be satisfied overall with their stay in the UK: 93% compared to 86%.
- 59% of students (70% of taught postgraduates) said most of their friendships were with co-nationals and other international students, rather than including UK students.
- International students were more likely to include UK students in their social circle if they were women, if they were younger, if they had no dependants, and if they were undergraduates, or were studying science or medicine.
- Students from East and South-East Asia were considerably less likely to have UK friends than average and students from the EU, North America and Sub-Saharan Africa were more likely to, except Greek and Cypriot students who were less likely to. Only 15% of Chinese students said they had UK friends.
- Students who had participated in any type of activity on campus (e.g. joining clubs or societies, doing sport, drama, music, or volunteering) were more likely to have UK friends than those who had not.
- Students wanted more opportunities to mix with UK students and with local communities, but found the latter particularly hard.
- A small number of students reported experiencing racism, but some commented positively on its absence.



## CHAPTER 8

# Students' overall satisfaction with their stay in the UK

*"How well the university welcomed international students and what an effort they made to make us feel comfortable"*

**Danish female undergraduate**

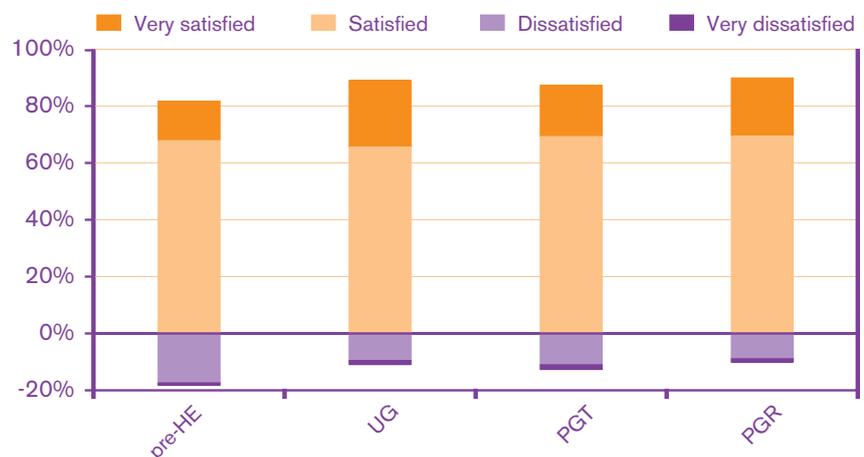
## CHAPTER 8

# STUDENTS' OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THEIR STAY IN THE UK

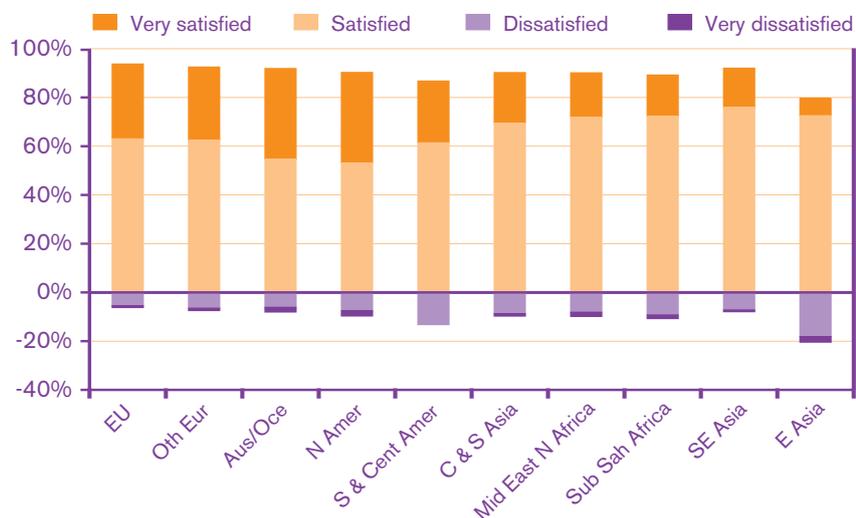
One of the most notable findings of the study was the high level of satisfaction students expressed with their experience in the UK overall. 89% of respondents described themselves as satisfied or very satisfied with their stay in the UK. Only 1% described themselves as very dissatisfied. The data are not out of line with other countries' experiences, although we do not have directly comparable data: e.g. over 90% of students in a recent Australian survey (Smith et al 2002) said they would recommend Australia to compatriots, and 90% of respondents to a Canadian study (Walker 1999) were satisfied with their decision to study in Canada.

The satisfaction expressed in the UKCOSA survey appears to be at a very high level given that the survey was conducted while students were in the middle of their studies; a number of studies in different countries have found that perceptions tend to become more negative a few months after arrival. The range of countries with similar findings suggests this phenomenon is related to the process of transition rather than to problems with students' particular destination. MORI (2002) found that ratings of the UK education system fell after arrival, apparently in relation to the amount of work and the requirement for independent study. Ward (2001) notes two studies which found international students in other countries developed more negative views of host country nationals after a period of time there, and Eller et al (2004) have found the same in a current study of international students in the UK. The HEIST survey noted that dissatisfaction among international students was commonly linked to three related issues: language problems (which often linked to

**Figure 16** Overall satisfaction with stay in the UK by level of study



**Figure 17** Overall satisfaction with stay in the UK by region of origin



academic problems), integration with home students and issues relating to accommodation. Thus, several related aspects of international students' experience may cause a dip in satisfaction after arrival. The finding is consistent with theories of cultural adjustment which see the initial period as something of a "honeymoon" before the difficulties of day to day life set in, and conflicts between home and host culture can no longer be screened out (cf for example Unterhalter & Green, 1997). As students become more competent in a culture we would expect some of these negative feelings to disappear, and a more balanced evaluation of home and host culture to take place.

Figure 16 shows very slightly higher levels of satisfaction among students on HE courses compared to those on pre-HE courses; however, this finding should be treated with caution given the very small number of respondents from the FE sector compared to those in HE.

Considered by region of origin, students from North America, Europe and Oceania were most satisfied with their stay in the UK (90%, 94% and 92% respectively were satisfied or very satisfied), while students from East Asia were slightly less positive: 80% of this group were satisfied or very satisfied (see Figure 17).

Not surprisingly, students who had encountered financial difficulties were significantly less satisfied with their experience of the UK: 83% of those with financial difficulties were satisfied compared to 90% of students without financial worries.

Respondents were also asked to answer an open question about what they had gained from their stay in the UK. The most commonly listed benefits included their academic experience, improving their English, becoming more independent, meeting people from all over the world and learning about the UK and other cultures. These latter aspects of personal development - developing independence and knowledge of

other cultures – distinguish the experience of studying abroad from that of studying at home - as noted in the recent study of outward mobility from the UK (HEFCE 2004). As the market for transnational education grows, institutions will need to ensure that students who have the choice between taking a UK degree in their home country or in the UK are made aware that studying outside their home country offers benefits not available from remaining at home.

#### KEY FINDINGS

- 89% of respondents described themselves as satisfied or very satisfied with their stay in the UK
- The most commonly listed benefits included their academic experience, improving their English, becoming more independent, meeting people from all over the world and learning about the UK and other cultures.

**D.**

**CONCLUSIONS**

## CONCLUSIONS

The research results appear to show very high rates of satisfaction with the academic experience and in general high levels of satisfaction with student support and the wider experience of living in the UK. However, there is plenty of scope for institutions, other agencies and government to improve different facets of the experience for international students.

**INSTITUTIONS** will want to benchmark their own performance against the points raised in the report, which cover a wide range of topics, including teaching and learning issues, language and study skills; resourcing and take up of support services; provision of information pre- and post-arrival; policies relating to fees and financial support; accommodation issues; and integration of international and UK students.

**GOVERNMENT** might consider addressing topics such as information about and process of issuing of national insurance numbers; better publicity for employers about working regulations and rewording of stamps and vignettes in passports; and proceeding with caution in imposing additional charges e.g. for visa extensions.

**OTHER AGENCIES** will, according to their remit, wish to consider some issues such as providing improvements to pre-arrival information on immigration issues; national initiatives on training for academics; consideration of the availability of data to inform policies; and the need for regular monitoring of the experiences of international students to ensure the UK continues to provide world class support.

This report provides a starting point for all concerned to review and develop the many processes, procedures and services which affect the experiences of international students in the UK. We hope that by the time of the next UKCOSA survey, satisfaction ratings will have reached an even higher level.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AEI International Education Network (2003) *Why Choose Australia? Insights from a Survey of International Students who Commenced Study in 2000*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Accessed on 17/8/04 at <[http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/PublicationsAndResearch/Publications/WhyChooseAus\\_pdf](http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/PublicationsAndResearch/Publications/WhyChooseAus_pdf)>.
- Allen A & Higgins T (1994) *Higher Education: The International Student Experience*. Leeds: HEIST.
- Böhm A, Follari F, Hewett A, Jones S, Kemp N, Meares D, Pearce D, Van Cauter K (2004) *Vision 2020: Forecasting international student mobility: a UK perspective*, London: British Council.
- Court G (2001) "International Student Hardship: review of the CCOS Hardship Fund" in *World Views Issue 6 Summer 2001*. London: UKCOSA.
- Walker JL (1999) *Canada First: The 1999 Survey of International Students*. Ontario: Canadian Bureau for International Education.
- Eller A & Abrams D (2004a) *University of Kent-British Council Longitudinal Attitude Survey: The Experience of International Students in Britain (Time 1)*. Canterbury: University of Kent.
- Eller A, Abrams D & Zimmerman A (2004b) *University of Kent-British Council Longitudinal Attitude Survey: The Experience of International Students in Britain (Time 2)*. Canterbury: University of Kent.
- Hall J, Hamilton S, Hall S & Pitcairn J (1998) *Institutional Support for Overseas Students in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Hughes R (1990) *Homes far from home: Housing for overseas students*. London: Overseas Student Trust.
- Humfrey C, Harris B, Ward C & Levine K (2001) *National Societies in the Student Community: an exclusive or inclusive factor*. University of Nottingham.
- Johnes G (2004) *The Global Value of Education and Training Exports to the UK Economy*. British Council. Accessed on 17/8/04 online at <[www.britishcouncil.org/global-value-of-education-and-training-exports-to-the-uk-economy.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/global-value-of-education-and-training-exports-to-the-uk-economy.pdf)>.
- HEFCE (2004) *International student mobility: a report by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, and the Centre for Applied Population Research, University of Dundee*. HEFCE Issues Paper July 2004/30. London: Higher Education Funding Council for England. Accessed on 29/9/04 online at <[www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2004/04\\_30/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2004/04_30/)>.
- HESA (2004) *Students in Higher Education Institutions 2002/03 Re-issue*. Cheltenham: Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- Loughborough University Careers Service (2004) *Recruiting International Students and Graduates: Survey of Employers Project Report*. Accessed on 17/8/04 online at <[www.careers.lboro.ac.uk/pdf/internationalsurvey2004.pdf](http://www.careers.lboro.ac.uk/pdf/internationalsurvey2004.pdf)>.
- Maslow A (1970) *Motivation and Personality*. Harper & Row.
- MORI (2002) *Attitudes of Overseas Students towards the United Kingdom: Research study conducted for the British Council*. Unpublished British Council paper.
- MORI (2003a) *Education UK: The Prime Minister's Initiative Four Years On. Executive Summary: The views of overseas students and UK educational institutions*. Unpublished British Council paper.
- MORI (2003b) *Student Living Report 2003* Bristol: UNITE. Downloaded from <[www.unite-students.com/a.asp?page=opg&page\\_area\\_id=7](http://www.unite-students.com/a.asp?page=opg&page_area_id=7)> on 17/8/04>.
- National Union of Students (2004) *NUS accommodation costs survey 2004*. London: National Union of Students.

Institute of International Education (2003) *Open Doors 2003: Report on International Educational Exchange*. New York: Institute for International Education.

Rawson S (2004) *International Students Benchmarking Study: A report for the East Midlands Development Agency*. Loughborough University (accessed online on 17/8/04 at <[www.lboro.ac.uk/service/careers/pdf/internationalsurvey2004.pdf](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/careers/pdf/internationalsurvey2004.pdf)>).

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

UKCOSA (2002) "Institutional policies on overseas fees and funding for international students: Analysis of responses to a questionnaire" in *World Views*, Issue 10 Autumn 2002. London: UKCOSA.

Unterhalter E & Green D (1997) *Making the adjustment: orientation programmes for international students*. London: UKCOSA.

Ward C (2001) *The impact of international students on domestic students and host institutions*. New Zealand Ministry of Education. Accessed on 17/8/04 online at <[www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=5643&indexid=6671&indexparentid=6663](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=5643&indexid=6671&indexparentid=6663)>.

Ward C & Masgoret AM (2004) *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand: Report on the Results of the National Survey*. New Zealand Ministry of Education. Accessed on 17/8/04 online at <[www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=9684&indexid=6671&indexparentid=6663](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=9684&indexid=6671&indexparentid=6663)>.

Williams G, Woodhall M & O'Brien U (1986) *Overseas Students and their Place of Study: Report of a survey*. London: Overseas Student Trust.

# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A: FURTHER STATISTICAL DATA FROM THE SURVEY

**Table A1: Top 20 countries of domicile of respondents, compared to top 20 countries of origin for international students in the UK**

Top 20 countries* of domicile in UK higher education**	Nos in HE 2002/03	%	Top 20 countries of domicile (respondents)	No of respondents	%
China (People's Republic of)	31,930	12%	China (People's Republic of)	882	18%
Greece	24,280	9%	Malaysia	366	8%
United States	14,365	5%	United States	326	7%
Germany	13,750	5%	India	247	5%
France	13,020	5%	Germany	198	4%
Irish Republic	12,665	5%	Greece	192	4%
India	10,900	4%	Hong Kong	179	4%
Malaysia	10,205	4%	France	127	3%
Hong Kong	9,735	4%	Canada	114	2%
Spain	7,645	3%	Singapore	109	2%
Japan	6,165	2%	Nigeria	88	2%
Italy	6,075	2%	Taiwan	83	2%
Taiwan	4,920	2%	Thailand	78	2%
Singapore	4,160	2%	Mexico	77	2%
Nigeria	4,135	2%	Japan	74	2%
Cyprus	3,775	1%	Pakistan	72	2%
Sweden	3,750	1%	Norway	63	1%
Canada	3,685	1%	Spain	62	1%
Norway	3,650	1%	Kenya	60	1%
Thailand	2,975	1%	Finland	57	1%

\* The term 'country' is used in this report as a shorthand for country, territory or administrative region

\*\* source: HESA (2004)

**Table A2: Distribution of respondents by location of UK institution**

Institutions' location	HE	FE	All
East of England	243	7	250
East Midlands	371	28	399
London	610	13	623
North East England	61	30	91
North West England	468	15	483
South East England	451	41	492
South West England	626	22	648
West Midlands	500	8	508
Yorkshire & Humberside	330	21	351
Scotland	677	19	696
Wales	243	12	255
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,580</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>4,796</b>

**Table A3: Respondents' subjects of study (higher education)**

Subject of study – HE respondents *	Respondents	%	Distribution of international students in UK by subject **
Business & administrative studies	898	20%	23%
Social, economic & political studies	764	17%	8%
Engineering & technology	753	17%	13%
Biological sciences	369	8%	4%
Computer science	286	6%	8%
Humanities	266	6%	2%
Law	252	6%	5%
Chemistry and physical sciences	202	5%	3%
Medicine & dentistry	196	4%	2%
Subjects allied to medicine	196	4%	6%
Architecture, building & planning	115	3%	3%
Mathematical sciences	114	3%	2%
Languages	114	3%	8%
Creative arts & design	112	2%	5%
Librarianship, information science and media studies	78	2%	2%
Education	72	2%	4%
Veterinary science	25	1%	0%
Agriculture & related subjects	9	0%	1%
Don't Know	4	0%	N/a
Other	1	0%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,487</b>	<b>108%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Note: multiple selections were possible for joint honours.

\*\* Source: HESA (2004)

**Table A4: Respondents' subjects of study (further education)**

Subject of study – FE respondents *	Respondents	%
English, Languages and Communication	66	34%
Science, Computing and Mathematics	52	27%
Business administration and management	50	26%
Humanities, education and social studies	16	8%
Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing	12	6%
Art and Design, Music and Drama	8	4%
Health and Social Care	5	3%
Hotel and Catering, Sports, Leisure and Travel	3	2%
Agriculture	1	1%
Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy	1	1%
Construction	0	0%
Retailing, Customer Service and Transportation	0	0%
Other (please tell us what)	22	11%
Don't Know	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>124%</b>

**Table A5: Length of time respondents had spent in the UK**

Length of time in the UK	Respondents	%
Less than one year	1,876	39%
1-2 years	1,334	28%
2-3 years	786	16%
More than 3 years	815	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,811</b>	<b>100%</b>

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS

**Q1 - First, please can you tell us in which country are you permanently resident?**

**Q2 - And of which country are you a national?**

**Q3 - Do you speak English as a first, second or foreign language?**

- speak English as my first language
- speak English as a second language used in my home country
- speak English as a foreign language

**Q4 - Which institution are you now studying at?**

**Q5 - What type of course are you taking? Please tick only one of the options below. Pick the one which is your main course of study**

- English as a Foreign Language (with or without additional courses e.g. English Plus)
- A levels, AS levels or a Foundation course
- Vocational course at a further education college
- Undergraduate degree (Bachelors or Foundation degree)
- Taught postgraduate degree (e.g. Diploma or MA, MBA, LLM, MSc etc.)
- Research postgraduate degree (e.g. MRes or PhD)
- Other (please tell us what)

ASK Q6a IF CODED UNDERGRAD/ POSTGRAD DEGREE (CODES 4-6) AT Q5

**Q6a - What is the main subject you are studying? Tick the area closest to the one you are studying, e.g. for Development Studies tick "Social, economic and political studies" or for Astronomy tick "Chemistry and physical sciences". Please select only your major subject unless you are studying a course in which two or three topics have equal weight**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Medicine & dentistry
- Subjects allied to medicine
- Biological sciences
- Veterinary science
- Agriculture & related subjects
- Chemistry and physical sciences
- Mathematical sciences
- Computer science
- Engineering & technology
- Architecture, building & planning
- Social, economic & political studies
- Law

- Business & administrative studies
- Librarianship, information science and media studies
- Languages
- Humanities
- Creative arts & design
- Education
- Other (please tell us what)
- Don't Know

ASK Q6b IF ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE/ A LEVELS/ VOCATIONAL COURSE (CODES 1-3) AT Q5

**Q6b- What is the main subject you are studying? Tick the area closest to the one you are studying, e.g. for Tourism tick "Hotel and Catering, Sports, Leisure and Travel" Please select only your major subject unless you are studying a course in which two or three topics have equal weight**  
*(Check all that apply)*

- Humanities, education and social studies
- English, Languages and Communication
- Science, Computing and Mathematics
- Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing
- Business administration and management
- Art and Design, Music and Drama
- Health and Social Care
- Hotel and Catering, Sports, Leisure and Travel
- Construction
- Agriculture
- Retailing, Customer Service and Transportation
- Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy
- Other (please tell us what)
- Don't Know

**\*\*ASK ALL\*\***

**Q7a- Before the course you are now on, had you ever studied outside your home country?**  
*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**ASK Q7b IF YES AT Q7a**

**Q7b- Where have you studied (before your current course)?**  
*(Check all that apply)*

- The UK (on another course)
- The USA
- Australia
- Somewhere else (please tell us where)

**\*\*ASK ALL\*\***

**Q8- For how long have you been studying in the UK?**

*(Check one)*

- Less than one year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- More than 3 years

**ARE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY WITH YOU IN THE UK?**

**Q9a- Husband or Wife**

*(Check one)*

- Yes - My husband or wife is with me in the UK
- No - I do not have a husband or wife/My husband or wife is not with me in the UK

**Q9b - Children**

*(Check one)*

- No - I do not have any children with me in the UK
- Yes - One
- Yes - Two
- Yes - More than two

ASK Q9C-E IF YES AT Q9A/Q9B

**Q9c- Please can you tell us whether you have had problems with arranging any of the following for your family?**

*Please select all that apply*

*(Check all that apply)*

- Schooling
- Childcare
- Finance
- Healthcare
- None of these

**Q9d- Did you have difficulty finding suitable accommodation for your husband/wife/children when you first arrived in the UK?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**Q9e- Have you now found suitable living accommodation?**

Please select your answer below  
(Check one)

- Yes
- No

**\*\*ASK ALL\*\***

**Q10- How satisfied are you overall with your stay in the UK?**

(Check one)

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

There is no Q11

**WE WOULD NOW LIKE YOU TO THINK ABOUT YOUR ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE IN THE UK.**

**Q12- How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your course of study?**

(Check one alternative per row)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not applicable
The course overall	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Quality of lectures (large group teaching)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Quality of seminars/tutorials/supervisions (small group teaching)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Quality of academic support e.g. tutors (one-to-one contact with academic staff)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Content of course	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Relevance for future career	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Library	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Computing facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Departmental facilities (e.g. classrooms, laboratories, lecture halls)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Value for money	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Q13a- We would now like to think about any financial support you may receive.**

**Please can you tell us who is paying your fees?**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Yourself or your family
- Scholarship from your own government
- Your employer
- Scholarship from UK government
- Scholarship from your UK college or university
- A charity or trust
- Other organisation (please specify)
- Don't Know

**Q13b- And who is paying your living expenses?**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Yourself or your family
- Scholarship from your own government
- Your employer
- Scholarship from UK government
- Scholarship from your UK college or university
- A charity or trust
- Other organisation (please specify)
- Don't Know

**Q14- Have you had enough money to live on and pay your fees while studying and living in the UK?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

ASK Q14b IF NO AT Q14

**Q14b- Which of the following reasons describe why you have not had enough money to live on?**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Exchange rate fluctuations
- Money promised by sponsor or family was not available
- Illness of self or family
- My studies lasted longer than I expected
- I was unable to get a job in the UK
- The cost of living was higher than I budgeted for
- Tuition fees were higher than I budgeted for
- Another reason (please tell us what)
- None of these

**\*\*ASK ALL\*\***

**Q15- Have you taken out medical insurance to cover you during your stay in the UK?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**Q16- And have you taken out insurance to cover your personal possessions while in the UK?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**Q17- How satisfied were you with the information you received before you arrived in the UK on each the following topics?**

*(Check one alternative per row)*

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Did not receive any
Your course	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Immigration issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fees and cost of living	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
What to do when you first arrived	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Living and studying in the UK	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**WE WOULD NOW LIKE YOU TO THINK ABOUT ISSUES THAT MAY HAVE CONCERNED YOU BEFORE YOU ARRIVED IN THE UK, THOSE THAT CONCERNED YOU DURING YOUR FIRST MONTH IN THE UK AND THOSE THAT CONCERN YOU NOW.**

**Q18- How useful have you found the following support services from your institution?**

(Check one alternative per row)

	Very useful	Useful	Not Useful	Have not used this service, although it is available	Am not aware of such a service being available
Induction or orientation programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study skills support classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
English classes (e.g. English for Academic Purposes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College/university advice services (e.g. International Office/ Student Services)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students' Union advice service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social activities organised by college or university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students' Union including clubs and societies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chaplaincy or multifaith centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q19a- So thinking back, which, if any, of the following issues were a concern to you before you arrived in the UK?**

**Q19b- Thinking back again, which, if any, of the following issues were a concern to you during your first month in the UK?**

**Q19c- And which, if any, of the following issues are a concern to you now?**

(Check all that apply) [same list was given for each question]

- English language – social and practical use
- English language – academic use
- Food
- Meeting religious needs
- Accommodation
- Feeling homesick/lonely/isolated
- Keeping in touch with family back home
- Bringing family members with you
- Mixing with UK students
- Adapting to UK cultures/customs
- Financial problems
- Finding part-time work
- Balancing study with paid work
- Obtaining or extending your visa or other immigration issues

- Adapting to UK study methods (e.g. lectures, reading lists, independent study)
- Coping with course content
- Relationship with academic staff
- Assessments: essays and examinations
- Health
- None of the above

**Q20a- If you had an academic problem, which of the following people would you speak to?**

**Q20b- If you had a financial problem, which of the following people would you speak to?**

**Q20c- If you had a personal problem, which of the following people would you speak to?**

*(Check all that apply)* [same lists given for each question]

- Friends
- Family
- Personal tutor/ supervisor
- Lecturer
- Course leader/ tutor
- College/university adviser or counsellor
- Students' Union adviser
- Someone else (please tell us who)
- None of the above

**Q21a- Have you had to extend your visa, residence permit or Leave to Remain since you have been a student in the UK?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**ASK Q21b-c IF YES AT Q21a**

**Q21b- How did you do this extension?**

*(Check one)*

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

**Q21c- Please can you tell us how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:**

**"Extending my visa/residence permit/Leave to Remain was straightforward and efficient"**

*Please select an answer from the scale below where 5 equals Strongly Agree and 1 equals Strongly Disagree (Check one)*

- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 - Strongly Disagree

**Q22a- What accommodation, if any, did your college or university help you to arrange at the beginning of your course?**

*(Check one)*

- Halls of residence – self catering and mixed with UK and international students
- Halls of residence – meals provided and mixed with UK and international students
- Halls of residence – self catering and mixed with other international students only
- Halls of residence – meals provided and mixed with other international students only
- A student house/flat controlled by the institution
- Private rented house/flat/rooms with residential landlord
- Private rented house/flat rooms with non-residential landlord
- Private student hostel
- Homestay with a British family
- Something else (please tell us what)
- Not offered any help with accommodation

**Q22b– And where are you living now? Please select the most appropriate answer from the list below**

*(Check one)*

- Halls of residence – self catering and mixed with UK and international students
- Halls of residence – meals provided and mixed with UK and international students
- Halls of residence – self catering and mixed with other international students only
- Halls of residence – meals provided and mixed with other international students only
- A student house/flat controlled by the institution
- Private rented house/flat/rooms with residential landlord
- Private rented house/flat rooms with non-residential landlord
- Private student hostel
- Homestay with a British family
- Living with friends and relatives already in the UK
- Somewhere else (please tell us where)

**Q23- How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your current accommodation?**

*(Check one alternative per row)*

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not applicable
The overall quality of the accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cost	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Privacy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Location	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Warmth	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Access to international telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Bathroom facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Kitchen facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Meals provided in the residence	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Availability of special diets (e.g. halal, kosher, gluten-free)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Integration with UK students	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Q24- Which, if any, of these problems have you had with accommodation?**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Having to move out during vacations
- Inflexible contract – not able to change after arrival
- Deposit not returned by landlord
- Not being able to get single sex accommodation
- Lack of suitable adaptations for a disability
- Difficulties with other people living in the same place
- Something else (please specify)
- None

**Q25a- We would now like you to think about employment in the UK.**

**Have you done any paid work in the UK since coming to the UK?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

ASK Q25b-h IF YES AT Q25a

**Q25b- How helpful was your institution's careers service or student employment office with finding part-time employment?**

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- There is a service for this, but I have not used them
- There is no such service available

**Q25c- Has your employment been related to your programme of study or future career plans?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**Q25d- Has your employment helped you improve your English?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**Q25e- Was it difficult for you as an international student to find work?**

*(Check one)*

- Yes
- No

**Q25f- What were the reasons you found it difficult to find work as an international student?**

*(Check 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
- My English was not good enough
- Something else (please specify)
- None

**Q25g- Did you get a National Insurance Number?**

*(Check 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

**Q25h- How easy was it to find out how to apply for a National Insurance Number?**

*(Check one)*

- Very easy
- Easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult
- Not applicable

**\*\*ASK ALL\*\***

**IN THE FINAL PART OF THE SURVEY WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND SOME GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOU HAVE FOUND LIVING IN THE UK.**

**Q26- How would you describe the following facilities at your institution?**

*(Check one alternative per row)*

	Better than I expected	As good as as I expected	Not as good as I expected	Haven't used them
Sports facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clubs and societies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students' Union facilities (e.g. bars and cafes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Campus catering outlets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q27- Which, if any, of the following activities have you been involved in while studying in the UK?**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Sports clubs or teams
- Music or drama groups
- Voluntary (unpaid) work (e.g. in the local community)
- Being a student representative on a college/university committee
- Participating in student societies
- Charity fundraising or sponsorship activities
- Acting as a buddy or mentor to other students
- None of the above

**Q28- We would like you to think about your contact with other students.**

**Would you say that most of you friends here in the UK are.....**

*(Check one)*

- students from my country
- other international students
- UK students
- a mixture of students from my home country and other international students
- a mixture of UK and international students
- Don't Know/Cannot say

**Q29- Listed below are a number of statements that other people have made about studying in the UK. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each one where 5 means you totally agree and 1 means you totally disagree.**

*(Check one alternative per row)*

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
UK students are hard to get to know	<input type="checkbox"/>				
UK students are friendly when you get to know them	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Staff and students here have shown an interest in my country and culture	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I prefer to mix with people from my own culture	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would like more chances to experience UK culture and family life	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is difficult to meet UK people from outside the university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The UK is a welcoming and tolerant society	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Q30a- Please can you tell us how you think you have benefited from your time in the UK?**

**Q30b- What good things/ benefits have you found which you did not expect before you came here?**

**Q30c- Is there anything else you would like to say which we have not asked questions about?**

**Q31- For analysis purposes, can we just check, are you?**

*(Check one)*

- Male
- Female

**Q3 – Please can you indicate your age?**

**FINALLY, STA TRAVEL, WHO ARE PROVIDING THE PRIZES FOR THE PRIZE DRAW, WOULD LIKE TO KNOW A BIT ABOUT YOUR TRAVELS SINCE YOU CAME TO THE UK TO STUDY.**

**Q33 - Have you visited any other countries since arriving in the UK?**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Yes - I have made a trip back to my own country
- Yes - I have visited other countries
- No - I have not travelled to any other country since I arrived in the UK

ASK Q34-Q35 IF ONE OR MORE AT Q33

Q34- Excluding any trips back to your own country, which other countries have you visited since arriving in the UK?

Q35- Which travel company did you book through most recently?

Q36- Which of these was the main reason you chose to book through [answer at Q35]?

**\*\*ASK ALL\*\***

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**

**Please encourage other international students you know to complete the survey too.**

**If you would like to be entered into the prize draw please enter your name and email address here.**

*(Check all that apply)*

- Your name:
- Your email address:



