



Introduction and Overview

For a one-week period, from Tuesday 17 November, we opened an online survey to all students and asked them six simple questions. We wanted to gauge the overall mood on campus and get a handle on how students are reacting to a very different academic term.

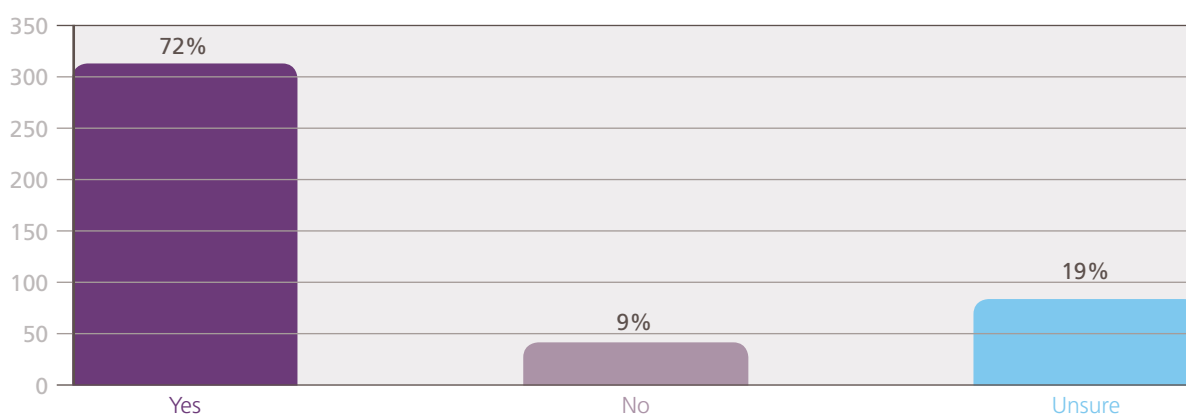
We had **745** individual respondents in total which represents approximately **13%** of the Bucks (taught) student body.

While this survey was conducted over in a short timeframe, and the results rely on a relatively small sample, we believe taken in context it's a reasonable temperature check for current feeling amongst our membership and the responses were generally positive for both the institution and the Students' Union.

Findings

The results were as follows:

1. Are your timetable and the new modes of teaching giving you what you need to succeed in your course?



We offered respondents the chance to elaborate on their answers with an open comment. From those who replied **positively** the following quotes were representative of the sample:

"The ongoing support and teaching is on outstanding level. I am more than impressed how my tutors and University handle this difficult and extraordinary circumstances. The great educators' effort (many times outside of working hours) gave me and my colleagues opportunity to continue our course and develop into fully qualified nursing staff. Thankfully to them we are more than ready to tackle current problems and issues and provide high quality, person-centred care for our patients!"

"I feel like even though I have online lessons, I am still able to communicate the same way as I was in lecture."

"I've been given all the resources that will assist me in completing my work and any questions that I have had about how things will work in the future have been answered clearly and quickly."

From those who responded **less positively** the following quotes were representative of the sample:

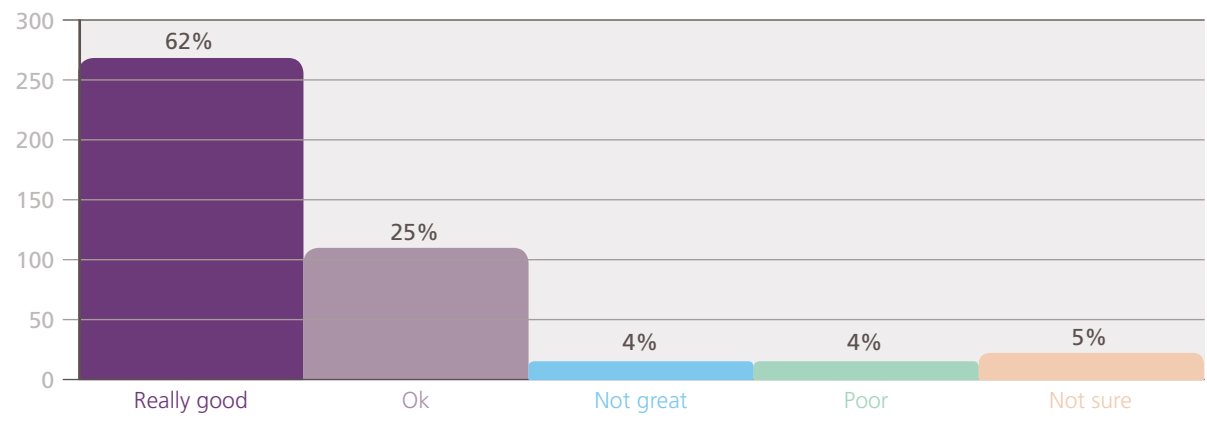
"Paying over £9,000 to be 'taught' a subject through YouTube links is not what I would call the Uni experience."

"I'm unsure because I have dyslexia so I am struggling with the online learning and how many of us on the blackboard at one time. I learn more in person and hands on. The timetable is great as has lots of breaks and gives time to clear thoughts before next session. However our practical classes haven't started due to covid and it worries me we won't have practice before placements."

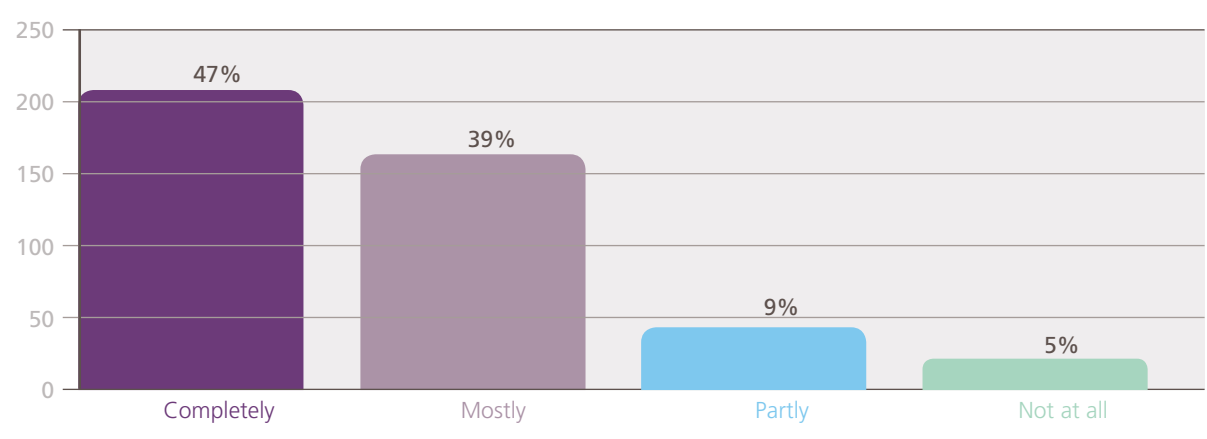
"I believe that although the University has adapted well to an online teaching platform. It is very hard to keep on top of the modules due to the lack of clarity through blackboard. The academic side lacks the face to face experience which makes a big difference in understanding task, which is very crucial being in year 3."



2. How have you found the face-to-face activity on your course?



3. Has your timetable and face-to-face learning been delivered as planned?





4. What one thing could the University change to make your experience better right now?

There are many **positive** comments in this section, including:

"In my opinion, the university is making my experience better than I expected despite the Covid-19 restrictions. I would not change anything right now as I am happy with the way we are moving forward."

"Honestly, I don't have answer for this question, for me is brilliant."

"At this moment I think they are doing it well, protecting staff and student from the pandemic, giving lessons online."

"I don't think that there is much that the university could do, I think the uni is dealing with covid procedures very well."

"I'm pretty happy with the way things are. I like the relaxed atmosphere and the fact that our lecturer is always there when we need him. Obviously, the course can't be tailored to everyone and I find that I'm not very interested in certain aspects of it but I have no complaints so far."

"Again, I've not had a bad experience so there for I do not think anything needs changing."

Other responses breakdown into the following themes:

Communication

"The university has been good at communication. Right now, would be good to know rough numbers of how many people have got covid at the current point instead of hearing rumours."

"More communication between the uni and students. Being left in the dark makes it harder to plan for the year."

"Sometimes a bit more communication about my course and what is the plan each week."

Online learning versus face-to-face

"Online lectures as well as face-to-face teaching should have been implemented a long time ago. As of right now just to provide support to students and really just try and make students feel less anxious about exams and upcoming events in regards to being successful"

"Provide a platform that's specific in which online students can easily contact teachers and vice versa and allow each other to share content, and provide support. We need to support online students."

"The university can convert to fully online to help the students and faculty to stay safe not only they will benefit but our families and their families will and keeping in mind this will help keep the number of corona cases in the UK as low as possible meaning we can help the government as well. Please try to convert the University to online classes instead of face-to-face."

Financial concerns

"More support with student finance."

"Half the price for the half expected experience that we are getting."

"Free printing? We spend around £9k a year but we still can't print stuff for free. I understand that some people print excessive amounts, so maybe we could start off with some free credit and then pay to top-up if we need to print more?"

General support

"I think the uni could leave unis open during the weekends and holidays just so I can catch up on my work."

"More individual meetings with each student to check how they are doing. Mandatory face mask in every single lecture. More information to the students about COVID-19 new measures and cases in the University. Flexibility when deciding if attending to seminar online. More understanding of how hard it is to manage this situation."

"Keep the no detriment policy in place to ensure that our grade will not be affected due to the teaching in such a way in that some people cannot take in the information being taught."



5. What can the Students' Union do to make your life better at Bucks?

Again, this was an opportunity for students to make open comments. We were extremely pleased with the **positive** responses and broad endorsement of our offer over the first term, we received no negative comments with the following quotes being representative of the feedback:

"Just continuing how they have be going. They are being amazing at keeping you engaged with the social side of uni even if it is remotely. I think this is brilliant as this time can be very lonely and it's import for students to keep in touch!"

"I think what the Students union is doing a great job. Even though it's hard to do much face to face, we still get to enjoy various of the things the SU offers safely online. It's keeping us busy."

"I believe that the Students' Union is already doing a fantastic job at Bucks, from life outside of the university to the one inside. I am pleased with the way the Union is organising and running activities, despite the current delicate situation."

"Unfortunately, I have not visited the campus yet since the inception of my course, however the students' are sending informative messages to our emails which I believe they are doing their best to let us get familiar with campus life even though we are still in the comfort zone of our home due to the pandemic."

"Keep up the good and hard work, well done on making the students have something to do to take my mind off of the stress and the current situation, providing that escape for students."

"Not sure, the SU does a lot of amazing things already so it's hard to think of anything else... (I'm not just saying this btw, my friends at other universities are so jealous of how great the Bucks SU is!)."

"The Students Union is amazing, it is a lot more than what I was expecting in the first place. Keep doing what you're doing!"

There were also a range of helpful suggestions and requests that fit in to the following themes, the quotes are representative of the sample:

Representation and academic matters

"Keep on advocating for students."

"Student reps should have more voice to be able to make changes through the education experience."

"Is it possible to advocate for practical sessions for nursing students given that some of us do not have any clinical background in terms of using equipment such as manual blood pressure machine, performing urinalysis, administering medication via injection etc. I do understand that because of

Covid-19 restrictions, the university is unable to accommodate all the nursing groups, hence their inability to deliver face to face practical on these essential skills, can this be re-considered please.

Social life

"Offer more social activities at halls possibly."

"The SU has done a very good job at putting on organised events since we have been coming back to university along with running all their campaigns also. All the staff have been great with communication with everything going on."

"I think the Student union has done an extraordinary job at making life for students at bucks really good. They still managed to have these events with safe social distancing along with bring events online."

Student activities

"Please continue the sports and games session."

"Set up some virtual get to know you sessions, by course and year, to help those of us who have been unable to attend face-to-face sessions as planned."

"I genuinely believe the students union have done an amazing job with continuing to provide activities etc in these difficult times."



Development and employability

"More face to face skills sessions."

"I think the union is trying their best as much as they can. Right now there's nothing much I can ask for because of the restrictions. However, some training provided was really good and helpful like Spanish lessons and BSL."

"More subject-based opportunities."

Mental health and wellbeing

"Students' Union could do another mental health week alongside with exercises for students to participate online or at university."

"I really liked the wellbeing boxes, free meals and coupons! It's nice to have someone looking out for us in our busy schedules."

"Students' Union is doing a great job at making our experience as good as possible. Apart from all sorts of mental and physical support offered throughout the lockdown, we were recently treated with pizza and movie snacks, I consider it an extremely kind yet unexpected gesture towards all students at halls."

"Do more for student nurses that are working 4x 12.5 hours for free a week and it's really tiring and challenging especially on our mental health."

Welfare issues (including financial hardship)

"Promote the mental health / Counselling facilities more to ensure students are getting the help they need as a lot of people are scared to reach out themselves."

"Students' Union could do another mental health [week] alongside with exercises for students to participate online or at university."

"Support and encouragement. I have a lot of stresses out of uni alongside uni. So far I found things a struggle but getting better. Support is definitely the way forward."



Conclusion and recommendations

As mentioned, this is a quick survey, garnering responses from a relatively small sample and is very much a 'temperature check'. However, given the circumstances we are in and the shifting guidance it does represent a fairly positive picture for both the Union and University.

Alongside the other surveys and the more sophisticated feedback mechanisms the University has deployed currently, we think we will soon be able to build a better understanding of our student community's challenges, reactions and thoughts regarding the new learning environment.

Next step for the Union is to publish our response to the survey and show the members we are listening and value their feedback. From their requests and suggestions there and number of new events and initiatives we can quite quickly build into the programme and it's important we can demonstrate a timely and effective response.

We are also adding these questions, where appropriate, to the feedback mechanisms for all Union services for the foreseeable future so that we can constantly monitor our performance and make service changes where necessary:

1. Did you find communications about services changes in the department during the pandemic were clear and easy to understand?

(Yes / No)

Please explain the reason for your answer (*open text*)

2. To what extent do you think the Union has successfully adapted its services and activities to maintain the best possible student experience?

(*Great extent / Some extent / Little extent / No extent / Don't know*)

Please explain the reason for your answer (*open text*)

3. How would you rate the Union's online activities, events and services in the department during the pandemic?

(*Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor / Very Poor / Don't know*)

4. What could the Union do to improve its online provision? (*open text*)

5. How safe have you felt while participating in face-to-face activities and services this term?

(*Very safe / Somewhat safe / A little safe / Not safe at all / Don't know*)

Please explain the reason for your answer (*open text*)

Presently, the figures suggest up to **53%** have experienced at least some disruption to an already compromised learning experience, with **14%** reporting this has been somewhat significant. From these findings, and in the absence of any more information, we would like to encourage the University to look more closely at the reliability and consistency of delivery of teaching and be in a position to be able to make bold and explicit assurances to the student body that their experience in January will be very much 'as promised'. We believe this will be the single most impactful message the institution could share to encourage students to return to study and mitigate against the risks of growing attrition.