

No Detriment Survey Report

Background

On the 13 January City Students' Union distributed a survey, via email, to understand students' current worries, their appetite for a no detriment policy and reasons why they believe such a policy is necessary. The survey follows a term of blended remote and on campus teaching, changing national restrictions and continued calls from City students for the introduction of a No Detriment policy. In just under 24 hours the survey received 1,060 responses of which 77% were Undergraduate students and 23% Postgraduate students. The survey responses were spread out evenly amongst the five schools with the highest number of responses coming from the School of Arts and Social Sciences (26.19%) and the School of Mathematics, Computer Science and Engineering (27.51%).

Headlines

- Students unanimously (96.49%) responded in favour of implementing a No Detriment/ Safety Net policy. This was reflected by both Undergraduate and Postgraduate students and across every school. These worries are reflected in the surveys free text comments where students explain why they require a No Detriment policy.
- City students are very worried about many aspects of their life. Over 80% of students are 'very worried' or 'quite worried' about the current COVID-19 situation and their studies and attainment. Further, over half of students are 'very worried' or 'quite worried' about their money and financial situation.
- A combination of continued and increasing social isolation, inadequate learning environments, subsequent mental health issues and concerns over online learning have resulted in students requiring a No Detriment policy.

Student Concerns

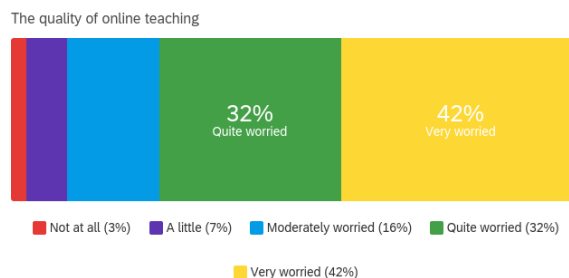
To create a picture of the concerns of City students, respondents were asked how worried they were about four topics. For each of these topics students were able to select answers on a five point scale encompassing 'not at all worried', 'a little worried', 'moderately worried', 'quite worried' and 'very worried.' The topics were:

1. The current COVID-19 situation
2. Studies and attainment
3. Quality of online teaching
4. Money and my financial situation

Students were most worried about the current COVID-19 situation and their studies and attainment. Well over three quarters of the students surveyed were 'very worried' or 'quite worried' about the current COVID-19 situation and their studies and attainment. Of all the questions asked, students worries regarding studies and attainment received the highest percentage (65.21%) of 'very worried' results.

There were no notable variances between schools in terms of worries over the current COVID-19 situation and exams and attainment with all schools following the overall trend. Similarly, there were also no notable variances between Undergraduate and Postgraduate worries.

Amongst all students nearly three quarters (74.1%) were concerned about the quality of online teaching. Less than 10% of students had no worries at all about their online teaching. This trend of concern is reflected in both Undergraduate and Postgraduate students. There were no notable variances in any schools with students belonging to all schools showing extremely high levels of concern regarding their online learning.



Students demonstrated high levels of concern for their financial situation. Over half (62.5%) of respondents were 'quite worried' or 'very worried' regarding concerns around money. Undergraduate students were more likely to be 'moderately worried', 'quite worried', or 'very worried' in comparison to Postgraduate students. However, for both groups of students over 50% of students were quite worried or very worried about their financial concerns. Whilst a slightly larger proportion of students responded as 'not at all worried' and 'a little worried' (18.79%) regarding their finances than other for other questions, a relatively large portion still highlighted their concerns.

No Detriment Policy

Students overwhelmingly feel the need for a No Detriment Policy to be introduced to support their continuation and attainment. Of the 1,060 respondents, 96.5% of students feel the need for the introduction of a no detriment policy, a trend reflected across all school and both Undergraduate and Postgraduate students. (See Appendix 1) Students have also highlighted and explained their need for a No-Detriment response through an independent student-led petition signed by 343 individuals. (See Appendix 2) Students were asked in the Union's survey to explain, in the free text comments, the issues they are facing which they believe requires a No Detriment / Safety Net policy. (See Appendix 3 and 4) Many of the free text comments mentioned multiple issues both internal and external to their student experience at City. This demonstrates how in many cases students' reasons for requiring a No Detriment policy is a combination of detrimental and unavoidable factors.

Overwhelmingly, the **quality of online learning** and **mental health** were the biggest reasons students stated in their comments. The concerns regarding online learning were extensive with criticism ranging from ineffective teaching methods to a lack of communication with academic staff and fellow students – both formal and social. Many students stated that online learning could not replicate the quality of in person teaching and subsequently this was negatively impacting their attainment.

"The quality of teaching has obviously been disrupted, and the level of my studies at city is poor due to online classes"

Poor mental health was the second biggest reason given for the need to introduce a No Detriment policy. Negative mental health issues were frequently cited as being caused by a multitude of factors such as COVID-19, studying at home, isolation, and grief. Students stated that they were stressed, exhausted, struggling, and depressed. Few students spoke about accessing welfare services in response to their poor mental health. This is particularly important as we know from the [NUS Coronavirus Student Survey](#) that only 1/5 students had sought support for their poor mental health. Students often references not applying for Extenuating Circumstances for poor mental health in fear of being rejected. Many students noted the negative mental health impact of not having a Safety Net policy whilst studying during COVID-19.

“Working as a student nurse on a COVID-19 ward has made me physically and mentally exhausted. Doing essays on top of this is extremely hard.”

Inadequate learning environment was the next most common reason. Students described having a lack of a quiet place to study, often because of multiple people working and learning from home. This often linked to comments regarding lack of access to stable Wi-Fi for both online learning and assessment. Students referenced the library being open but expressed fear for them or their family catching COVID-19 when travelling to access it. The **lack of access to facilities** was another issue referenced where students struggled to access books and texts. Students expressed concern about travelling to campus because of COVID-19 or living too far away to access facilities.

“Difficulty studying at home with constant distractions and busy home due to primary school siblings being at home, Wi-Fi problems due to whole family using it for work purposes, huge impact on mental health”

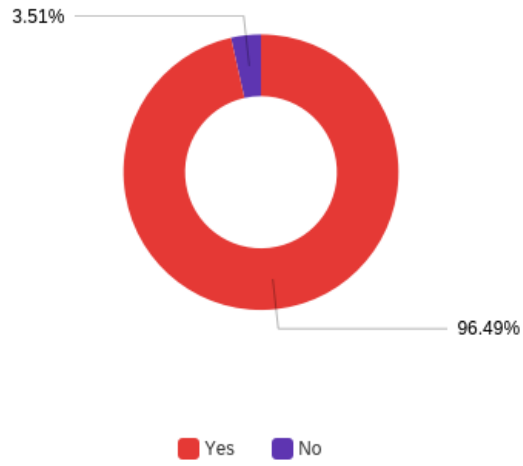
Many responses described the unavoidable difficulty of **trying to study during a global pandemic**. The implications of lockdown such as isolation from family and travel restrictions were noted as impacting on studies. Just under one tenth of responses described struggling with the implications of **COVID-19 illness / bereavement** on them or their family and the subsequent need for support. A notable number of responses described the difficulty of new **caring responsibilities** due to the impacts of government restrictions and the need for this to be considered. The responses demonstrate that students are facing numerous significant and unavoidable issues that are impacting their academic studies and wellbeing.

Recommendations

1. City, University of London to look at best practice examples at other institutions to devise a ‘no detriment’ policy which best suits its students.
2. City, University of London should reintroduce the Supporting Your Academic Success policy to allow students to get a resit or extension without low / no evidence.
3. All assessment should be done through coursework, rather than exams, wherever possible.
4. All online exams to be 24-hour and open book wherever possible.
5. The Students’ Union, via the NUS campaign, and the University, via the S10 Universities group, to lobby the OfS to reassure institutions that action will not be taken against them in regard to grade inflation as a result of no detriment policies.
6. Schools and the Union should increase communications regarding available welfare services to their students particularly regarding bereavement, mental health issues and financial problems.

Appendix 1

Do you feel there is a need for a No Detriment/ Safety Net policy?



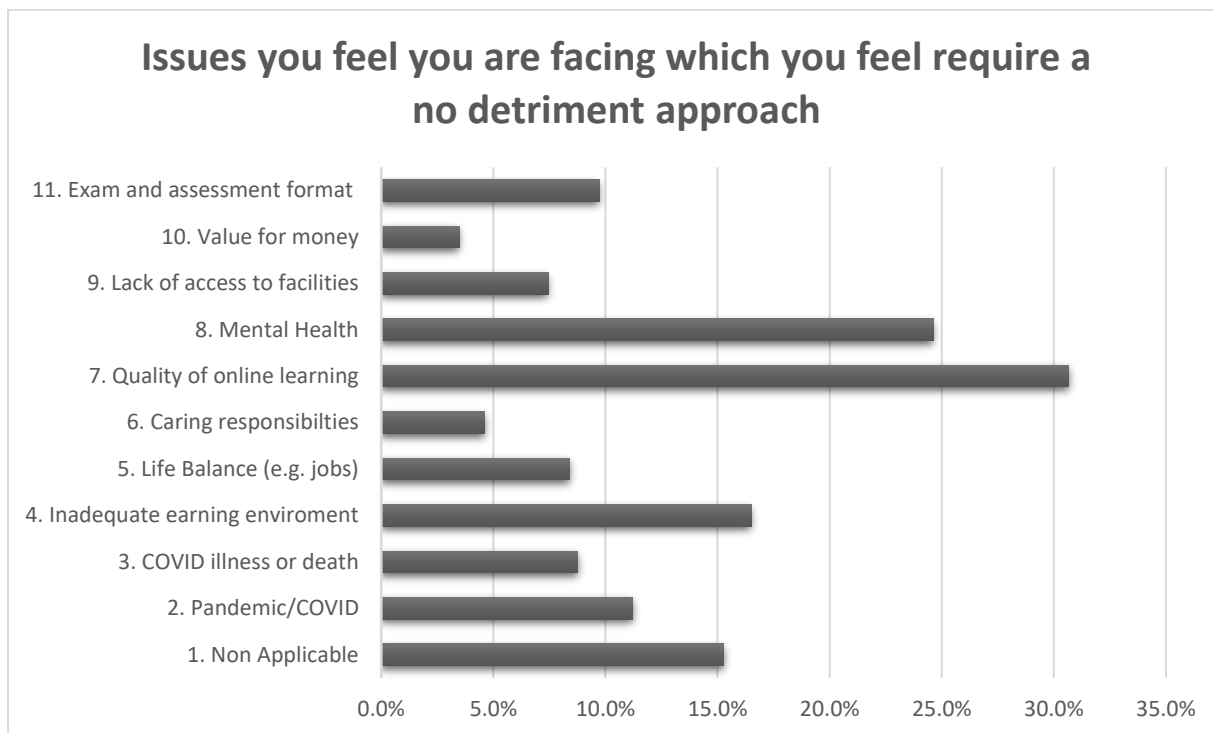
Appendix 2

A petition has been started by City students for the implementation of a Safety-Net policy for all City, University of London students. This has currently been signed by 343 individuals. Comments explaining why include:

“I’ve lost many family and friends to Covid 19 and we are expected to produce the same quality of work with everything that’s happenings. It’s inhumane and ridiculous for the heads of courses to assume everything is unchanged and everyone has adjusted to online learning. With families having little to no income right now it is difficult to manage even financially let alone mentally”

“Every other major uni in London is doing it so why not City.”

Appendix 3



Appendix 5

A selection of free text comments from students giving providing their reasons for needing a No Detriment Policy.

"I feel that this year we as students are facing more uncertainty and issues with our studies than last semester when the pandemic started at the end of the teaching period as now the whole teaching period is in the pandemic."

"Trying to juggle lockdown restrictions such as home schooling alongside studies. The pandemic has made trying to keep with workload more difficult."

"Can't work well from home - I live with a loud family, online teaching is not the same, I often have internet difficulties."

"Things are just as difficult as they were last March when these policies were the norm - if not worse, as last year students had two terms of in person teaching."

"Online exams add an extra layer of worry. Technical issues. Familiarity and the ability to practice and have support available before and during the exam period."

"The quality of teaching is not the same as everything is online. Everything seems very different. I'm literally doing everything on my own without receiving any help. It's effecting my mental health."

"The impact of this pandemic has been huge on our studies. From having barely any quiet space to study to having IT difficulties. Furthermore, the teaching just isn't the same, I understand it's hard for the lecturers as well but I feel as though the quality of teaching is not the same."