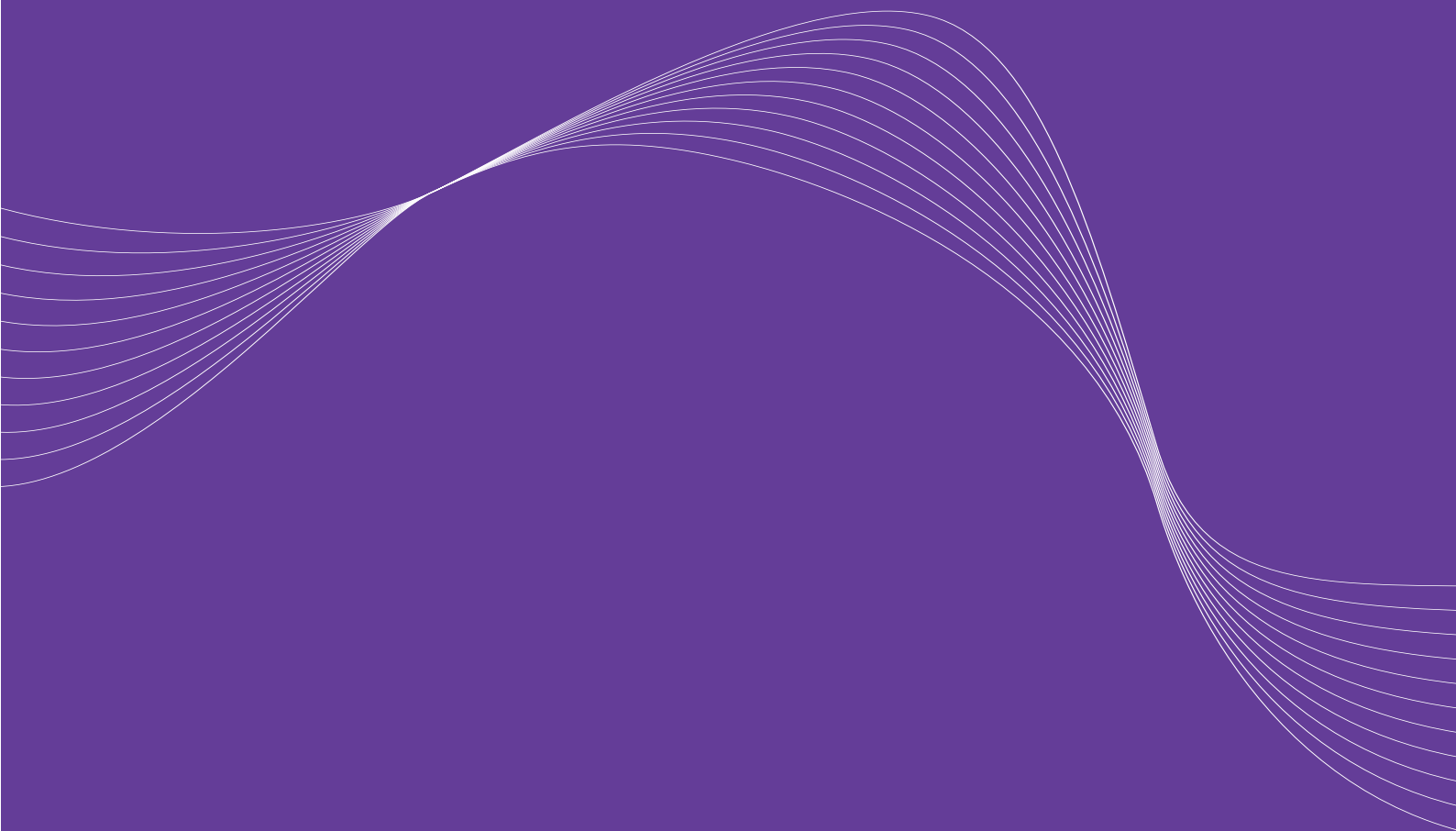




UKCOSA
The Council
for International
Education

BENCHMARKING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS



UKCOSA: The Council for International Education is the national advisory body serving the interests of international students in the UK and those who work with them. It does so through research, publications and guidance notes, a national training programme, dedicated advice lines for students and advisors and liaison and advocacy with institutions, agencies and government.

Its members include all UK universities, those colleges which are active internationally and a range of specialist and representative bodies.

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ISBN 1 870679 41 5

INTRODUCTION

Most practitioners would agree that the support that international students receive in UK higher education institutions not only has a fundamental influence on their satisfaction levels (and therefore future recruitment) but can also influence academic performance. Many, although not all, UK higher education institutions have extremely well-developed and extensive support services and there is growing evidence that the 'student experience' is being given increased attention by both policy makers and practitioners.

It is therefore perhaps surprising that the UK has no widely agreed benchmark of the range of services international students should typically need or expect. Nor has there been any measure of what services are generally available and what proportion of students take up and benefit from them. Feedback from advisers in institutions indicates that they do wish to benchmark and compare their services, staffing and other resources against others to ensure they remain both responsive and competitive. Senior management and policy or funding bodies would also benefit from better benchmarking data to inform policy decisions and the allocation of resources.

This survey, therefore, undertaken in March 2007 with financial support from the Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI), seeks to answer some of these questions. It is part of a package of measures which aim to ensure that the UK retains, and ideally improves, its reputation for the highest quality of international student support across the sector.

UKCOSA is extremely grateful to all colleagues within the sector who have so willingly and openly responded to this survey. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of the PMI for funding this work.

KEY FINDINGS

It is encouraging that most institutions do offer the basic range of services which international students need: pre-departure information on the web and in print format; advice on immigration issues for students and their dependants, before and after arrival; “meet and greet” services and orientation programmes; free in-session English or study skills classes; international student advisers; assistance with police registration; and social and cultural activities.

However, there are areas for improvement which emerge from the findings:

The participation rate in **orientation programmes** remains not much above 50%, raising questions about whether the non-participating students are missing out on crucial support. Students arriving at times other than the start of term are also missing out, as few institutions offer on-demand orientation at other times. Most institutions could also improve the effectiveness of orientation by offering follow-up sessions throughout the year, rather than simply a one-off event.

A high percentage of respondents were not able to respond to the questions about procedures relating to international students **under 18** years of age. This may have lain outside the role of the respondent, but may also indicate a need to widen awareness of procedures for this group. Although numbers involved may be small, the issues are extremely sensitive.

Student feedback has already shown the need for more **activities** to encourage home and international students to mix. Buddying or mentoring schemes are still comparatively rare, as are other activities that specifically encourage mixing.

Those 27% of institutions which do not currently make **hardship funding** available for international students might wish to consider putting support in place as a matter of urgency. It appears little progress has been made since UKCOSA last conducted a survey on this issue in 2004. Other financial issues institutions might consider include fixing of fees for the full duration of the course – a proportion of institutions are already doing this, but others have yet to recognise the benefits of doing so.

This benchmarking survey considers the extent rather than the quality of provision. The latter is also vital, and the small number of institutions which do not currently seek international student **feedback** might consider how they assure the quality of their provision without this. The survey also shows that representative structures for international students are not well-developed: numbers of elected part- and full-time international students officers in Students' Unions are still small, and international student committees are far from universal. Moreover, institutions do not always have high levels of awareness of either.

One clear anomaly that emerges from the survey is the absence of correlation between the number of international students and the number of **international student advisers**. Institutions with high numbers of international students and few advisers may integrate provision for international students into mainstream services. However, anecdotal feedback to UKCOSA over a long period suggests that in many cases institutional management does not provide the resources needed for specialist advice provision to increase in line with numbers of students. The fact that no sector benchmark can be given for the staffing resources needed should not prevent institutions from looking internally for indicators of whether advice services have the resources needed adequately to support international students.

We hope institutions will give full consideration to these key issues, as well as to the many others raised by the report.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

UKCOSA defines “international students” as any students not normally resident in the UK. However, as noted below, there is wide variation in institutional practice as to whether the same services are offered to EU and non-EU students. For the purpose of this report, the students referred to are assumed to be international students according to this definition, unless stated otherwise.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. It was sent to UKCOSA's 154 Primary Contacts who were asked to complete it, or pass it to a more appropriate person in their institution to complete. Responses were received from 76 institutions. Note that not all respondents answered all questions. Where the report refers to respondents or respondent institutions, this means the number of responses received for that particular question.

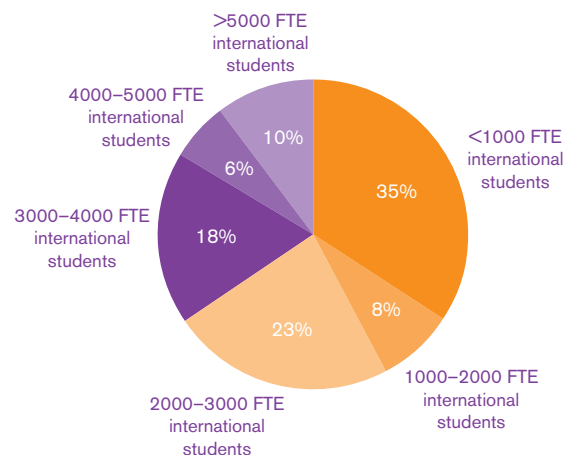
RESPONDENTS

As Figure 1 below shows, just over one third (35%) of responses were from institutions with less than 1,000 FTE international students. 8% were from institutions with 1,000–2,000 FTE international students, 23% from institutions with 2,000–3,000, 18% with 3,000–4,000, 6% with 4,000–5,000 and 10% from institutions with more than 5,000 FTE international students¹.

Based on 2004/05 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, this is roughly representative of the higher education sector as a whole.

Figure 1

Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) international students in respondent institutions (n=76)



Respondents were asked to provide brief details where there were significant differences between levels of provision for different groups. One of the most common responses was the difference in provision of services and support for overseas fee-paying students compared to EU students.

1. Numbers of FTE non-UK students based on 2004/05 HESA data except for the case of one institution for which HESA data was unavailable and where international student numbers were taken instead from figures reported to UKCOSA.

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

As Figure 2 opposite shows, the most common ways of providing pre-departure information to students were by handbook/documents sent by post (95% of respondents) and on the institution's website (89% of respondents). Over half (53%) of respondents provided in-country briefings to international students, and 41% provided bulletins by email. Other ways of providing pre-departure information to students included by personal emails and through agents.

49% of respondents facilitated contact pre-departure for new students with current students and/or alumni. 42% did not facilitate such contact, and 9% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say.

11% of respondents offered some interactive on-line tools to prepare students in terms of language, culture or study skills etc. These tools included message and discussion boards, on-line checklists, and on-line study skills and language support resources. Some respondents reported that their institution was currently working on materials in this area. 75% of respondents did not offer any such on-line tools, and 14% didn't know/couldn't say.

As Figure 3 opposite shows, 93% of respondent institutions provided advice/assistance on visas/entry clearance applications for international students and 75% provided this for accompanying dependants. 67% of respondent institutions provided advice/assistance on appeals against visa/entry clearance refusals. 3% of respondents provided none of the above and 4% didn't know/couldn't say.

Figure 2 Ways of providing pre-departure information to students (n=76)

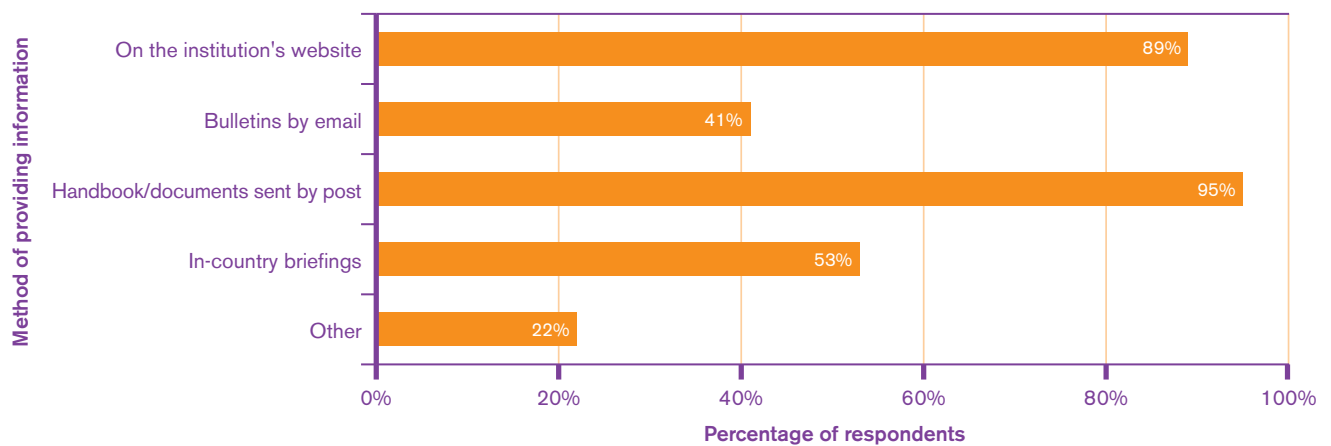
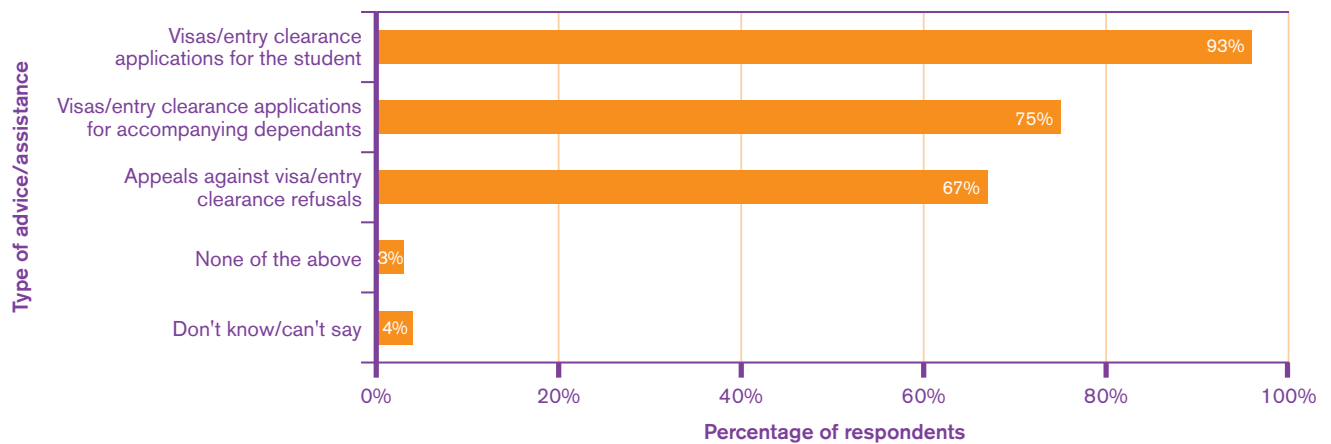


Figure 3 Provision of visa/entry clearance advice/assistance (n=76)



INDUCTION/ORIENTATION

“Meet and greet” service

84% of respondent institutions reported that they offered a “meet and greet” service.

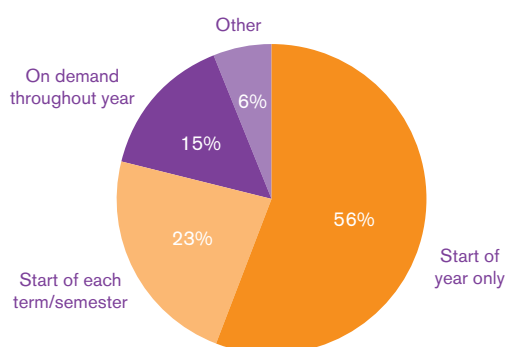
Of these, 81% met students at local airports, and 42% met students at train stations (note that respondents could provide multiple answers to this question). Some respondents said they also met students at non-local airports, e.g. Heathrow, bus/coach stations, and ferry ports.

81% of respondent institutions took students to their accommodation. 44% took them to a central point at the institution, and 6% took them to the centre of town (note that respondents could provide multiple answers to this question). Some respondent institutions said that they met and welcomed students at their point of arrival but did not provide transport as public transport facilities were good and inexpensive.

As Figure 4 below shows, 56% of respondents operated this “meet and greet” service at the start of the year only. 23% operated it at the start of each term or semester, and 15% operated it on demand throughout the year. Some respondents noted that they also offered the service for summer school courses. One institution noted that the service was only available to new students starting in October who opted to attend a pre-sessional orientation programme.

Figure 4

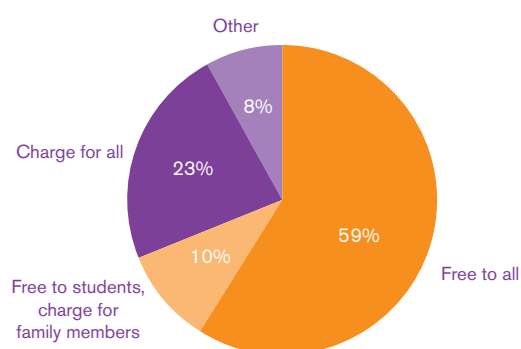
When the “meet and greet” service was offered (n=62)



As Figure 5 below shows, the “meet and greet” service was free to all at 59% of respondent institutions, while 10% of respondents reported that it was free to students but there was a charge for family members. 23% reported a charge for all. The situation in the remainder of respondent institutions was less clear-cut, for example a charge for EU students but not for other international students, no charge for an individual student who is collected by car but a charge for a group, etc.

Figure 5

Charge for “meet and greet” service (n=62)



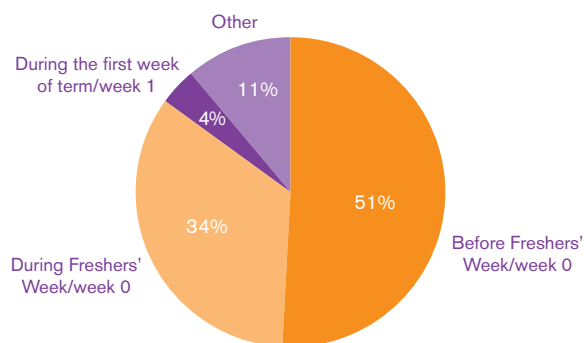
Where there were charges for the “meet and greet” service, these varied widely, most likely as a result of different locations, distances from the point of arrival etc. It is, therefore, difficult to provide a meaningful analysis of these charges, but they ranged from £10–60, with most being around £10–20.

Orientation

As Figure 6 below shows, at just over half (51%) of the respondent institutions, orientation for students starting at the beginning of the academic year took place mainly before Freshers' Week/week 0. 34% held orientation for these students during Freshers' Week/week 0, and 4% held it during the first week of term/week 1. Most of the other respondents reported that orientation was held during both weeks 0 and 1.

Figure 6

When orientation took place for students starting at the beginning of the academic year (n=70)

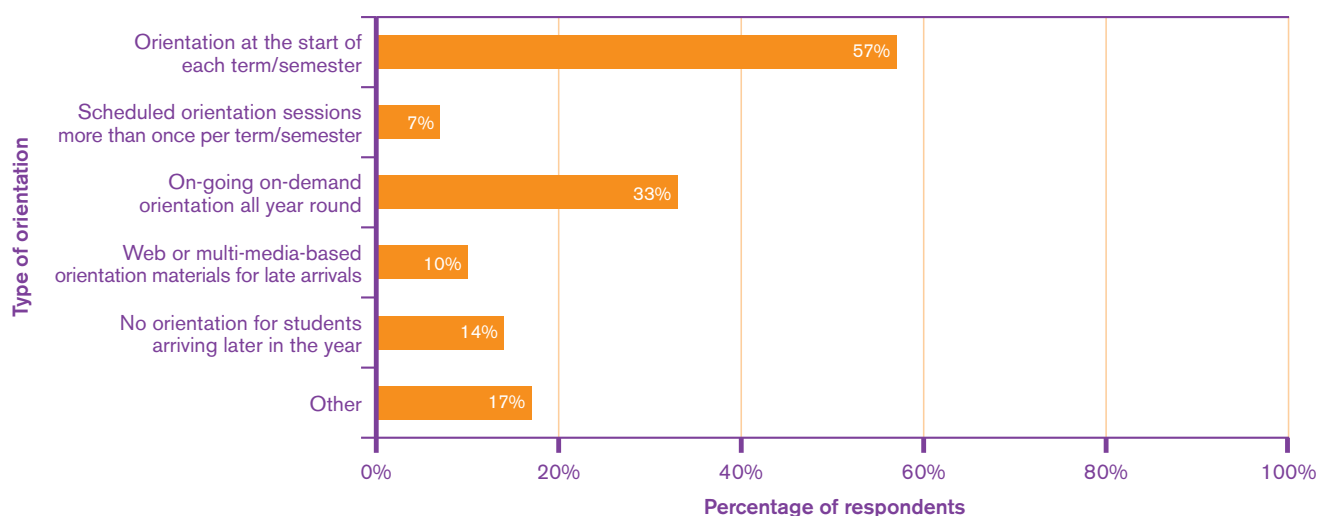


For students arriving later in the year, 33% of respondents provided ongoing "on-demand" orientation all year round. 57% of respondents provided orientation at the start of each term/semester, and 7% provided scheduled orientation sessions more than once per term/semester. 10% provided web or multi-media-based orientation materials for late arrivals. Other responses included a late/refresher orientation in week 4, special sessions for groups arriving later in the year and a self-induction pack for those not arriving at the beginning of the year. Note that respondents could provide multiple answers to this question. 14% of respondents provided no orientation for students arriving later in the year. This is shown in Figure 7 below.

43% of respondents reported that their orientation programme was entirely separate from home students' orientation. 51% reported that it was integrated for some activities, and 6% reported that it was completely integrated with no separate international student orientation.

19% of respondent institutions' orientation programmes lasted 1–2 days, 55% lasted 3–5 days and 26% lasted more than 5 days.

Figure 7 *Orientation provision for students arriving later in the year (n=70)*



As figure 8 opposite shows, at 45% of respondent institutions, students didn't pay for the orientation programme as all costs were included in their tuition fees. At 36% of respondent institutions, students paid for accommodation during the orientation programme, at 33% they paid for meals, at 30% they paid for leisure activities, and at 3% students paid for the orientation programme itself.

As is to be expected due to the varying length and nature of orientation programmes, the reported average total cost of orientation to a student varied widely too. Where there was a cost, responses ranged from £10 for a Saturday outing to £170 for a longer programme.

In terms of participation, estimates of the percentage of new international students taking part in institutions' orientation programmes ranged from 5%–100%. The mean was 59% and the mode was 50%. There is no clear correlation between the number of international students at the institution and the percentage that participated in the orientation programme except possibly in very small institutions where several reported 100% participation rates.

43% of respondent institutions offered follow-up sessions throughout the year to supplement the start of year orientation. These follow-up sessions included:

- workshops on issues such as immigration applications and employment/careers;
- sessions on cultural awareness;
- counselling sessions for culture shock;
- weekly question time on different topics; and
- study skills sessions.

As Figure 9 opposite shows, 24% of respondent institutions provided orientation sessions targeted at postgraduates, 13% provided orientation sessions targeted at students with dependants, and 7% provided orientation sessions targeted at direct entrants to second/final year. Other groups provided with targeted orientation programmes included exchange and study abroad students, PGCE students, sponsored students, students with low language scores, and students wanting to work. Note that respondents could provide multiple answers to this question. 64% of respondents did not provide orientation sessions targeted at any specific group.

Figure 8 Parts of the orientation programme paid for by students (n=69)

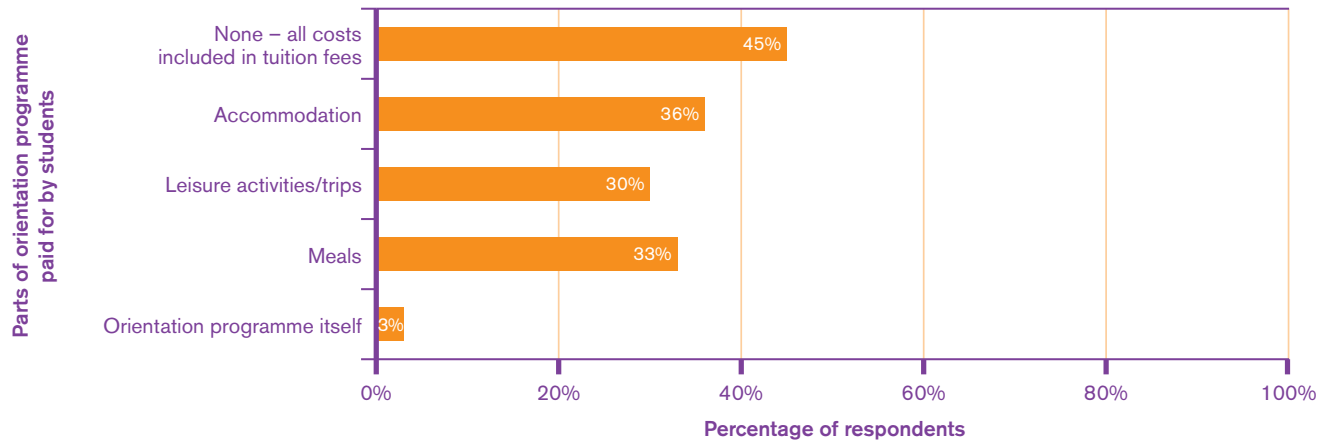
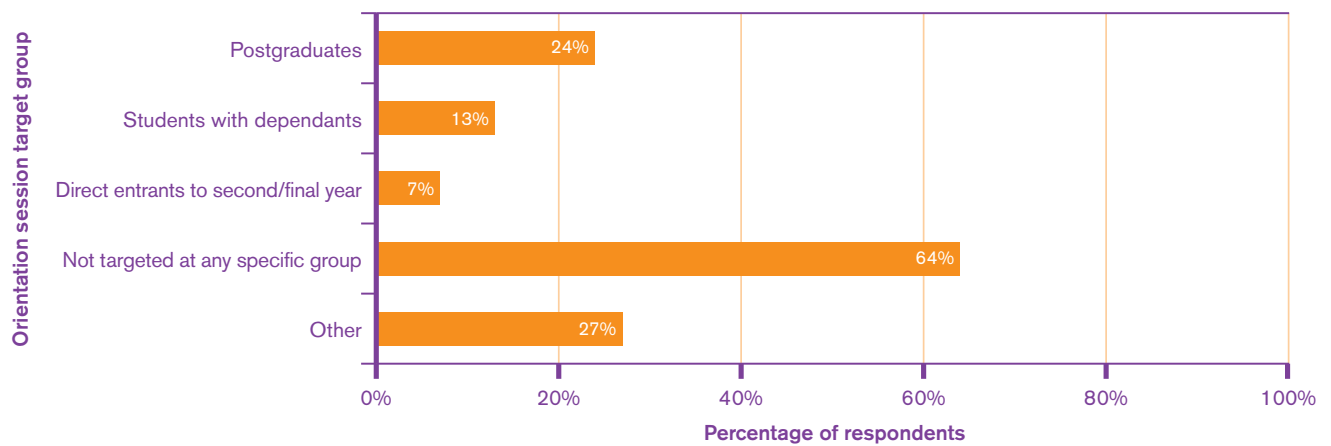


Figure 9 Orientation sessions targeted at specific groups of international students (n=70)

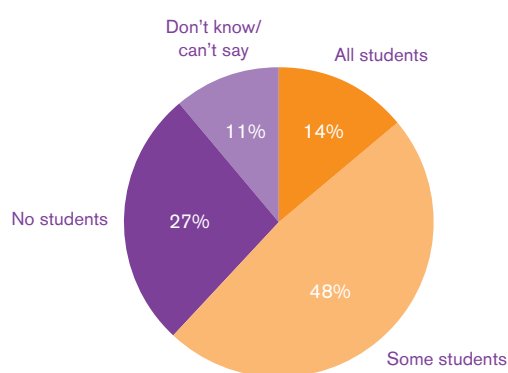


STUDY ISSUES

As Figure 10 below shows, 14% of respondent institutions assessed all students' levels of English on arrival. 48% assessed some students' levels of English on arrival, and 27% did not assess any students' levels of English on arrival. 11% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say.

Figure 10

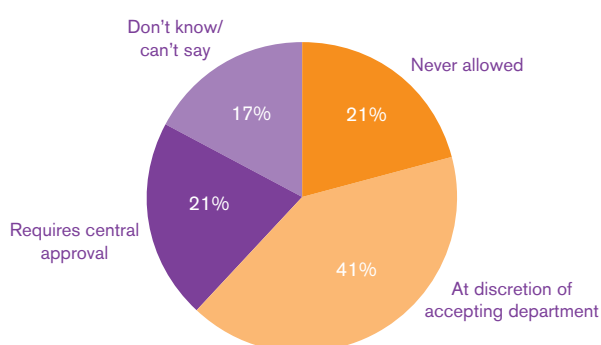
Assessment of students' levels of English on arrival (n=66)



21% of respondent institutions reported that they never accepted students onto a course with less than the stated English language requirements. At 41% of respondent institutions students were allowed onto a course with less than the stated English language requirements at the discretion of the accepting department, and at 21% of institutions this required central approval. 17% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say about the situation at their institution. This is shown in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11

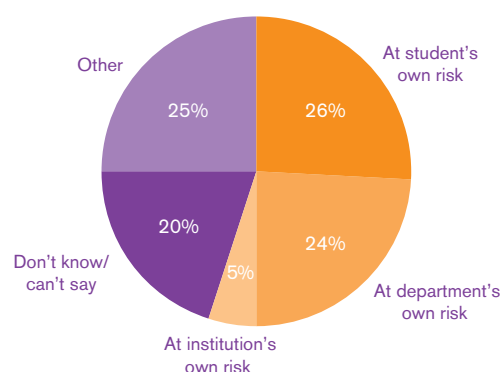
Institutional policy on students with less than the stated English language requirements (n=66)



As Figure 12 below shows, at respondent institutions that did accept students without the stated English language requirement, 25% reported that this was at the student's own risk, 24% reported that this was at the risk of the accepting department (they may have been asked to fund supplementary language classes), and 5% reported that it was at the risk of the institution as a whole (the institution guaranteed to underwrite the cost of extra support). Other responses were mainly around students attending pre-session and/or in-session English classes either required by the institution or simply suggested and provided either free of charge or at a cost to the students. 20% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say about the situation at their institution.

Figure 12

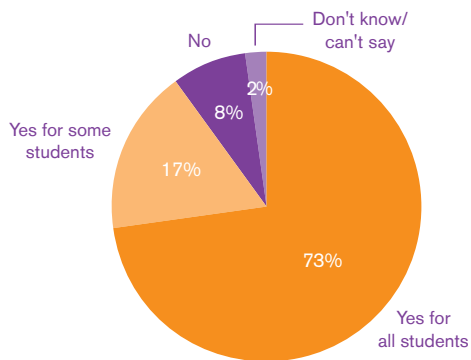
Responsibility for students accepted without the stated English language requirement (n=55)



73% of respondents offered free in-session English or study skills classes for all students and 17% offered them for some students, e.g. if the student was accepted with lower than standard entry level. 8% of respondents did not offer any free in-session English or study skills classes. 2% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say. This is shown in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13

Respondent institutions that offered free in-session English or study skills classes (n=66)



Of those respondents who did provide free English language or study skills, 29% offered 1–2 hours per week to students, 32% offered 2–4 hours per week, and 10% offered more than 4 hours per week. 29% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say.

These free classes were available throughout the period of study in 69% of respondent institutions, for the first year of study in 11%, and for the first term/semester in 6% of respondent institutions. Other responses included for the first two terms, and an “English Language Points” system whereby students were given 100 free points worth of tuition that they could use at any time. 9% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say.

ACCOMMODATION

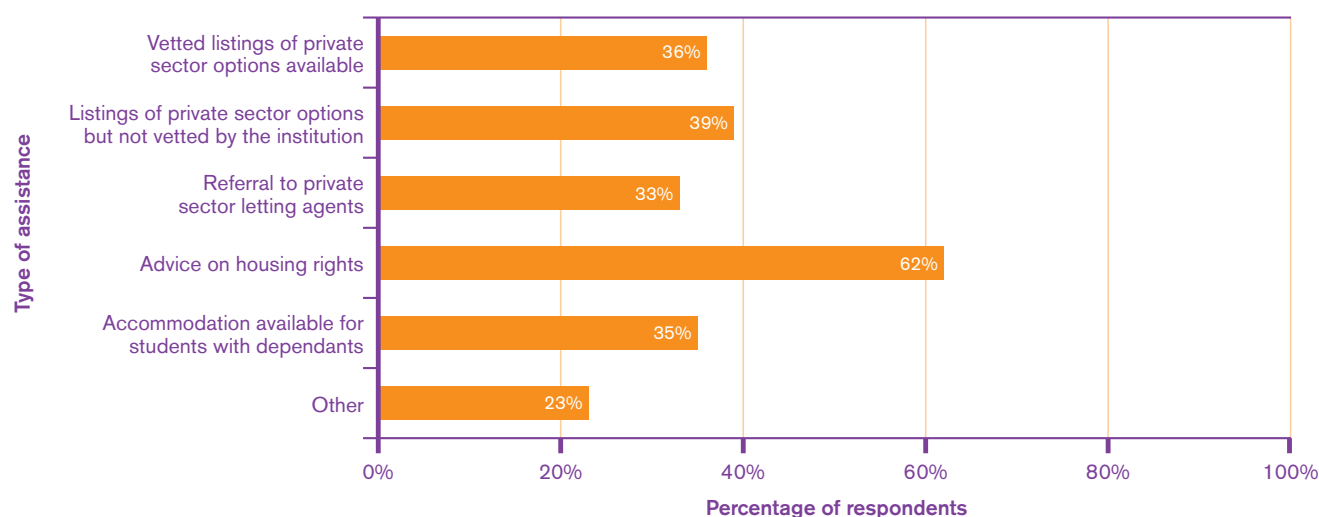
59% of respondent institutions reported that they guaranteed accommodation to all international students who applied before their deadline. A smaller number reported that they gave guarantees for certain groups (e.g. first year undergraduates), and fewer still reported that they gave no guarantee but that some institution-managed housing was available.

As Figure 14 below shows, 62% of respondent institutions gave advice on housing rights. 36% had vetted listings of private sector options available to international students, 39% had listings of private sector options that had not been vetted, and 33% provided referrals to private sector letting agents. 35% of respondent institutions had accommodation available for students with dependants. Note that respondents could provide multiple answers to this question.

Other responses to this question included:

- “a network of current students who assist new arrivals to find private accommodation through their own contacts and experience in the private sector”;
- “students who attend the orientation programme given support in finding private accommodation – mini buses take them to view properties and the Students’ Union Advice Centre provides advice on contracts, suitable areas, what to expect etc”;
- “ongoing guarantee for international undergraduates throughout studies”; and
- an accreditation scheme run in conjunction with the local council.

Figure 14 Assistance with accommodation provided by institutions to international students (n=66)



STUDENT SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Institutional structure and policies

Specialist support and advice for international students was provided by the International Office in 51% of respondent institutions, by Student Services in 65% of respondent institutions, and by the Student Union in 48%.

Figure 15 below gives details of the combinations of the above-mentioned departments providing specialist support and advice for international students. Some respondents noted that support and advice was also provided by other departments, for example, Careers Office and Registry, but this has not been included in this figure except where it was provided in “other” only.

Figure 15

Respondent institutions that provided specialist support and advice for international students in stated departments (n=65)

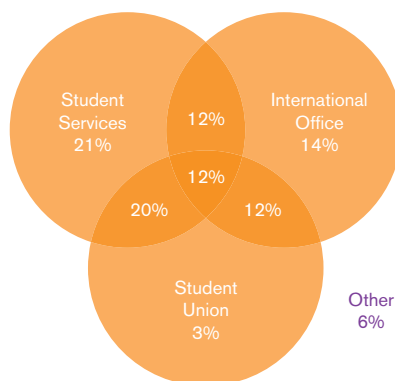
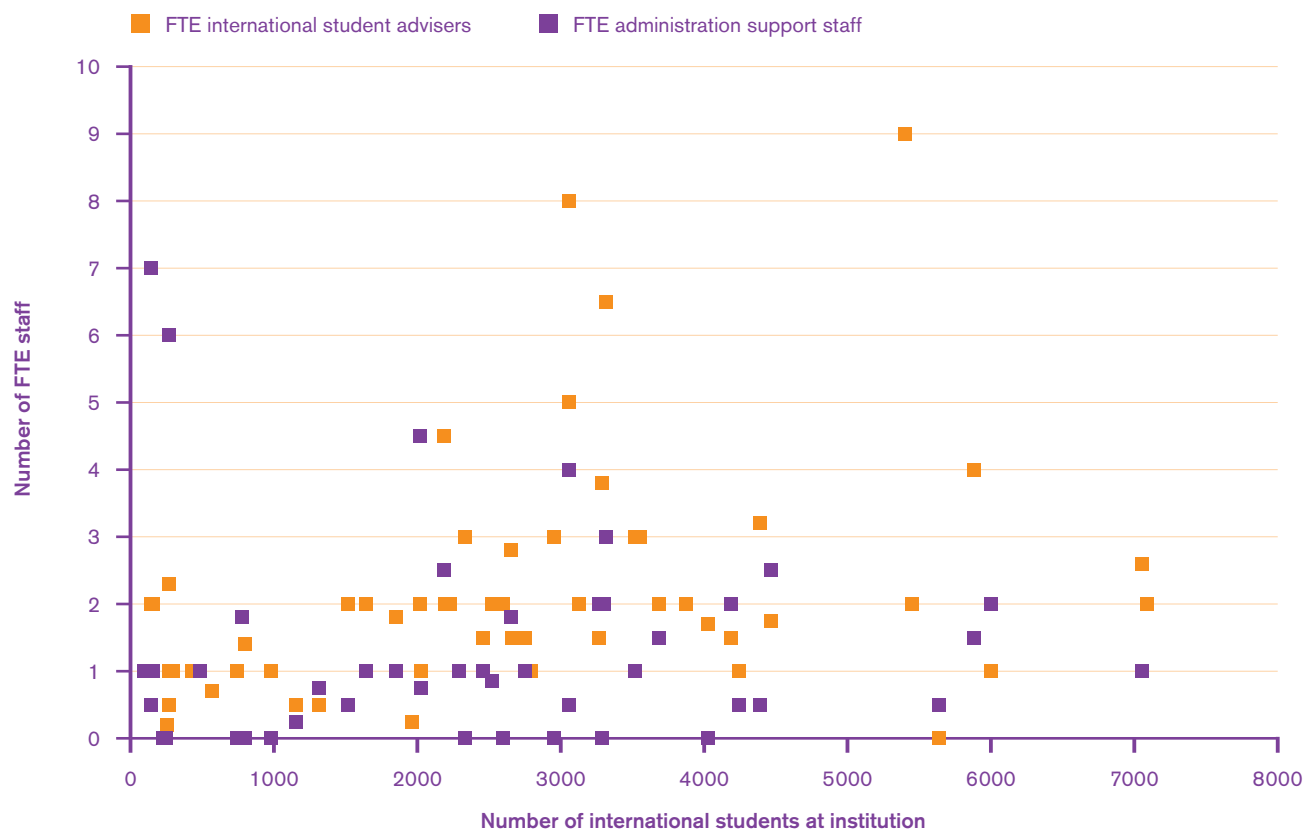


Figure 16 overleaf shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) international student advisers or staff who provided dedicated support to international students (split into international student advisers and administration support staff) in respondent institutions plotted against the number of international students at the institution². As the figure shows, there is little correlation between the number of international students and the number of FTE international student advisers/administration support staff.

2. Numbers of international students based on 2004/05 HESA data.

Figure 16 Number of FTE international student advisers and administration support staff by size of international student population ($n=62$ for international student advisers and $n=46$ for administration support staff)



Perhaps a more useful analysis in this situation is the mean and mode number of FTE international student advisers shown by size groupings of respondent institutions, as shown below in Table 1.

The number of hours per day that international student advisers were available to see students varied amongst respondent institutions, ranging from 1–2 hours a day and 1 day per week to a full 8 hour day. At approximately 47% of respondent institutions, international student advisers were available to see students all day (i.e. 7–8 hours). A further 41% had advisers available to see students for at least half (i.e. 4 hours) of the day.

It was not possible to draw any meaningful correlation from the data between the number of hours international student advisers were available to see students and the number of advisers or the number of international students at the institution.

The question on institutions' approximate budgets for international student support, excluding staff costs, proved difficult to get meaningful, comparable responses to. Where figures were given they ranged from £500 to approximately £100,000. Many respondents indicated that there was no separate budget for international student support at their institution and the budget was contained within the wider International Office, Student Support or Registry budget.

Table 1 Mean and mode number of FTE international student advisers by size of institution

Number of international students at institution ³		Mean number of FTE international student advisers	Mode number of FTE international student advisers		Mean number of FTE administration support staff	Mode number of FTE administration support staff
<1,000	n=18	1.01	1.00	n=13	1.48	0
1,000–2,000	n=6	1.18	0.50	n=5	0.70	1.00
2,000–3,000	n=15	2.05	2.00	n=11	1.22	1.00
3,000–4,000	n=11	3.53	2.00	n=8	1.75	2.00
4,000–5,000	n=5	1.83	no mode	n=5	1.10	0.50
>5,000	n=7	2.94	2.00	n=4	1.25	no mode

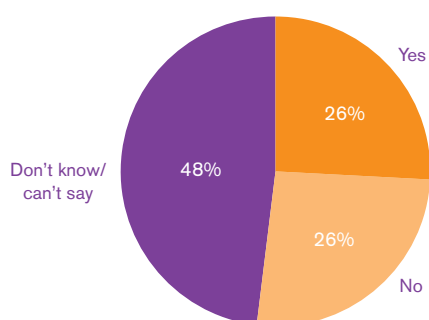
3. Numbers of international students based on 2004/05 HESA data.

International students under 18 years of age

Of respondent institutions for whom it was relevant (not, therefore, including Scottish institutions⁴), 26% required a nominated guardian for international students under the age of 18. 26% did not require a nominated guardian, and 48% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say. This is shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17

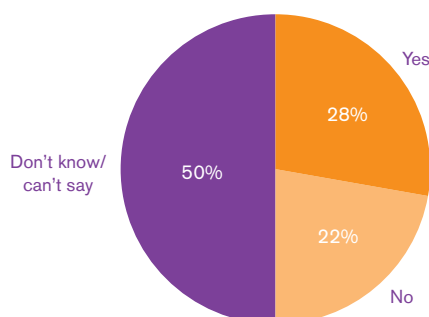
Respondent institutions that required a nominated guardian for international students under the age of 18 (n=46)



28% of respondents for whom it was relevant required parental consent forms for international students under the age of 18, 22% did not, and 50% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say. This is shown in Figure 18 below.

Figure 18

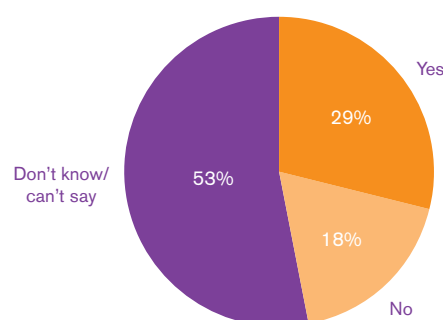
Respondent institutions that required parental consent forms for international students under the age of 18 (n=46)



29% of respondents for whom it was relevant provided parents with information about the legal situation of under 18s in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the boundaries of institutional responsibility. 18% did not provide this information and 53% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say. This is shown in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19

Respondent institutions that provided parents with information about the legal situation of under 18s in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (n=45)



4. Scottish institutions are not included here as the age of majority in Scotland is 16, not 18, and we have assumed that international students under 16 would be very exceptional cases, for whom it would not be reasonable to expect provision to have been made in advance.

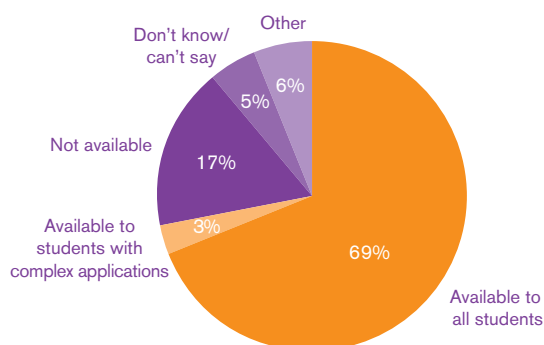
Immigration/visa services

95% of respondents provided immigration advice to students.

As Figure 20 below shows, the Student Batch Scheme was available to all students at 69% of respondent institutions, and available to students with complex applications at 3%. A small number of respondents indicated that they had some internal criteria for use of the Student Batch Scheme, e.g. available to all students unless in debt to the institution or previously in breach of immigration rules without a clear explanation as to why. The Student Batch Scheme was not available at 17% of respondent institutions and 5% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say.

Figure 20

Availability of the Student Batch Scheme at respondent institutions (n=65)



The vast majority of respondent institutions did not charge students for using the Student Batch Scheme service. In a couple of cases institutions charged a small amount, e.g. £5–£10 to cover postage or where students had not provided photocopies of all of their supporting documents.

Police registration

45% of respondents arranged on-campus visits by local police for registration, and 11% accompanied students to the police station for registration. 29% of institutions had no special arrangements with regard to police registration. Other responses from institutions in relation to assistance with police registration included:

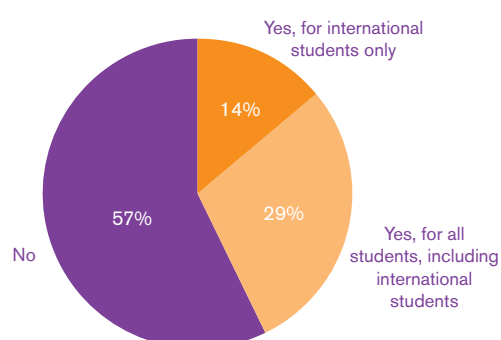
- “police attend the orientation programme and advise students then students are given the address to do the registration themselves”;
- “assistance in helping students organise taxis etc for group visits to the police station”;
- “provision of information and forms to enable students to complete them before going to register”;
- “liaison with local police to assist students in scheduling appointments for registration”;
- “a system whereby students needing to register with the Police can make an appointment online during one of three days during September/October when [police] visit the campus”.

Activities

As Figure 21 below shows, 29% of respondent institutions offered a buddying or mentoring scheme for all students, including international students, and 14% offered a scheme for international students only. 57% of respondents did not offer a buddying or mentoring scheme.

Figure 21

Respondent institutions that offered a buddying or mentoring scheme (n=65)

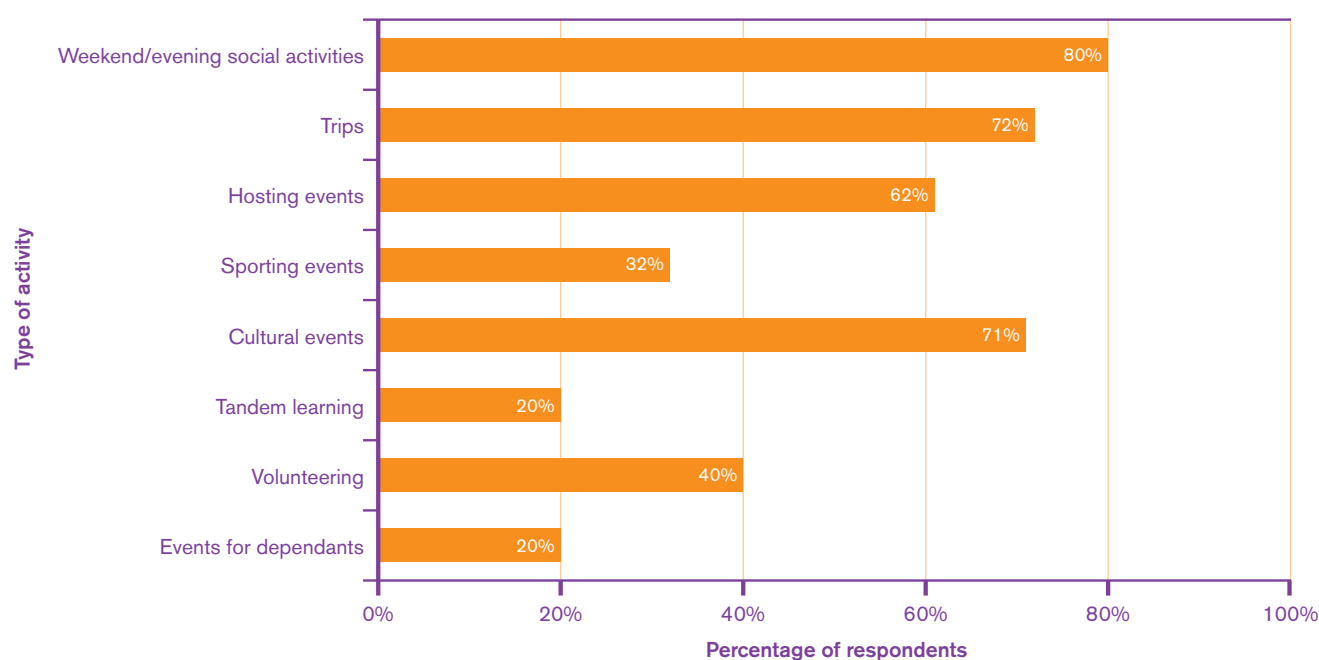


80% of respondent institutions arranged weekend/evening social activities specifically for international students, 72% organised trips, and 71% organised cultural events, e.g. international fairs. 62% of respondent institutions arranged hosting events (via HOST or other schemes), 40% organised volunteering and 32% organised sporting events. 20% organised tandem learning programmes and 20% organised events for dependants. This is shown below in Figure 22.

Other responses from institutions included:

- “provision of information on local activities taking place as we are too small to organise events ourselves”;
- “cultural events are open to dependants as well as students”; and
- “regular tea and coffee events during term time”.

Figure 22 *Activities and support arranged specifically for international students (n=65)*



94% of respondents offered the previously mentioned activities throughout the year while 6% offered them in the first term/semester only.

77% of respondent institutions encouraged home students to participate in some of the previously mentioned activities while 23% did not.

57% of respondent institutions ran activities specifically to encourage home and international students to mix while 43% did not. Activities run at respondent institutions to encourage home and international students to mix included:

- social events such as a bowling, karaoke, film evenings;
- international Ceilidh;
- "a scheme called Progression Partnerships which is open to all students (home and international) and offers them the chance to work in the local community. A lot of the work is done in local schools";
- cultural excursions;
- celebration of various events/festivals;
- tandem learning; and
- language exchange.

STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK

17% of respondent institutions initially reported that they had a full-time (sabbatical post) International Student Officer in the Students' Union, and 45% reported that they had a part-time volunteer post. UKCOSA was a little surprised at the high number of institutions that reportedly had a full-time (sabbatical post) International Student Officer so followed this up with an email to institutions that had reported that they did. In response, five institutions (8% of respondents) confirmed that they did have a full-time (sabbatical post) International Student Officer in the Students' Union, one confirmed that their International Student Officer in the Students Union was part-time (making 46% of respondent institutions with a part-time International Student Officer post), and one respondent confirmed that they did have an International Student Officer in the Students' Union but they were unsure whether it was a full-time or part-time role. 37% of respondents reported that their institution had neither a full-time nor part-time post, and 2% didn't know/couldn't say.

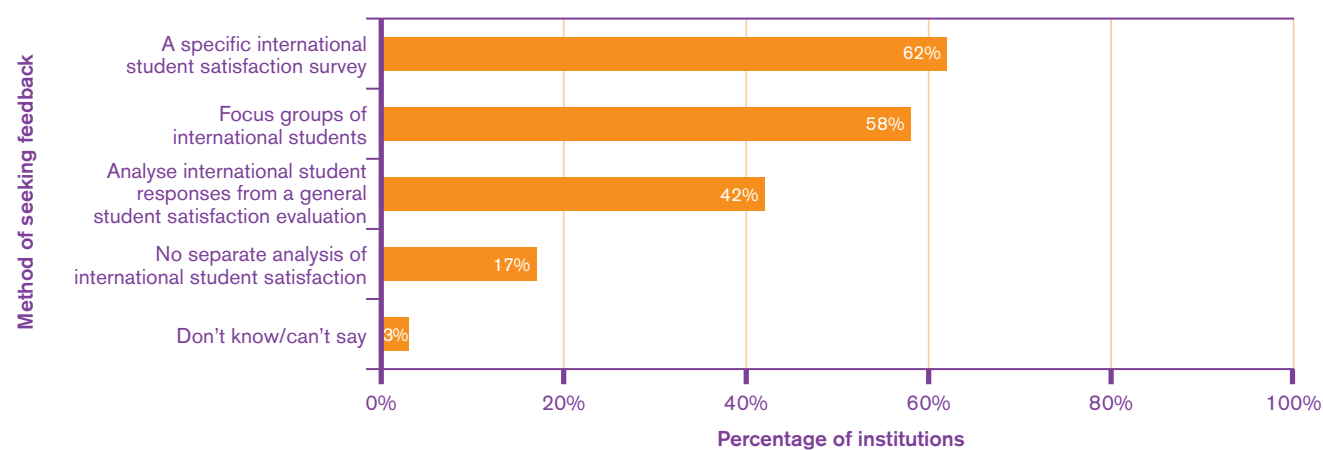
26% of respondents had an International Students' Committee within their institution or union, while 68% did not and 6% didn't know/couldn't say.

As Figure 23 opposite shows, 62% of respondent institutions sought international student feedback through a specific international student satisfaction survey, 58% used focus groups of international students, and 42% analysed international student responses from a general student satisfaction evaluation. Note that respondents could provide multiple answers to this question. 17% of respondent institutions conducted no separate analysis of international student satisfaction and 3% didn't know/couldn't say.

Other methods of seeking feedback from international students included:

- "anecdotal feedback collected by the International office and Students' Union"; and
- "questionnaire to obtain feedback from students who have used advice services, attended workshops etc".

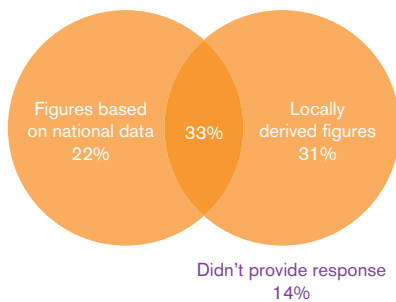
Figure 23 Ways in which institutions sought international student feedback (n=65)



FINANCE

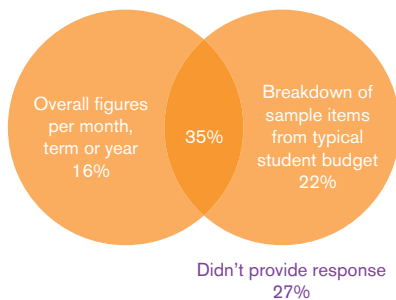
As Figure 24 below shows, one third of respondents provided both figures based on national data, e.g. the British Council, and locally derived figures on the cost of living to new students pre-departure. Almost another third (31%) provided locally derived figures only and 22% provided only figures based on national data. 14% of respondents didn't report the practice in their institution.

Figure 24
Types of information provided to new students, pre-departure, on the cost of living (n=66)



As Figure 25 below shows, 35% of respondent institutions provided both overall figures for the cost of living per month, term or year and a breakdown of sample items from a typical student budget (e.g. travel, clothes, books etc.) to new students pre-departure. 16% provided overall figures only, and 22% provided a breakdown of sample items only. 27% of respondents didn't report the practice in their institution.

Figure 25
Types of information provided to new students, pre-departure, on the cost of living (n=66)

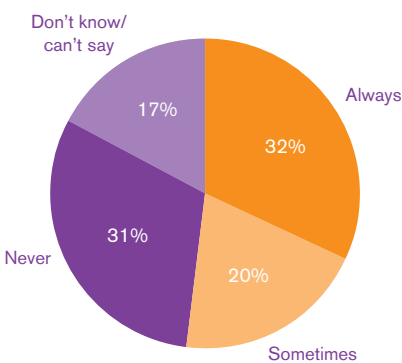


Some respondents reported that information such as helpful hints about the cost of living, useful tips, and links to other websites with information was provided on their institution's website.

Institutional practice with regard to how far in advance of registration institutions advised students of the actual fees for that year varied considerably. Responses to this question ranged from "when they apply" and "approximately 15 months" to "approximately 4 months". An approximate mean for responses to this question was 8.2 months and an approximate mode was 6 months. 34% of respondent institutions said they advised students of the actual fees for that year either on application or at the offer stage.

As Figure 26 below shows, 32% of respondent institutions reported that they always fixed fees for future years in advance, i.e. students were informed prior to registration what fees would be for the duration of their course of study. 20% reported that they sometimes fixed fees in advance, and 31% said they never did. 17% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say.

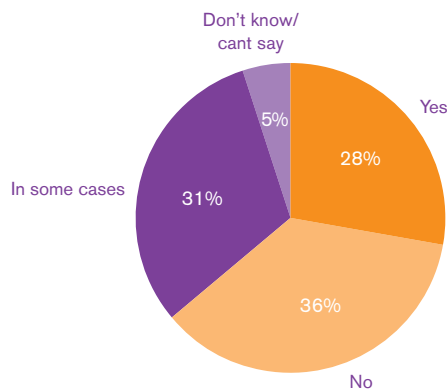
Figure 26
Respondent institutions that fixed fees for future years in advance (n=64)



At 36% of respondent institutions, international students were not required to pay a deposit on acceptance of offer. International students were required to pay a deposit at 28% of respondent institutions and were required to pay a deposit in some cases at 31%. 5% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say. This is shown in Figure 27 below.

Figure 27

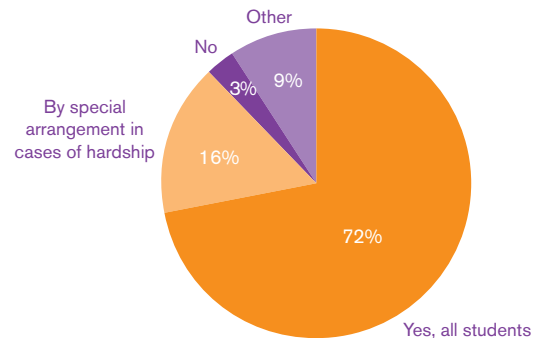
Requirement for payment of deposit on acceptance of offer (n=64)



72% of respondent institutions allowed all international students to pay fees by instalments and 16% allowed international students to pay fees by instalments in cases of hardship. A small number of institutions reported institutional policies such as a requirement for special arrangement with the Finance Office in advance, or payment by instalments allowed except where the student had a history of poor payment. 3% did not allow payment of fees by instalments. This is shown in Figure 28.

Figure 28

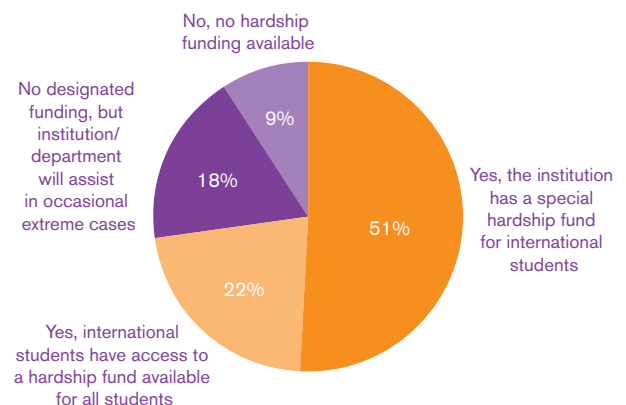
Respondent institutions that allowed international students to pay fees by instalments (n=64)



51% of respondent institutions had a special hardship fund for international students, while international students had access to a hardship fund available for all students (i.e. UK and international) at 22% of respondent institutions. 18% of respondent institutions had no designated hardship funding, but in occasional extreme cases would provide financial assistance. 9% of respondent institutions had no hardship funding available at all. This is shown in Figure 29 below.

Figure 29

Respondent institutions with hardship funding available (n=64)



EMPLOYMENT

34% of respondent institutions reported that they offered specific help to international students seeking part-time work while studying. The other 66% offered the same services as to home students.

Specific help offered to international students seeking part-time work included:

- twice-weekly drop in sessions at the careers and employment centre for international students;
- International Office links with recruitment agencies in the city;
- specific help notes for international students, e.g. on National Insurance numbers, writing a CV etc; and
- workshops by international student advisers and specialist employment lawyers.

42% of respondent institutions offered specific help to international students with careers or further study. 55% offered the same services as to home students. 3% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say.

Specific help offered to international students with careers or further study included:

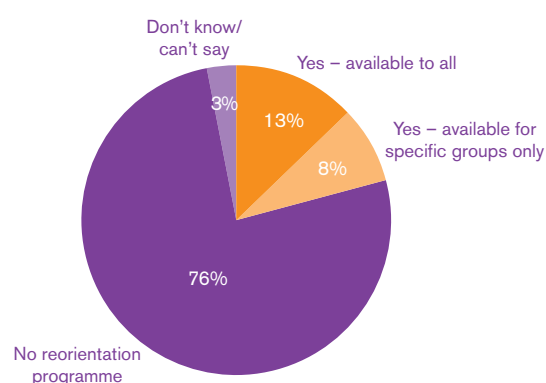
- careers advisers based within the Careers Service specialising in employment for international students;
- presentations to groups of students about their options for staying in the UK once they have finished studying;
- workshops on work permits, CVs etc;
- production of a leaflet for employers to try and encourage them to employ international students/graduates;
- visits overseas to speak to employers; and
- employer surveys in India and China (with more countries to follow).

GRADUATION AND RETURN

As Figure 30 below shows, 13% of respondent institutions offered a reorientation programme for all returning students, and 8% offered a reorientation programme for specific groups of students only. 76% of respondent institutions did not offer any reorientation programme, and 3% didn't know/couldn't say.

Figure 30

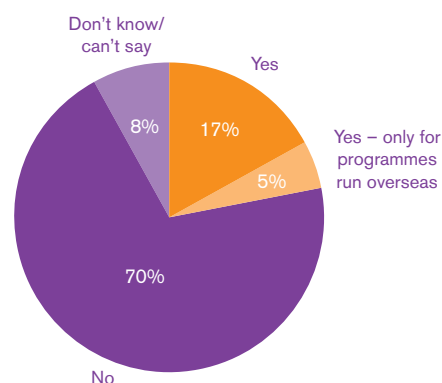
Respondent institutions that offered a reorientation programme (n=64)



17% of respondent institutions held graduate ceremonies overseas for international students, and 5% held graduate ceremonies overseas only for programmes run overseas. 70% did not hold graduation ceremonies overseas, and 8% of respondents didn't know/couldn't say. This is shown in Figure 31 below.

Figure 31

Respondent institutions that held graduation ceremonies overseas (n=64)



CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this survey suggest consistency between institutions in offering core services to international students. However, there are also institutions who are going beyond the basic services, or who are managing to provide services to a larger proportion of their students. Those institutions who wish to ensure their services are in the top bracket of UK institutions may wish to use this survey and in particular the self-assessment tool in the appendix, to benchmark their current position against competitors and to identify areas to improve further.

The self-assessment tool can also be downloaded from UKCOSA's website at www.ukcosa.org.uk/PMI.

A PowerPoint presentation on the benchmarking survey, available for use in institutions, is also downloadable from this site.

APPENDIX 1

SELF-ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKING TOOL

The following self-assessment tool was developed using key questions from the survey and is intended to enable institutions to benchmark their provision of services for international students against the results obtained by the survey.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers, rather this tool is designed to get institutions thinking about their provision of support services, see what other institutions offer and to help institutions reflect on how to target resources, set priorities etc.

Unless specified, percentages shown under *survey results* are the percentage of respondent institutions.

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

In which ways does your institution provide pre-departure information to students? (Tick all that apply)	Survey results
<input type="checkbox"/> On the institution's website	89%
<input type="checkbox"/> Bulletins by email	41%
<input type="checkbox"/> Handbooks/documents sent by post	95%
<input type="checkbox"/> In-country briefings	53%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	22%
Does your institution facilitate contact pre departure for new students with current students and/or alumni e.g. by email or via message boards? (Tick one)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	49%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	42%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	9%
Does your institution offer any interactive on-line tools to prepare students in terms of language, culture or study skills, for example? (Tick one)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	75%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	14%
Does your institution provide advice/assistance on: (Tick all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Visas/entry clearance applications for the student	93%
<input type="checkbox"/> Visas/entry clearance applications for accompanying dependants	75%
<input type="checkbox"/> Appeals against visa/entry clearance refusals	67%
<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	4%

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION

“Meet and greet” service

Does your institution offer a “meet and greet” service?

Survey results

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 84% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 16% |

Where are students met?

(Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local airport(s) | 81% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Train station | 42% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | 42% |

Where are students taken to?

(Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student's accommodation | 81% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central point in institution | 44% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centre of town | 6% |

When does the service operate?

(Tick one)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Start of year only | 56% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Start of each term/semester | 23% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On demand throughout year | 15% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | 6% |

What is the cost of the service?

(Tick one)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Free to all | 59% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Free to students, charge for family members | 10% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charge for all | 23% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | 8% |

If there is a charge for the service, how much is this?

£ _____

*Varied widely.
Ranged from £10–60,
with most around £10–20.*

Orientation

For students starting at the beginning of the academic year, when does orientation mainly take place?

(Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Before Freshers' Week/week 0	51%
<input type="checkbox"/> During Freshers' Week/week 0	34%
<input type="checkbox"/> During the first week of term/week 1	4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	11%

Survey results

For students arriving later in the academic year, what orientation do you provide?

(Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Orientation at the start of each term/semester	57%
<input type="checkbox"/> Scheduled orientation sessions more than once per term/semester	7%
<input type="checkbox"/> On-going "on-demand" orientation all year round	33%
<input type="checkbox"/> Web or multi-media-based orientation materials for late arrivals	10%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	17%
<input type="checkbox"/> No orientation for students arriving later in the year	14%

Is the orientation programme for international students:

(Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Entirely separate from home students	43%
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrated for some activities	51%
<input type="checkbox"/> Completely integrated – no separate international student orientation	6%

How long does the orientation programme last?

(Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> 1–2 days	19%
<input type="checkbox"/> 3–5 days	55%
<input type="checkbox"/> >5 days	26%

What parts of the orientation programme do students pay for?

(Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Orientation programme itself	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation	36%
<input type="checkbox"/> Leisure activities/trips	30%
<input type="checkbox"/> Meals	33%
<input type="checkbox"/> None of these – all costs included in tuition fees	45%

On average what is the total cost of your orientation programme for a student?

£ _____

Survey results

Varied widely.

Ranged from £10 for a Sunday outing to £170 for a longer programme.

Roughly what percentage of new international students participate in your institution's orientation programme?

_____ %

*Number of students participating ranged from 5–100%.
Mean 59%, mode 50%.*

Do you offer follow-up sessions through the year to supplement the start of year orientation?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

43%
57%

Are orientation sessions targeted at any of the following groups of international students?

- ☐ Postgraduates
☐ Students with dependants
☐ Direct entrants to second/final year
☐ No, not targeted at any specific groups
☐ Other

24%
13%
7%
64%
27%

STUDY ISSUES

Does your institution assess students' levels of English on arrival?

- ☐ All students
☐ Some students
☐ No students
☐ Don't know/can't say

14%
48%
27%
11%

Under what conditions are students accepted onto a course with less than the stated English language requirement?

- ☐ Never allowed
☐ At discretion of accepting department
☐ Requires central approval
☐ Don't know/can't say

21%
41%
21%
17%

If a student is accepted without the stated English language requirement, who takes responsibility for any additional language support required?

Survey results

<input type="checkbox"/> At student's own risk	26%
<input type="checkbox"/> At department's risk – they may be asked to fund supplementary language classes	24%
<input type="checkbox"/> At institution's risk – institution guarantees to underwrite cost of extra support	5%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	25%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	20%

Does your institution offer any free in-session English or study skills classes?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes for all students	73%
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes for some students e.g. if student was accepted with lower than standard entry level	17%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	8%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	2%

For respondents who do provide free English language or study skills classes, how many hours per week are typically available to a student?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1–2	29%
<input type="checkbox"/> 2–4	32%
<input type="checkbox"/> >4	10%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	29%

For what period of time is this available?

<input type="checkbox"/> First term/semester	6%
<input type="checkbox"/> First year of study	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> Throughout the period of study	69%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	5%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	9%

ACCOMMODATION

What assistance with accommodation does your institution provide to international students?

(Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Guarantee accommodation to all who apply before our deadline
- ☐ Guarantees for certain groups only (e.g. first year undergraduates)
- ☐ No guarantee given, but some institution-managed housing is available

Survey results

Due to discrepancies in data received, these figures have not been quoted. In summary, however, 59% guaranteed accommodation to all international students who applied before their deadline, a smaller number gave guarantees for certain groups, and fewer still gave no guarantee but had some institution-managed housing available.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vetted listings of private sector options available | 36% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listings of private sector options, but not vetted by the institution | 39% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Referral to private sector letting agents | 33% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advice on housing rights | 62% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation available for students with dependants | 35% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | 23% |

STUDENT SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Institutional structure and policies

Which of the following provide specialist support and advice for international students at your institution?

(Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Office | 51% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Services | 65% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Union | 48% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | 17% |

For combinations of above-mentioned departments within institutions please refer to body of report.

Please give an estimate of the number of international student advisers, or staff providing dedicated support to international students in your institution, in full-time equivalents (i.e. one full-time and one half-time ISA would be 1.5 FTE).

_____ FTE international student advisers
 _____ FTE administration support staff

Due to complex nature of results, please refer to body of report.

Approximately how many hours per day are international student advisers available to see students?

_____ hours per day

Survey results

Advisers available all day at approx 47% of institutions.
A further 41% had advisers available to see students for at least half (i.e. 4 hours) of the day.

International students under 18 years of age

For institutions for whom this question is relevant (i.e. not Scottish institutions) please answer the following 3 questions with regard to under 18s.

Does your institution require a nominated guardian?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 26% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 26% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say | 48% |

Does your institution require parental consent forms?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 28% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 22% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say | 50% |

Does your institution provide parents with information about the legal situation of under 18s in England, Wales & Northern Ireland, and the boundaries of institutional responsibility?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 29% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 18% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say | 53% |

Immigration/visa services

Does your institution provide immigration advice to students?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 95% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 5% |

At your institution, is the Student Batch Scheme:

(Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Available to all students	69%
<input type="checkbox"/> Available to students with complex applications	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> Not available	17%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say	5%

Survey results

If your institution charges students for using the Student Batch Scheme service, how much is this charge?

£_____

Vast majority of institutions did not charge.

Police registration

Does your institution have any special arrangements with regard to police registration?

(Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes – arrange on-campus visits by local police for registration	45%
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes – accompany students to the police station for registration	11%
<input type="checkbox"/> No – no special arrangements	29%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	15%

Activities

Does your institution offer a buddying or mentoring scheme for international students?

(Tick one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, for international students only	14%
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, for all students, including international students	29%
<input type="checkbox"/> No	57%

What activities and support does your institution or union arrange specifically for international students?

(Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Weekend/evening social activities	80%
<input type="checkbox"/> Trips	72%
<input type="checkbox"/> Hosting visits (via HOST or other schemes)	62%
<input type="checkbox"/> Sporting events	32%
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural events (e.g. international fairs)	71%
<input type="checkbox"/> Tandem learning	20%
<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering	40%
<input type="checkbox"/> Events for dependants	20%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	18%

When are these offered?

(Tick one)

- ☐ First term/semester
☐ Throughout the year

Survey results

6%
94%

Are home students encouraged to participate in any of these?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

77%
23%

Are any activities run specifically to encourage home and international students to mix?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

57%
43%

STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK

Does your institution have an elected International Student Officer in the Students' Union?

(Tick one)

- ☐ Yes – elected full-time sabbatical post
☐ Yes – part-time volunteer post
☐ No
☐ Don't know/can't say

*Due to complex nature of results,
please refer to body of report.*

Does your institution have an International Students' Committee within the institution or union?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know/can't say

26%
68%
6%

Does your institution seek international student feedback in other ways?

(Tick one)

- ☐ A specific international student satisfaction survey
☐ Focus groups of international students
☐ Analyse international student responses from a general student satisfaction evaluation
☐ No separate analysis of international student satisfaction
☐ Don't know/can't say

62%
58%
42%
17%
3%

FINANCE

What information do you provide to new students, pre-departure, on the cost of living?

(Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ Figures based on national data e.g. British Council
- ☐ Locally-derived figures
- ☐ Overall figures per month, term or year
- ☐ Breakdown of sample items from typical student budget (e.g. travel, clothes, books, etc)
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Don't know/can't say

Survey results

Please refer to body of report.

How far in advance of registration do you advise students of the actual fees for that year?

_____ months

Varied widely.
Approximate mean 8.2 months,
mode 6 months.

Are fees for future years fixed in advance, i.e. is a student informed prior to registration what fees will be for the duration of their course of study?

(Tick one)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Always | 32% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | 20% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never | 31% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say | 17% |

Are international students required to pay a deposit on acceptance of offer?

(Tick one)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 28% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 36% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In some cases | 31% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't say | 5% |

Does your institution allow international students to pay fees by instalments?

(Tick one)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, all students | 72% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By special arrangement in cases of hardship | 16% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 3% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | 9% |

Does your institution have hardship funding available to international students?

(Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Yes, the institution has a special hardship fund for international students
- ☐ Yes, international students have access to a hardship fund available for all students
- ☐ No designated funding, but institution/department will assist in occasional extreme cases
- ☐ No, no hardship funding available

Survey results

51%
22%
18%
9%

EMPLOYMENT

Does your institution provide specific help to international students seeking part-time work while studying?

- ☐ No – same services available as to home students
- ☐ Yes – we provide specific services

66%
34%

Please refer to body of report for examples of specific help offered to international students.

Does your institution provide specific help to international students with careers or further study after leaving your institution?

- ☐ No – same services available as to home students
- ☐ Yes – we provide specific services
- ☐ Don't know/can't say

55%
42%
3%

Please refer to body of report for examples of specific help offered to international students

GRADUATION AND RETURN

Does your institution offer a reorientation programme for returning students?

- ☐ Yes – available to all
- ☐ Yes – specific groups only
- ☐ No – no reorientation programme
- ☐ Don't know/can't say

13%
8%
76%
3%

Does your institution hold any graduation ceremonies overseas for international students?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes – only for programmes run overseas
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know/can't say

17%
5%
70%
8%

A series of thin, white, curved lines that originate from the left edge of the page and sweep upwards and to the right, eventually curving downwards towards the bottom right corner. The lines are closely spaced and create a sense of motion and flow.

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