



CITY
STUDENTS'
UNION

Term One Check-ins 2022/23

*'A report on the experience of students during term one of the academic
year 2022/23.'*



Term One Check-ins Report 2022

The Student Check-ins project is a wellbeing and insight project delivered by City Students' Union. The project takes place across the academic year at key check-in points for new and returning students. The first Check-ins of this academic year 22/23 took place in November and focused on first year undergraduate and postgraduate students. The Union made 2,503 calls to students and completed 705 check-ins with students.

Positive experiences of Term one have shined through this report with most students pleased with the campus experience, sense of community and expectations of their course being met. As well as capturing the academic and wider student experience of Term one, students were also invited to share their feedback on their experiences with the current cost of living crisis, much of which food, travel and housing features significantly in.

This report highlights the key headlines from the Term one Check-ins and recommendations to consider.

Report headlines

- **Campus experience:** 84% of students that we called were pleased with their Term one campus experience. Many students owed this to attending society events or joining Students' Union events on campus. 94% of students felt a part of a community at City during their first term.
- **Course experience:** 92% of first year students felt that their course expectations have been met, a similar average was found across all schools. 61% of students who still have some online teaching rated their online learning as good, 27% were unsure and 13% as poor.
- **Cost of living:** 60% of students are cutting back on their spending and 37% of students are concerned, very concerned or extremely concerned with financially managing. Further segmented by living situation and ethnicity, these financial worries are higher for students still looking for somewhere to live¹, those living in City halls, Black African students and Black Caribbean students. 25% of students highlighted that the current crisis has had a significant impact on their wellbeing.
- **Student support:** 73% of students that we called felt 'Supported' or 'Very supported' so far, having high awareness of the different City services available to them. 24% of students felt that the support they received has been neutral. Students responded that they want more academic support around assessment guidance including having assessment details available, earlier submission information and earlier exam timetables. Other areas of support also included greater support in careers support and more coordinated social/society events.
- **Student communications:** 81% of students have generally found that they have received most or all information they need from the University, their School and the Students' Union. Central communications have positively been described as 'clear', 'informative' and 'regular'.
- **Student worries:** The main worry of students at the time were upcoming exam and assessments, followed by cost of living / financial concerns.

¹ Total number of students called who reported that they are still looking for somewhere to live were 2 students (0.3% of students called).

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been set out by the Union because of findings from the Term one Check-ins 2022.

1. Campus Experience

- 1.1 City to review capacity of all communal student social spaces and study spaces for current intake of students.
- 1.2 City to support the implementation of the Union's Academic Societies Review by proposing a SLT sponsor to ensure success across all six schools.
- 1.3 City to continue to invest in student community building opportunities via the Union.

2. Course Experience

- 2.1 As recommended in previous Check-ins reports, Schools should undertake research of the current restrictions and pressures to timetabling and coordinate with the Timetabling team on condensing in-person teaching days across the teaching week.

3. Cost of Living

- 3.1 City to have record of all students still pending accommodation and signpost adequate support.
- 3.2 City to complete a comprehensive accommodation needs-analysis ahead of the 2023/24 academic year to ensure there are enough halls spaces for forecast student recruitment numbers.
- 3.3 City to better signpost and support students living in the private rented sector and to work with the Students' Union to expand the Housing Fair.
- 3.4 City and the Union to consider extra financial support for students, such as bursaries / hardship schemes.
- 3.5 City and the Union to collaborate on clearly communicating financial / money support available to students.
- 3.6 The Union to add these recommendations to its Cost of Living Manifesto.

4. Student Support

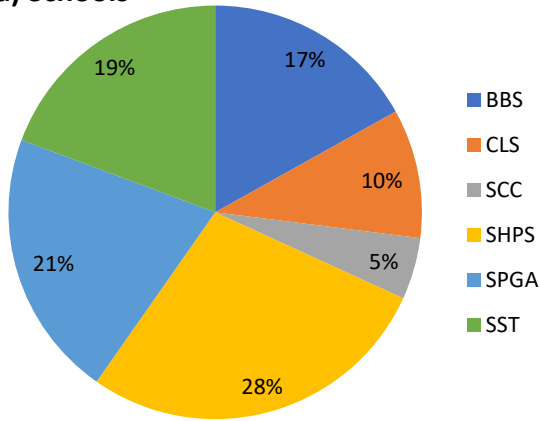
- 4.1 Schools to review current communications on assessment guidance and instructions and to make key information available at the start of the term.
- 4.2 Schools to coordinate with Exam timetabling team to ensure an earlier release of exam timetables at the start of the term.

5. Student Communications

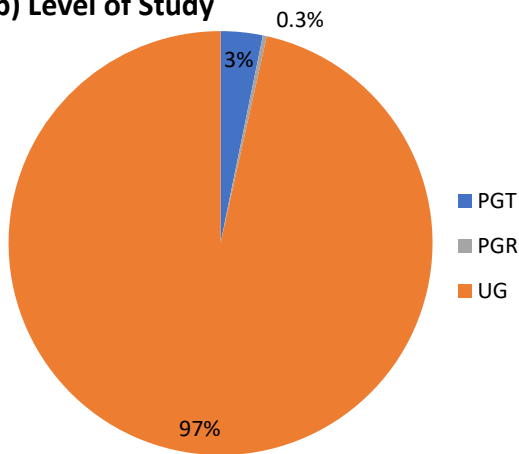
- 5.1 A consistent approach/policy to be developed for school communications to consider email frequency and content, in-line with central communications from the University and the Union.
- 5.2 Joint SU Communications & Student Communications review of Student Hub on accessibility on finding information and link with Students' Union information.

Graph 1a-d: Demographic breakdown of students called by the Students' Union.

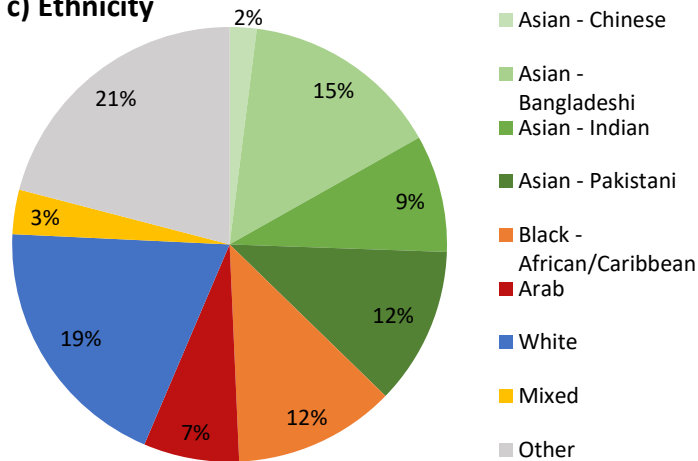
a) Schools



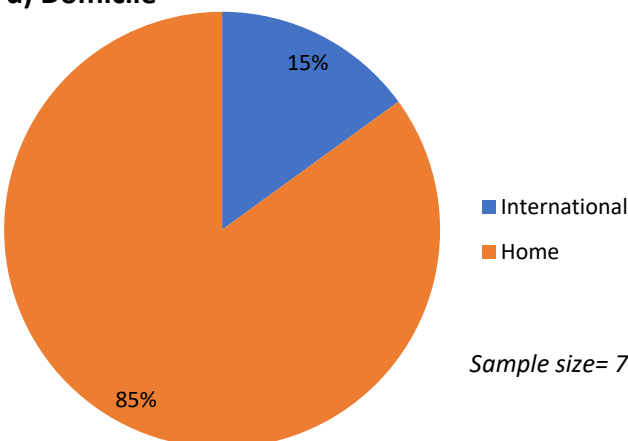
b) Level of Study



c) Ethnicity



d) Domicile



Sample size= 705

Overview

The Students' Union ran the termly student Check-ins over 5 days from 11th November to 18th November. The Check-ins project has built on the success of previous check-ins delivered over the past academic years. The aim of the project is to provide a wellbeing check-in for first year students in their first term and gather insights on the student experience.

The project was delivered on campus by a team of 16 trained student check-in callers who were guided through a range of topics. 2,503 calls were made to new students with 705 check-in conversations being completed in total. Nearly 30% of total calls conducted were continued on to complete a check in.

Check-in conversations were framed around **campus experience, course experience, the cost of living, student support, student communications** and **student worries**. This year, a section of the call focused on the current cost of living to better understand what support is required by students from the University and SU.

The full question set can be found in Appendix B.

Demographics

Students in their first year of study were part of the Term one Check-in calls. Most students who received a check-in were from SHPS (28%), followed by the least number of students called from SCC (5%).

Most students who had a check-in call were UG level, a total of 97% of students.

Students who received a check-in call were mainly Asian (38%), White (19%) and Black (12%). Percentages of individual ethnicities are shown in Graph 1c.

85% of students who received a call were home students while 15% were international students.

Due to small sample size, the findings will not include analysis on disability status. A full list of demographic data including sex and tenure of students called can be found in Appendix A.

Analysis

The Check-in's call data recorded responses to 25 questions from 705 City students. Each call asked questions on the **campus experience** of Term one, the **course experience**, students' experiences with the current **cost of living** crisis, the quality of **student support** and **student communications** received and overall **student worries**. The following section explores the student experience in these following areas, providing demographic breakdowns to further understand experiences of specific student communities at City.

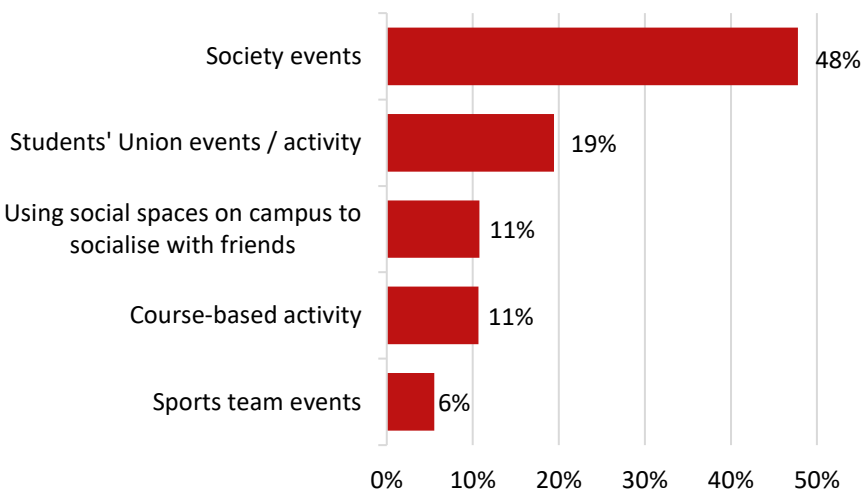
Campus experience

84% of students that we called are pleased with Term one's campus experience. 94% of students felt a part of a community at City.

Students' response on overall campus experience for Term one was generally positive with 45% of responses saying it was 'great', and 39% of responses to 'average'. Comments around space were frequently linked to the student on campus experience with some responses mentioning experiences such as *crowdedness, difficulties in finding quiet study spaces, difficulties in navigating campus and the buildings, and feeling that there is no space for socialising.*

Most responses on good activity that has been happening on campus was owed to student's enjoying society events and Union events. Students identified that having more society events and course-based activity would further add to their campus experience. Open text comments also included that some student's felt that they had no time to stay on campus, due to commuting as well as other responsibilities such as employment, hindering their full campus experience.

Graph 2a: Total response categories from students on good campus activity



94% of students felt a part of a community at City. Results from the Union Welcome survey completed by City students who attended a Welcome event similarly cites that a high number of students (92%) had felt a sense of community during the first term. This figure slightly varies between School as shown in Graph 2b which highlights that first-year students from School of Creativity and Communication (100%) are the most likely to feel part of a community. 89% of students from School of Science and Technology felt a part of a community, 93% of students from the Bayes Business School and City Law School, 94% for School of Health and Psychological Sciences and 96% for School of Policy and Global Affairs.

Graph 2b: Percentage of students who feel a part of a community at City by Schools



Qualitative data was gathered during the calls to capture student experiences of community through individual narrations. Common themes of community at City are highlighted in the word cloud below, suggesting that society events, being in a diverse and inclusive space, a friendly and welcoming environment and meeting new people have played an integral part of forming a sense of community and belonging at the start of student's journey at City.

Word cloud: What makes Community at City?

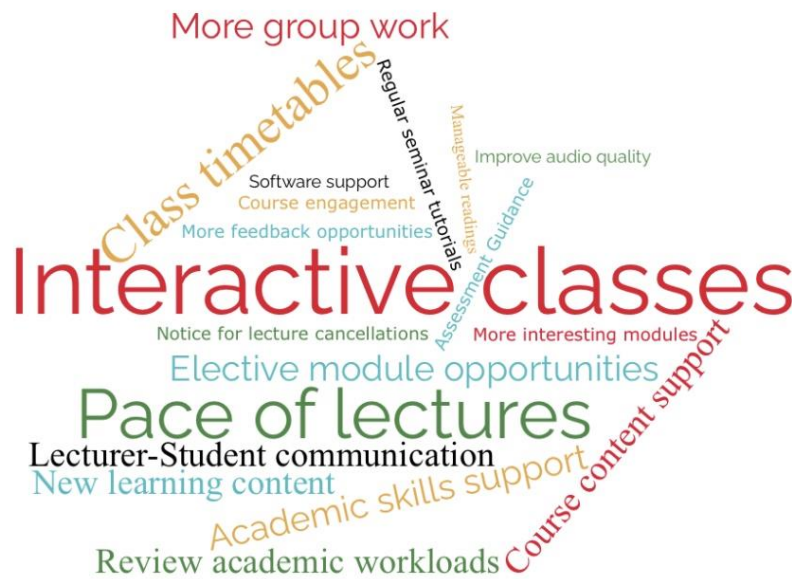


Course experience

Students were asked if their course is meeting their expectations to date 92% of students indicated that their overall expectations of their course have been met during Term one. On average all Schools maintained similar expectation management, indicating students are overall pleased with their course experience. Open text responses from students displayed in the below word cloud highlights student suggestions for improving areas of their course; particularly around course learning including being able to choose more elective modules specified to their degree and condensing timetables; and teaching delivery including students wanting a greater level of interactivity from peers and lecturers.

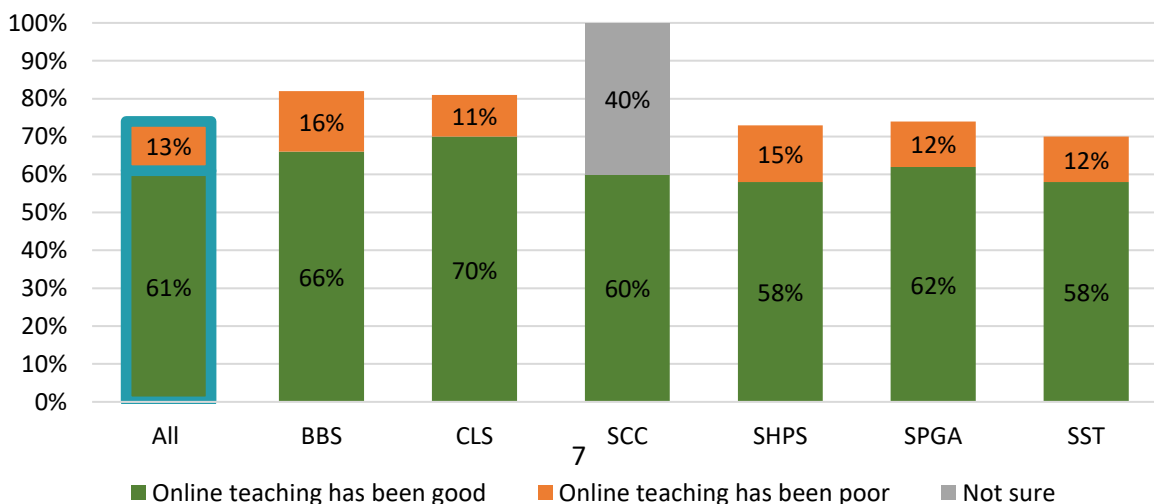
92% of first year students felt that their course expectations have been met.

Word cloud: What can City do to improve your course experience?



Almost half of students stated that their course is being delivered fully in-person; this was indicated mostly by students from the School of Health and Psychological Sciences and School of Policy and Global Affairs. Students from courses that had some aspects of online learning rated the quality of teaching and resources in comparison to in-person teaching on campus as good (61%), with 27% feeling unsure and 13% rating their online experience as poor. More students from the City Law School were likely to rate their online learning experience as good compared to the overall average while students from the Bayes Business School and School of Health and Psychological Sciences were slightly more likely to rate their online learning experience as poorer than the overall average.

Graph 3: Course experiences of online learning by Schools

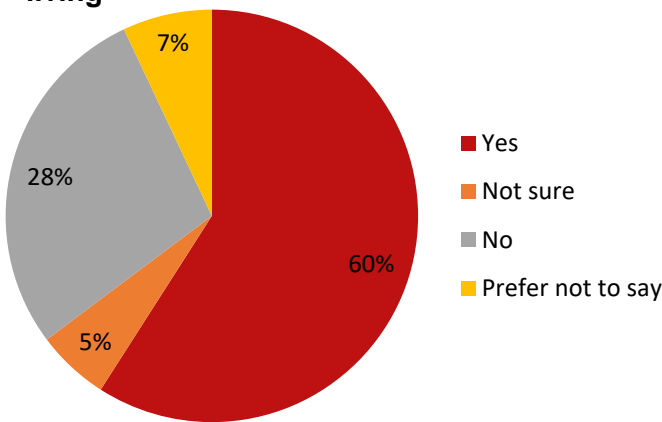


Cost of Living

This term we explored the student experience around the cost of living and its effect on City student’s financial behaviours and management, and their wellbeing. Data from the National Union of Students (NUS) Cost of Living research has been included in the analysis to supplement Check-in’s reporting on the cost of living and to provide a summary on the wider City student population. Check-in calls were conducted with first year City students and NUS Survey was completed by City students across all years (n= 425 City students)².

60% of students at City are cutting back on their spending.

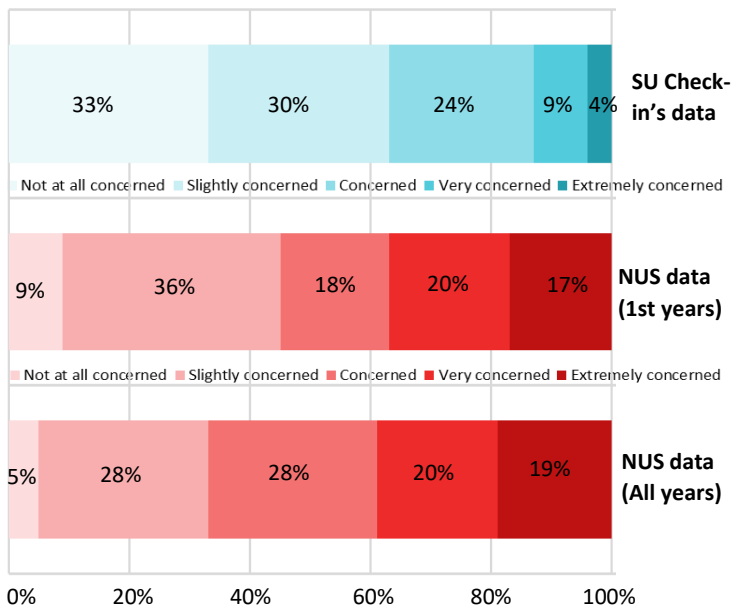
Graph 4a: Percentage of student’s cutting back on their spending due to the current cost of living



Students were asked whether they have been changing their spending habits because of the rise in cost of living. Graph 4a shows that nearly 60% of students stated that they have had to cut back on their spending. According to NUS data, City students reported that the highest cutbacks in spending since the beginning of 2022 has been on socialising.

Students were then asked about their level of concern on financially managing their living costs; this has allowed us to understand further into the financial pressures students may be facing. Overall, 37% of first year students who received a check-in call this term indicated that they were concerned with managing financially including 13% of students feeling ‘very concerned’ or ‘extremely concerned’.

Graph 4b: Percentage of students concerned about their ability to manage financially



Reversely, NUS Cost of living data highlights more widely that 67% of City students surveyed across all years are feeling the hit with cost of living, with 39% of students feeling ‘very concerned’ or ‘extremely concerned’; as shown in Graph 4b, the level of concern tends based on NUS data to be lower for first year students when further segmented by year of study, providing a more similar comparison to the Check-in’s data.

City students have ranked the following costs as pressure points (NUS, 2022)

- 1 Housing (e.g. rent, energy and water bills)
- 2 Food & Travel
- 3 Energy
- 4 Learning

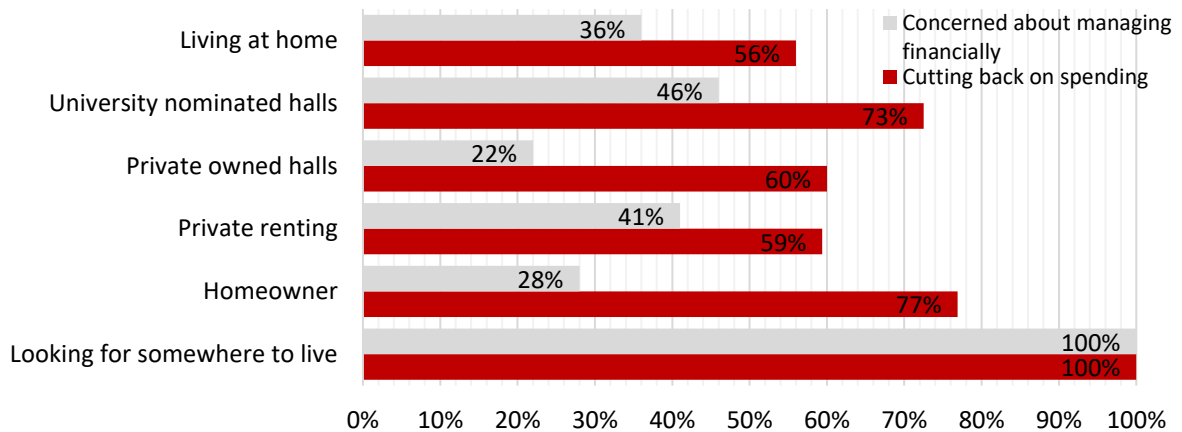
² Sample demographics of City University of London responses include *year of study* (First year-40%; Second year-23%; Third, fourth or final year-37%), *level of study* (UG-49%;PGT-45%;PGR-6%), *domicile* (Home student-48%;International student-52%), and *ethnicity* (White-38%;Asian-38%; Black-10%;Mixed-6%;Other-8%). NUS: Student Cost of Living Report (Sept 2022)

Which students are the most affected by the Cost of Living?

Our data shows that the cost of living experience varies among City students with some students being more affected than others. Analysis on cost of living data from the Check-ins has been segmented by the following key student demographic groups: tenure, domicile and ethnicity.

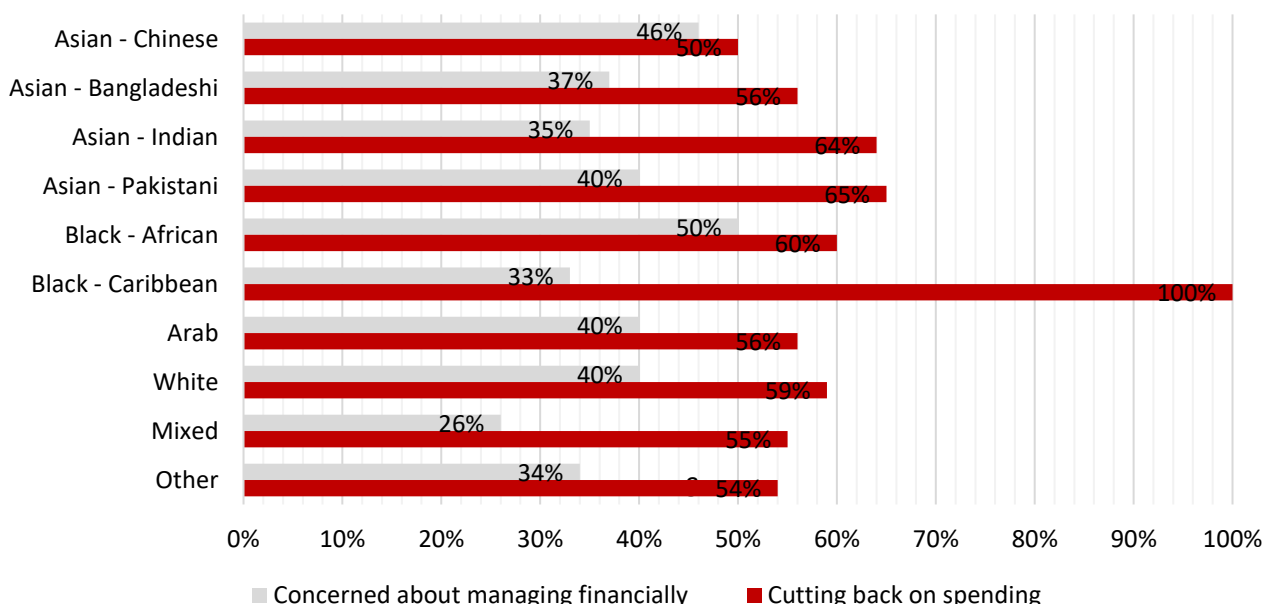
- **Living Situation:** Students who were still seeking a place to live are the most likely to have cut back on their spending due to the rising cost of living as well as being most concerned with financially managing compared to students living somewhere. The total percentage of students recorded in the Check-ins who were still looking for somewhere to live was 0.03%.
- Students living in City nominated halls were second most likely to have concern on their ability to manage financially with most of these students (73%) already restricting their ordinary spending.
- Based on the check-in calls, students living in private owned halls, are homeowners, or living at home with a parent/guardian were less likely to be concerned about financially managing.

Graph 4c: Tenure of students and cost of living experiences



- **Domicile:** Home students are 10% more likely to cut back on their spendings due to the cost of living than for international students.
- **Ethnicity:** 100% of Black Caribbean students who received a check-in call reported that they have had to cut back on their spendings as a result of the cost of living; 50% of Black African students are concerned about financially managing, 13 percentage-points higher than the overall average. Pakistani and Indian students are next more likely to have cut back their spendings than average.

Graph 4d: Ethnicity of students and cost of living experiences



Nearly half of students highlighted that the cost of living has had 'no impact' on their mental health and wellbeing. 17% of students highlighted that the current crisis has had a 'moderate impact' on their wellbeing while 8% share it has had a 'major impact'. In comparison to NUS data, students at City across all years reported that the impact was larger on their mental health and wellbeing; nearly a third of students state that their mental health and wellbeing has been 'moderately impacted' because of the cost of living, and almost a quarter of City students highlight that this has had a 'major impact'.

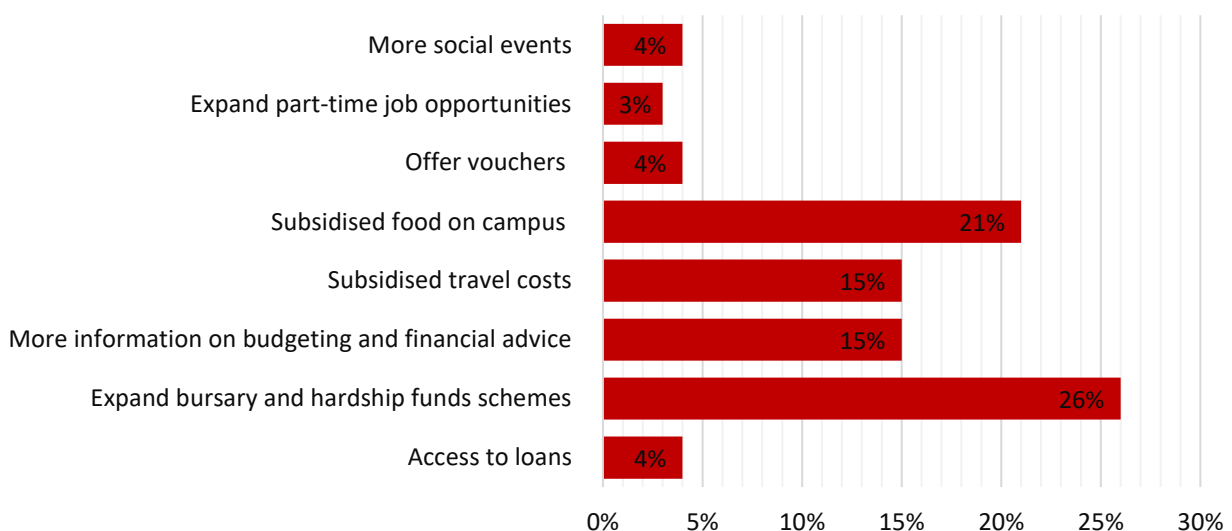
Graph 4e/f: Impact of cost of living on student mental health and wellbeing (Check-in data and NUS data)



Students reported several ways City could help with easing the cost of living crisis through open text responses in the calls. The most common suggestion was having greater financial provisions available including bursaries and hardship funds with more than a quarter of students agreeing that this would help students who are struggling or in need of accessing financial support. 4% of students stated access to loans at City would be helpful. 15% of students share that more information on budgeting and wider financial advice during this time would make them feel more confident in managing their finances and spendings.

Another area that students stated in their check-in calls was introducing subsidies for key expenses to the student experience: this includes food and travel. Over 20% of students commented on the expensive food options on campus and reported that subsidised food would help students to reduce their costs. Many students mentioned that the cost of travel has been heavy and therefore suggest subsidised travel costs onto campus or for their travel costs to be reduced by having more condensed timetable arrangements across the week to reduce commuting requirements to campus. The cost of travel has additionally led to students suggesting the retention of online teaching so that they are not required to commute frequently. Other student suggestions in response to City's approach to the cost of living included free gym memberships, free events and ensuring all course materials are provided at no additional costs to students.

Graph 4g: Categorized open text responses of ways City can support students with the cost of living



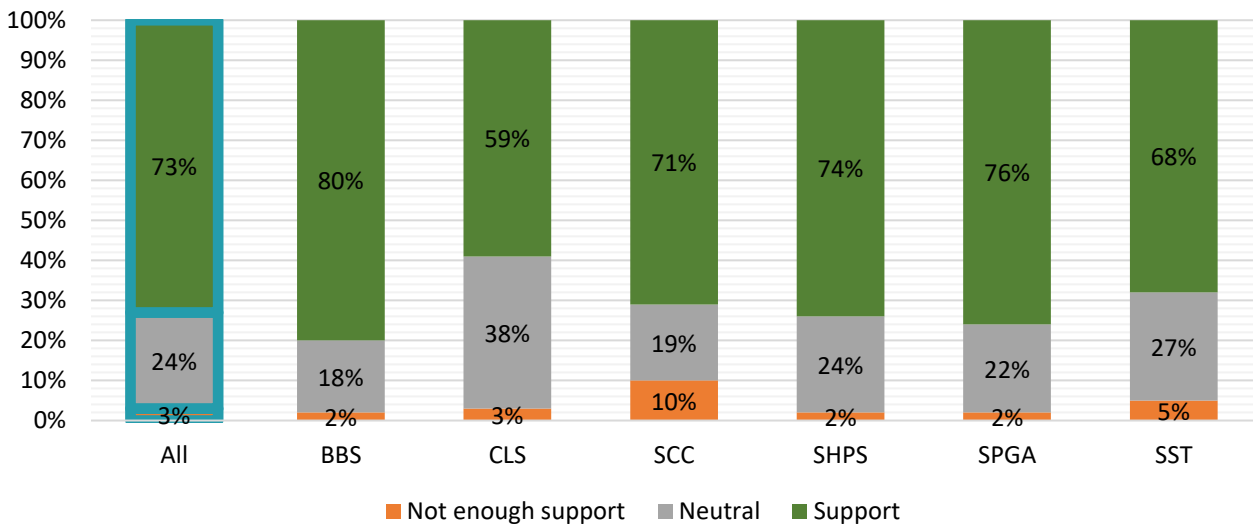
Student support

Most students (73%) felt supported during Term one. There was high awareness of different services available within City (89%) and students were further informed with signposting services on the call.

3/4 of students we called said they felt supported during Term 1.

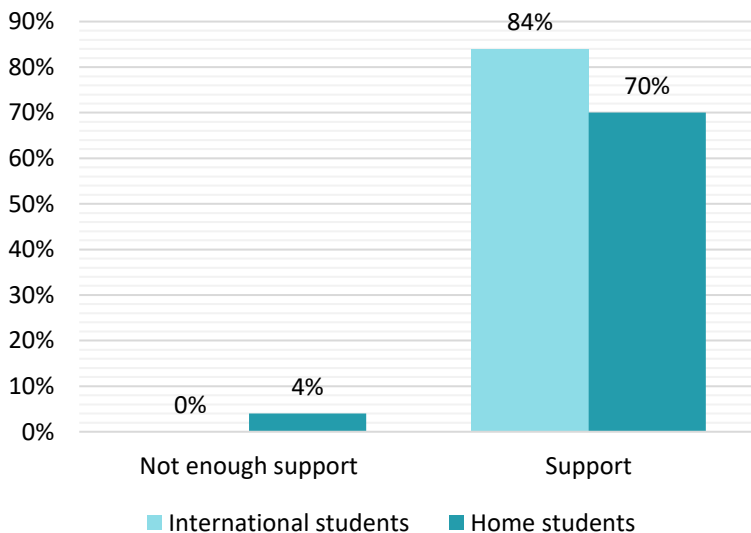
Graph 5a provides a school breakdown of the level of support students felt they had received. Students from Bayes Business School had the highest percentage of students who responded that they felt supported in their first term.

Graph 5a: Percentage of students feeling supported by Schools



International students are more likely than home students to have felt supported in their first term. 84% of international students stated they felt supported so far, with none feeling they have received little to no support. 4% of home students felt unsupported and quarter responded as the level of support being neutral.

Graph 5b: Percentage of students feeling supported by Domicile



Student communications

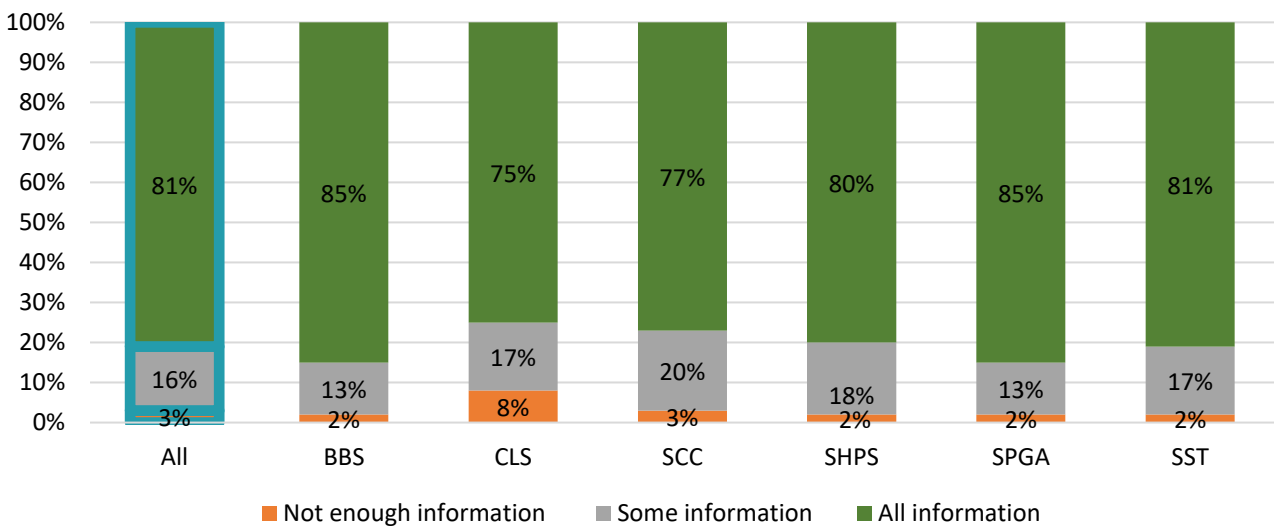
81% of students have found they have received most or all information they need from the University, their School and the Students' Union. Students have highlighted that central communications have been generally 'clear', 'informative' and 'regular' including fast response time to student emails.

Central communications this term has been 'clear', 'informative' and 'regular'.

Three-quarters (75%) of students from all Schools agreed that they received sufficient information. Students from City Law School had a higher percentage of students (8%) who found that there were not receiving enough information from the University, School and SU.

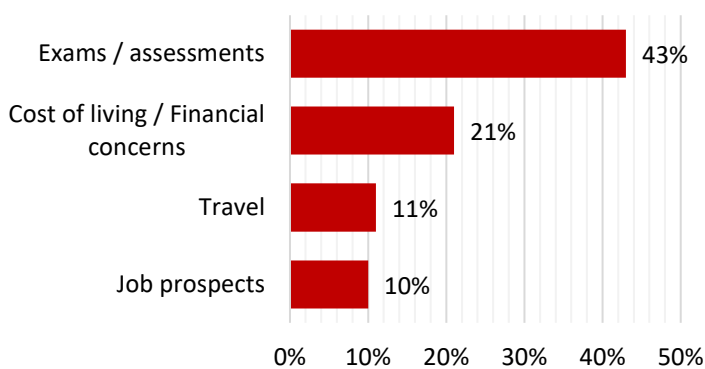
For students who felt that there was none, or not enough information being received, they reported that there needs to be more communication from schools on assessment instructions, more direct and streamlined signposting information as well as consideration for frequency of emails to avoid email overload.

Graph 6: Student communication experiences by School



Student worries

Graph 7: Student general worries ranked in order



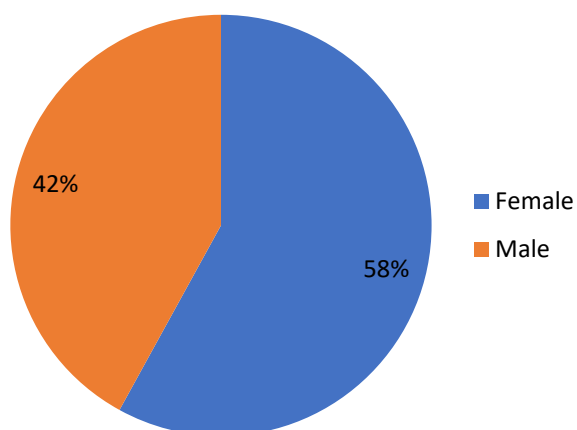
The main worry for students were upcoming exam and assessments, followed by cost of living/financial concerns. Almost half of students shared in that they were looking forward to the Christmas break with many also looking forward to seeing friends and going on placement.

Appendix A

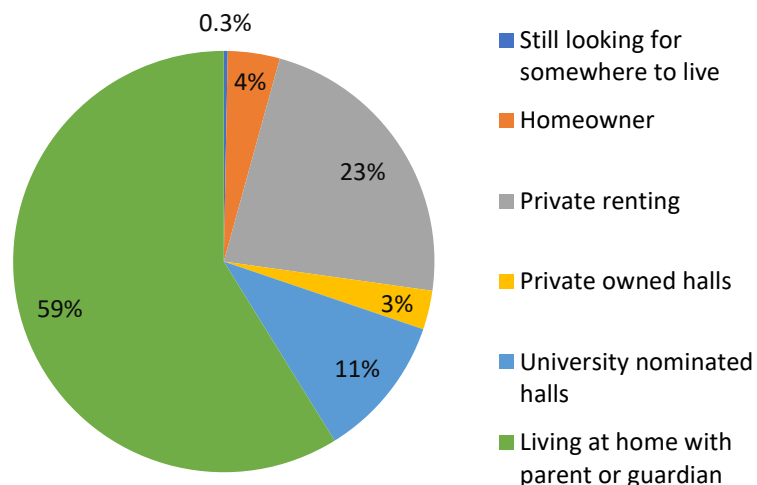
Appendix below provides a full demographic breakdown of students who participated in the Term one Check-in calls including department level.

Graph 8a-b: Student Demographics

Gender



Tenure



Department breakdown

	Departments
Bayes	Undergraduate Programme
	Bayes Specialist Masters Programme
	MBA Programme
CLS	Academic Programmes
	Professional Programmes
SHPS	Health Services Research & Management
	Optometry & Visual Science
	Midwifery & Radiography
	Nursing
	Language & Communication Science
	Psychology
SPGA	Department of Sociology & Criminology
	Department of International Politics
	Department of Economics
SCC	Department of Media, Culture & Creative Industries
	Department of Journalism
	Department of Performing Arts
SST	Department of Computer Science
	Department of Engineering
	Department of Mathematics

Appendix B

Check-in calls question set

1. Is now a good time?
2. Is it okay for me to make some notes as we chat?
3. So we know how to best support you, where are you currently living?
4. How has your experience on campus been so far since you started at City?
5. Do you think there is enough activity, for example, events, course-based socials, society activity etc. happening on campus?
 - a. What has been good about activity happening on campus?
 - b. What activity would you like to see more of?
6. Would you say you feel part of a community at City this year?
7. What makes you feel part of a community at City?
8. What do you think would make you feel part of a community at City?
9. What School are you part of?
10. Are you an undergrad, or postgrad student?
11. Is your course so far meeting the expectations you had before arriving at City?
12. If there was one thing City could do to improve your course so it meets your expectations, what would it be?
13. How would you rate your experience of online teaching and resources compared to in-person teaching on campus?
14. Are you cutting back on your spending because of the current cost of living?
15. How concerned are you about your ability to manage financially at present?
16. How much do you feel like the cost of living is affecting your mental health and wellbeing?
17. What, if anything, do you think City should do to help students during the current cost of living crisis?
18. Have you received the information you need from the University, your School and your Students' Union?
19. What other information would you like to, or need to receive? And where do you need more communications from? (University, School, Students' Union)
20. What has been good about the communications you have received?
21. How supported would you say you feel at City?
22. If this was on a scale of 1-5, would you say you feel very supported, neutral, or very not supported?
23. There are many support services available to students which support specific academic or welfare needs. Are you aware of these different services?
24. Finally, if you don't mind me asking, what are you worried about at the moment?
25. And what are you excited about at the moment?
26. What is one more thing you'd like more help with?