



Snapshot 2026 Summary Report

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Introduction

Snapshot 2026 explored students' experiences at the University of Manchester across a range of areas, including health and wellbeing, accommodation, transport, future plans, belonging, university experience, finances, employment and Students' Union engagement.

The survey was open to all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students and was live from **Wednesday 25 March to Wednesday 20 May 2026**. A total of **2,625** students completed the survey.

The findings provide a snapshot of student life at the University of Manchester and will help inform future Students' Union and University priorities, campaigns, services and student support initiatives.

This report summarises the key quantitative findings alongside thematic insights from open-ended responses. It is designed to complement the interactive Power BI dashboard (available to staff) by providing an accessible overview of the findings and highlighting the key themes emerging from students' qualitative comments.

Methodology

Percentages throughout this report are based on the number of respondents who answered each question. For questions where respondents could select more than one option, percentages may total more than 100%.

Open-ended responses were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns across students' experiences. The report presents the key themes identified for each qualitative question.

Figures have been rounded to two decimal places where appropriate.



Health & Wellbeing (n = 2,625)

Students generally reported positive physical health and overall wellbeing. However, mental health outcomes were notably less positive, with almost one in four students rating their mental health negatively. Qualitative responses highlighted academic pressure, loneliness, work-life balance challenges and existing health conditions as key factors influencing students' wellbeing. Although many students reported positive social lives and good sleep quality, recurring themes suggest that stress, academic demands and social connection continue to shape students' day-to-day experiences.

Physical, Mental and General Health & Wellbeing

Measure	Positive (good/extremely good)	Neutral (neither good nor poor)	Negative (poor/extremely poor)
Physical Health	66.39%	25.17%	8.33%
Mental Health	41.68%	34.50%	23.48%
General Wellbeing	60.62%	29.49%	9.78%

Loneliness

- 45.56% of students reported feeling lonely less than monthly or never.
- 22.32% reported feeling lonely monthly.
- 30.98% reported feeling lonely weekly or daily.

Students who rated their health or wellbeing negatively, or who reported feeling lonely, were invited to explain the factors contributing to their experiences (n = 942):

1. Academic Pressure

Academic pressure was one of the most commonly cited contributors to poor wellbeing. Students frequently linked stress, anxiety and loneliness to coursework deadlines, revision periods and examinations.

2. Social Connection

Many students described difficulties making friends, maintaining meaningful relationships and feeling socially connected within university life.

3. Work-Life Balance Challenges



Students balancing academic study alongside placements, employment and other commitments commonly described feelings of exhaustion and a lack of work-life balance.

4. **Physical and Mental Health Conditions**

Some students linked poor wellbeing to chronic illnesses, existing health conditions, anxiety and wider mental health challenges.

Sleep Quality

- 69.90% of students agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of sleep they get each day, 30.90% disagreed.

Students who reported dissatisfaction with their sleep quality were invited to describe the factors contributing to their experience (n=754):

1. **Stress and Overthinking**

Students frequently linked poor sleep quality to stress, anxiety and overthinking.

2. **Academic Workload**

Revision periods, deadlines and coursework demands were commonly associated with disrupted sleep patterns.

3. **Fatigue and Burnout**

Several students described exhaustion and difficulties maintaining a healthy work-life balance, contributing to poor sleep quality.

Social Life

- 81.87% of students reported being satisfied with their social life, 18.59% reported dissatisfaction.

Students dissatisfied with their social life were invited to explain why (n=454):

1. **Social Connection**

Many students described challenges making friends, maintaining friendships and building meaningful social connections, with some reporting feelings of isolation.

2. **Academic Workload**

Coursework, examinations, placements and wider academic commitments frequently limited opportunities for social engagement.



3. Financial Barriers

Students highlighted the cost of social activities, transport and nights out as barriers to participating in university life.

4. Confidence, Anxiety and Introversion

Some students described social anxiety, shyness and a lack of confidence as factors affecting their ability to engage socially.

5. International, Commuter and Postgraduate Student Experiences

International students, commuter students and postgraduate students often reported additional barriers to social integration, including language barriers, travel requirements and limited opportunities to meet peers.

6. More Inclusive Social Opportunities

Students expressed a desire for more accessible and inclusive social opportunities, particularly activities not centred around alcohol, nightlife or undergraduate-focused environments.

Support Services

Service	Satisfied / Very Satisfied	Dissatisfied / Very Dissatisfied	Not Used
NHS Services	51.74%	10.81%	37.46%
DASS	30.40%	3.44%	66.15%
University Mental Health Services	27.74%	4.92%	67.34%
SU Essentials	25.85%	1.06%	73.09%
SU Advice Centre	25.15%	1.51%	73.33%
Report & Support	22.05%	2.27%	75.68%
SU How's You	15.82%	0.49%	83.68%



Accommodation & Living (n = 2,569)

Accommodation plays an important role in students' financial wellbeing, sense of belonging and overall university experience. While many students reported feeling safe and connected within their accommodation, concerns relating to affordability, housing quality, maintenance and wider cost of living pressures were recurring themes throughout both the quantitative and qualitative findings. Students also highlighted the impact that accommodation experiences can have on their wellbeing, academic experience and ability to make the most of university life.

Accommodation Type

- 49.71% reported living in private rental accommodation.
- 21.46% reported living in university accommodation.
- 12.56% reported living with parents, guardians or family members.
- 10.61% reported living in private student halls.
- 5.03% reported living in a home they own.
- 0.74% selected another accommodation arrangement.

Accommodation Value for Money

- 41.35% of students agreed that their accommodation represented good value for money.
- 24.89% selected a neutral response.
- 23.18% disagreed that their accommodation represented good value for money.
- 11.39% selected not applicable.

Students who disagreed were invited to explain why (n = 607):

1. Housing Quality

Students commonly felt that accommodation costs were disproportionate to the quality, size or condition of housing provided.

2. Maintenance

Damp, mould, leaks, pests, broken appliances and delays to repairs were frequently raised as concerns.

3. Additional Costs

Students expressed frustration with additional charges such as laundry, utilities and other living expenses that increased overall housing costs.



4. **Convenience and Safety**

Where students reported positive experiences, these were often linked to convenient locations, safety, supportive communities and bills being included within rent.

5. **Financial Pressure**

Accommodation dissatisfaction was often connected to wider cost of living pressures and financial stress.

6. **International Students and Private Renting**

Some international students and private renters reported difficulties with guarantor requirements, upfront payments and navigating tenancy arrangements.

Monthly Rent Costs

- 7.02% reported paying between £0 and £200 per month.
- 5.66% reported paying between £201 and £400 per month.
- 20.83% reported paying between £401 and £600 per month.
- 29.69% reported paying between £601 and £800 per month.
- 12.76% reported paying between £801 and £1,000 per month.
- 8.58% reported paying more than £1,000 per month.
- 16.07% selected not applicable.

Rent Inclusions

- 55.13% reported internet being included.
- 54.78% reported water being included.
- 53.37% reported electricity being included.
- 49.16% reported gas being included.
- 20.76% reported laundry access being included.
- 18.42% reported cleaning services being included.
- 12.21% reported gym access being included.
- 5.11% reported cooked meals being included.
- 19.16% reported that none of the listed costs or services were included within rent payments.
- 17.64% selected not applicable
- 2.03% selected other



Homelessness

- 93.52% of students reported not having experienced or expecting to experience homelessness.
- 3.90% reported having experienced or expecting to experience homelessness.
- 2.77% preferred not to say.

Students were invited to provide further comments in relation to homelessness (n = 48):

1. Future Stability

Students described concerns about their ability to continue affording accommodation due to rising housing costs and financial pressures.

2. Financial Pressures

Housing insecurity was frequently linked to rent increases, limited maintenance loans, guarantor requirements, reliance on paid work and wider cost of living pressures.

3. International Student Vulnerability

International students highlighted additional challenges including upfront rent payments, guarantor requirements and limited familiarity with UK housing systems.

4. Hidden Forms of Homelessness

Students discussed experiences such as sofa surfing, gaps between tenancies and temporary accommodation arrangements, highlighting broader understandings of homelessness and housing insecurity.

5. Impact on Wellbeing

Housing instability was often associated with stress, anxiety and concerns about academic performance and belonging.

Safety

Students were asked to rate how safe they feel in their accommodation on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represented "not at all safe" and 10 represented "extremely safe".

Students generally reported feeling safe within their accommodation. Over three-quarters (77.25%) rated their safety as 8–10 out of 10, with 37.07% selecting the highest possible rating of 10. Around one in ten students (10.50%) reported safety ratings of 6 or below.



Accommodation Issues and Housing Conditions

- 33.48% reported experiencing multiple issues.
- 23.25% reported experiencing one issue.
- 30.86% reported experiencing no issues.
- 13.03% selected not applicable.

Students were asked to describe any issues with their current accommodation (n = 1,224):

1. **Maintenance and Repairs**

Students frequently reported unresolved repairs, broken appliances, heating issues and delays in maintenance responses.

2. **Damp and Mould**

Concerns relating to damp, mould and poor ventilation were commonly linked to dissatisfaction and concerns about health and wellbeing.

3. **Pests and Cleanliness**

Several students described pest problems, poor hygiene standards and dissatisfaction with communal living spaces.

4. **Security**

Some students raised concerns about break-ins, faulty locks and feeling unsafe within accommodation environments.

5. **Utilities**

Issues relating to internet connectivity, heating, laundry facilities and utilities were frequently discussed.

6. **Impact on Wellbeing and Academic Experience**

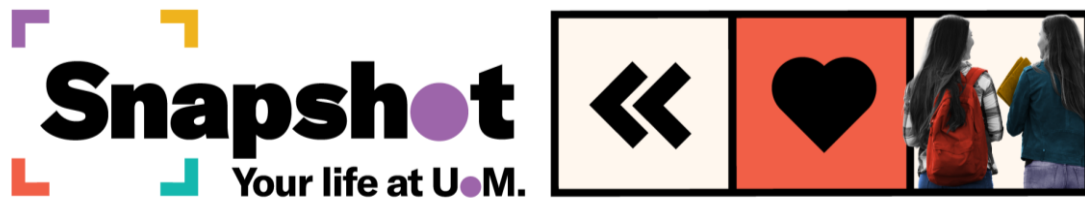
Students commonly linked accommodation issues to stress, poor sleep and difficulties concentrating on their studies.

Awareness and Perceived Impact of the Renters' Rights Act

- 63.64% reported being aware of the Renters' Rights Act.
- 36.91% reported not being aware.

Among students who were aware of the legislation:

- 60.72% believed the end of fixed-term contracts would have the biggest impact on students.



- 22.29% believed restrictions on annual rent increases would have the biggest impact.
- 17.84% believed the end of Section 21 'no-fault' evictions would have the biggest impact.

Sense of Belonging

- 65.94% agreed that they feel a sense of belonging in their accommodation, 17.99% disagreed and 16.93% selected not applicable.

Students were invited to provide any additional comments relating to housing and accommodation (n = 186):

1. Affordability and Value for Money

Students frequently discussed rising rents and concerns that accommodation costs were not matched by housing quality or facilities.

2. Community

Positive experiences were often linked to accommodation-based social opportunities, supportive communities and opportunities to meet other students.

3. Shared Living

Students reported difficulties relating to cleanliness, noise, privacy and managing relationships with housemates.

4. Housing Stability

Some respondents described previous experiences of housing insecurity or difficulties securing suitable accommodation.

5. Communication

Students expressed a desire for stronger accommodation communities, improved communication and more opportunities for social connection.



Transport & Safety (n = 2,522)

Transport plays an important role in students' daily experiences, influencing accessibility, affordability, safety and engagement with university life. Most students travelled to campus using active travel or public transport, with journey time and cost emerging as the primary factors shaping transport choices. Students generally reported feeling safe when travelling around Manchester, although perceptions of safety were lower when socialising or travelling after dark and when travelling to and from work.

Primary Mode of Transport

- 40.19% primarily travelled to university by walking or running.
- 33.53% primarily used buses.
- 8.60% primarily used bikes or scooters.
- 6.66% primarily travelled by train.
- 6.38% primarily travelled by car.
- 2.14% primarily used trams.
- 1.82% selected another form of transport.
- 0.59% primarily used taxis.
- 0.04% primarily used motorbikes or mopeds.
- 0.04% reported using wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

Factors Influencing Transport Choices

- 62.92% selected journey time.
- 62.45% selected cost.
- 22.19% selected health and wellbeing reasons.
- 22.11% selected proximity to public transport.
- 21.36% selected frequency of public transport.
- 12.19% selected environmental concerns.
- 11.27% selected lack of alternatives.
- 7.94% selected safety concerns.
- 5.56% selected other

Travel Time to Campus

- 27.04% travelled to campus within 15 minutes.
- 44.56% travelled between 16 and 30 minutes.



- 12.81% travelled between 31 and 45 minutes.
- 7.88% travelled between 46 and 60 minutes.
- 4.76% travelled between 61 and 90 minutes.
- 3.39% travelled more than 90 minutes.

Transport Affordability

- 69.48% agreed that local transport options are affordable, 26.64% disagreed and 4.40% reported not using local transport options.

Perceptions of Safety

Students were asked about their feelings of safety across a range of travel-related situations:

Situation	Agree / Strongly Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Travelling to and from University	93.16%	5.73%	1.11%
Using Public Transport	87.78%	9.50%	2.73%
Around the Area They Live	84.81%	12.90%	2.29%
Socialising or Travelling After Dark	72.93%	22.40%	4.67%
Travelling to and from Work	58.47%	5.18%	36.35%

Sense of Belonging at University (n = 2,469)

A sense of belonging emerged as an important aspect of the student experience, with most students reporting that feeling a sense of belonging was important to them and that they felt connected to their course, department and the wider university community. While many students also reported having access to support and feeling part of the student community, findings highlight ongoing challenges relating to workload, time pressures, confidence and making meaningful social connections, which can affect students' ability to engage fully in university life.



Making the Most of Student Life

- 72.22% of students agreed that they make the most of their time as a student or researcher in Manchester, 28.54% disagreed.

Belonging Within University Communities

Sense of Belonging Measure	Agree / Strongly Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Feeling a sense of belonging is important to me	89.71%	8.95%	1.34%
At university	79.94%	19.05%	1.02%
Within course or research department	77.10%	22.25%	0.65%
Within societies, sports clubs or volunteering groups	49.25%	14.91%	35.83%

Community, Support and Social Connection

Statement	Agree / Strongly Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree
There are people at university I could reach out to for support	86.86%	13.15%
I feel part of the student community at UoM	67.52%	32.48%
Belonging requires emotional effort I do not always have the energy for	63.85%	36.15%
It is easy to make meaningful connections with other students and people around the city	58.89%	41.11%
I do not always have enough time to engage in activities that build community	55.81%	44.19%



What Belonging Means to Students

- 81.46% selected feeling accepted and comfortable being themselves around others.
- 79.42% selected having meaningful friendships.
- 68.58% selected feeling valued, respected and included.
- 68.05% selected feeling part of a community or group.
- 57.74% selected feeling supported and looked out for by others.
- 56.93% selected feeling like they fit in at university.
- 56.07% selected feeling genuinely connected to people around them, the city and something beyond the university.
- 52.89% selected having people they can rely on when they need support.
- 36.31% selected being able to have open conversations with people who have different views to them.
- 35.66% selected feeling like they are contributing to something bigger than just their degree.
- 28.04% selected feeling like their student voice genuinely shapes decisions.
- 0.86% selected other.

Barriers to Belonging

- 52.93% identified managing academic workload as a barrier.
- 42.62% identified a lack of free time.
- 41.48% identified a lack of confidence or social anxiety.
- 41.08% identified financial pressures and cost of living concerns.
- 37.86% identified difficulty making friends or connections.
- 27.59% identified mental health or wellbeing challenges.
- 25.79% identified not knowing what opportunities are available.
- 25.14% identified feeling like they do not fit in.
- 20.78% identified commuting or not living near campus.
- 18.83% identified feeling excluded or not represented.
- 7.78% identified caring responsibilities or personal commitments.
- 6.85% identified a lack of inclusive, accessible or welcoming spaces.
- 3.50% selected other.



Students who selected "Other" were invited to provide additional comments about factors affecting their sense of belonging (n = 87):

1. Remote Learning and Campus Access

Several students described remote learning, commuting or infrequent campus attendance as barriers to social connection and community participation.

Students who spent less time on campus often reported fewer opportunities to build relationships and engage with university life.

2. Neurodivergence and Accessibility

Some students referenced ADHD, autism and other neurodivergent experiences as factors affecting social participation, confidence and inclusion. These experiences were often linked to difficulties navigating university systems or feeling different from peers.

3. Exclusion and Representation

Several respondents described feeling disconnected from university culture, activities or communities. Some felt that opportunities were not designed with people like them in mind or that they struggled to relate to dominant aspects of student culture.

4. Postgraduate and Mature Student Experiences

A smaller number of respondents highlighted additional challenges experienced by postgraduate, mature and research students. These included different schedules, smaller social networks and reduced engagement with activities perceived as undergraduate-focused.

University Experience, Goals & Challenges (n = 2,439)

Students reported high levels of satisfaction with their university experience overall, with most indicating that their experience had met or exceeded the expectations they held before starting their course. Alongside academic success, students identified employability, personal development and building meaningful relationships as key aspirations. However, workload pressures, financial concerns, limited time and wellbeing challenges continued to influence students' ability to achieve these goals and make the most of their university experience



Overall Satisfaction

- 92.17% of students reported being satisfied with their university experience overall, 8.21% reported dissatisfaction.

Expectations

- 80.21% of students agreed that their university experience has met the expectations they had before starting their course, 20.48% disagreed.

Student Goals

- 89.74% hoped to achieve a strong degree and perform well academically.
- 74.65% hoped to build skills for their future career.
- 72.48% hoped to improve their employability through experience, networks or CV development.
- 71.39% hoped to make meaningful friendships and connections.
- 63.93% hoped to experience and enjoy student life.
- 62.88% hoped to grow in confidence and independence.
- 48.89% hoped to explore Manchester and make the most of the city.
- 41.31% hoped to become involved in societies, sports clubs or volunteering opportunities.
- 41.18% hoped to explore new interests, hobbies and activities.
- 36.74% hoped to use their studies to address real-world or societal challenges.
- 34.23% hoped to improve their mental health and wellbeing.
- 28.95% hoped to make a positive impact in their community or beyond the University.
- 2.22% were not sure or did not have specific goals.
- 0.92% selected other.

Challenges To Achieving Goals

- 56.85% identified managing academic workload as a challenge.
- 53.00% identified financial pressures and cost of living concerns.
- 47.88% identified balancing study alongside work or other commitments.
- 39.76% identified a lack of free time.
- 35.57% identified mental health or wellbeing challenges.
- 28.99% identified a lack of confidence.
- 24.63% identified difficulty making friends or connections.



- 21.37% identified not knowing what opportunities are available.
- 15.79% identified difficulty accessing opportunities (e.g. limited spaces, timing or eligibility).
- 9.09% identified accommodation issues.
- 8.25% were not sure what they wanted to achieve.
- 7.92% identified keeping up with AI and digital tools used in their course.
- 7.12% identified caring responsibilities or personal commitments.
- 4.78% identified digital challenges (e.g. platforms, access or systems not working well).
- 3.02% reported no challenges.
- 1.68% selected other.

Campus and Digital Experience

Students were asked “**What could be improved to enhance your experience of campus and digital student life at the University?**” (n = 854):

1. Study Spaces

Students frequently highlighted the importance of accessible and comfortable study environments. Common suggestions included additional silent study spaces, individual study booths, charging facilities and increased study capacity during busy assessment periods. Several respondents described challenges finding suitable study space during peak times.

2. Workload and Wellbeing

Many students discussed difficulties balancing academic workload alongside social activities, employment and personal wellbeing. Some respondents felt that workload pressures limited their ability to engage fully with wider aspects of university life.

3. Community and Student Engagement

Students frequently linked positive university experiences to opportunities for social connection, physical activity, societies and wider community engagement. Several respondents highlighted the importance of accessible extracurricular opportunities and stronger promotion of student activities, facilities and support services.

4. Transport and Accessibility



Transport affordability, commuting and accessibility emerged as important considerations. Some students also highlighted the value of flexible timetabling and accessible campus environments, particularly for those balancing work, caring responsibilities or longer commutes.

Future Plans (n = 910)

The questions in this section were answered by **final-year students only (n = 910)**. As students approached graduation, many were actively considering their next steps, with employment emerging as the primary focus. Despite this, many students had not yet secured employment and described uncertainty about their future plans. Competition in the graduate job market, access to opportunities and wider financial pressures emerged as the most significant challenges affecting post-graduation planning.

Future Plans After Graduation

- 51.27% reported currently looking for jobs.
- 40.81% reported not having any jobs lined up after graduation.
- 20.57% reported having secured a job related to their field or discipline.
- 16.50% planned to pursue further education, including postgraduate or doctoral study.
- 10.78% planned to undertake volunteering.
- 10.67% reported not yet beginning future planning.
- 6.38% reported having secured a job unrelated to their discipline.
- 2.09% planned to become self-employed or start a business.
- 5.28% selected other

Barriers to Future Planning and Employability

- 61.61% identified high competition in the job market as a challenge.
- 50.94% reported difficulty finding relevant job opportunities.
- 41.80% reported balancing job searching alongside academic workload.
- 35.53% reported a lack of professional networks or connections.
- 29.59% reported a lack of work experience.
- 20.57% reported concerns regarding salary expectations and the cost of living.
- 19.91% reported visa or immigration-related challenges.



- 14.63% reported lacking confidence in applying learning outside of their course.
- 14.52% reported uncertainty regarding further study options.
- 11.77% reported not currently thinking about future plans or being at that stage yet.
- 9.13% reported limited access to career support or guidance.
- 6.49% selected other.

Remaining in Manchester After Graduation

- 37.25% of students planned to remain in Manchester after graduation.
- 37.14% did not plan to remain in Manchester.
- 25.60% were unsure of their future plans.

Students were invited to explain the reasons for their answer (n = 446):

1. Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunities emerged as the most significant factor shaping students' future location decisions. Students who planned to remain in Manchester frequently referenced graduate employment opportunities, professional experience, networking opportunities and the city's large employment market. Others described intentions to leave Manchester due to concerns about career progression or difficulties securing suitable employment.

2. Cost of Living

Financial considerations featured prominently throughout responses. Students commonly linked their decisions to accommodation costs, transport expenses and wider cost of living pressures. Some respondents felt that remaining in Manchester following graduation would be financially challenging without secure employment.

3. Connection to Manchester

Several students described a strong emotional attachment to Manchester, highlighting friendships, familiarity with the city, university communities and positive experiences living in Manchester. For many, these factors contributed to a desire to remain after graduation.

4. Returning Home or Relocating

Some students planned to return home following graduation, particularly international students and those whose families lived outside Manchester.



Others intended to relocate for employment opportunities, further study, family commitments or lifestyle preferences.

5. **Uncertainty About Future Plans**

A notable proportion of students described uncertainty regarding their future plans. Responses frequently referenced waiting for job outcomes, financial circumstances, visa decisions or further opportunities before making decisions about where to live after graduation.

Finances (n = 2,405)

Financial pressures emerged as a significant aspect of the student experience, influencing wellbeing, participation, belonging and academic life. While many students reported confidence in managing their finances and meeting essential living costs, many continued to rely on multiple sources of financial support and expressed concerns about student loans, the cost of living and their longer-term financial security.

Funding

Sources of Financial Support

- 54.38% received financial support from family or guardians.
- 45.62% relied on maintenance loans.
- 33.36% received bursaries or scholarships.
- 32.94% used paid employment during term time.
- 11.12% relied on overdrafts or credit cards.
- 6.72% used loans from banks or other financial institutions.
- 3.55% borrowed money from friends or partners.
- 1.52% received support from carers.
- 8.41% selected other

Financial Support from Parents/Guardians in an Academic Year

- 8.79% received between £1 and £500.
- 6.93% received between £500 and £1,000.
- 7.19% received between £1,000 and £2,000.
- 6.93% received between £2,000 and £3,000.
- 21.52% received £3,000 or more.



- 18.27% reported receiving no financial support.
- 16.74% selected not applicable.
- 14.29% preferred not to say.

Maintenance Loans Coverage

- 23.21% reported that their maintenance loan partially covers their rent.
- 7.36% reported that it covers both rent and living costs.
- 6.00% reported that it fully covers their rent.
- 5.88% reported that it covers rent and part of their living costs.
- 4.95% reported that it covers the total cost of their accommodation.
- 44.02% selected not applicable.
- 8.88% preferred not to say.

University Bursaries

- 21.14% of students reported receiving a university bursary.
- 75.05% reported not receiving a university bursary.
- 3.89% preferred not to say.

Student Loans

- 47.48% of students reported feeling somewhat or very concerned about their student loans.
- 23.00% reported feeling not very or not at all concerned.
- 30.02% selected not applicable.

Students who expressed concerns about student loans were invited to explain why (n = 644):

1. Cost of Living

The most common theme related to rising living costs, including accommodation, food, transport and household expenses. Many students described feeling under ongoing financial pressure throughout the academic year.

2. Multiple Sources of Financial Support

Students frequently described relying on combinations of maintenance loans, family support, bursaries, overdrafts and paid employment to meet their financial needs.



3. **Balancing Employment and Study**

Many respondents discussed working alongside their studies to cover living costs. Financial pressures were often linked to workload stress, exhaustion and difficulties balancing academic and employment commitments.

4. **Participation and Belonging**

Several students felt that financial pressures limited their ability to participate fully in university life. Respondents commonly referenced avoiding social activities, reducing involvement in extracurricular opportunities and missing out on aspects of the student experience due to affordability concerns.

5. **Future Financial Uncertainty**

Some students expressed concerns about long-term debt, future employment opportunities, loan repayments and financial security after graduation.

Cost of Living

- 80.85% of students reported feeling somewhat or very confident managing their finances at university, 19.96% reported feeling not very or not at all confident.

Affordability

- 76.64% agreed that they can cover the costs associated with being on campus and engaging with university life, 23.91% disagreed.
- 69.84% agreed that they have enough money left after paying rent to cover essential costs such as food, transport and clothing, 18.73% disagreed and 11.94% selected not applicable.
- 63.00% agreed that they have enough money remaining after essential expenditures to participate in co-curricular or extracurricular activities, 37.55% disagreed.

Food Insecurity

- 70.31% of students reported being not at all or not very concerned about food running out before they could afford to buy more, 25.88% reported being somewhat or very concerned and 3.81% preferred not to say.



- 84.72% disagreed that they or their household had run out of food and been unable to afford more, 10.34% agreed that they had experienced this form of food insecurity and 4.94% preferred not to say.

Employment

Employment, placements and internships form an important part of many students' university experiences, providing opportunities to earn income, develop transferable skills and gain experience for future careers. Many students reported balancing employment alongside their studies, with work-related experiences viewed as an important source of professional development and career preparation.

Current Employment, Placements and Internships

- 36.72% reported working in a part-time job during their studies.
- 8.09% reported participating in an unpaid internship or placement.
- 6.64% reported working in a full-time job.
- 6.41% reported completing a paid internship or placement as part of their course.
- 42.14% selected none of the above.

Number of Jobs Held

Students currently engaged in employment, placements or internships were asked how many jobs they held (n = 1,286).

- 77.60% reported having one job.
- 18.27% reported having two jobs.
- 3.34% reported having three jobs.
- 0.78% reported having more than three jobs.

Weekly Working Hours

- 26.28% reported working between 1 and 5 hours per week.
- 21.54% reported working between 5 and 10 hours per week.
- 14.23% reported working between 10 and 15 hours per week.
- 10.03% reported working between 15 and 20 hours per week.
- 11.28% reported working between 35 and 40 hours per week.



- 5.13% reported working more than 40 hours per week.

Perceived Benefits

- 61.28% identified building transferable skills as a benefit.
- 50.23% identified gaining relevant experience for the future.
- 37.64% identified developing a better understanding of their chosen sector.
- 30.02% identified meeting friends and building social connections.
- 27.53% identified contributing to meaningful or real-world projects.
- 24.42% identified networking with potential employers.
- 18.12% identified building commercial awareness.

Students' Union (n = 2, 349)

This section explored students' engagement with the Students' Union (SU), awareness of representation structures, participation in leadership opportunities and perceptions of student advocacy. Overall, students reported high levels of satisfaction with the Students' Union and recognised the importance of student representation and political advocacy. However, awareness of some representative structures and identification with the Students' Union appeared more mixed, suggesting opportunities to improve visibility and engagement.

- 91.00% of students reported being satisfied with the Students' Union overall, 9.39% reported dissatisfaction.
- 50.22% of students agreed that they consider themselves part of the Students' Union, 50.31% disagreed.
- 58.92% of students agreed that communication from the Students' Union is relevant to them, 25.95% disagreed and 15.63% selected not applicable / not heard of it.

Engagement

Students were asked which Students' Union activities, services and opportunities they had engaged with since September.

- 50.61% engaged with societies.



- 36.52% participated in voting or completing surveys.
- 28.93% attended SU events (e.g. Welcome events and workshops).
- 21.55% engaged with sports clubs.
- 14.79% used SU commercial venues (food outlets).
- 14.40% attended gigs.
- 9.70% participated in volunteering opportunities.
- 9.35% used SU Essentials.
- 9.31% engaged with JobShop or JobClub.
- 5.97% used the SU Advice Centre.
- 5.66% participated in SU campaigns or representation activities (e.g. Course Rep or LeadMCR).
- 5.09% attended International Society trips or events.
- 1.54% used SU How's You.
- 18.61% reported not engaging with any of the listed SU opportunities or services.

Impact

- 54.74% reported that the Students' Union had a positive impact on their university experience.
- 44.47% reported no impact.
- 1.09% reported a negative impact.

Students who reported a positive impact were asked **“Tell us about a moment where the Student’ Union made a positive difference to your experience”** (n = 1,278):

1. Societies, Sports Clubs and Student Activities

The most commonly reported positive experiences related to participation in societies, sports clubs and Students' Union events. Students frequently described meeting people, developing friendships and becoming more engaged in university life through extracurricular activities.

2. Friendship, Community and Belonging

Many students viewed the Students' Union as an important space for social connection and community building. Responses frequently referenced feeling welcomed, making friends and developing a stronger sense of belonging at university.

3. Support Services and Wellbeing Initiatives



Students also highlighted positive experiences with support services, including SU Essentials, wellbeing initiatives and the Advice Centre. Practical support and accessible services were particularly valued during periods of financial or personal difficulty.

4. **Representation and Student Voice**

Some students described positive experiences through representation, campaigning and opportunities to influence university decision-making. These responses often reflected a sense of being listened to and having opportunities to contribute to change.

5. **Inclusive and International Opportunities**

Students also valued cultural events, volunteering opportunities, international student activities and inclusive social spaces that helped them connect with wider university communities.

Representation Structures (n = 2,329)

Students' awareness of representation structures varied considerably. Course and Academic Representatives were the most widely recognised, while awareness of Executive Officers and Union Assembly/Policy Insight was substantially lower. Among students who were familiar with these structures, perceptions of their effectiveness were generally more positive than negative, although large proportions selected 'Not Applicable' for some structures, suggesting limited awareness or experience.

Awareness

Representation Structure	Agree / Strongly Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Course / Academic Representatives	72.98%	18.97%	8.05%
SU Advice Service	48.69%	39.56%	11.74%
SU Executive Officers	35.53%	51.39%	13.07%
Union Assembly / Policy Insight	26.89%	59.21%	13.91%



Perceived Effectiveness

Representation Structure	Agree / Strongly Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Course / Academic Representatives	60.37%	19.54%	20.09%
SU Advice Centre	46.14%	17.92%	35.93%
SU Executive Officers	42.79%	20.13%	37.08%
Union Assembly / Policy Insight	37.27%	20.48%	42.25%

Student Leadership (n = 2,329)

- 18.10% reported being society committee members.
- 9.53% reported being Course or Academic Representatives.
- 5.78% reported being sports club committee members.
- 2.97% reported being Volunteer Project Leaders, Peer Mentors or Global Buddy volunteers.
- 2.84% reported being student staff members at the Students' Union.
- 0.65% reported being LeadMCR candidates.
- 0.13% reported being RA/JCR committee members.
- 70.17% reported holding none of the listed leadership roles.

Student Leadership Experiences (n = 707)

Students currently involved in leadership roles were asked about their experiences (n = 707).

- 88.64% agreed that they were satisfied with their experience as a student leader, 11.50% disagreed.
- 84.05% agreed that they feel supported in their role as a student leader, 16.28% disagreed.
- 7.29% reported experiencing barriers to student leadership, 92.71% reported no barriers.



Students were asked to describe the barriers (n = 152):

1. Academic Workload and Lack of Time

Students frequently identified coursework, revision, placements and employment commitments as barriers to participating fully in leadership opportunities.

2. Confidence and Social Anxiety

Some respondents described confidence-related challenges, including anxiety, fear of judgement and concerns about public speaking.

3. Limited Awareness of Opportunities

Several students highlighted limited awareness of leadership opportunities, application processes and routes into representation roles.

4. Feeling Excluded or Not Represented

Some respondents described feeling disconnected from leadership structures or perceived them as being dominated by established friendship groups or highly engaged students.

5. Accessibility and Structural Barriers

Students also highlighted practical barriers including commuting, scheduling difficulties, disability-related challenges and a lack of flexibility within some leadership roles.

Student Issues and Political Advocacy (n = 2,329)

Confidence Understanding Student Issues

- 82.20% reported feeling somewhat or very confident understanding national issues affecting students.
- 18.23% reported feeling not very or not at all confident.

Importance of Political Advocacy

- 93.35% reported that it is somewhat or very important for the Students' Union to advocate politically on student issues.
- 7.21% reported that political advocacy is not very or not at all important.



Respondent Demographics

This section provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of survey respondents. The findings help contextualise the results presented throughout the report and provide insight into the range of student experiences represented within the survey sample.

Level of Study

- 67.24% of respondents were Undergraduate (UG) students.
- 17.83% were Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students.
- 14.93% were Postgraduate Research (PGR) students.

Faculty

- 40.23% of respondents were from the Faculty of Humanities.
- 33.77% were from the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health.
- 26.00% were from the Faculty of Science and Engineering.

Year of Study

- 42.67% of respondents were in Year 1.
- 24.61% were in Year 2.
- 20.39% were in Year 3.
- 9.20% were in Year 4.
- 2.51% were in Year 5.
- 0.62% were in Year 6.

Final Year Status

- 35.80% reported being in their final year of study.
- 64.20% reported not being in their final year.

Student Characteristics

- 17.70% identified as mature students.
- 15.61% identified as commuter students.
- 13.89% identified as independent students.
- 3.13% identified as student parents.



- 2.19% identified as student carers.
- 42.76% selected none of the above.
- 4.72% preferred not to say.

Disability

- 13.17% reported having a mental health condition.
- 12.48% reported being neurodivergent.
- 6.54% reported having an unseen or hidden disability.
- 3.88% reported having a longstanding illness or health condition.
- 3.00% reported having a learning disability.
- 2.88% reported physical or mobility issues.
- 1.06% reported being blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing.
- 53.11% reported not considering themselves to have a disability.
- 3.88% preferred not to say.

Ethnic Identity

- 43.95% identified as White British (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British).
- 8.73% identified as Indian.
- 7.32% identified as White from another White background.
- 6.47% identified as Chinese.
- 5.41% identified as another Asian background.
- 4.88% identified as Pakistani.
- 4.10% preferred not to say.
- Smaller proportions of respondents identified across a range of other ethnic backgrounds, including African (2.91%), Irish (2.53%), White and Asian (2.47%), other Mixed ethnic backgrounds (2.35%), Arab (2.28%) and Bangladeshi (1.38%), with all remaining categories each representing less than 1% of respondents.

First Generation University Students

- 23.29% reported being the first person in their family to attend university.
- 72.48% reported not being first-generation university students.
- 2.11% were unsure.
- 2.11% preferred not to say.



Free School Meal Eligibility

- 16.86% reported having received free school meals.
- 72.03% reported not having received free school meals.
- 4.32% selected not applicable.
- 3.79% preferred not to say.

Gender Identity

- 63.85% identified as women.
- 30.52% identified as men.
- 1.94% identified as non-binary.
- 0.26% selected other.
- 3.43% preferred not to say.

Trans Identity

- 2.07% identified as trans.
- 94.98% did not identify as trans.
- 2.95% preferred not to say.

Sexual Identity

- 64.77% identified as heterosexual.
- 14.40% identified as bisexual.
- 6.56% identified as homosexual.
- 2.64% selected other.
- 11.62% preferred not to say.