

START OF TERM SURVEY

REPORT



OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2023

HERTS SU



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OVERVIEW

The Start of Term Survey examined 1,256 student responses from October to November 2023. The respondents had recently joined the university and were asked how they felt about their experience. The survey focused on areas like **pre-arrival information, registration, Freshers Week, support, facilities and resources**.

From the 1,256 respondents, 989 were international students (79%), whilst home students were underrepresented (21%, N = 267/1,256). 40% (N = 504/1,256) of survey responses came from Hertfordshire Business School students and 20% (22%, N = 276/1,256) of responses came from School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science students. The survey received the lowest number of responses from School of Creative Arts students (7%, N = 94/1,256).

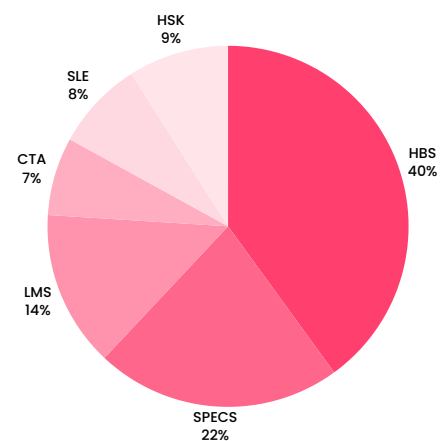


Figure 1
Pie chart showing distribution of responses via School of Study

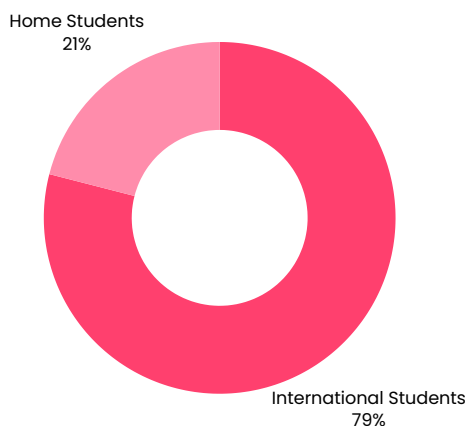


Figure 2
Doughnut chart showing registration status of participants

71% of survey respondents classified themselves as commuting students, with the most popular transport method for travelling to university being via bus (53%, N = 469/884), followed by train (24%, N = 215/884) and walking (12%, N = 107/884). Commuting to university via car was only chosen by 10% of respondents who classified themselves as commuting students. 52% of commuting students surveyed travelled for 60 minutes or less (each way) to get to university, while the remainder travelled for longer, with 14% (N = 424/884) of commuting students surveyed travelling for more than two hours each way.

When asked about hobbies and interests, the most common interest was sports and fitness (25%, N = 288/1165), followed by travelling (19%, N = 222/1165) and social activities (12%, N = 141/1165). When asked what they were most looking forward to at Herts, only 8% (N = 92/1165) of survey respondents reported to be most looking forward to "making friends". The highest responses were for "academic learning and education" (33%, N = 381/1165), followed by "professional development" (27%, 314/1165) and "gaining new experiences" (25%, 295/1165).

PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Pre-arrival information focuses on what type of information students received before they arrived at the university. This included information around finding housing, part-time jobs, timetables and transport to-and-from the university campuses.

Overall, 77% (N = 855/1,111) of students felt that they were well informed about how to find housing, rising to 80% of international student respondents reporting that they felt well informed about this (N = 702/877). However, this drops to a significantly lower proportion of home student respondents (65%, N= 153/234, $P < 0.05$).

Overall, only 50% (N = 549/1,095) of respondents felt well informed about how to find part-time jobs. This rose to 53% (N = 457/884) for international student respondents and dropped to 40% (N = 92/231) for home student respondents. Commuting student respondents reported feeling better informed than non-commuting respondents around how to find part-time work (55% vs. 39% respectively), with 76% (N= 603/792) of commuting student respondents reporting that they had been notified about their timetable. Meanwhile, only 66% (N= 207/313) of non-commuting respondents reported that they had been supplied with this information.

When respondents were asked if they were aware of their programme leaders and academic staff on their course, 63% (N= 147/235) of home student respondents stated that they had been made aware. However, this response dropped to 55% (N= 490/883) from international student respondents. Moreover, international student respondents reported that the information they received before arriving at the university was useful (93%, N = 818/884), which was significantly higher than responses from home student respondents ($P < 0.05$, 84% N = 198/235).



“It was all smooth and very helpful, university kept us updated on every step”

“The University should lay more emphasis on the prices of rent outside the school premises, it was a lot higher than what we saw online so we are trying to adjust and it has not been easy”

FRESHERS WEEK

Survey respondents were questioned about their experiences during Freshers Week and how they felt about the different events they had either attended or knew about. Overall, 74% (N= 797/1,075) of respondents reported having had the opportunity to meet new people and make friends during this time, with 78% (N= 837/1,069) of respondents being aware of the different events and activities that were taking place. A good proportion of commuting student respondents were aware of the different events and activities that were held throughout welcome week (77%, N=577/766), but only 65% (N= 491/760) of commuting student respondents felt that the events and activities appealed to them.

76% (N= 643/848) of international student respondents reported having the opportunity to meet new people and make friends, which was significantly higher than the response from home student respondents ($P<0.05$). 80% (N = 671/843) of international student respondents were aware of the different events and activities which were available during Freshers Week, which was significantly higher than the response from home student respondents ($P<0.05$). Also, 78% (N= 654/839) of international student respondents felt the range of events and activities was diverse, which dropped significantly to 61% (N= 138/226) for home student respondents ($P<0.05$).

“ More activities for mature learners with families that commute to university rather than partying activities aimed at younger people ”

FACILITIES

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the facilities available to them at uni. 94% (N= 938/1,002) of survey respondents were satisfied with the Learning Resources Centres (LRC) and 90% (N= 899/996) of respondents were satisfied with the academic facilities overall.

Commuting student respondents were significantly more satisfied with the academic facilities (86%, N= 601/700) when compared to responses from non-commuting respondents ($P<0.05$). Non-commuting respondents were satisfied with the study spaces (86%, N=251/291), but this was significantly lower than the satisfaction rates reported from commuting student respondents ($P<0.05$). International student respondents were also significantly more satisfied with the academic facilities (92%, N= 725/785) when compared with the satisfaction rates from home student respondents (82%, N= 174/211, $P<0.05$). 64% (N= 501/779) of international student respondents felt satisfied with the laboratory facilities available to them, whereas satisfaction rates for laboratory facilities were significantly lower from home student respondents (48%, N= 100/210, $P<0.05$).

“ I wish the university would do something about supporting international students more ”



HERTFORDSHIRE BUSINESS SCHOOL (HBS)

Overall, Hertfordshire Business School (HBS) respondents were satisfied with the pre-arrival information they received. 81% (N=361/445) of HBS respondents confirmed receiving information about finding housing, which was higher than the UH average (74%). HBS respondents also confirmed that they received information about finding part-time work (54%, N=237/437) and their timetables (77%, N=342/444), which was significantly higher when compared with the average response taken from the other schools ($P < 0.05$). 98% (N=434/443) of HBS respondents felt the registration process met their expectations and 98% (N=433/443) of HBS respondents found it to be easy.



Only 33% (N=144/434) of HBS respondents signed up to events, societies or networks, with 16% (N=69/434) of HBS respondents signing up to events after they had arrived and registered after Freshers Week. 77% (N=334/433) of HBS respondents confirmed that they had the opportunity to meet new people and 81% (N=346/430) of HBS respondents were aware of the different events that were held during Freshers Week, which was higher than the UH average (77%). 76% (N=324/428) of HBS respondents felt there was a diverse programme of events and 70% (N=301/428) of HBS respondents felt welcomed and comfortable at these events.

Regarding information distributed about student support, 18% (N=340/413) of HBS respondents did not feel informed about UH Student Wellbeing or Herts SU's Advice & Support provision (18%, N=340/414).

81% KNEW ABOUT FRESHERS WEEK EVENTS

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS (CTA)

Creative Arts (CTA) respondents were not satisfied with the pre-arrival information they received. The satisfaction rates were low for receiving adequate information about part-time jobs (42%, N= 35/83), timetables (58%, N= 49/84) and transport to/from university (59%, N= 50/84). CTA respondents stated that they were not given clear information about how to access content required for their courses (78%, N= 61/78) which was drastically lower than the UH average of 88%. CTA respondents also agreed that they did not receive clear information about how to succeed (78%, N = 61/78).

70% (N= 54/77) of CTA respondents confirmed that they were informed about their personal tutor but this, again, was lower than the average of 78%. 26% (N= 20/78) of CTA respondents confirmed that they were informed about their personal tutor before they came to university, but this was also lower than the average (40%). Only 68% (N = 53/78) of CTA respondents confirmed that they had been informed about the Students' Union's Advice & Support service, coming in lower than the UH average of 76%. This was also the case for the Herts Experience Manifesto, as only 24% (N = 19/78) of CTA respondents were aware of the manifesto, while the UH average level was 43%.

NOT MANY STUDENTS FELT ADEQUATELY INFORMED ABOUT SUPPORT

80% OF STUDENTS
WERE HAPPY WITH THE
STUDIOS & WORKSHOPS

CTA respondents were not satisfied with the academic facilities overall (84%, N= 64/76). They were not satisfied with the Learning Resource Centre (84%, N= 64/76), computer suites (72%, N= 55/76) or study spaces (78%, N= 57/73). However, CTA respondents felt that the studios & workshops were suitable (80%, N= 61/76) and this was higher than the UH average (70%).

CTA respondents were dissatisfied with the resources available as. Only 63% (N= 45/72) of respondents found it easy to access the learning resources, while when the UH average was 84%. Finally, only 69% (N= 50/72) of respondents accessing books & journals found the process easy, yet the UH average was 76%.

“ I could have used more help from the university regarding off campus accommodation. The University was completely deserted when I arrived in the UK at the end of August ”

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK (HSK)

Respondents from the School of Health and Social Work (HSK) did not feel well informed on areas such as housing (64% N = 61/95, average = 74%), part-time jobs (37% N = 34/93, average = 47%) and transportation (61% N= 58/95, average = 68%). Only 49% (N = 47/95) of HSK respondents were aware of their programme leaders and academic staff on their course before they arrived, whilst the UH average was 56%. 40% (N= 35/88) of HSK respondents signed up to activities, societies or networks during Freshers Week and 72% (N= 63/87) of HSK respondents were aware of the different events and activities that were on during this time. Only 59% (N= 52/88) of HSK respondents felt the Freshers Week activities appealed to them.



92% FOUND THE INDUCTION AND WELCOME WEEK EVENTS HELPED THEM FEEL PREPARED

33% (N = 28/86) of HSK respondents felt informed about who their personal tutor was before they arrived at the university, when the UH average was 40%. 83% (N= 71/86) of HSK respondents stated they were informed about the Student Wellbeing team and 57% (N= 48/85) of respondents were informed about the financial support available. 92% (N= 79/86) of HSK respondents felt prepared for their year of study after their induction and Freshers Week events. 94% (N= 80/85) of HSK respondents felt they received adequate support and advice during their first few weeks at university.

HSK respondents were satisfied with the Learning Resource Centre (90%, N= 75/83) and the simulation suites/clinics that are available to respondents (63%, N= 52/82). However, only 85% (N=70/82) of respondents were satisfied with the academic facilities overall, whilst the UH average was 88%. Only 53% (N= 44/83) of respondents were pleased with the entertainment (such as Bar Seventy7), whilst the UH average was 63%.



Organisation would be great. Communication between students and placement supervisor are very poor, we have no access to our shifts yet and we will be starting in 1 week



SCHOOLS OF LAW AND EDUCATION (SLE)

Schools of Law and Education (SLE) respondents were less satisfied on the whole. 84% (N = 76/99) of SLE respondents stated they felt well informed about the registration process and 69% (N = 61/89) of SLE respondents reported that they felt well informed about housing, which was lower than the UH average (74%). 9% (N = 8/88) of SLE respondents felt the registration process did not meet their expectations, which was significantly lower than the UH average ($P < 0.05$). 10% (N = 9/89) of SLE respondents did not find the registration process easy.

During Freshers Week 38% (N = 32/85) of SLE respondents signed up to events, activities or networks. However, 64% (N = 54/85) of SLE respondents felt that they did not have the opportunity to meet new people and make friends during this time, which was significantly lower than the average response (72%) from other Schools of Study ($P < 0.05$). SLE respondents felt the Freshers Week events and activities appealed to them (56%, N = 48/85) but reported that there was not a diverse programme of events and activities. Only 58% (N = 49/84) of SLE respondents felt welcomed or comfortable at these events, which was 10% lower than the UH average (68%).

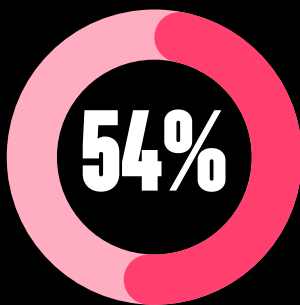
74% (N = 55/74) of SLE respondents confirmed that they had received clear information about the academic support they're entitled to, which was lower than the UH average (79%). 58% (N = 55/74) of SLE respondents did not feel informed about Herts SU's Advice & Support provision.

78% THINK THE STUDY SPACES COULD BE IMPROVED

SLE respondents were also not satisfied with the facilities provided. 53% (N = 39/74) of SLE respondents were not satisfied with the studios & workshops that were available, which was significantly lower than the UH average of 70% ($P < 0.05$). This trend continued as 64% (N = 47/74) of SLE respondents did not find the computer suites suitable, which was lower than the UH average (75%). SLE respondents (78%, N = 57/73) were also not happy with the study spaces, whilst the UH average was 86%. 73% (N = 54/74) of SLE respondents stated that they were satisfied with the social activities such as The Forum, cafes & restaurants, common areas and sports facilities, when the average response was 78%.

SCHOOL OF LIFE AND MEDICAL SCIENCE (LMS)

Overall, for respondents from the School of Life and Medical Science (LMS), the registration process met their expectations (95%, N= 152/160) and was easy to follow (95% N= 153/161) . However, only 70% (N= 112/160) of LMS respondents were aware of the different events and activities that were held during Freshers Week, whilst the UH average was 77%. 57% (N= 90/159) of LMS respondents felt that these events appealed to them, but this was lower than the UH average (61%).



**OF STUDENTS
KNEW WHERE
TO GO FOR
FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

LMS respondents felt informed about the financial support available (54%, N= 85/156), but this was lower than the UH average of 60%. 43% (N= 66/155) of LMS respondents also felt informed about the Herts Experience Manifesto. 15% (N= 24/156) of LMS respondents confirmed that their first few weeks at the University of Hertfordshire had exceeded their expectations, but this was lower than the UH average of 21%.

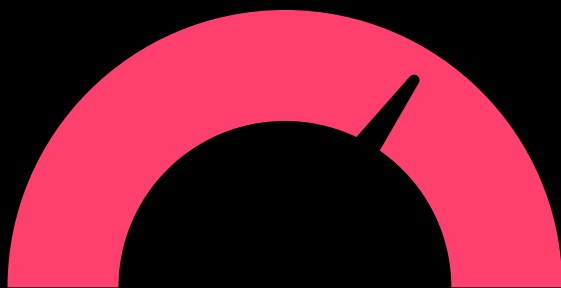
86% (N= 130/151) of LMS respondents were satisfied with the academic facilities overall. However, they were significantly not as satisfied with the Learning Resource Centre (89%, N= 134/150) as respondents from other Schools of Study, where the average satisfaction rate was 92% ($P < 0.05$). LMS respondents were satisfied with the studios & workshops (70%, N = 104/148), computer suites (75%, N= 113/151), study spaces (88%, N= 132/150) and simulation suites (59%, N= 88/150). This was also the same for social facilities like The Forum (64%, N=97/151), common areas (86%, N= 130/151) and the cafes & restaurants (78%, N= 116/148).

**LMS STUDENTS LOVED
THE FACILITIES**



SCHOOL OF PHYSICS, ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE (SPECS)

Similar to HBS respondents, respondents from the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science (SPECS) were satisfied with their start of term experience. SPECS respondents felt that the registration process exceeded their expectations (97%, N= 221/229) and 95% (N= 220/232) of SPECS respondents found it a simple process to follow. 79% (N=) of SPECS respondents had the opportunity to meet new people during Freshers Week and start of term on the whole. 72% (N = 162/226) of SPECS respondents stated that the Freshers Week events and activities appealed to them, which was higher than the average UH agreement rate (61%). This was also higher than other Schools of Study that had a good review of this area, like the HBS and CTA ($P < 0.05$). Respondents also felt there was a diverse programme of events and activities during this time (79%, N=177/224), which was significantly higher than all other schools ($P < 0.05$).



**68% OF STUDENTS
KNEW WHO THEIR
PERSONAL TUTOR WAS**

68% (N=146/216) of SPECS respondents knew who their personal tutor was, but this was significantly lower than the UH average (78%). 50% (N=108/218) of SPECS respondents knew who their personal tutor was before arriving at the university, confirming they had received clear information about the support they are entitled to as students (85%, N = 185/217), as well as the financial support available (70%, N = 152/217). 25% (N = 55/221) of SPECS respondents felt their first few weeks at university had exceeded their expectations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONSISTENCY AND QUALITY OF PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION FOR ALL STUDENTS

FINDING

Respondents from different schools reported varying experiences in relation to the pre-arrival information they received. For example, respondents from the Hertfordshire Business School (HBS) were satisfied with the pre-arrival information, with 81% (N=361/445) confirming they received information about finding housing, which was significantly higher than the UH average (74%). HBS respondents also confirmed that they received information about finding part-time jobs (54%, N=237/437) and their timetables (77%, N=342/444), which was significantly higher when compared with the average response taken from the other schools ($P < 0.05$). However, respondents from the School of Health and Social Work (HSK) reported not feeling as well informed about things like finding housing (64% N = 61/95, average = 74%) and they felt significantly less informed about all pre-arrival information topics surveyed ($P < 0.05$).

RECOMMENDATION

Schools should ensure that pre-arrival information is provided to respondents well in advance so that they are able to adequately prepare for the academic year. The pre-arrival information should include details about arranging accommodation, finding part-time work, transport to-and-from the university and the registration process. There should be standardised information relating to topics such as housing, timetables and transportation so that respondents are not disadvantaged in any way.

MORE THOROUGH PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

2. INSIGHT DRIVEN PLANNING FOR A DIVERSE RANGE OF FRESHERS WEEK ACTIVITIES

FINDING

64% (N=683/1,086) of respondents felt Freshers Week events appealed to them, but this figure varies across the schools. For example, while 72% (N = 162/226) of SPECS reacted positively to this question, only 59% (N= 52/88) of HSK respondents felt the Freshers Week programme appealed to them, with 59% (N = 48/82) of Creative Arts respondents mirroring the HSK response. This could lead to a lack of engagement from certain schools and may lead to continuous disengagement from students during their time at the university.

RECOMMENDATION

A diverse range of events at Freshers Week and beyond would be better for students who may be more inclined to engage with them. To begin this change and to prevent further disengagement from students, there should be a review of event schedules, making sure that the event range appeals to as wide a community of students as is possible. Further insight can be conducted to inform the planning of more engaging events in the future, with particular focus on students from the Schools of Study with whom there are lower levels of engagement and satisfaction with historic events.

3. REVIEW OF UNIVERSITY FACILITIES RECEIVING LOW LEVELS OF STUDENT SATISFACTION

FINDING

The feedback from respondents shows that many were not satisfied with the facilities and resources provided by the university. Within SLE, a significant portion stated dissatisfaction with the available studios & workshops (53%, N = 39/74), computer suites (64%, N = 47/74), study spaces (78% N= 57/73), and the Learning Resource Centre (89%, N= 134/150). CTA respondents also noted dissatisfaction, with only 63% (N= 45/72) of respondents finding it easy to access the learning resources overall, when the UH average was 84%.

RECOMMENDATION

An intensive review of the facilities available to respondents should be conducted across all schools as there are varying levels of satisfaction. The university should focus on improving areas that have received consistent dissatisfaction across the board.



HERTS SU

