HERTS UNF!LTERED

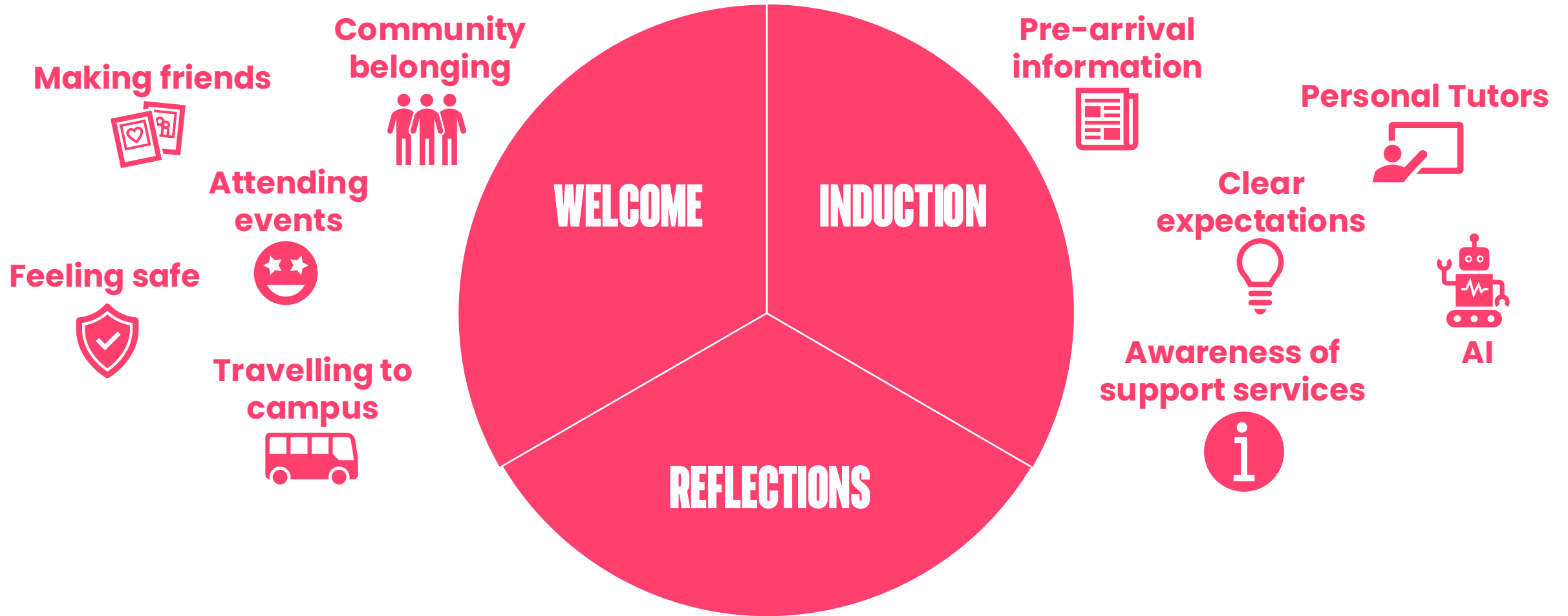## SEM A 24-25 | OVERALL FINDINGS

SPILL THE TEA

HERTS SU YOUR UNION

INSIGHT TEAM
research@hertssu.com

HERTS UNF!LTERED | SEMESTER A

- Herts Unfiltered is a **student listening** project – focussing on understanding students' **expectations, experiences, and concerns** throughout the term.

- The Semester A project ran from **23 Sept – 24 Nov 2024**, with 3 phases of reporting completed throughout the duration.

- Our target audience was **first year UG** students, however we welcomed responses from all students.

- **96%** of responses were collected by our **student staff** (Insight Assistants) via conversations with students over both campuses – enabling **signposting to support**, if appropriate.

- **Insights were shared** on an ongoing basis with the goal to **address concerns in real time**, where possible, and **shape future inductions** in the longer term.

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START OF TERM EXPERIENCE | PHASE 1 | 23 SEPT - 4 OCT 2024

Making friends

Community belonging

Attending events

Feeling safe

Travelling to campus

WELCOME

INDUCTION

REFLECTIONS

Pre-arrival information

Personal Tutors

Clear expectations

Awareness of support services

AI

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Expectations vs. reality

ONGOING EXPERIENCE | PHASE 2-4 | 7 OCT - 24 NOV 2024

Friendships

Feeling safe

Attending events

Travelling to campus

Community belonging

Clear expectations

Academic Workload

Personal Tutors

Use of AI

LIFE	**STUDIES**
REFLECTIONS	**SUPPORT**

Challenges

Inclusivity

Key Supports

Suggested improvements

Expectation vs. Reality

Confidence

Awareness of support services

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PHASE 1-4 | RESPONSE DEMOGRAPHICS

From 23 Sept – 24 Nov, **HERTS UNFILTERED** received **4,868** responses from **3,450** students.

GENDER

Female* - 37% **Male**** -** 57%
Non-binary – 1% **PNTS** – 5%

*Including Trans women **Including Trans men

ETHNICITY

White – 10% **Asian** – 71%
Black – 7% **Mixed** - 2%
PNTS – 4% **Arab** – 1%

AGE-RANGE

17-24 years – 68%
25-39 years – 31%
40+ years – 1%

FEE STATUS

Home – 21%
International – 79%

SCHOOL

SPECS – 44% **HBS** – 23%
LMS – 13% **CTA** – 8%
HSK – 8% **SLE** – 4%

LEVEL OF STUDY

Foundation – 2%
Undergraduate – 42%
Postgraduate – 56%

REGISTERED DISABILITY

Yes – 7%
No – 89%
PNTS – 4%

*Self-declaration

COMMUTER STATUS

Commuter* – 75%
Non-commuter – 25%

*Self-defined

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PNTS = Prefer not to say.

PHASE 1-4 | RESPONSE DEMOGRAPHICS

From 23 Sept – 24 Nov, **HERTS UNFILTERED** received **4,868** responses from **3,450** students.

FIRST YEAR, UNDERGRAD
22%

FINAL YEAR, UNDERGRAD
10%

FIRST IN FAMILY
48%

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES
Student parents – **7%**
Eldercare – **6%**
Registered Carers – **3%**

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
Live on-campus – **23%**
Live in Hatfield – **20%**
Live within 60mins – **35%**
Live 60+mins away – **22%**

EMPLOYMENT
No PT Job – **62%**
Works 0-10 hours p/wk. – **11%**
Works 11-20 hours p/wk. – **25%**
Works 20+ hours p/wk. – **2%**

FINANCIAL POSITION
No concerns – **44%**
Some concerns – **52%**
Serious concerns – **4%**

COMMUTER STATUS
Commuter* – **75%**
Non-commuter – **25%**

*Self-defined

HERTS SU

PNTS = Prefer not to say.

KEY FINDINGS | LIFE

BELONGING & COMMUNITY: 91% of respondents felt part of the UH community, and 94% had formed friendships with other students.

Breaking it down reveals a different perspective: only **80%** of **home respondents** felt they **belonged within the UH community**, and just **78%** of those **working over 20 hours per week** felt a sense of **belonging.**
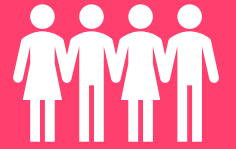
SAFETY ON CAMPUS: 96% of respondents felt safe on campus, and 94% of respondents felt that the university community was inclusive.

However, **Arab ethnicity (14%), mixed ethnicity (11%)** and **disabled (11%)** respondents reported the highest levels of **feeling unsafe** on campus.

TRAVELLING TO CAMPUS: 79% of respondents agreed that travelling to campus was easy.

However, respondents of **Arab ethnicity (41%)**, of **home fee status (34%)** and **respondents travelling from 60+ minutes away (34%)** felt **travel to campus was difficult.**

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KEY FINDINGS | STUDIES

ACADEMIC WORKLOAD

88% of respondents felt their **academic workload** was manageable, with **85%** of respondents having **accessed academic skills support** from the university.

However, **27%** of **Arab respondents** felt their **academic workload was unmanageable,** and only **65%** of **white respondents** had **accessed academic skills support.**

PERSONAL TUTORING

72% of respondents had **met their personal tutor**, and **69%** of respondents had **contacted their personal tutor via email.**

However, only **59%** of **black ethnicity respondents** and **59% of mixed ethnicity respondents** had **contact with their personal tutor by email.** Also, only **69%** of **male respondents** had **met their personal tutor** in person.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Overall, **44%** of respondents had **used AI** to help with their learning (at least once). **37%** of respondents had used AI to help with their **spelling or grammar.** ChatGPT/OpenAI was the **most used AI tool (79%).**

47% of **International respondents** had used **AI to help with their studies,** and **56%** of **40+ year olds** were using **AI to help with their spelling and grammar.**

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KEY FINDINGS | SUPPORT

AWARENESS OF SUPPORT: **76% of respondents were aware of the financial support available to them, and 89% of respondents were aware of the careers guidance UH has to offer.**

However, 37% of **home respondents** and respondents **working 20+ hours per week (35%)** were **not aware of the financial support available**. Also, **Arab ethnicity (80%)** and **Home (82%)** respondents also reported the lowest awareness **of the career's guidance available.**
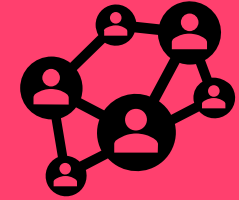
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY: **94% of respondents felt the UH community is inclusive and supportive to them, and 90% felt it was easy to make friends.**

However, 18% of **Arab ethnicity respondents did not agree that the UH community was inclusive** and **15%** of **white ethnicity students** reported **difficulties in making friends**. Also, **non-binary** respondents experienced **higher than average levels of loneliness** during their time at UH **(97%),** with **37%** feeling **lonely daily.**

ACADEMIC CONFIDENCE: **92% of respondents felt their coursework distribution was manageable, with 93% feeling confident that they will achieve the degree classification they are aiming for.**

However, **16%** of **mixed ethnicity respondents** and **13% of non-binary respondents** did not feel that their coursework workload was manageable.

KEY FINDINGS | REFLECTIONS

EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY

93% of respondents stated th**e information that was provided to them before** they started their course **helped them to feel prepared for studying at UH,** and **84%** of respondents felt that **UH was the right choice for them**.

CHALLENGES

Unreliable Public Transport was the factor with the **strongest negative impact** on students' ability to engage on campus (25%). Other common barriers were: **Cost of Food/Drink on campus (16%)** and **on-campus parking (15%)**

LONELINESS

81% of respondents experienced **loneliness (**either daily, sometimes or occasionally) whilst at UH, with **16%** of respondents experiencing loneliness daily.

Disabled (86%), male (81%) and **international (83%)** respondents reported the **highest levels of experiencing loneliness** whilst at UH. With **non-binary (37%)** and **disabled (33%)** respondents reporting a high level of feeling lonely daily.

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SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

SCHOOLS OF LAW & EDUCATION

15% of respondents **were not aware of the Wellbeing Support** UH has to offer.
15% of respondents found it **difficult to make friends with their peers** and **85%** of respondents **felt lonely**, with **14% feeling lonely daily.**

SCHOOL OF PHYSICS, ENGINEERING & COMPUTER SCIENCE

63% of respondents **had met with their personal tutor** but this was the lowest rate in comparison to the other schools. Also, only **61%** of respondents **had communicated with their personal tutor via email.**

HERTFORDSHIRE BUSINESS SCHOOL

95% of HBS respondents **felt part of the UH community, 95%** had **formed friendships** with other students, and **81%** of respondents **attended extracurricular events on campus**. However, **18%** of them felt **lonely daily.**

One in four HBS respondents had **not met their personal tutor** and **27% had not had email contact with their personal tutor.**

HERTS SU

SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

SCHOOL OF LIFE & MEDICAL SCIENCES

15% of respondents **did not feel part of the UH community** but **95%** of respondents **had formed friendships with other students.**
61% of respondents were **worried about their finances,** which was the **highest rate** in comparison to the other schools.

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

93% of respondents **felt safe on campus,** and **78%** agreed that **travel to campus was easy**.
88% of respondents **felt confident in their ability to complete their assignments,** and **83%** of respondents felt their **workload was manageable.**

SCHOOL OF HEALTH & SOCIAL WORK

42% of respondents stated they **had not attended extracurricular events on campus**, and **97%** of respondents felt **safe on campus** (which was one of the **highest rates** amongst the schools).

86% of respondents felt **equipped to complete their academic assignments,** and **78%** of respondents felt their **academic workload was manageable**. When seeking help with their assignments, **76%** had **accessed academic skills support available at UH.**

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FIRST YEAR, UNDERGRADUATES

Herts SU received 788 responses from First year, undergraduate students; 21% of all Herts Unfiltered responses.

COMMUNITY BELONGING:

- **91%** felt **part of the UH community** and **93%** had **formed friendships with other students** in the university or in their course.
- **69%** of these respondents had **attended extracurricular events on campus**, and **95% felt safe on campus**

PERSONAL TUTORING:

- **69%** of these respondents **stated their personal tutors knew their name**, and **72%** of these respondents had **met with their personal tutor in-person.**
- **74%** of these respondents were also in **contact with their personal tutor by e-mail.**

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI):

- In total, **39%** of these respondents had **used AI to help with their learning**, and the most popular reason for use was to help **improve their spelling or grammar** **(37%).**
- The most **popular platform** used was **ChatGPT (76%),** and **97%** of respondents found **AI tools to be useful** throughout their learning experience.

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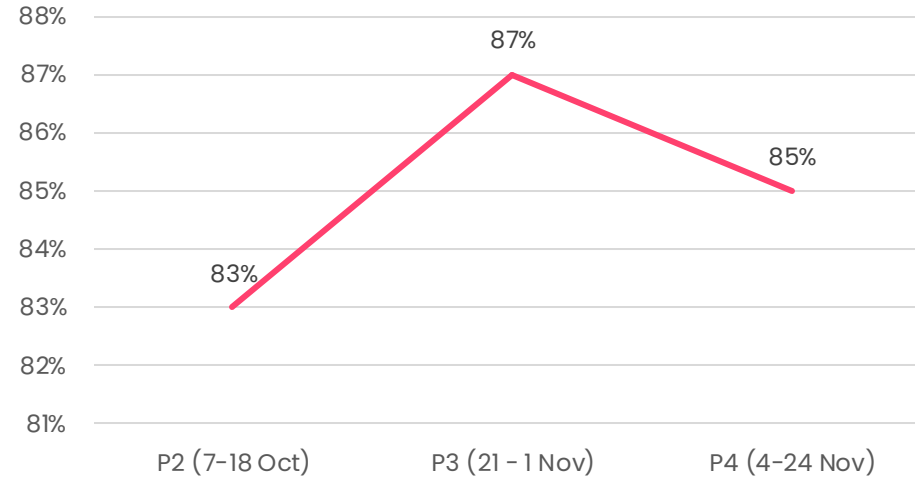# HERTS UNF!LTERED | AREAS OF FOCUS

- We wanted to explore the interaction between the following factors on student responses, if a student reported:

  - If their **Personal Tutor** knew their name.

  - If they had accessed **academic skills support**.

  - If they were never experiencing **loneliness**.

  - If they had no **financial concerns** about affording their living costs.
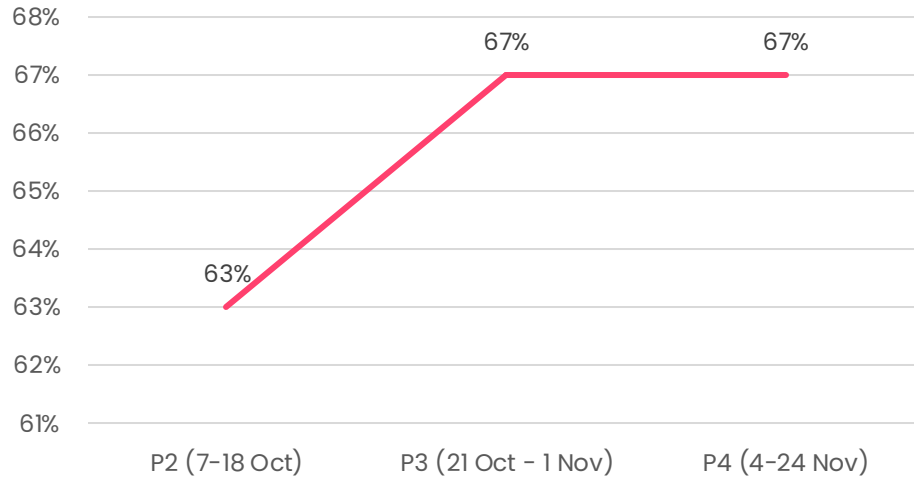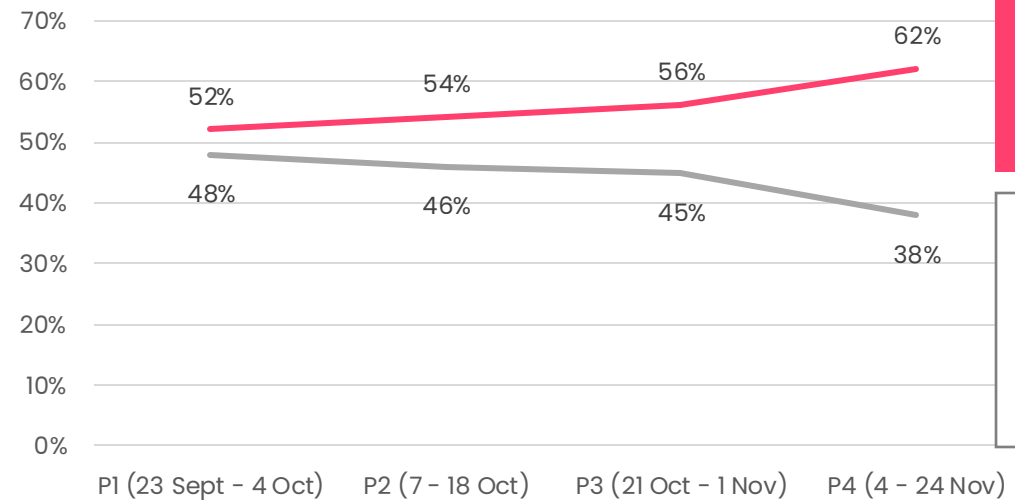
HERTS SU
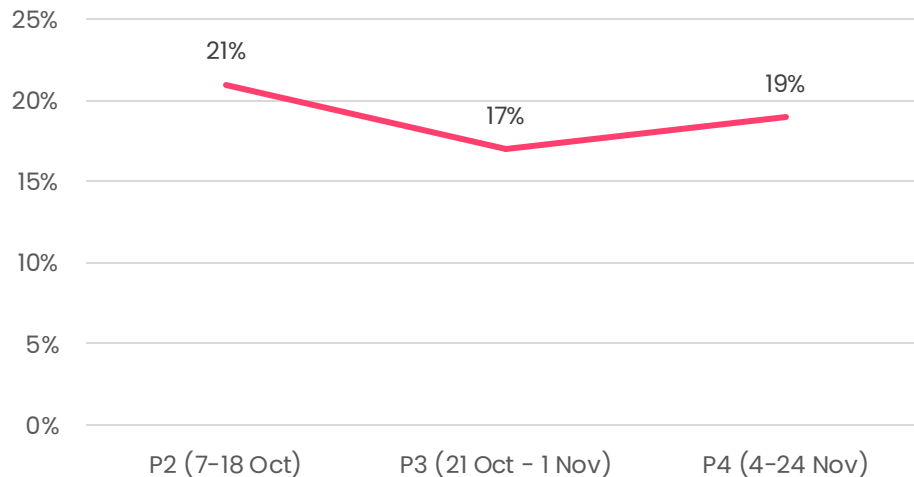
HERTS UNF!LTERED | AREAS OF FOCUS

IMPACT OF PERSONAL TUTORING | If a student agrees with… "My Personal Tutor Knows my Name"

HIGHER LEVELS OF…
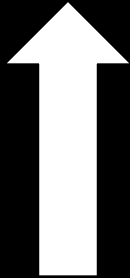
- Engagement with Personal Tutors, both in-person and via e-mail (both 55pp ↑).
- Participation in extracurricular activities on-campus (21pp ↑).
- Accessing academic skills support (14pp ↑).

LOWER LEVELS OF…

- Financial concern about ability to cover or afford living costs (10pp ↓).
- Feeling lonely daily (6pp ↓).

IMPACT OF ACADEMIC SKILLS SUPPORT | If a student agrees with… "I have accessed academic skills support from UH"

HIGHER LEVELS OF…

- Participation in extracurricular activities on-campus (33pp ↑).
- Workload feeling manageable (26pp ↑).
- Belonging in UH community (20pp ↑).
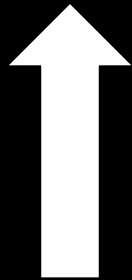- Awareness of financial (42pp ↑), wellbeing (25pp ↑), and careers support (25pp ↑).

LOWER LEVELS OF…

- Financial concern about ability to cover or afford living costs (8pp ↓).
- Feeling lonely daily (6pp ↓).

HERTS UNF!LTERED | AREAS OF FOCUS

IMPACT OF STUDENT FRIENDSHIPS | If a student selects that... They never feel lonely

HIGHER LEVELS OF...
- Workload feeling manageable (12pp ↑).
- Belonging in UH community (7pp ↑).
- Higher levels of in-person engagement with Personal Tutor (9pp ↑).

LOWER LEVELS OF...
- Financial concern about ability to cover or afford living costs (20pp ↓).

IMPACT OF FINANCIAL STABILITY | If a student selects... "I can afford to cover my living costs"

HIGHER LEVELS OF...
- Workload feeling manageable (23pp ↑).
- Agreement that it has been easy to make friends (20pp ↑), and that the UH community is supportive to students (19pp ↑).
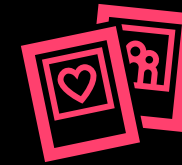- Belonging in UH community (18pp ↑).

LOWER LEVELS OF...
- Feeling lonely daily (11pp ↓).

THE EMERGING PATTERN
...also seen in the findings of previous projects*

42% of responses came from students who had part-time jobs; with 15% of responses indicating that employed student worked 20+ hours per week.

Responses from students, without financial concerns, indicated a 20pp higher level of agreement that it had been easy to make friends at university.

Rising cost of living

More time spent **working** part-time jobs
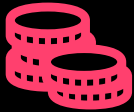
57% of responses indicated students having financial concerns about their ability to afford their living costs.

Living further away from campus / longer **commute**

Less time, resource and energy for:
- Visiting family/friends
- Attending social events
- Attending extra-curricular activities
- Looking after physical wellbeing
- Maintaining studies as key focus

24% of responses came from students living more than 1-hour away from campus.

More worry = declining **mental wellbeing**

6% of responses indicated that a student's mental health was the factor with the strongest negative impact on their ability to engage with the studies or activities on-campus.

Responses from students, without financial concerns, indicated a 13pp higher level of agreement that they felt confident that they would graduating with the degree classification that they are aiming for.

HERTS SU

RECOMMENDATIONS

HERTS SU

UH | SEM A 2024-25 | FINAL 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ENHANCE PERSONAL TUTORING THROUGH CURRICULUM INTEGRATION, EVALUATION, AND TUTOR UPSKILLING.

- Explore the integration of personal tutoring into the curriculum to foster consistent student engagement.
- Evaluate the Personal Tutoring Framework, and its implementation, through an APP lens to assess its impact on student outcomes - particularly in supporting large student cohorts.
- Strengthen the personal tutoring system by upskilling Personal Tutors to deliver effective non-academic guidance and signposting, enabling them to address a broader spectrum of student needs.

2. REVIEW TIMETABLING PRINCIPLES TO ENABLE OPTIMAL MAXIMISATION OF STUDENT TIME AND STUDY-LIFE BALANCE.

- Review timetabling principles - as these have not been reviewed since pre-Covid - considering options allowing optimal time for engaging with part-time work and extracurricular opportunities across Herts's broad demographic of students.
- For schools reporting low event attendance and community belonging (i.e. LMS, HSK & CTA); to consider embedding start of term, and/or term-time, extracurricular events within student timetables to encourage engagement.

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UH | SEM A 2024-25 | FINAL 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

3. INTEGRATE ACADEMIC SKILLS GUIDANCE INTO TEACHING SESSIONS TO ENHANCE STUDENT AWARENESS AND SUCCESS.

- Embed academic skills content into teaching delivery, prioritizing the start of courses for new students and the beginning of each academic year for returning students; to ensure all students begin their studies at the appropriate level and are aware of how to access additional academic skills support when needed.

4. ENHANCE TEACHING DELIVERY TO FOSTER STUDENT INTERACTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING.

- Include additional opportunities for students to interact, outside of assessed group work, within the learning environment, focusing on building community and engagement within taught sessions.
- Herts SU could run timetabled mixer events within schools with lower levels of reported community belonging; alongside exploring how academic societies within schools offering placements can run tailored activities to keep students connected whilst working away from campus.

5. IMPROVE STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY AND FINANCIAL STABILITY THROUGH CAMPUS OPPORTUNITIES AND CURRICULUM INTEGRATION.

- Enhance employability opportunities for students by integrating employability workshops from day one, woven into the curriculum, whilst adopting a holistic approach to assessing and expanding part-time employment opportunities on-campus.

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HBS | SEM A 2024-25 | SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PERSONAL TUTORING

- Low levels of responses to 'my Personal Tutor knows my name', 'I have met my Personal Tutor', and, 'I have had contact with my Personal Tutor via E-mail'
- Work with Academic staff to promote Personal Tutoring to students, encouraging engagement.
- Also, provide support for a wider review of the Personal Tutoring Framework.

2. LONELINESS

- Highest level of responses relating to experiencing loneliness daily.
- Collaborating with the Students' Union, work to understand individual experience of loneliness, what contributes to it, and what may improve it.

SPECS | SEM A 2024-25 | SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PERSONAL TUTORING

- Lowest level of responses relating to Personal Tutors.
- Promote Personal Tutoring to students to encourage engagement.
- Also provide support for a wider review of the Personal Tutoring Framework.

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LMS | SEM A 2024-25 | SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   COMMUNITY BELONGING

- Lower levels of feeling welcome, community belonging and attendance at start of term events.
- Collaborate with the SU to explore the root cause, considering adding additional start or term activity into induction timetables.

2. AI

- Lowest levels of agreement that UH has provided sufficient information around the use of AI.
- Review information provided about responsible use of AI at induction and throughout learning (such as Personal Tutoring and Assignment guidance).

3. FINANCIAL CONCERNS

- Highest level of responses relating to feeling concerned about whether living costs could be covered, and the lowest levels of awareness of financial support UH has to offer.
- Collaborate with other parts of UH to consider adding bespoke induction sessions covering budgeting, money management, and access to UH financial support.

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CTA | SEM A 2024-25 | SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. AWARENESS OF SUPPORT

- Low levels of awareness of support available at UH.
- Revising the information available to students either through induction, follow on materials or through Personal Tutoring to help students understand and access support at UH.

2. ACADEMIC CONFIDENCE

- Lowest levels of academic confidence and workload management, alongside low uptake of academic skills support.
- Promotion of academic skills support, particularly centralised services through HAS. Supported by further investigation to understand if there are any discipline-specific areas that require more support.

HERTS SU

SLE | SEM A 2024-25 | SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

- Highest feeling that information about their course was missing from what was provided pre-arrival.
- Reviewing the information provided to students to ensure that it represents the realities of studies.

2. AWARENESS OF SUPPORT

- Lowest level of agreement that they have everything they need to succeed, with low levels of understanding of the types of support available at UH.
- Revising the information available to students either through induction, follow on materials or through Personal Tutoring to help students understand and access support at UH.

3. AI

- Low levels of agreement that sufficient information regarding responsible use of AI.
- Reviewing how information is provided to students about the responsible use of AI at induction and through learning, such as Personal Tutoring and Assignment Guidance.

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HSK | SEM A 2024-25 | SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. FINANCIAL CONCERN

- High levels of financial concern.
- Collaborate with other parts of UH to consider adding bespoke induction sessions covering budgeting, money management, and access to UH financial support.

2. AI

- Low levels of agreement that sufficient information regarding responsible use of AI.
- Reviewing how information is provided to students about the responsible use of AI at induction and through learning, such as Personal Tutoring and Assignment Guidance.

3. ACADEMIC CONFIDENCE

- Low levels of academic confidence and workload management, alongside low uptake of academic skills support.
- Promotion of academic skills support, particularly centralised services through HAS. Supported by further investigation to understand if there are any discipline-specific areas that require more support.

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HERTS UNF!LTERED | SEMESTER B

- Herts Unfiltered is a **student listening** project – focussing on understanding students' **expectations, experiences, and concerns** throughout the term.

- The Semester B project began running from **21 Jan 2025**, with plans to run until the end of February.

- Our target audience is still **first year UG** students, however we welcome responses from all students.

- Data will be collected via our **student staff** (Insight Assistants)– enabling **signposting to support**, and targeted student communications.

- **Insights will be shared** on an ongoing basis with the goal to **address concerns in real time**, where possible.

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