THRIVING
ACADEMICALLY
### 2023-24

HERTS SU YOUR UNION

INSIGHT TEAM
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THRIVING ACADEMICALLY | OBJECTIVES & SCOPE

- We wanted to **follow up** on the trends which emerged from our **Community Project findings** in the previous academic year.

- Focus on understanding the key factors which may **enhance** or **challenge** students' **academic** and **non-academic experience** at UH.

- An **online survey** released during **Semester B** of the 2023-24 academic year.

- Targeting **undergraduate** students with **home fee status**, whilst receiving insights from all.

- Insights to be used to inform our **APP student submission**, alongside the direction of our continued union **lobbying activity** and further research.

- Goal was to gain **greater understanding** of the **post-pandemic student experience**; and where support needs to be provided to combat any barriers to engagement and success.

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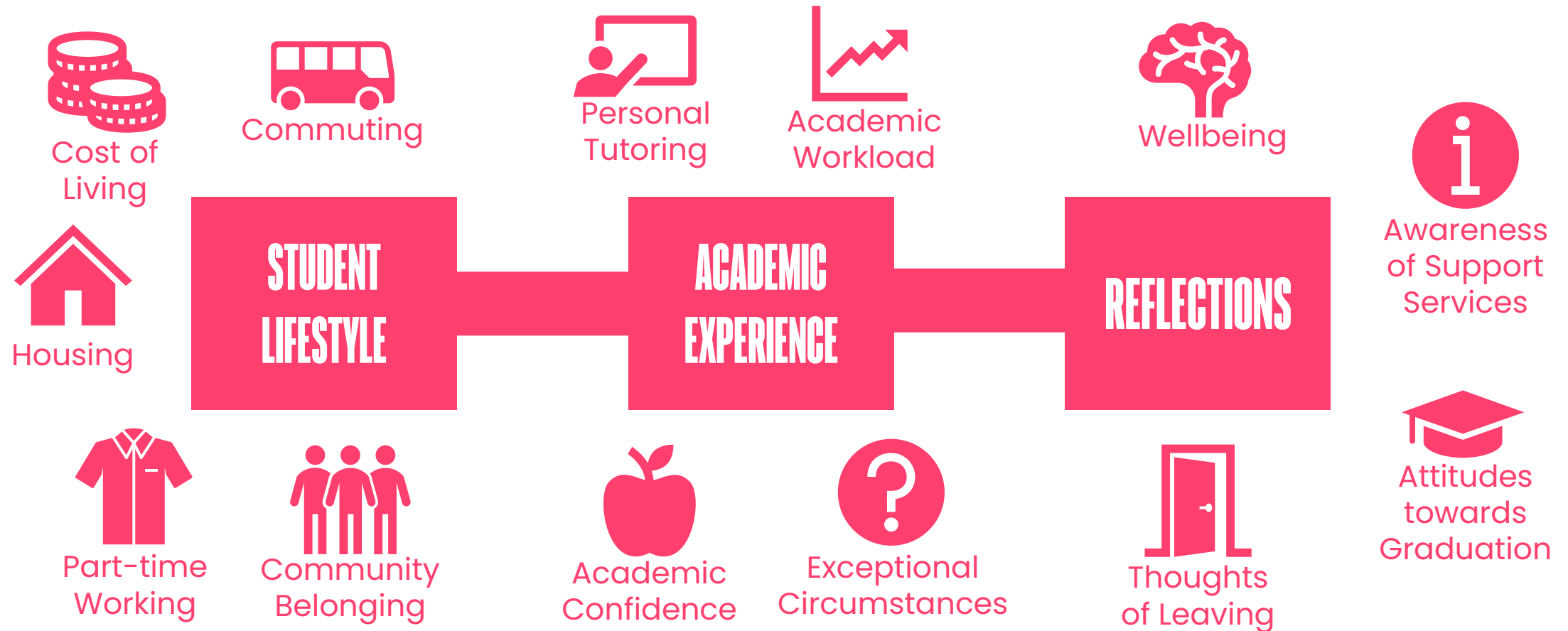
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

THRIVING ACADEMICALLY
received **1070** responses.

GENDER

Female* – 49% **Male**** – 44%
Non-binary – 2% **PNTS** – 5%

*Including Trans women   **Including Trans men

ETHNICITY

White – 18%   **Asian** – 58%
Black – 17%   **Mixed** - 3%
Arab – 1%   **PNTS** – 3%

AGE-RANGE

17-24 years – 53%
25-39 years – 47%

FEE STATUS

Home – 29%
International – 71%

SCHOOL

SPECS – 27%   **HBS** – 34%
LMS – 13%   **CTA** – 9%
HSK – 8%   **HLE** – 9%

LEVEL OF STUDY

Foundation – 2%
Undergraduate – 38%
Postgraduate – 58%
PhD – 2%

REGISTERED DISABILITY

Yes – 9%
No – 88%
PNTS – 3%

*Self-declaration

COMMUTER STATUS

Commuter* – 71%
Non-commuter – 29%

*Self-defined

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PNTS = Prefer not to say.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

THRIVING ACADEMICALLY
received **1070** responses.

HOME, UNDERGRAD
24%

FIRST IN FAMILY
45%

FINANCIAL POSITION
No concerns – **19%**
Some concerns – **62%**
Serious concerns – **19%**

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES
Student parents – **13%**
Eldercare – **8%**
Registered Carers – **4%**

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
Live on-campus – **28%**
Live in Hatfield – **15%**
Live within 60mins – **33%**
Live 60+mins away – **24%**

EMPLOYMENT
Works 0-10 hours p/wk* – **29%**
Works 11-20 hours p/wk* – **59%**
Works 20+ hours p/wk* – **12%**

* Of employed respondents (44% of all respondents)

REGISTERED DISABILITY
Yes – **9%**
No – **88%**
PNTS – **3%**

*Self-declaration

COMMUTER STATUS
Commuter* – **71%**
Non-commuter – **29%**

*Self-defined

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PNTS = Prefer not to say.

KEY FINDINGS | ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

89% of respondents were satisfied with the **quality of teaching**, the **accessibility of academic staff** (**89%**), and support if they were affected by **exceptional circumstances** (**88%**).

Respondents with disabilities reported the lowest agreement rate regarding the **accessibility of academic staff** (73%).
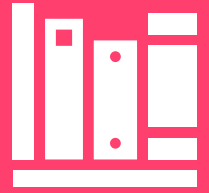
PERSONAL TUTORING

Respondents were also satisfied with the **support from Personal Tutors** (**86%**), and the **regularity of meetings with Personal Tutors** (**85%**). **Home** respondents reported **less regularity of meetings with their personal tutors** (**26%**) and **effective support from personal tutor** (**24%**) compared to **international** respondents (**90% and 90%**)

ACADEMIC CONFIDENCE

84% of respondents felt that their academic workload was **manageable**, with **85%** of respondents agreeing that they had everything they needed to **successfully complete** their assessments.

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KEY FINDINGS | ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

TIMING OF ASSESSMENTS

Respondents were satisfied with **the timing of assessments (84%)** and the **quality of information provided about assessments** (**85%**).

Home respondents were less likely to be satisfied with the **timing of assessments (72%)** and the **quality of information provided about assessments (75%)** compared to **international** students (**90% respectively**)

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

84% of respondents felt the **marking of their assessments and coursework was fair. 83%** of respondents were comfortable to **apply for a coursework extension** if they needed to and **85%** would **apply for exceptional circumstances** if needed.

Non-commuter (79%) and **Black (78%)** respondents reported the lowest agreement rate regarding **applying for exceptional circumstances.**

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Overall, **87%** of respondents stated they were **satisfied with the academic support available** if they were struggling with assignments.

Only **74%** of respondents who **were considering leaving UH** were **satisfied with academic skills** and assignment support, if they were struggling.

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KEY FINDINGS | STUDENT LIFESTYLE

COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS & FINANCIAL CONCERNS

Overall, **81%** of respondents felt **worried about their financial position** and **65%** of respondents will **ask their family or friends for financial support**.

Only **62%** of students surveyed thought that they were eligible for **financial support** from UH. Substantially lower proportions of **UG (47%)**, **home (48%)**, and **non-commuter (49%)** respondents reported awareness of their eligibility for financial support from UH.

International (83%), Postgraduate (83%) respondents were more likely to be worried about their financial position, compared to **home (76%)** and **Undergraduate (78%)** respondents.
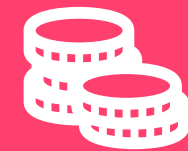
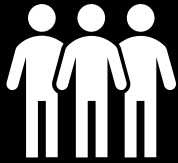## IMPACT OF THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The Cost of Living had a **negative impact on their mental health/wellbeing (38%)** and **spending time with their friends/family (32%)**.

For **Home (51%), undergraduate (49%)** and **Black (52%)** respondents, the cost of living had a negative impact on their mental health/wellbeing.

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KEY FINDINGS | STUDENT LIFESTYLE

COMMUNITY BELONGING

Overall, **23%** of respondents felt they did not belong to the university community and **23%** of respondents felt **they did not have a group of friends** to support them.

Home respondents **(48%)** and **respondents with disabilities (54%)** did not feel part of the university community.

HOUSING

28% of respondents **were living in on campus accommodation** and **33%** of respondents **were living in Off-campus** accommodation (within 60 minutes travel-time from campus).

33% of respondents who were living off campus, **would have preferred to live on campus,** but felt it was too expensive.

PART-TIME JOBS

44% of respondents had part-time jobs; of **12%** reported working **20+ hours per week.**

78% of those who worked **20+ hours per week** indicated that they'd had to **prioritise part-time work over their studies** to cover their living costs, in comparison to those working 0-10 hours **(37%)**, or 11-20 hours **(46%)** per week.

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KEY FINDINGS | REFLECTIONS

DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS

89% of respondents felt will **graduate with the degree classification that they're aiming for** and 94% stated they would **graduate with a degree with would feel proud** of when finishing at UH.

EMPLOYABILITY

Overall, **92%** of respondents felt their **degree will support their future employability** and 93% of respondents plan to **seek employment in an area related to their degree**.

THOUGHTS OF LEAVING...

21% of respondents had **considered leaving their course** at some point.
The **most common reasons** for considering leaving were, (1) Mental / physical wellbeing (**27%**), and (2) Financial cost of studying (**20%**)

When asked what **prevented them from leaving**, students sought support from:
1. Discussions with friends/family (**21%**)
2. Wellbeing services (**6%**)
3. Financial assistance (**5%**)

However, 34% of respondents made the decision by themselves without support.

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THE NARRATIVE

47% of employed respondents agreed they'd need to prioritise PT work over studies; with 12% working over 20 hours per week.

32% of respondents reported that their financial position had a negative impact upon spending time with friends/family.

Rising cost of living

More time spent **working** part-time jobs

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

81% of respondents had financial concerns; with 19% of respondents worrying daily about their financial position.

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

Constant worry = declining **mental health**

36% of commuter respondents lived with more than a 60-min travel time to campus.

38% of respondents selected their financial position having the most negative impact upon their mental wellbeing.

18% of respondents reported that their financial position had a negative impact upon their academic performance.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. REVIEW PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION TO ENSURE IT IS REALISTIC & INCLUDES SUFFICIENT DETAIL ABOUT FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

For UH to review its pre-arrival information and the content of induction to ensure that it is **comprehensive** and **realistic**, particularly with relation to the **costs of the student lifestyle**. Integrate financial support details into the **induction** process and provide **financial literacy workshops** to help students develop essential financial management skills.

2. EXPLORE HOW CAMPUS LIFE CAN BE MADE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR STUDENTS.

For UH to Investigate ways to make **on-campus services more affordable** (including catering, parking, and other amenities). Ensure the availability of **adequate community spaces** with free-to-use facilities like microwaves and water taps. Additionally, explore opportunities to provide more **affordable accommodation options** for students, minimizing costs related to living on or near campus. The University, Students' Union, and local businesses could also collaborate to create as many **student-friendly (flexible) part-time job opportunities** as possible.

3. EMBED FURTHER FLEXIBILITY INTO TIMETABLING & TEACHING DELIVERY.

For UH to explore ways to **increase further flexibility** into timetabling and teaching delivery, allowing students more opportunity to **balance** their academic and personal commitments.

4. CONTINUE TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS.

For UH to provide a **comprehensive induction** and **re-induction** process that raises awareness of available support services, encouraging students to **seek help early**. To also offer **training for all frontline staff** to enhance their support and signposting skills, ensuring **clear pathways** for students to sources of help.

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