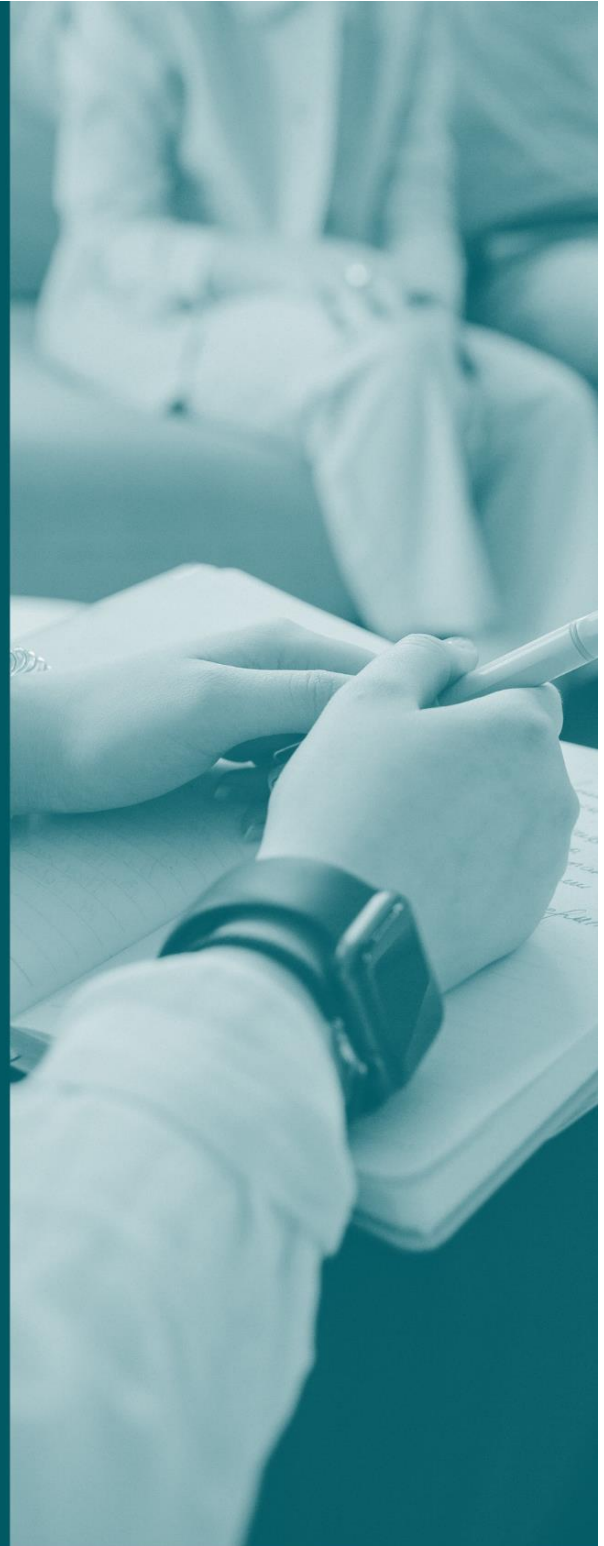


Student Advice Service

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-20



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1. HIGHLIGHTS

"Among the few good things in the past two months was meeting you and seeing the incredible work you and SUAS do here in Cambridge. Your support has been one of the major reasons why I didn't decide to drop out of my course and I am deeply grateful for that."

feedback from service-user, 2019-20 (shared with permission)

In 2019-20, the Student Advice Service:

- was in its tenth year of service
- employed four staff members (3.2 full-time equivalent)
- was funded by a direct college levy

Service-users and Cases:

- 528 service-user CASES (11% increase as compared to 476 service-user cases in 2018-19)
- 479 service-users (13% increase as compared to 425 service-users in 2018-19)
- 444 student CASES (10% increase as compared to 405 student cases in 2018-19)
- 395 students (12% increase as compared to 354 students in 2018-19)
- As compared to 2014-15, this represents an increase of 158% in the number of students accessing the Service, and a 137% increase in the total number of service-users.

Service-user status, top 3 for students:

- Current students (74%)
- Past students (5%)
- Intermitting students (5%)

Busiest times of the year:

- July 2019 (74 student cases)
- March 2020 (49 student cases)
- February and April 2020 (43 student cases each)
- November (40 student cases)

Colleges:

- We supported students from 31 colleges
- For the majority of colleges, we supported between 10 and 29 students

- 4 graduate/mature colleges featured in the top 5
- Top 10 colleges – mix of old and newer colleges with varying levels of resource

How students found out about the Student Advice Service:

- Signposted by College service-providers and staff e.g. Senior Tutors, Tutors, Nurses (21%)
- Signposted by University service-providers and staff e.g. DRC, UCS, OSCCA (19%)
- Signposted by Cambridge SU Officer (13%)
- Signposted by friends (11%)
- Web search (8%)

Gender (of those who disclosed)

- Female (60%)
- Male (38%)
- Other (2%)

Disability:

- Students who disclosed a disability on the SAS monitoring form (15%, same as last year)
- Students who did not disclose a disability on the form but mentioned a disability to the Advisor (11%, as compared to 15% last year)
- Potentially up to 26% of students who accessed the SAS may have a disability (as compared to 30% last year)

Student status:

- Undergraduate (38%, as compared to 41% last year)
- Postgraduate (62%, as compared to 59% last year)
- Of the postgraduate students (51% PhD, 30% MPhil, 17% other Masters, 2% PGCE)

Top 10 issues for all students:

1. Examination-related
2. Complaints (University/College/OIA/Other)
3. Intermission/return from intermission
4. Mental health
5. Financial hardship
6. Supervisor issues
7. Reasonable Adjustments (new to the top 10 issues)
8. Review of Decisions (new to the top 10 issues)
9. College/Tutor issues
10. Extensions/deadline concerns

Top 3 issues for undergraduate students:

1. Examination-related
2. Intermission/return from intermission
3. Complaints

Top 3 issues for postgraduate students:

1. Examination-related
2. Complaints
3. Intermission/return from intermission

Feedback from student service-users:

- 100% strongly agreed or agreed that their concerns were listened to and taken seriously by the Advisor.
- 86% strongly agreed or agreed that the advice they received was relevant, appropriate and clear.

SAS initiatives:

1. Post-exam online workshops and videos for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Post-exam workshops and videos for postgraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
3. Information guides on issues such as examinations, supervisor issues, and finance.

Training provided

- 12 training sessions were provided to 144 College and University student representatives (e.g. JCR/MCR Officers, liberation campaigns, sports club welfare officers)
- Welfare training was provided to University staff, including library staff from across the Collegiate University
- Feedback questionnaire indicates extremely high satisfaction rates among participants.

2. ADVICE SERVICE TEAM

STAFF ADVISORS

In 2019-20, the Student Advice Service was composed of four professional advisors (3.2 FTE) who provided individual support to students and other service-users.

- Lisa Déry (Head of Advice and Welfare)
- Rachel Wilson (Senior Advisor, maternity leave)
- Gemma Douglas (Senior Advisor)
- Simona Obeng (Advisor)
- Candy Stokes (Advisor, maternity cover for 6 months)



Photo: Gemma, Rachel, Lisa and Simona

“You are amazing at what you do! You are brilliant. I can’t tell you how much you’ve helped me. You’ve made such a difference.” feedback from service-user, 2019-20 (shared with permission)

ELECTED SABBATICAL OFFICERS

The students' unions' elected sabbatical officers worked closely with staff on the development of the Service and social policy work. Sabbatical officers bring to the Service their experience as students of the Collegiate University, while staff members bring experience, knowledge and institutional memory. These different backgrounds ensure the Student Advice Service is simultaneously student-led and professional.

- Stella Swain (CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer, and lead officer of the SAS)
- Edward Parker Humphreys (CUSU President)
- Alessandro Ceccarelli (GU President)
- Ali Hyde (CUSU Education Officer)
- Kate Litman (CUSU Women's Officer)
- Jess O'Brien (CUSU Disabled Students' Officer)
- Lily-Rose Sharry (CUSU Access and Funding Officer)
- Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar (GU Vice-President)

3. STUDENT ADVICE SERVICE AND COVID-19

The Student Advice Service adapted promptly and smoothly to delivering advice during the pandemic. Since the lockdown in March 2020, the Advice Service has been providing its services remotely, delivering advice mainly by email and video call. The number of students who accessed the Service increased by 12% in 2019-20. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic and the increase in demand, the small team of 3.2 full time equivalent employees successfully dealt with 528 service-user cases. More students accessed the Advice Service partly as a result of the pandemic and the issues that arose from this, but we believe that a major contributing factor was the ease of access to the Service now that advice was mainly provided on-line. We expect numbers to continue to rise post-pandemic as we continue to offer and promote online services in addition to in-person advice.

The main service provided was one to one advice, however, as demand for the Service continued to rise, we developed initiatives to support us in managing capacity and meeting students' needs.

- We offered group advice to students at specific points in the academic year when similar issues arose for several students (e.g. examination results).
- We continued developing a range of resources and tools students could access independently (e.g. videos, information guides, templates), helping them to understand what options exist and which procedure/s was appropriate to their situation, supporting them in their journey in resolving problems themselves.
- We made full use of the administrative support provided by the students' union with 60% of the full-time Administrative Assistant's time being spent on Advice Service administration.
- We increased the Service's response time to 2-3 days, something we didn't take lightly bearing in mind the tight deadlines around many of the University and College procedures (e.g. complaints, reviews of decisions etc)

Overall, the performance of the Advice Service during the pandemic has been excellent which is down to the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of a team that cares deeply about the community it serves.

4. STUDENT ADVICE SERVICE DEFINED

The Student Advice Service provides free, confidential, and independent advice, information and representation to all Cambridge University students, undergraduate and postgraduate, from all 31 Colleges. Students can come to the Service with any issues they might experience during their time at the University of Cambridge.

In 2019-20, the Advice Service was provided by Cambridge University Students' Union and the Graduate Union (which merged into one into Cambridge Students' Union in July 2020).

Advisors work by a Code of Practice which assures students that they will receive free, confidential, impartial, non-directive, and non-judgmental advice. Response times are also specified.

As generalist advisers, the Student Advice Service complements other more specialised University service providers such as the Counselling Service and the Disability Resource Centre which deal with more specific issues such as mental health and disabilities. Advisors can also work closely with tutors, other University or College service providers and departmental staff members if the student feels this would be useful.

5. ACTIVITIES

A. ADVICE WORK

INDIVIDUAL ADVICE WORK

All students at the University of Cambridge can come to the Service with any issues or problems that they might experience as a student - from making friends to working relationships, from exams to intermission, and from welfare concerns to finance. The issues experienced by students using the Service are often complex and regularly involve many inter-related concerns (for example a health issue and exam allowances, or intermission and finances). A student might approach the Service with one particular issue, but others may emerge during the course of subsequent communications.

The Service helps students with a broad range of issues, with a varying degree of involvement in each case. Some case studies are included as an appendix to this report to provide some examples of the role of the Service in different scenarios.

Following the advice sector's framework for defining the types of advice provided, the Service splits cases into three categories - Information, Advice, and Advice with Casework.

"It is really helpful to have someone to look at the ins and outs behind the scenes because it's so hard to find out what's needed for resolving my issues within college and department. It does help a lot being able to come to you at SUAS." feedback from service-user, 2019-20 (shared with permission)

GROUP ADVICE WORK

The Student Advice Service continued the development of workshops which were offered on-line in 2019-20:

1. Post-exam workshop for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Post-exam workshop for postgraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams

The advantage of delivering these workshops are twofold. Firstly, they allow students to access relevant information, ask questions and share experiences with other students in similar circumstances. Secondly, they allow the Advice Service to manage its capacity by delivering group advice at a time when many students will be seeking advice on the same issue.

ADVICE RESOURCES

The Student Advice Service continued its development of resources for students during the academic year 2019-20, which included the following:

1. Post-exam video for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Post-exam video for postgraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
3. Introduction video to the Student Advice Service
4. Information guides on examinations, finance, and supervisor issues

Several more resources are in development (such as more videos, information guides and templates). The advantage of developing such resources are twofold. Firstly, they give students' autonomy by providing them with the information, resources and tools they need to help them understand what options exist and which procedure/s is appropriate to their situation, supporting them in their journey in resolving problems themselves. Secondly, they aid the management of the Advice Service capacity by delaying the point at which students need specialist advice.

OTHER TYPES OF ADVICE WORK

While the Student Advice Service is geared towards directly supporting students, we are often approached by users who are not current Cambridge students. For example, non-standard users might include past and prospective students, students on intermission, students who are off the register, and visiting students.

The Service also records information regarding non-student users - for example, parents, relatives or friends of students who ask for advice. Though non-student users approach the Service on a regular basis, the aim is always to work with the student directly. Therefore, the advice we provide to non-student users is often limited and is usually focused on helping the non-student user encourage the student to access the Service themselves.

A service is also provided for JCR/MCR and Sports Welfare Officers who specifically want advice that relates to their role or to discuss any concerns they may have about a student they are supporting. More detail is provided later in this report (see Links with other Organisations).

More informally, the Service continues to welcome contact from tutors, other service providers and staff across the Collegiate University who wish to discuss options that may be available to a student they are supporting.

MAINTAINING QUALITY STANDARDS

Maintaining a consistently high quality of service is vital to the continued success of the Student Advice Service. The effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms is important in ensuring that every member of the team can provide students with an excellent standard of support. Advisors undergo **training** throughout the year in order to increase their knowledge in relevant areas. The Service also utilises a **peer observation** scheme throughout the year.

In addition, each week, all Advisors meet for **reflective practice** – this provides an opportunity to share best practice, discuss challenging cases and explore options together, and reflect on how Advisors might improve the level of support they offer to individual students. The Head of Advice and Welfare leads the team in maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of training and professional standards and may therefore use this time to discuss possible changes to current practice in line with this understanding.

B. TRAINING

ADVICE SERVICE STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING

In 2019-20, Advice Service staff took part in the following professional development opportunities:

- **Formal qualifications:**
 - Senior Leaders Master's Degree Apprenticeship - ongoing (Head of Advice and Welfare)
 - Project Management Apprenticeship - ongoing (Senior Advisor)
- **Office of the Independent Adjudicator Sessions (OIA):**
 - OIA workshop at the University
 - Meeting and Discussion with the Independent Adjudicator
 - An Introduction to the OIA for Student Representative Bodies
 - Non-academic Disciplinary Procedures
 - Research Supervision and Research Degrees
 - Procedural Fairness
 - Good Practice Framework - Supporting Disabled Students

- **Advice UK Workshops:**
 - SU Advice Service Networking and Learning Event
- **National Union of Students:**
 - NUS Covid-19 response group: Advice and Welfare
- **Other:**
 - Discipline Procedure Workshop (OSCCA)
 - Responding to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct in the University setting (University)
 - Working with Disabled Students (DRC)
 - Annual visits to College and University service providers and key staff members (e.g. UCS, DRC, Nurses)
 - Meetings with key bodies (OSCCA, EAMC etc)

In addition to this, we had meetings and were in regular contact with our equivalents at Anglia Ruskin University, University of East Anglia and Oxford University to discuss common areas of interest.

TRAINING DELIVERED TO ELECTED SABBATICAL OFFICERS

The Advice Service provides a welfare training programme to incoming elected sabbatical officers every year to allow them to offer initial support and signposting to students when approached. These sessions included:

- Introduction to the Student Advice Service
- Essential Skills for Supporting Students (active listening, confidentiality, boundaries, non-directive advice, signposting)
- Working with Disabled Students (provided by DRC)
- Communication Skills
- Train the Trainer
- Meeting and visiting University and College service providers and key staff members

PRESENTATIONS DELIVERED TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STAFF

For the sixth year, the Advice Service participated in the tutor training programme by delivering a session on the Student Advice Service. This session informs tutors about the existence of the Advice Service and the important role we have to play, and helps to build relationships with colleagues with whom we are likely to have contact in the future.

We continued to provide inductions to new staff members from the University Counselling Service, Disability Resource Centre and College nurses which includes an introduction to the Student Advice Service and a general overview of the Collegiate University.

TRAINING DELIVERED TO STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

In 2019-20, the Advice Service provided twelve 3 hour training sessions to 144 student representatives, including JCR/MCR Officers, Sports Welfare Officers and liberation campaigns. The training provided included:

- Essential Skills for Supporting Students
- Introduction to Student Mental Health
- Supporting a student who may be feeling suicidal

Feedback questionnaires indicate high satisfaction rates among participants.

C. OUTREACH

STUDENTS AND STAFF

This year, the Advice Service took part in the following student outreach activities:

- Disability Resource Centre Transitional Events
- Pop-Up Advice sessions on various academic sites
- Welcome Event for Student-parents
- International Students' Welcome Events

COMMITTEES AND ASSOCIATIONS

The Head of Advice and Welfare is a member of the following committees:

- Health and Wellbeing Committee
- Joint Committee on Childcare for Students

The Head of the Advice and Welfare submitted and/or presented the Student Advice Service Annual Report 2018-19 to the following committees:

- Health and Wellbeing Committee
- Student Finance and Welfare Committee
- Graduate Tutors' Committee
- College Nurses' Association

D. FEEDBACK

All students who access the Advice Service are invited to provide feedback on their experience through a confidential and anonymous on-line questionnaire. In 2019-20, the response rate was very low with only 2% of student service-users who responded (7 students out of 395). Of those:

- 100% strongly agreed or agreed that their concerns were listened to and taken seriously by the Advisor.
- 86% strongly agreed or agreed that the advice they received was relevant, appropriate and clear.

To the question “What I like about the Service is...”, the following comments are amongst the responses received during the year:

'How nice the workers are'

'Friendly advisors'

To the question “What I feel you could do to improve the service for students is...”, similarly to previous years, the majority of responses related to the promotion of the Service. Below are some of the comments:

- *'More advertising'*
- *'Just the visibility'*

6. PARTNERS AND LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

A. CUSU AND THE GRADUATE UNION

In 2019-20, the Student Advice Service was provided by Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU) and the Graduate Union (GU). The Advice Service forms part of the "non-representational" student support services offered by the Unions. Presently, this includes the Advice Service and the training, support and guidance provided to the JCR/MCR officers of the Colleges.

The Welfare and Rights Officer served as the lead officer in the Advice Service, and the team of elected sabbatical officers participate in the governance and development of the Service in a variety of ways.

A benefit of providing an advice service via the central students' union is that the suitably anonymised casework data provides a useful resource for informing the elected sabbatical officers' representational priorities. The existence of the Advice Service as part of the union ensures that the elected students are informed of recurrent or emergent student issues within the Collegiate University.

B. COLLEGIATE UNIVERSITY

Working effectively with other Collegiate University services is key to the way the Advice Service operates, and the team works closely with these services throughout the year, in making or receiving referrals, seeking advice and information, or working alongside various support services when supporting a student through a difficulty.

Cases often involve discussing multiple referral options with the student to help them identify what might be most appropriate for them. To support this aspect of the Service, every year, the Advice Service team meets other key service-providers in the Collegiate University such as:

- University Counselling Service
- Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor
- Disability Resource Centre
- Careers Service
- Childcare Office
- International Students Office
- Accommodation Service
- Language Centre
- Fees and Funding team
- Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals
- Student Registry
- Senior Tutors and their teams
- College Nurses

In addition to these annual visits, we also have regular meetings or are in regular contact with:

- Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals
- Exam Access and Mitigation Committee
- Student Registry

C. STUDENT GROUPS

Strong peer support networks are a feature of the Collegiate University and something which the Advice Service plays a vital role in supporting. In turn, volunteers in these networks are a vital source of referrals and awareness-raising for the Service.

This year, we provided training and/or worked with:

- JCR/MCR committee members
- Sports Clubs Welfare Officers
- Liberations Campaigns
- Clubs and societies

The Service further supports these student networks by providing a confidential source of advice and support for volunteers who are concerned about a particular student or situation. The Service can support officers in providing information about what support and information is available, how to manage the situation, how to set clear boundaries and when to share information.

D. NATIONAL ADVICE COMMUNITY

The Student Advice Service remains a member of Advice UK (the UK's largest support network for free, independent advice centres), AMOSSHE (Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education), RAWs (Research and Welfare Staff in Student Unions), and has benefitted from the access to training, resources and advice that membership of these organisations afford.

The Service continues to foster strong relationships with other advice services locally and nationally, including Anglia Ruskin University, the University of East Anglia, and Oxford University.

7. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

A. MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLAN

The mission of the Student Advice Service is to support students in any aspect of their journey through the University of Cambridge in overcoming obstacles that may prevent them from realising their educational aspirations.

As part of our vision, we are committed to improving the overall student experience at Cambridge by feeding back to the Collegiate University any challenges our student service -users have faced that can be improved by changes in processes.

Key strategic objectives include:

1. Increase students' awareness of the Service
2. Increase the Service's role as a force for positive change
3. Expand the range of services and resources on offer to students
4. Improve further the quality of the Service and ensure long term funding for sustainability
5. Increase the Service's profile within the Collegiate University as an integral part of student support in Cambridge
6. Ensure the future proofing of space and resource for the Service

B. KEY INITIATIVES IN 2019-20

1. Post-exam workshops and videos for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Post-exam workshops and videos for postgraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
3. Information leaflets (examinations, supervisor issues, and finance)
4. Programme of welfare training for College and University student representatives e.g. JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation campaigns
5. Welfare training for sports club welfare officers
6. Welfare training for staff

The Welfare training includes active listening, confidentiality, managing boundaries and expectations, providing information and signposting.

8. STATISTICS AND TRENDS

The Student Advice Service obtains information about service-users by asking them to complete registration and monitoring forms when they access the Service – either via email, phone, in person or video call. All service-users who have received advice in person will have completed these forms however those with whom we have corresponded mainly by email will not necessarily have completed these forms. This means that we do not have a complete set of personal data for every service-user. Also some service-users who do complete the forms may choose to not disclose certain details such as ethnicity, language, gender or whether they consider themselves to be disabled.

Data, such as the number of students, user demographics and issue areas act as indicators which inform the Service's development. This information also helps the Service to identify trends in student welfare needs, respond efficiently to enquiries and direct students to relevant resources. Through its monthly meetings with students' union elected sabbatical officers, the Service regularly updates the students' union on its activities and trends in student welfare issues, which, in turn, facilitates their wider political work in supporting students.

The following measures of data were taken from the time period **1st July 2019 to 30th June 2020**. Noting trends in the types of issues students raised ensures the Service is well-equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to help the students who approach us. It allows the Service to adapt and evolve, and to develop its sources of support in line with student demand and need.

A. SERVICE-USERS

SERVICE USER NUMBERS

In 2019-20, the Service worked with a total of:

- 528 service-user CASES (11% increase as compared to 476 service-user cases in 2018-19)
- 479 service-users (13% increase as compared to 425 service-users in 2018-19)
- 444 student CASES (10% increase as compared to 405 student cases in 2018-19)
- 395 students (12% increase as compared to 354 students in 2018-19)
- students = current, intermitting, off the register, past, visiting, exchange, JBS and matriculated ICE students

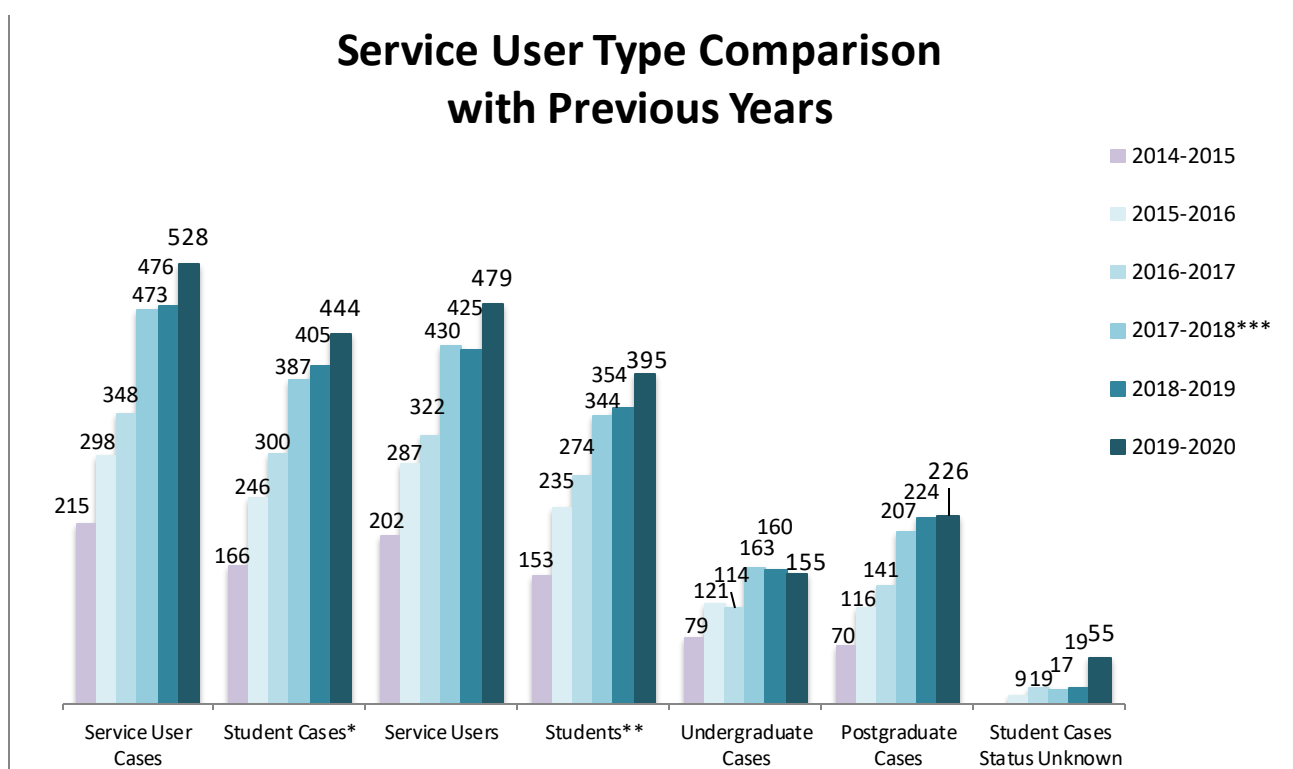
The number of students accessing the Service has grown steadily over the last six years, 158% in the number of students accessing the Service, and a 137% increase in the total number of service-users.

The small team of 3.2 FTE employees dealt with 528 service-user cases in 2019-20. The most recent increases in demand are partly as a result of the pandemic and the issues that have arisen from this, but we believe that a major contributing factor has been the ease of access to the Service now that advice is mainly

provided on-line. We expect numbers to continue to rise post-pandemic as we continue to offer and promote online services in addition to in-person advice.

Some students experience multiple issues throughout the year and return to the Service with different cases:

- 32 students received support on 2 different cases (as compared to 29 last year)
- 3 students received support on 3 different cases (as compared to 1 last year)
- 1 student received support on 4 different cases (as compared to 5 last year)
- 1 student received support on 9 different cases (highest number of cases per student recorded, the previous highest being 6 cases)



Graph 1 – Comparison of Service User Type from 2014-2015 to 2019-2020

* When students use the service more than once, each time they use the service for a different issue, this is recorded as a new case.

**25 students continued to access support from the previous reporting period.

*** New reporting period from 1st July to 30th June. 2016 – 2017 reporting year ran from 11th June 2016 to 30th June 2017 which includes an extra 20 days of reporting. Reporting years 2014 – 2015 and 2015 – 2016 both ran from 11th June to 10th June.

HOW SERVICE-USERS FOUND OUT ABOUT THE ADVICE SERVICE

Of the students who disclosed how they found out about the Advice Service:

- 21% were signposted by College service providers and staff, such as Tutors, Senior Tutors, Nurses (as compared to 12% in 2018-19)
- 19% were signposted by a University service provider or staff member, such as the Disability Resource Centre, Counselling Service, OSCCA, or departmental administrator (as compared to 23% in 2018-19)
- 13% were signposted by Cambridge SU Officers
- 11% were signposted by friends

Found out about the service via	Number	Percentage
College Tutor/Senior Tutor	25	17%
Cambridge SU Officer	19	13%
Friend/s	16	11%
University Disability Resource Centre	14	9%
Web search	12	8%
Returning student	9	6%
SAS Publicity material	7	5%
Other	7	5%
Office of Student Complaints, Conduct & Appeals	5	3%
SAS Publicity Event - Advice Pop-up /Freshers' Fair	5	3%
University Counselling Service	4	3%
Cambridge SU Bulletin	4	3%
College JCR/MCR Officer	3	2%
College Chaplain/Nurse/Counsellor/Welfare Advisor	3	2%
Cambridge SU Staff	3	2%
Cambridge SU Website	3	2%
University Sexual Assault and Harassment Adviser	2	1%
University International Student Office	2	1%
Student Registry	1	1%
University Website	1	1%
Cambridge Rape Crisis	1	1%
Other University Staff	1	1%
Total	147	100%

Table 1 – Breakdown of how students found out about the Advice Service where this information is known

SERVICE USER STATUS

The Advice Service works with users across a range of profiles (*Table 1*). Current students, non-standard student users (including past and prospective students, or intermitted students), and non-students (such as relatives or friends of students) may all access the Service. Advice was also provided to JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation Campaign Officers, and Sports Welfare Officers who may use the Service to discuss their specific role or any concerns they may have about a student in their community.

Relatives and friends of students made up 1% of service-users (as compared to 4% last year). As an independent service, the Advice Service is well placed to talk parents and friends through options available where the student themselves is hesitant to access support. College and University staff made up 3% of service-users (same as last year). We also provided support to many individuals who were not eligible to access other University service providers (these included intermitted students, students off the register, and past students). Though we were glad to be able to support these individuals, this highlights a gap in the support available from the Collegiate University, and that the Advice Service may not always have the capacity to fill, thus potentially leaving these individuals isolated.

Client Status	Number	Percentage
Current student	385	74%
Past Student	27	5%
Intermitted student	25	5%
Off the register	6	1%
Erasmus Student	1	-
Relative of a student	6	1%
Prospective Student	23	4%
College staff (Senior Tutor/Tutor/Nurse/ Tutorial Office)	6	1%
Other	12	2%
Offer holder	11	2%
University staff	11	2%
Friend of a student	2	-
Support Officer (JCR/MCR/Peer2Peer)	7	1%
Total	522	100%

Table 2 – Status of Service User where this information is known

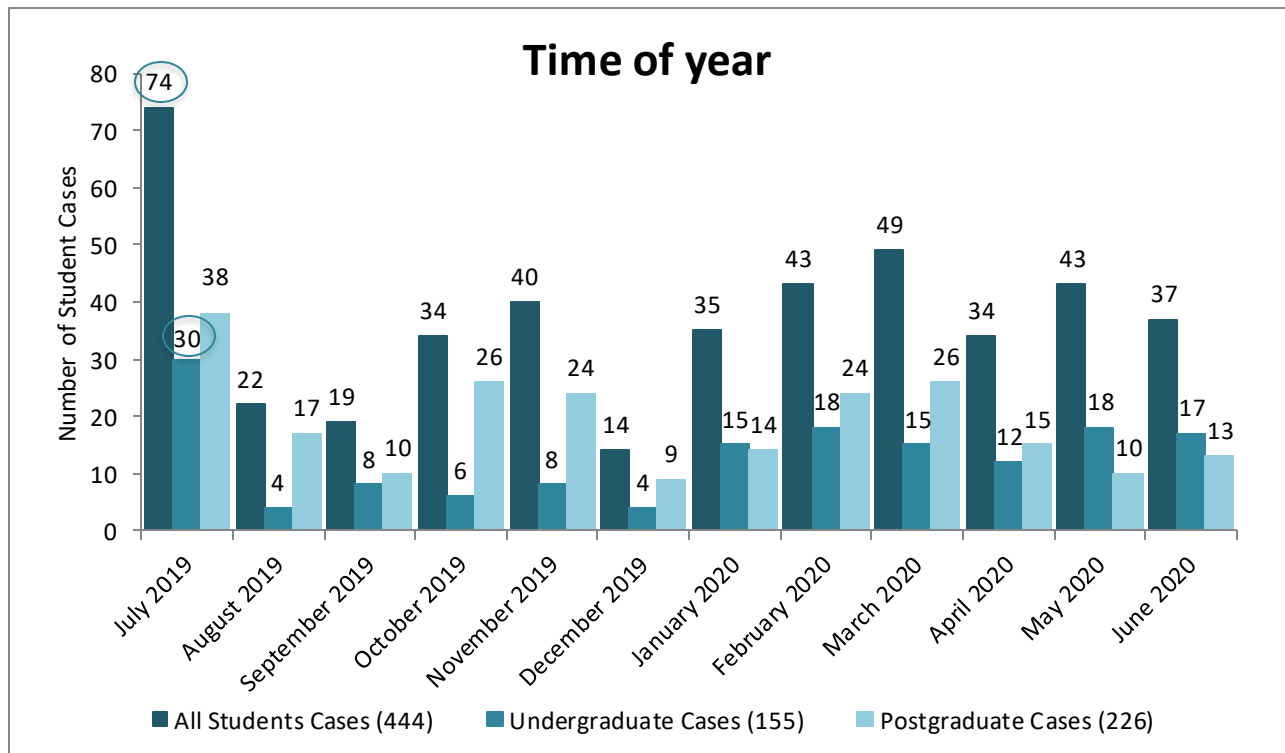
B. SERVICE-USER DEMOGRAPHICS

TIME OF YEAR

The Student Advice Service is open throughout the year, including outside of academic term time. *Graph 2* demonstrates what may be described as peaks and troughs throughout the year.

As in previous years, the Advice Service continued to be busy during the academic term-times but we have continued to see an increase in the number of students accessing the Service outside of term-time, the months of July 2019 and March 2020 were the busiest of the year. We supported an almost equal number of postgraduate and undergraduate students during the month of July 2019 enquiring about examination allowances, examination reviews, or advice on what options were available in light of their results. However, in nine out of twelve months, a greater number of postgraduate students accessed the Service. Of these students, 51% were PhD students with a variety of issues (as compared to 57% last year).

The average number of hours spent on casework per student service -user was 3.5 hours. The highest number of hours spent on a single case was 101 hours.



Graph 2 – Number of student cases by month of reporting year

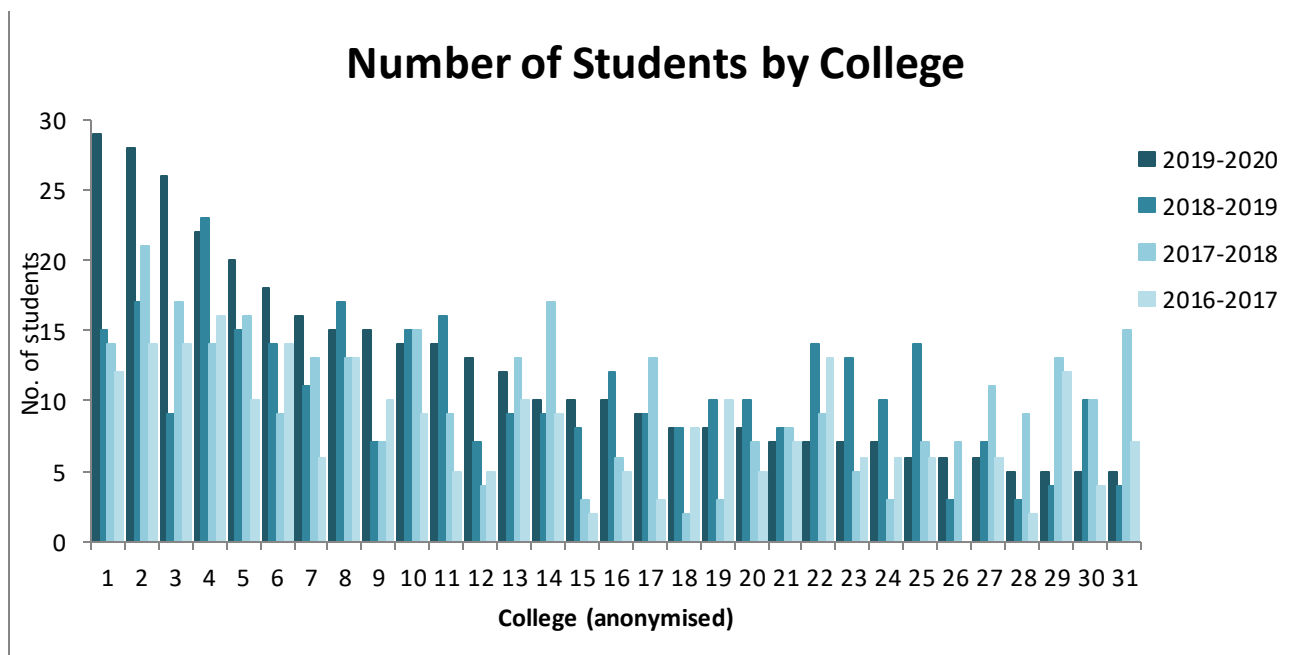
COLLEGE

In the 2019-20, the Advice Service supported students from 31 Colleges (Graph 3). As with every year, the number of students accessing the Service from each College varies and is not necessarily linked to the size of the College or its proximity to the Advice Service.

- For the majority of colleges, we supported between 10 and 29 students
- 4 graduate/mature colleges featured in the top 5
- Top 10 colleges – mix of old and newer colleges with varying levels of resource

Bearing in mind that 21% of service-users were signposted to the Advice Service by College staff such as tutors, senior tutors, nurses etc, there are clearly some colleges that are particularly strong at raising the awareness of their students of the services available to them.

The variability of students approaching the Service within a given year, as well as over several years, should not be taken as an indication of effectiveness or quality of support offered within different Colleges. It is important to note that the students’ union considers it to be good practice for colleges to inform their students they can receive independent advice via the Advice Service.



Graph 3 –Number of students accessing SAS by College (where college information is known n=371)

GENDER

In 2019-20, we have gender data for 38% of the students (151 students) who accessed the Service. The large number of students whose gender is undisclosed (242 in 2019-20) arises from the fact that data is recorded based on how students declare their gender. If a monitoring form is not received, for example, or if the case is short-lived (such as some of those under the 'Information' category), or if communication with a service-user is entirely by e-mail, then a gender may not be registered. The Service does not assume a user's gender if it has not been explicitly declared.

Of the students who disclosed their gender, more of these were female students (60%) compared to male students (38%) and other students (2%). This is in-line with previous years, and wider sector trends which signal lower engagement in pastoral and academic support services by male students, which in turn reflects social norms. 2% of our service-users identified their gender as "other", which based on percentages from previous years coupled with the increase in the number of students accessing the Service, indicates the highest number ever of students who identify their gender as 'other' accessing the Service.

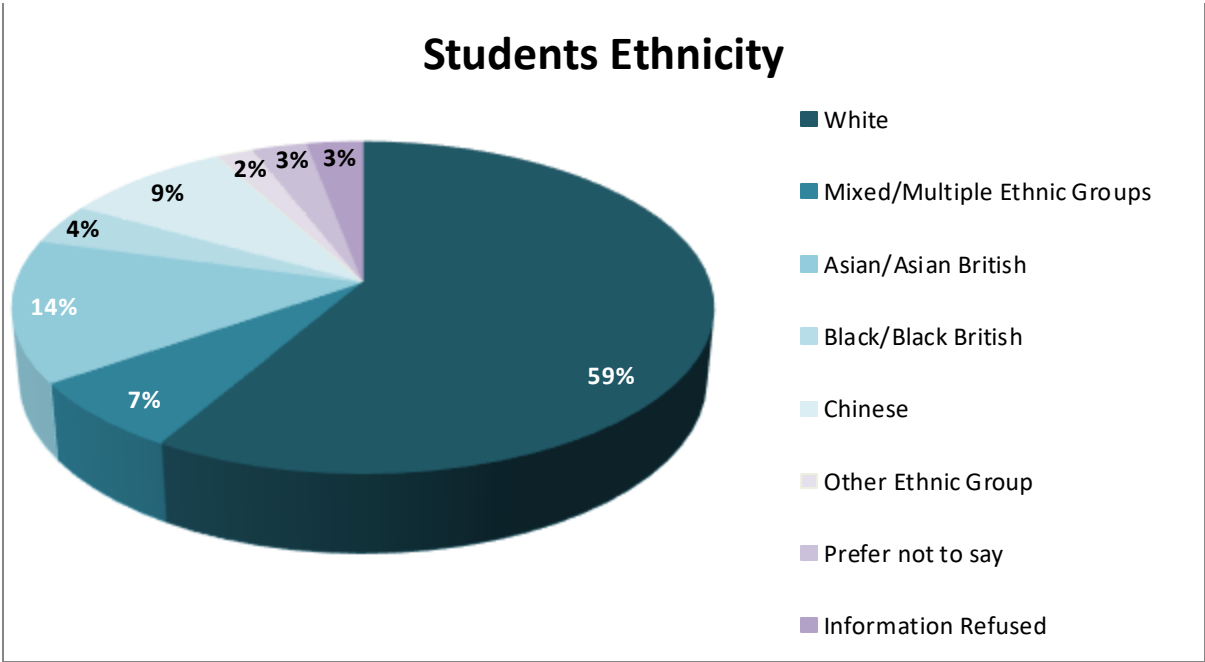
All Students	Number	Percentage
Female	90	60%
Male	58	38%
Other	3	2%
Total	151	100%

Table 3 – Students accessing the Service by gender where this information is known

ETHNICITY

In 2019-20, we have ethnicity data for 40% of the students (159 students) who accessed the Advice Service.

White students represented the largest group of students who accessed the Service (59%) followed by Asian/Asian British students (14%), Chinese students (9%), Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups (7%), Black/Black British students (4%), and other ethnicities (2%). Students from ethnicities other than 'white' represented 36% of service-users.



Graph 4 – Students by Ethnicity where this information is known (n=159)

DISABILITY

Of the 395 students who accessed the Service this year, 57 disclosed a disability via the monitoring form (Table 4). This represents 15% of the students who accessed the Service (same as last year). An additional 45 students mentioned a possible disability to the Advisor during the discussion of their case. We can therefore conclude that as many as 102 (26%) students who accessed the Service may have had a disability (as compared to 30% last year).

All Students	Number	Percentage
Yes	57	15%
No	100	25%
Prefer not to say	11	3%
Unknown*	227	57%
Total	395	100%

Table 4 – Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

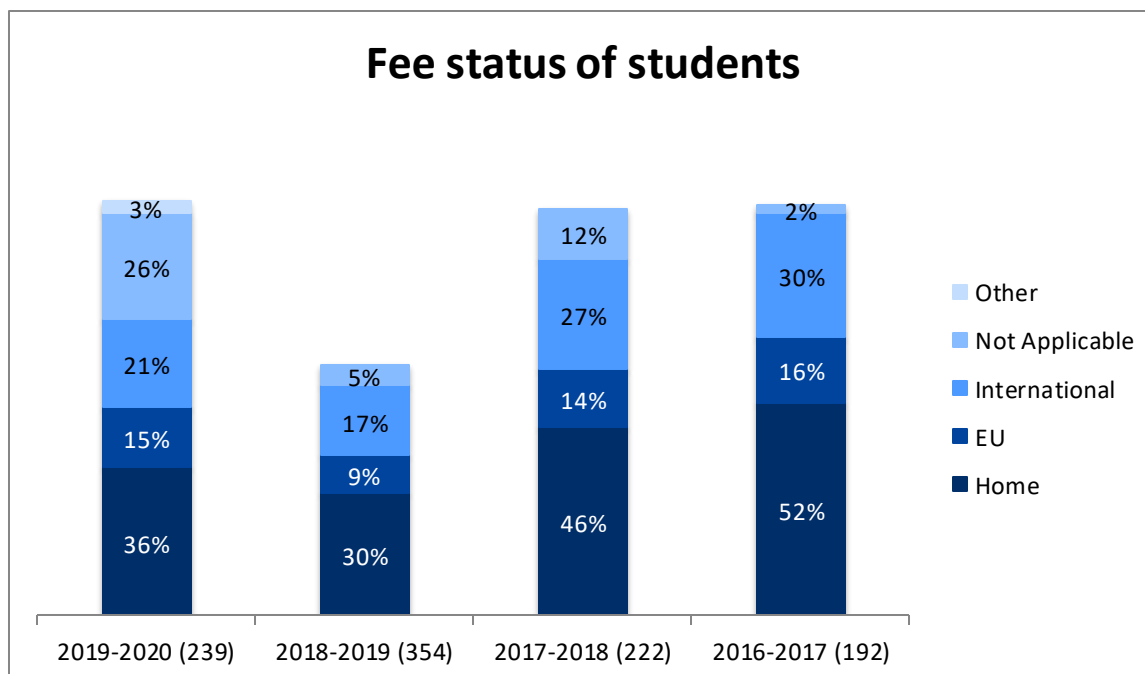
* For those where this information is unknown, it is because they did not complete a monitoring form either due to this form being optional or the support was provided via email or over the phone.

All Students	Number	Percentage
Students who disclosed disability on monitoring form	57	15%
Students who did not disclose disability on monitoring form but mentioned a disability to the Advisor during an appointment	45	11%
Students who did not disclose a disability or this information is unknown	293	74%
Total	395	100%

Table 5 – Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

FEE STATUS

In line with the increased number of students who accessed the Service in 2019-20, there was a corresponding increase in the number of Home, EU and International students (*Graph 5*). The proportions have remained fairly stable as compared to previous years with Home students representing the largest proportion of students accessing the Service followed by International and finally EU students.



Graph 5 – Fee status of students where this information is known

STUDENT STATUS

The Advice Service continues to support students across a wide range of degrees (*Table 6*). As with the last two years, for those students whose status is known, there was a greater number of postgraduate students who accessed the Service (207 postgraduates as compared to 130 undergraduates) which equates to a 62%/38% split (as compared to 59%/41% split last year) (*Table 7*). The category of ‘postgraduate’ encapsulates PhD students, MPhil, MFin, MBA, MRes, MSt, MEd, LLM and PGCE students. Within these sub-categories, usage of the Service varies. The proportions are similar to last year with the largest number of students coming from Tripos courses, followed by PhD students, followed by MPhil students and other postgraduate students. It is the combined figure for postgraduate students that exceeds the number of undergraduate students. With the increase in the number of students accessing the Service, most categories of students have grown proportionally, including for undergraduate students.

Student Status	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	130	33%
PhD	106	27%
MPhil	63	16%
Other Masters Degrees	35	9%
PGCE	3	1%
Other	6	2%
Not Applicable	2	1%
Unknown	50	13%
Total	395	100%

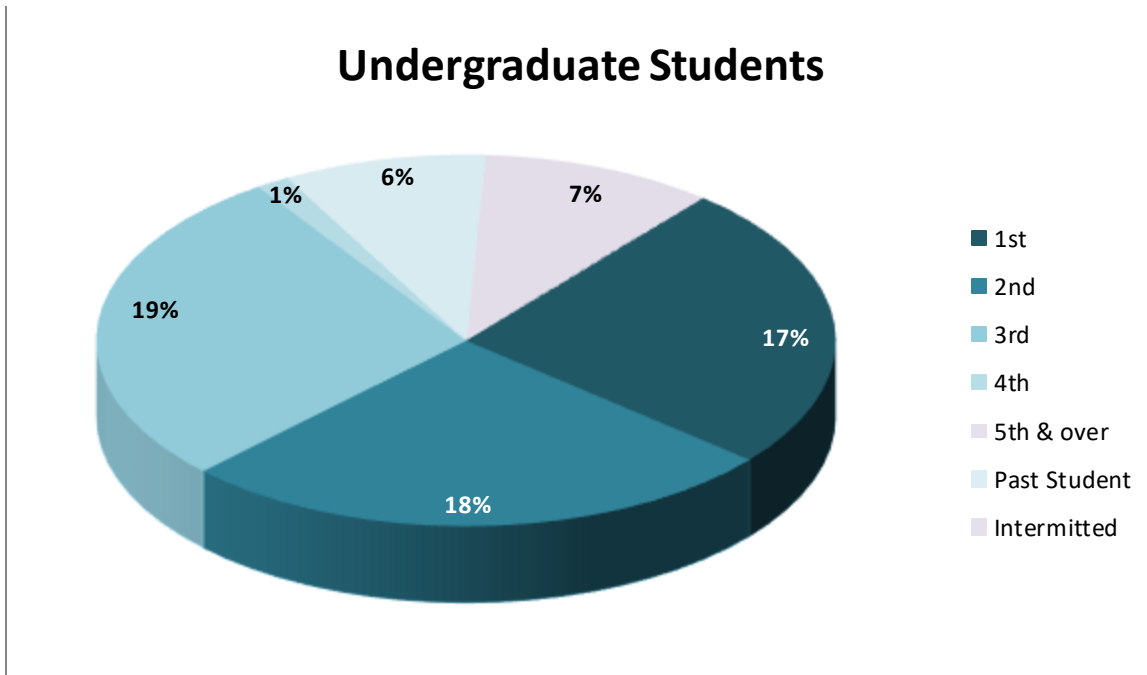
Table 6 – Student users by their student status

Student Status	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	130	38%
Postgraduate (PhD, MPhil, Other Masters Degrees & PGCE)	207	62%
Total	337	100%

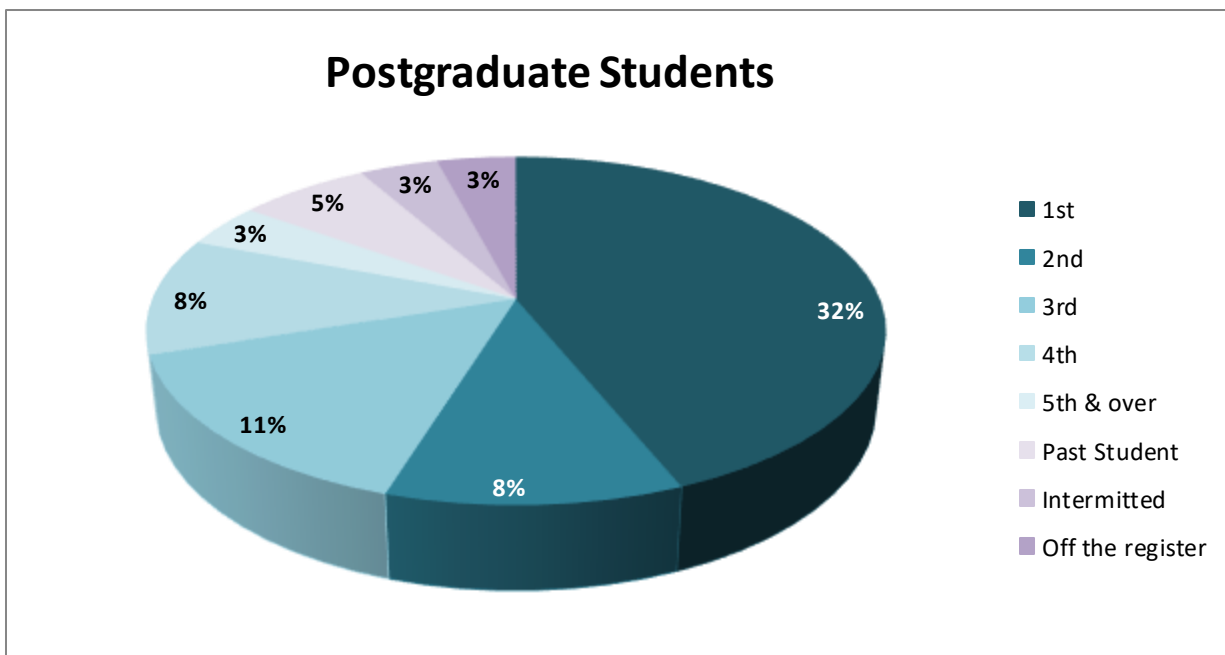
Table 7 – Student users by their student status where this information is known

YEAR OF STUDY

In 2019-20, there was a more even spread across the years for undergraduate students. Whereas in the previous year, the majority of undergraduate service-users were in their 3rd year of study, this year the numbers were similar for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students.

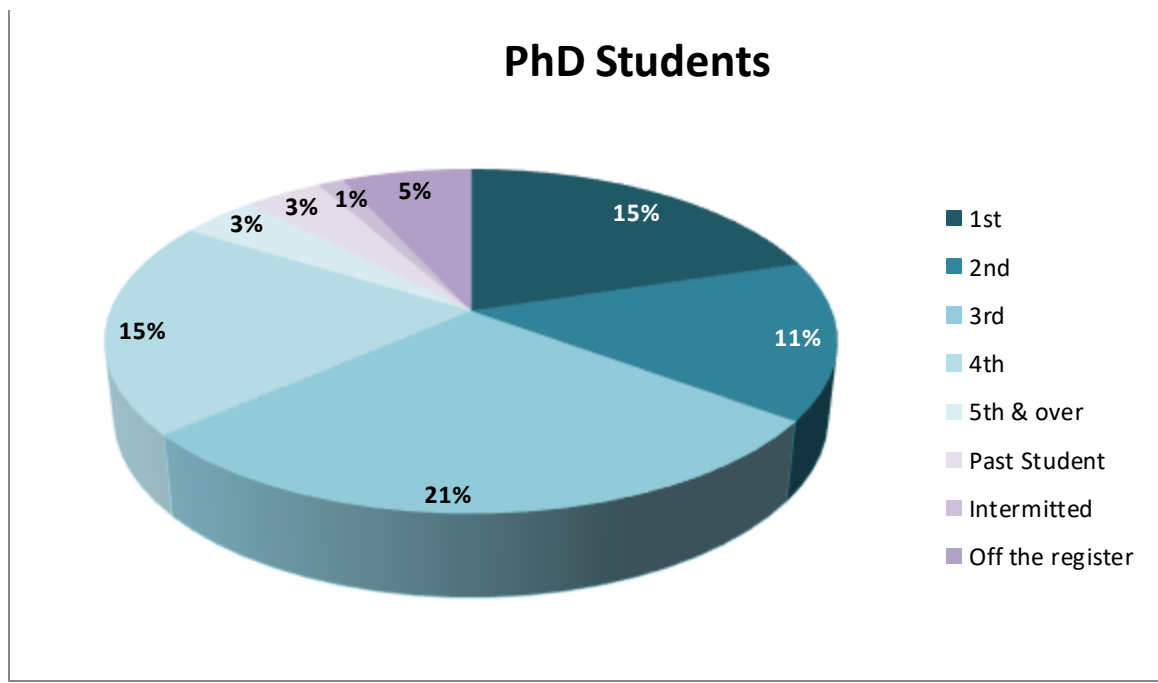


Graph 6 – Undergraduate student users by year of study where this information is known (n=88)
Some students in their 4th, 5th & over years were on extended period of study



Graph 7 – Postgraduate student users by year of study where this information is known (n=151)

MPhil students accessed the Service during their first and only year of study. Among PhD students, those in their 3rd year of study were most likely to approach the Service (21%), followed by equal numbers of students from 1st year (15%) and 4th year (15%).



Graph 8 – PhD student users by year of study where this information is known (n=78)

C. TYPES OF ISSUES

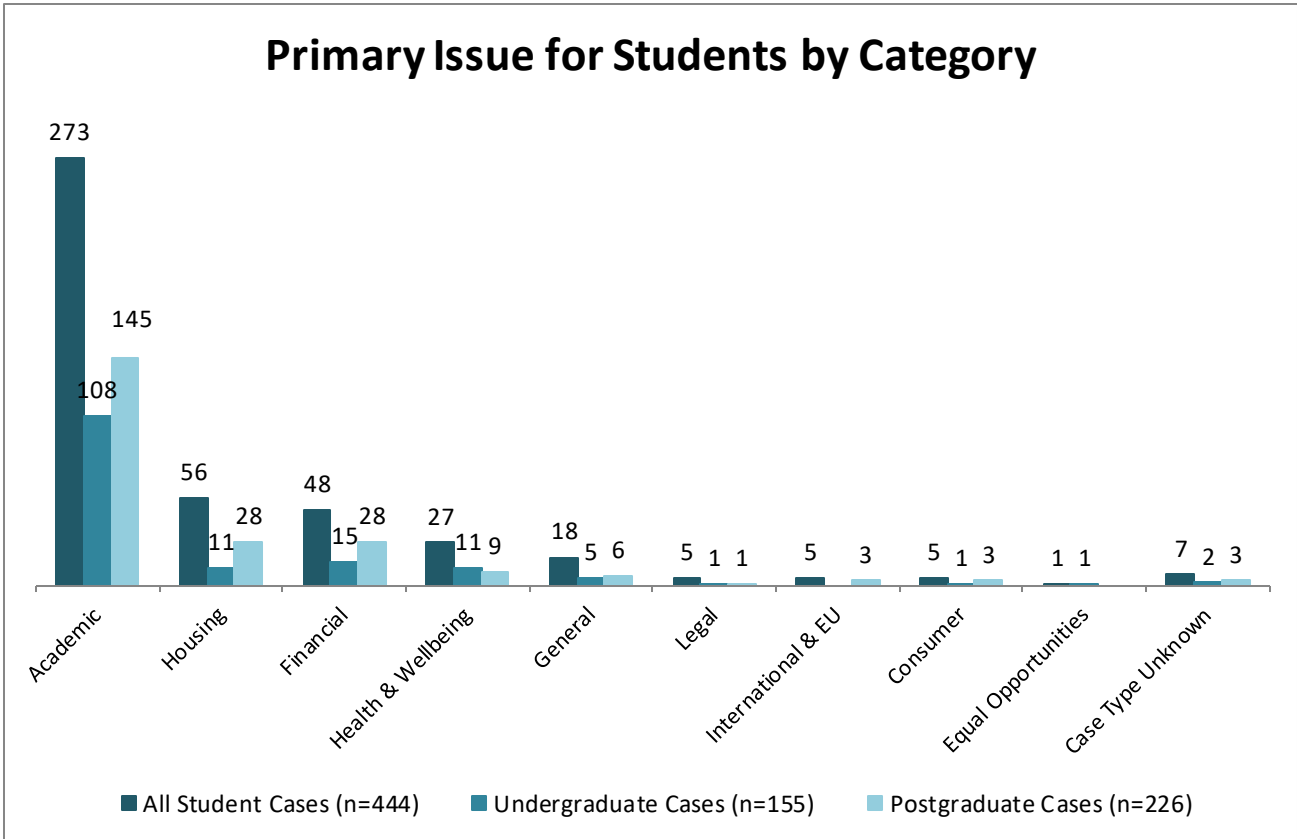
The Service has assisted students on a number of issues this year, ranging from exam concerns to financial difficulties to issues regarding student-supervisor relations. Students will often come to the Service for advice on a specific issue (e.g. exam failure); it may then transpire during the discussion with the Advisor that other issues are linked to the primary issue raised. For example, though few students access the Service specifically for advice on mental health, many students raise mental health as a factor contributing to the issue with which they require support.

PRIMARY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS BY CATEGORY

As such, when recording information about issues students have discussed with us, we record a primary issue followed by secondary issues. Issues are divided into categories. Below are the primary issues by issue category in order of importance (measured as the percentage of cases where students who accessed the Service experienced an issue in that particular area):

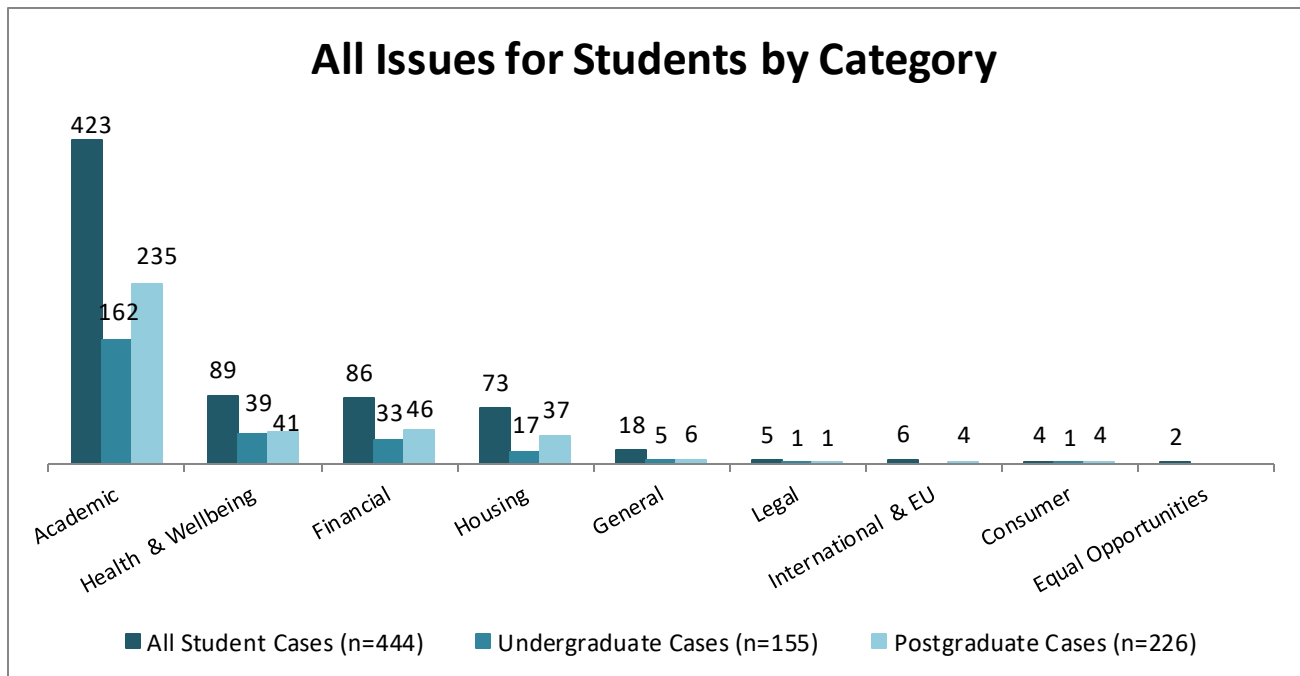
1. Academic (61%, as compared to 64% last year)
2. Housing (13%, as compared to 6% last year)
3. Financial (11%, as compared to 14% last year)
4. Health and Wellbeing (6%, same as last year)
5. General (5%, as compared to 3% last year)

- 6. Legal (1%, same as last year)
- 7. International & EU (1%, same last year)
- 8. Consumer (1%, as compared to 0.2% last year)
- 9. Equal Opportunities (0.2%, this category did not appear last year)
- 10. Case Type Unknown (2%, same as last year)



Graph 9 - Primary issue for students during the 2019-2020 cycle

ALL ISSUES FOR STUDENTS BY CATEGORY



Graph 10 - All issues for students during in 2019-2020

1. Academic (95%, as compared to 96% last year)
2. Health and Wellbeing (20%, as compared to 20% last year)
3. Financial (19%, as compared to 33% last year)
4. Housing (16%, as compared to 11% last year)
5. General (5%, same as last year)
6. Legal (1%, as compared to 2% last year)
7. International & EU (1%, same as last year)
8. Consumer (1%, as compared to 0.4% last year)
9. Equal Opportunities (0.5%, new entry)

As compared to 'Primary Issues', these figures demonstrate that regardless of what students perceive to be the main issue for which they are seeking advice, there are almost always academic implications.

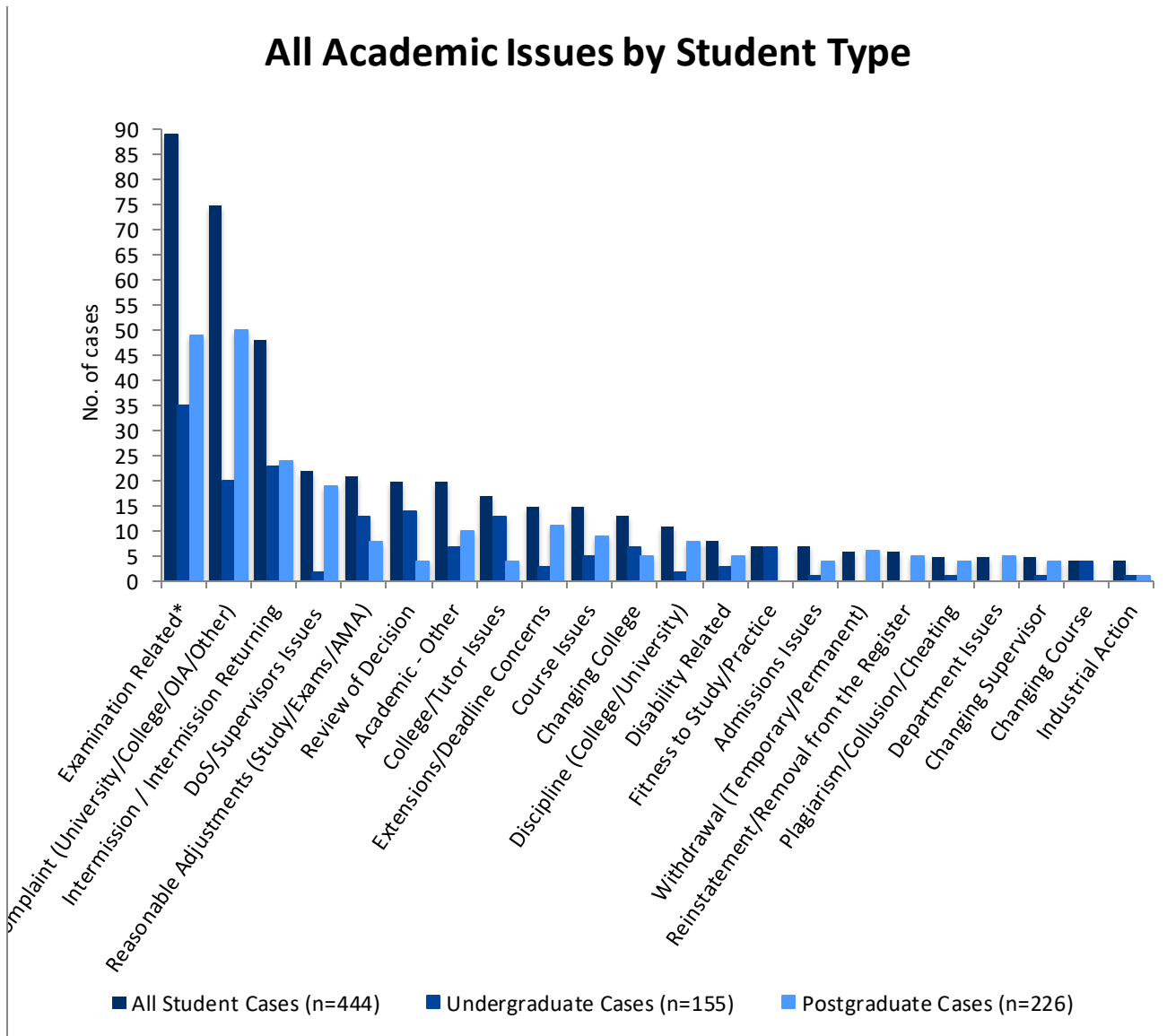
'Mental Health' issues for both undergraduates (n=18) and postgraduates (n=16) were the biggest concerns within the Health & Wellbeing Category.' Financial Hardship' was the area of concern for both undergraduates (n=11) and postgraduates (n=16) who came to the service with financial Issues.

ALL ACADEMIC ISSUES BY STUDENT TYPE

As 'Academic' is the main category of advice students requested support with, we have broken this category down into the most common issues recorded in this area during this period (measured as the percentage of cases where students who accessed the Service experienced that particular issue):

1. Examination-related (20%, as compared to 23% last year)
2. Complaint University/College (17%, as compared 10% last year)
3. Intermission/Intermission Returning (11%, as compared to 12% last year)
4. DoS/Supervisor Issues (5%, as compared to 8% last year)
5. Reasonable Adjustments new entry (Study/Exams/AMA) (5%, as compared to 4% last year)
6. Review of Decisions (5%, new entry to the top 10)
7. Academic – Other (5%, as compared 4% last year)
8. College/Tutor Issues (4%, as compared to 5% last year)
9. Extensions/Deadline Concerns (3%, as compared to 4% last year)
10. Course issues (3%, new entry in the top 10)

As in previous years, 'Examination-related' issues were the most common academic concerns across both undergraduates (n=35) and postgraduates (n=49). The second most common concern for undergraduates was 'Intermission/Intermission returning' (n=23), whilst for postgraduates it was 'Complaints' (n=50). The third most common concern for undergraduates (n=20) was 'Complaints', whilst for postgraduates (n=24), it was 'Intermission/Intermission' returning. 'Changing College' and 'College Discipline' did not feature top 10 in 2019-20, unlike the previous year.

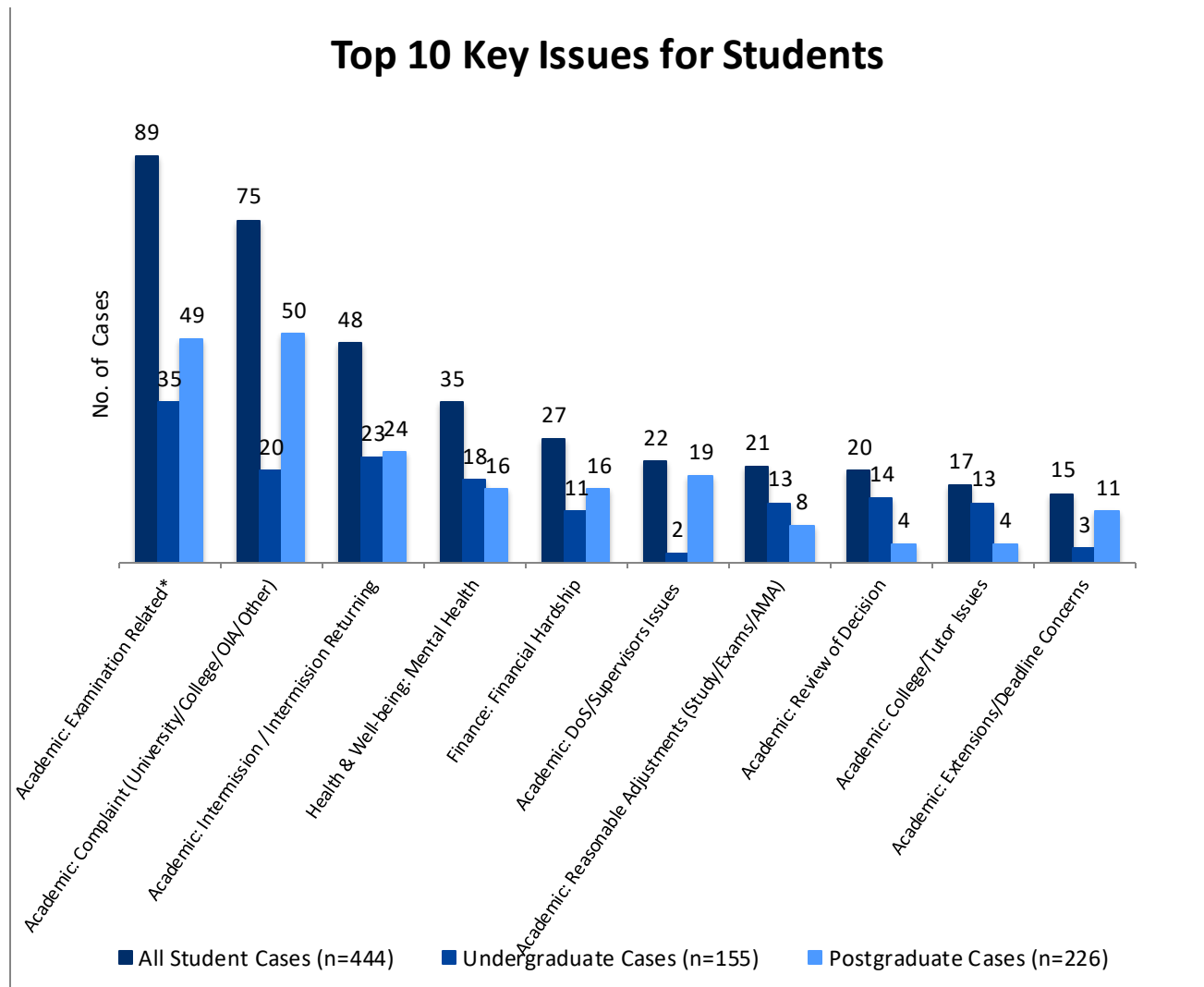


Graph 11 – All Academic Issues by Student Type

**Examination Related includes PhD Registration, Progression to Part III and Degree classification/calculation
The number of issues will be more than the number of students, as the majority of students raise more than one issue to the Service.*

TOP 10 KEY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS

The number of issues raised are higher than the number of students who accessed the Service as the majority of students raised more than one issue. For example, a student approaching the Service to discuss exam concerns may also seek advice on issues such as intermission or disability or academic support.



Graph 12 – Top 10 Key Issues by Student Type

**Examination Related includes PhD Registration Progression to Part III and Degree classification/calculation*

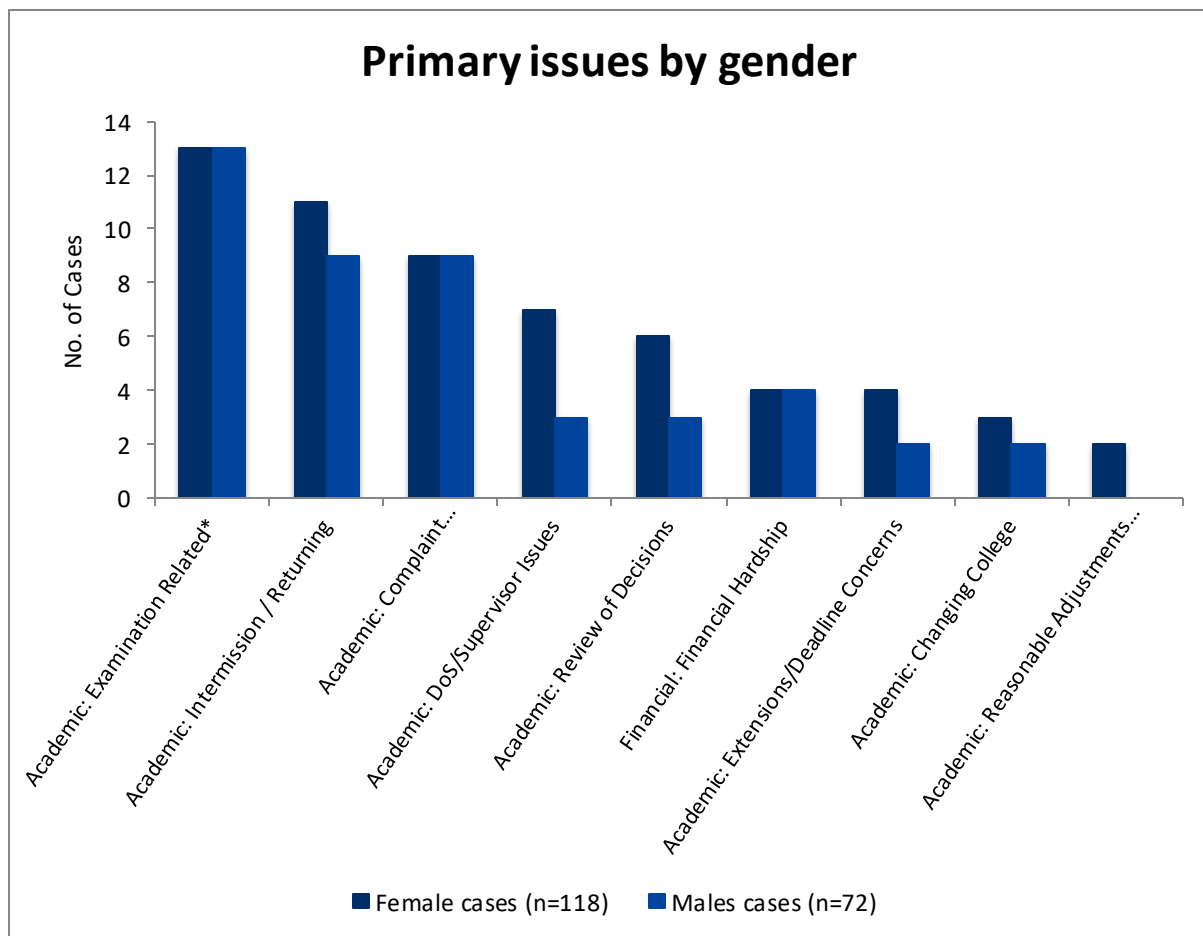
The most frequently occurring issues this year are broadly similar to those encountered every year since 2013-14, with the exception of 'Reasonable Adjustments' and 'Review of Decisions' which are new entries in the top 10, replacing 'Changing College' and 'Physical Health'. There has also been a significant increase in 'Complaint', and decrease in 'Mental Health'.

1. Examination-related (20%, as compared to 23% last year)
2. Complaint (17%, as compared to 10% last year)
3. Intermission/Intermission Returning (11%, as compared to 12% last year)
4. Mental Health (8%, as compared to 14% last year)

5. Financial hardship (6%, as compared to 5% last year)
6. DoS/Supervisor Relations (5%, as compared to 8% last year)
7. Reasonable Adjustments (5%, new entry to top 10)
8. Review of Decisions (5%, new entry to top 10)
9. College/Tutor Issues (4%, as compared to 5% last year)
10. Extensions/Deadline Concerns (3%, as compared to 5% last year)

PRIMARY ISSUES BY GENDER

As more female students accessed the Advice Service than male and other students, we see a higher number of female students across several categories however there were equal numbers of female and male students who requested advice on the following issues: ‘Examination-related’, ‘Complaint’ and ‘Financial Hardship. In light of the fact that male students only represented 38% of service-users, their access to these areas of advice is disproportionately high.



Graph 13 –Primary Issues by Student Gender

*Examination Related includes PhD Registration and Progression to Part III

APPENDIX I - CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1 - UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AND THE EAMC

A 2nd year undergraduate had failed their exams. The student had been experiencing mental health difficulties since the middle of Lent term. When they discussed their health issues with their tutor, the tutor encouraged them to intermit and to consider studying at another University in a less pressurised environment. The student did not feel that intermitting would resolve their health problems and that what they needed was support to be able to continue to study whilst living with their health issues.

As per the student's request, the College applied to the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee for an examination allowance. On the form, the College indicated that they did not support the student's application. The request for an examination allowance was unsuccessful.

The student accessed the Student Advice Service to discuss what their options were now they had failed their exams, and their request for an examination allowance had been denied. Their tutor had not been supportive of their application, and they didn't know what to do.

- The Advisor discusses with the student why they feel their application was unsuccessful and asks to see a copy of the application and the outcome letter.

The student is unable to provide this information as they have not seen the application to the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee nor the outcome letter.

With the Advisor's help and the cooperation of the College, the student manages to obtain the original application and the outcome letter. The student does not agree with how the College presented their case, and they feel that key elements were missing from the application.

- The Advisor works with the student on a review of the decision of the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee making sure that any key points that were missing from the original application are included. Furthermore, on the advice of the Advisor, the student obtains additional medical evidence as well as reference letters from supervisors.

The review of decision of the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee is successful, and the EAMC is required to consider the student's case again, this time with the additional key information and evidence included. The EAMC grants the student an examination allowance and the student can now proceed into the next academic year.

This case highlights the following:

- Students do not have the right to apply to the EAMC themselves
- Students are often unaware they have the right to submit a personal statement to accompany the application
- Students are sometimes not consulted by the College on the content of their application
- Students sometimes haven't seen the application that has been submitted on their behalf
- Students sometimes haven't seen the actual outcome letter from the EAMC
- Regardless of whether the College supports a student's application or not, the process requires the College to be the student's main advocate
- Students have very little autonomy in the process which can be disempowering and distressing

CASE STUDY 2 - PHD STUDENT AND COMPLAINT

During Lent and Easter Term, a Masters' student experienced issues accessing academic provisions and support from their department. They were unable to access part of their course material and did not receive the expected teaching for some of their papers. The student raised this issue directly with the department on numerous occasions; this resulted in the student finally receiving the academic provisions and support three weeks before their exams. However, this did not leave sufficient time for the student to receive the missed teaching support for the affected papers. In addition to this, the student identified they had not received their reasonable adjustments for their exams. The student sat their exams and received their examination results in July. On receiving their results, the student felt the delayed access to academic provision and support had negatively impacted on their examination performance for the affected papers and subsequently lowered their overall result.

The student wanted to continue within academia but with this result, their future was now uncertain. They were upset by the way in which the department had handled the situation and the consequent impact on their examination result. The student accessed the Student Advice Service to discuss what their options were for rectifying the situation.

- The Advisor discussed with the student what they experienced and what outcome the student was hoping for.
- The Advisor identified the relevant procedures the student could use to raise their issues and what the potential outcomes from these procedures could be – Examination Review and Student Complaint procedures.
- The Advisor informed the student of the 28-day deadline for submitting applications to these procedures. The Advisor highlighted the student may be outside of the deadline for submitting a student complaint due to the academic provision issues having occurred earlier than 28 days previously.
- The student decided to submit an application for an Examination Review. The student decided to include details about the lack of academic provision as they felt it had a direct impact on their examination; they also indicated they only became aware of the impact once they had received their results. The Advisor provided feedback on the application.

The part of the Examination Review relating to the lack of academic provision and support was not upheld due to falling outside of the remit of the Examination Review, and within the remit of the Student Complaints procedure. The matter was not automatically referred to be considered under the Student Complaints Procedure due to being out of time. The student was informed they could submit a complaint providing reasons for the delay in raising the issue but it was likely their complaint would be deemed out of time. The student did not pursue this option further as they felt that their reasons for the delay would not be considered sufficient – the delay was due to them not being aware of the significance of the impact of the issue until they had received their results, and they also felt the issue was related to their exams due to the direct impact it had on them.

As a result, the potential impact the lack of academic provision and support had on the student's examination results were not considered or investigated further. The student felt their result was not representative of their academic ability.

This case highlights the following:

- Students are not always aware of, or it is not clear, the impact of academic provision issues on their degree and examination performance until receiving their results.

- A 28-day deadline for submitting complaints does not take into account situations where the impact of a situation is not known until later.
- A 28-day deadline can deter students from raising complaints where they are beyond the deadline.
- If a student is discouraged from making a genuine complaint because they have missed the 28-day deadline, the University may lose the opportunity to receive feedback and improve their processes for future students (e.g. the department in this case).
- If an issue is outside of the 28-day deadline for raising a complaint, students potentially leave Cambridge with a result that is not representative of their academic ability which then impacts on their future opportunities.