

STUDENT LIFE SURVEY NOVEMBER 2024: SUMMARY

ABOUT THE SURVEY

It is critical to the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh University's Students' Association (EUSA) to improve the student experience, ensuring all students have a voice that we listen to and respond to. The Student Life Survey (SLS) aims to understand the changing lives, needs, behaviours and experiences of students at the University – their academic experience, their student life, the campus resources and facilities available to them and their support and wellbeing.

In response to student feedback that surveys should take 3 minutes or less and topics should be asked at the appropriate time in the academic year, we have changed how we ask for feedback in 2024/5. Instead of one long survey sent to students once a year, the questions are divided into five groups spread across the year based on the time they are most relevant to students and the ability to act upon results. The survey is open to all taught students, with slightly different questions sent to on-campus students and online students. An equivalent survey for research students is in early development.

The third (of five) surveys ran from 13 January to 26 January 2025. The questions can be found [here](#) and the results have been published in the [Dashboard](#). Data in the dashboard can be viewed by University, College, School, and Subject Area (where number of respondents are above the publishable threshold of 10). Outcomes can also be viewed by Demographic characteristic. This summary will provide a high-level overview of the results split by undergraduate students (UGs), postgraduate taught students (PGTs) who are based on-campus, and PGTs based online.

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

In the survey, unless indicated otherwise, students rated their agreement on a 5-point scale from "definitely agree" to "definitely disagree." The agreement rate shows the percentage selecting "definitely agree" or "mostly agree".

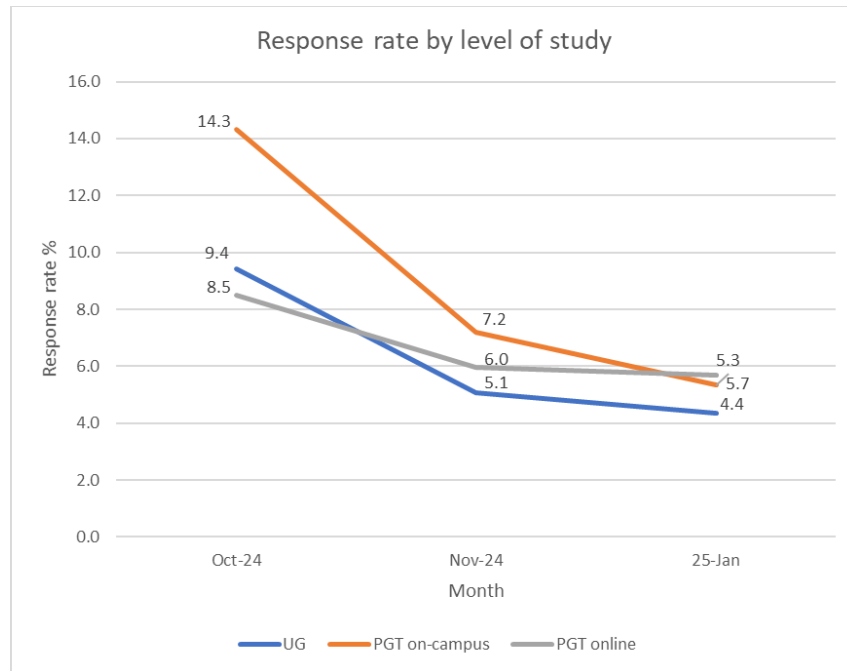
The March 2024 survey only interviewed non-final year UGs, however, this year we have also included final year UGs and PGTs. Previous data has been included for interest, but *caution is advisable when comparing to March 2024 data* due to the population change.

RESPONSE RATE

The survey was sent to 38,132 students in total, and 1,791 students responded, a **4.7% response rate**.

Group	Population size	Respondents	Response rate
Undergraduate	26,351	1,149	4.4%
Postgraduate – on-campus	7,731	412	5.3%
Postgraduate – online	4,050	230	5.7%

This was a decrease from the previous two surveys among all student groups.



OVERVIEW

The January 2025 SLS questions were focused on assessment and feedback, and included additional questions on the ability to share views with others and opportunities for building connections.

83.3% agreed that assessment supports learning and development

67.0% agreed feedback helps them learn and improve

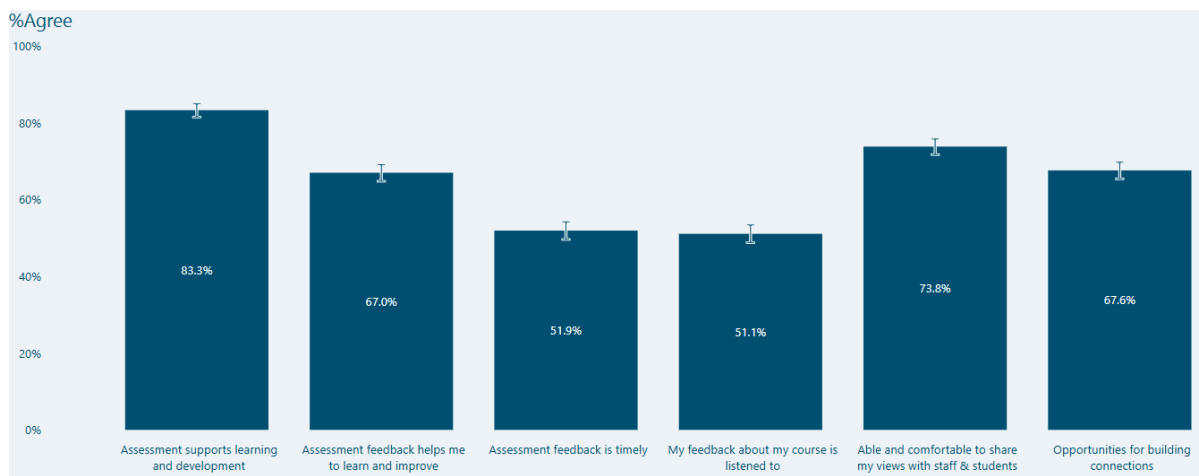
51.9% agreed feedback is timely

51.1% agreed their feedback about their course is listened to

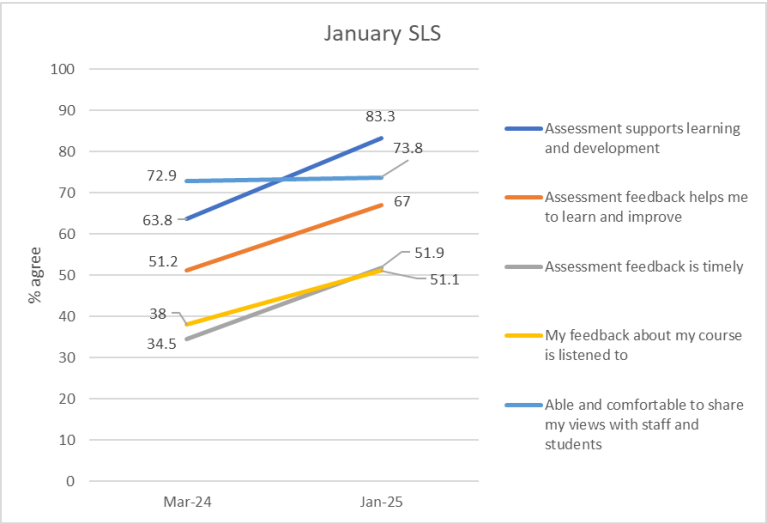
73.8% agreed they are able and comfortable to share their views with staff and students

67.6% agreed there are opportunities for building connections

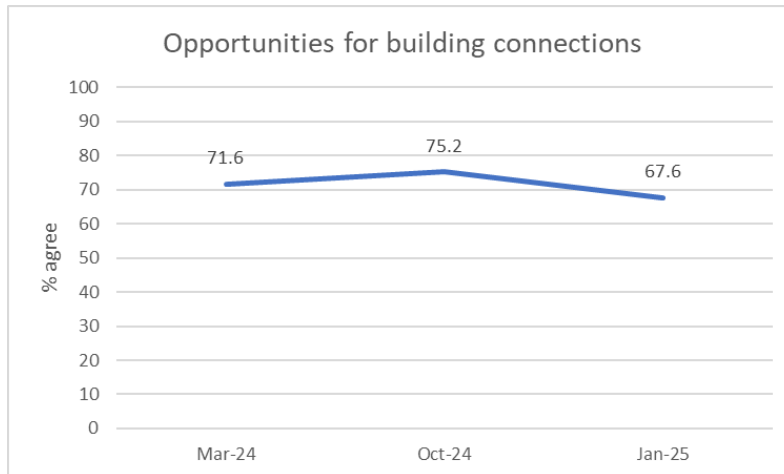
The highest agreement score was for assessment supporting learning and development, followed by being able and comfortable to share views with staff and students. The lowest scores were feedback about their course being listened to, and assessment feedback timeliness.



The questions can be compared to March 2024 data, but note the population difference as described earlier in the report. The questions have all seen some improvement in scores, with assessment supports learning and development showing the greatest increase (19.5 percentage points), and the smallest increment for students feeling able and comfortable to share views (0.9 percentage points).

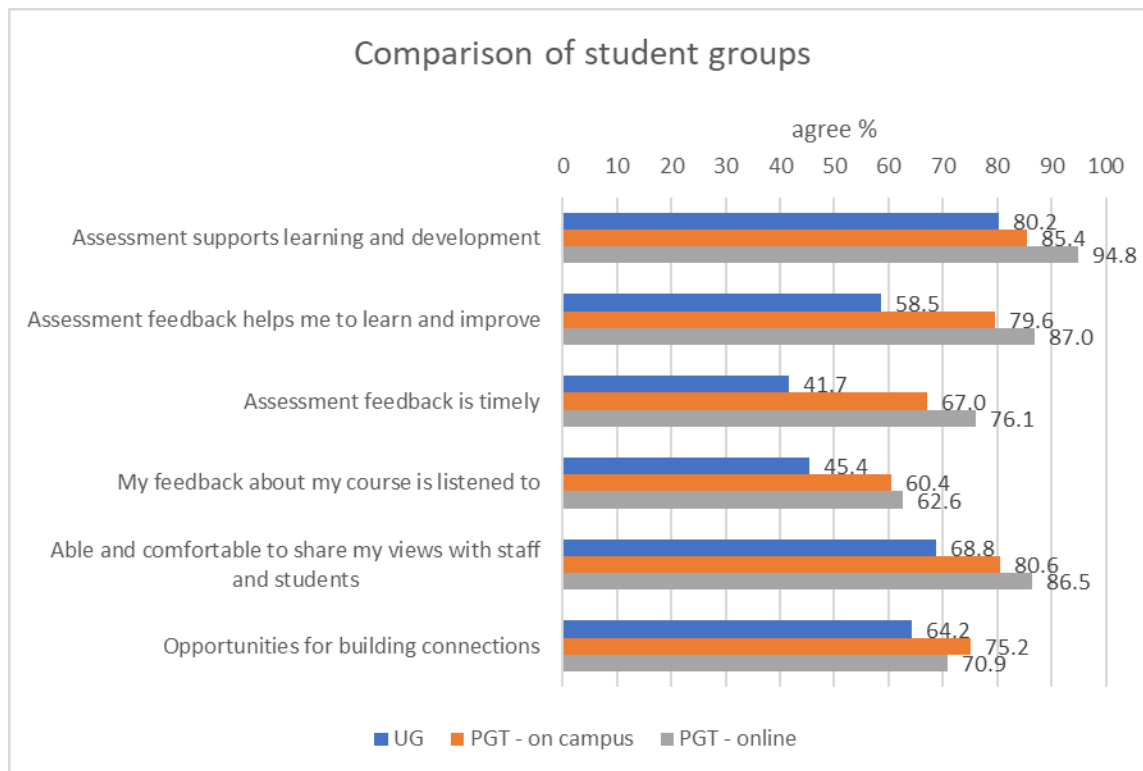


Opportunities to build connections has been asked several times over the past year. The agreement score peaked in October 2024 and has decreased in the most recent SLS instalment. The question will be asked again in March.



COMPARISON OF STUDENT GROUPS

There are large differences between student groups' responses to questions in this instalment of the SLS, particularly for assessment feedback helping students to learn and improve, and for assessment feedback being timely. PGT students have higher agreement than UG students across all questions. Online PGT students show the highest agreement scores, except when it comes to opportunities for building connections. The gap between UG and PGT is concerning and requires further investigation, e.g., is it based on expectations, experience, or academic skills?



UNDERGRADUATE RESULTS

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

80.2% of UG students agree that assessment supports learning and development. This is a 16.4 percentage point increase from March 2024 when 63.8% of non-final year UGs agreed with the statement.

58.5% of UG students agreed that assessment feedback helps them to learn and improve, an increase of 7.6 points from March 2024's score of 51.2% among non-final year UGs.

Only 41.7% of UG students agreed that feedback is timely. 34.5% of non-final year UGs agreed with this question in March 2024, so the January 2025 score is an increase of 7.2 points.

Feedback from open comments further suggests that UG students are expecting more timely and constructive feedback on their assessments. They are also seeking clarification about assessment criteria and expect standardisation across different courses. Given the gap in scores between UG students and PGT students, UG students may have a lower quality experience of assessments, there may be more disparity through encounters with multiple subject areas, or their expectations of what is acceptable may differ to PGTs.

STUDENT VOICE

Only 45.4% of UG students said their feedback about their course is listened to. While this is an increase of 7.4 points since March 2024 when 38% of non-final year UGs agreed with this question, it is still less than half of the population and indicates an accelerated need to understand the issues surrounding the statistic.

68.8% of UGs agreed they were able and comfortable to share their views with staff and students. This is a 4.1-point decrease since March 2024 when 72.9% of non-final year UGs agreed with the question.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING CONNECTION

64.2% of UG students agreed there were opportunities for building connections, a decrease of 7.4 percentage points from March 2024 when 71.6% of non-final year UG students agreed with the question, and an 8.1-point drop since October 2024.

Confirming findings from previous rounds of SLS, UG students again express desire for more communal spaces, cohort events, and organised social activities to build stronger connections with other students from both their own and different courses. They have suggested a different variety of events that they would like to participate in, such as pizza social, Ceilidh dance sessions, movie nights, and BBQ, with some students again wanting more social opportunities organised at the start of semester which would help them integrate and build better connections with their peers.

POSTGRADUATE – ON-CAMPUS RESULTS

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

85.4% of on-campus PGT students agreed that assessment supports learning and development. 79.6% agreed that feedback helps them to learn and improve. And 67% agreed assessment feedback is timely.

On-campus PGT students also report delays and lack of clarity in assessment feedback in the open comments. They would like to have more actionable feedback into their assessments so that they can improve their works effectively.

STUDENT VOICE

60.4% of on-campus PGTs agreed that their feedback about their course had been listened to. Meanwhile, 80.6% agreed they are able and comfortable sharing their views with staff and students.

OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD CONNECTIONS

75.2% of on-campus PGTs feel there are opportunities for building connections with other students.

However, the open comments noted a lack of community feeling among on-campus PGTs, who suggested more social gathering and organised events specific to PGT to foster a sense of belonging. They also expressed a desire for more networking events, industry or career interactions, and practical workshop that could enhance their job prospects.

POSTGRADUATE - ONLINE RESULTS

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

94.8% of online PGT students agreed that assessment supports learning and development. 87% agreed that feedback helps them to learn and improve. And 76.1% agreed assessment feedback is timely.

Some online PGTs have raised concerns about the timeliness and quality of feedback they receive on assessments. They are seeking more detailed and constructive feedback that not only helps them understand their performance but also provides clear guidance on how to improve their work.

STUDENT VOICE

62.6% of online PGTs agreed that their feedback about their course had been listened to, while 86.5% agreed that they were able and comfortable to share their views with staff and students.

OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD CONNECTIONS

70.9% of online PGT students agreed there were opportunities for building connections with other students.

Many online PGTs have expressed feeling disconnected from other students and Schools. They have suggested more virtual social events, networking opportunities, and integrated platforms like social media or discussion boards for easier interaction. Meanwhile, some of them would like to attend on-campus events to meet other online peers.

ADDITIONAL STUDENT COMMENTS

All respondents have been asked to provide suggestions on how the University could improve their student experience to create a greater sense of belonging. While recommendations related to building connections and

assessments and feedback have been discussed in the previous sections, additional themes identified from the open comments include support and resources, administrative efficiency, and communication.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Both UG and PGT students, whether they are studying on-campus or online, have expressed a desire for better academic guidance, mental health support, and resources that are tailored to their needs. Particularly, students who are balancing work and family commitments alongside their studies have highlighted the need for better supports from the University.

ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY

Many students have voiced concern about administrative processes, particularly around registration, fee payments and course selections. Some UG students have noted issues with course management and timetabling. Concerns about the bureaucratic aspects of the University experience are also common. Students have expressed a desire for more transparent, communicative administrative practices, and more streamlined processes.

COMMUNICATION

Students across all levels have again expressed the need for clear, more effective and timely communication from both academic and administrative departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The gap between UG and PGT scores indicates the priority areas for improvement work, particularly for UGs, are:

- Timeliness of feedback
- Student feedback about their course is listened to
- Assessment feedback helps students to learn and improve