

## STUDENT LIFE SURVEY OCTOBER 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 first (of five) surveys ran from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024. 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 37,438 students in total, and 3,861 students responded, a 10.31% response rate.

Group	Population size	Response rate
<b>Undergraduate</b>	25,992	9.43%
<b>Postgraduate – on-campus</b>	7,487	14.34%
<b>Postgraduate – online</b>	3,959	8.51%

## OVERVIEW

The October 2024 SLS questions were all focused on start of semester experience, including support services, extra-curricular activities and accommodation. Extra-curricular activities and accommodation were only shown to on-campus students.

- 76.7% respondents agree they are comfortable reaching out to their Student Adviser for support.
- 76.4% agreed they knew how to find out about student support services that the University offers.
- 78.6% of *on-campus* students agreed that extra-curricular activities, clubs and societies available through the University and EUSA cater to their interests.
- 75.2% of respondents agreed that the University provide opportunities for building connections with other students.
- *On-campus* students accommodation status:

Yes – other accommodation	54.7%
Yes – University accommodation	44%
No	1.3%

- 92.1% of students with permanent address agreed that their accommodation meets their needs.
- Students without accommodation experienced these challenges:

Not within budget	52.3%
Applications/viewings not accepted	40.9%
Does not meet needs	22.7%
Other	22.7%
No guarantor	9.1%

## UNDERGRADUATE RESULTS

### SUPPORT SERVICES

74.5% of respondents agreed that they were comfortable reaching out to their Student Adviser for support. This is an 8.2 percentage point increase from March 2024 (66.3%).

74.0% of respondents agreed they knew how to find out about student support services that the University offers (e.g. Student Counselling, Student Wellbeing Service). This is a 6.1 percentage point increase from March 2024 (67.9%).

UG students would like communications with Student Advisers and student support services to improve. They would like to receive quicker responses and to have more direct interactions with Student Advisers, who are essential for supporting their academic and personal wellbeing, especially for new students adapting to university life.

Other students expressed confusion and felt overwhelmed by all the services offered by the University. They suggested that improved communications and an introductory session at the beginning of their university journey would greatly help them understand and use these services more effectively.

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## BUILDING CONNECTIONS

79.8% of UG students who responded to the survey agreed that extra-curricular activities, clubs and societies available through the University and EUSA cater to their interests. This is a 5.7 percentage point increase from March 2024 (74.1%).

The UG students have expressed a need for more structured social and integration activities, particularly during Freshers' Week. They would like the University and EUSA to organise more networking opportunities, group chats, and in-person events to help them meet peers and form bonds earlier in their university life. There is also a notable demand for more non-alcoholic social events.

72.3% of UGs agreed that the University provides opportunities for building connections with other students. This was the lowest scoring question in the survey, and is similar to March 2024 results (71.6%).

While some Schools have already been hosting events tailored to specific programmes to improve peer integration and networking, many students believe that this practice should be adopted by other Schools as well. Extending such event across all Schools would significantly enhance opportunities for students to connect with peers from different programmes, fostering broader networking and integration.

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## ACCOMMODATION

On-campus students were asked whether they have a confirmed term-time address for this academic year. While 41.3% of students are in University accommodation, the majority of students (57.2%) who responded are in other accommodation. However, concerningly, 1.5% of respondents said they had no permanent accommodation.

Yes – other accommodation	57.2%
Yes – University accommodation	41.3%
No	1.5%

Students with a permanent address were asked whether the accommodation meets their needs, and 92.1% of students agreed that it did, with university accommodation scoring marginally higher than other accommodation (93.2% vs 91.3%).

Among those living in University accommodation, consistent concerns have been raised about accommodation arrangements, including the timing of allocations and conditions upon arrivals. Some students also have encountered difficulties with accommodation that did not meet with their preferences.

Students without permanent accommodation were asked about the challenges they encountered securing a place to live.<sup>1</sup> Budget constraints made up 52.8% of the responses, but students also reported that they were not receiving offers for viewings and/or their applications were not being accepted (38.9%). Some students also struggle to find accommodation because the accommodation does not meet their needs (25%) or they do not have a guarantor (11.1%).

Not within budget	52.8%
Applications/viewings not accepted	38.9%
Does not meet needs	25.0%
Other	25.0%
No guarantor	11.1%

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<sup>1</sup> Students could pick multiple options for this question

## POSTGRADUATE – ON-CAMPUS RESULTS

### SUPPORT SERVICES

80.9% of PGT on-campus respondents agreed that they were comfortable reaching out to their Student Adviser for support.

79.7% of respondents agreed they knew how to find out about student support services that the University offers (e.g. Student Counselling, Student Wellbeing Service).

PGT students have shown a particular interest in career planning services. They have expressed a desire for the University to provide more opportunities to connect and engage with potential employers.

### BUILDING CONNECTIONS

76.0% of PGT on-campus students who responded to the survey agreed that extra-curricular activities, clubs and societies available through the University and EUSA cater to their interests.

As with UG students, PGTs have voiced a need for more structured social and integration activities during Welcome Weeks. They would also like the University and EUSA to organise more networking opportunities, cohort-specific, and in-person events to help them connect with peers.

82.6% of PGTs agreed that the University provides opportunities for building connections with other students.

### ACCOMMODATION

PGT on-campus students were asked whether they have a confirmed term-time address for this academic year. Students are fairly evenly divided between University accommodation and other accommodation, and a smaller proportion than UG students have no accommodation yet.

Yes – other accommodation	50.0%
Yes – University accommodation	49.2%
No	0.7%

Students with a permanent address were asked whether the accommodation meets their needs. Those in University accommodation scored slightly lower than those in other accommodation (90.7% vs 93.7%).

As with UG students, PGTS living in University accommodation have consistently raised concerns about accommodation arrangements, including the timing of allocations and conditions upon arrivals.

We are unable to report on the challenges in securing accommodation for PGT on-campus students without an address as the numbers are too small.

## POSTGRADUATE - ONLINE RESULTS

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### SUPPORT SERVICES

80.1% of respondents agreed that they were comfortable reaching out to their Student Adviser for support.

83.4% of respondents agreed they knew how to find out about student support services that the University offers (e.g. Student Counselling, Student Wellbeing Service).

Many online PGT students have highlighted slow responses to emails, ambiguous instructions, and a lack of personalised interaction with Student Adviser.

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### BUILDING CONNECTIONS

73.3% of online PGTs agreed that the University provides opportunities for building connections with other students.

Online students have voiced a need for more virtual academic and informal social setting that are tailored to their circumstances. Many online students, who have a full-time job, have found it challenging to attend events scheduled during regular work hours. They have suggested organising these activities outside standard working hours to better accommodate their schedules.

## ADDITIONAL STUDENT COMMENTS

All respondents have been asked to provide suggestions on how University could better prepare them for the start the semester. Recommendations related to accommodation, support services, and building connection have already been discussed in the previous sections. Meanwhile, areas such as academic preparation, orientation, and technical and platform navigation support have been identified as key areas for improvement.

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### ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Both UG and PGT students, whether they are studying online or on-campus, have indicated that earlier access to course outlines, reading lists, and timetables would further enhance their preparation for the academic year. They have noted that more accurate and timely information would facilitate better planning of their academic commitments. Online students, in particular, have highlighted the need of clear and upfront communication about courses schedules that include both live and recorded sessions, enabling them to better balance their personal and academic lives.

Furthermore, some PGT students have reported a lack of clarity in how programmes and courses are structured, which has impacted their preparation. Meanwhile, UG students have requested for more standardised communications and regarding course and programme expectations to improve clarity.

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### ORIENTATION IMPROVEMENTS

Students have suggested that welcoming activities should cater not only to new students but also to returning, direct entry, and international students. Specifically, some direct entry and international students are seeking additional supports with preparatory information and integration activities to assist with their transition upon arrivals

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### TECHNICAL AND PLATFORM NAVIGATION SUPPORT

Challenges with navigating university platforms like Learn and managing communications across different channels have been a common issue for both on-campus and online students. There is recommendation for clearer instructions, centralised information resources, and guided introductions or tours of online platforms to enhance the learning experience and understand platform navigation.