

Student Advice Service

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21



STUDENT
ADVICE SERVICE

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1. HIGHLIGHTS

“I felt I was offered reliable, fair and impartial advice by the Student Advisor that I spoke to. They were able to explain and explore the options available to me for my circumstances and were able to provide me with further information that related to my specific issue which I was not able to find from other sources, such as university guidelines websites etc. I felt that this really helped me to make an informed decision at the time because I was able to make a decision based on reliable, impartial information. If this information hadn't have been available to me via the Student Advice Service I would have been unable to have made an informed decision at the time.”

Feedback from service-user, 2020-21 (shared with permission)

In 2020-21, the Student Advice Service (SAS):

- was in its 11th year of service
- employed four staff members (3.2 full time equivalent)
- was funded by a direct College levy

Service-users and cases:

- 471 service-user cases
- 424 service-users
- 413 student cases
- 366 students

Service-user status, top 3 for students:

- Current students (73%)
- Past students (7%)
- Intermitting students (5%)

Busiest times of the year:

- July 2020 (78 student cases)
- September 2020 (41 student cases)
- January 2021 (42 student cases)

Colleges:

- We supported students from 31 colleges
- For the majority of colleges, we supported between 10 and 22 students
- 2 graduate/mature colleges featured in the top 3
- Top 10 colleges – mix of old and newer colleges with varying levels of resource

How students found out about the SAS:

- Signposted by University service-providers and staff e.g. DRC, UCS, OSCCA, University Supervisor (26%)
- Signposted by Cambridge SU officers and staff (20%)
- Signposted by College service-providers and staff e.g. senior tutors, tutors, nurses (14%)
- Web searches and website signposting (17%)

Gender (of those who disclosed)

- Female (59%)
- Male (35%)
- Other (3%)
- Prefer not to say (3%)

Student Ethnicity:

- White (56%)
- Asian/Asian British (11%)
- Chinese (10%)
- Black/Black British (5%)
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups (5%)
- Other Ethnic Groups (2%)

Disability:

- Students who disclosed a disability on the SAS monitoring form (5%)
- Students who did not disclose a disability on the form but mentioned a disability to the advisor (17%)
- Potentially up to 22% of students who accessed the SAS may have a disability

Student status:

- Undergraduate (49%, as compared to 38% last year)
- Postgraduate (51%, as compared to 62% last year)
- Of the postgraduate students (50% PhD, 28% MPhil, 21% other Masters, 1% PGCE)

Top 10 issues for all students:

1. Complaints (University/College/OIA/Other)
2. Examination-related
3. Intermission/return from intermission
4. Mental health
5. Reasonable adjustments (AMA/exams)
6. Financial hardship
7. Extensions
8. Supervisor issues

9. Tutor/College issues
10. Changing College (new to the top 10 issues)

Top three issues for undergraduate students:

1. Examination-related
2. Intermission/returning from intermission
3. Complaints (University/College/OIA/Other)

Top three issues for postgraduate students:

1. Complaints (University/College/OIA/Other)
2. Intermission/returning from intermission
3. Examination-related

SAS initiatives:

- Post-exam workshops and videos for students who have underperformed, failed or missed their exams
- Engaging in social policy work within the wider University including EAMC paper on Mitigating Circumstances and Student Autonomy, review of financial support for intermitting students, and on-going research into students' experiences with complaints and the University Student Complaint Procedure.
- Further expansion of examination-related resources including the Flowchart of Processes on Examination-Related Issues, and information guide and video on the Examination Review Procedure.

Training provided

- 14 training sessions were provided to over 150 College and University student representatives (e.g. JCR/MCR Officers, liberation campaigns, sports club welfare officers, clubs and societies)
- Feedback questionnaires and verbal feedback indicate extremely high satisfaction rates among participants.

2. STUDENT ADVICE SERVICE TEAM

STAFF ADVISORS

In 2020-21, the SAS was composed of four professional advisors (3.2FTE) who provided individual support and guidance to students and other service-users.

- Lisa Déry (Head of Advice and Welfare)
- Rachel Wilson (Senior Advisor)
- Gemma Douglas (Senior Advisor)
- Simona Obeng (Advisor)

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The SAS received administrative support from the Cambridge SU. This was made possible by the impact of the pandemic on the provision of in-person services and the requirement for staff to work from home.

- Fanni Pirik (Administrative Assistant)



Photo: Lisa, Rachel, Gemma, Simona and Fanni

Thank you very much for your support in the past several years. If it were not with your help and support, I would not have got this degree. The help and patience you provided to me will always bring warmth to my heart, I believe.

Feedback from service-user, 2020-21 (shared with permission)

ELECTED SABBATICAL OFFICERS

The Cambridge Students' Union (Cambridge SU) elected sabbatical officers continued to work closely with staff on the development of the SAS and social policy work. Sabbatical officers bring to the SAS their experience as students of the Collegiate University, while staff members bring experience, knowledge and institutional memory. These different backgrounds ensure the SAS is simultaneously student-led and professional.

- Alice Gilderdale, Welfare and Community Officer
- Ben Margolis, Undergraduate President
- Aastha Dahal, Postgraduate President
- Chloe Newbold, Women's Officer
- Kerensa Gaunt, Disabled Students' Officer
- Howard Chae, BME Officer
- Esme Cavendish, Access, Education and Participation Officer Undergraduate
- Siyang Wei, Access, Education and Participation Officer Postgraduate

3. STUDENT ADVICE SERVICE AND COVID-19

With the ongoing pandemic in 2020-21, the SAS continued to provide its services remotely, delivering advice mainly by email, phone and video call. The online provision of the service allowed students to access support despite their circumstances. This included those students who were unable to return to Cambridge due to travel restrictions, those who were clinically vulnerable and shielding at home, and those who were required to study remotely during periods of government-mandated lockdown. As the pandemic progresses, we will continue to offer our services online and, when possible, we will re-introduce the option of in-person appointments. The Cambridge SU's upcoming move to the University Centre where adequately ventilated consultation rooms will be available for student-appointments should facilitate this process.

The number of service-users who accessed the SAS decreased from the previous year. We feel this is due to the decrease in the level of uncertainty students experienced around their studies and examinations, potentially due to the University providing more guidance and information about what to expect in the coming academic year. The number of service-users who accessed the SAS remained consistent with pre-pandemic figures.

The SAS continued to take advantage of the opportunities technology gave us to develop initiatives that helped us manage our capacity and meet students' needs. Whilst our main service provided was one to one advice; we also continued to offer group advice to students at specific points in the academic year when similar issues arose for several students (e.g. examination results). We also updated existing resources and developed new resources that students could access independently (videos, information guides, templates), helping them to understand what options exist and which procedure/s were appropriate to their situation, supporting them in their journey in resolving problems themselves. Overall, the performance of the SAS during the ongoing pandemic has been excellent. This 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 (SAS) 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 SAS with any issues they might experience during their time at the University of Cambridge.

The SAS is provided by the Cambridge Students' Union (Cambridge SU) and is open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, all year round. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the SAS continued to operate remotely during 2020-21 with students able to access advisor support via email, phone, and various video call platforms.

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

As a generalist advice service, the SAS 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

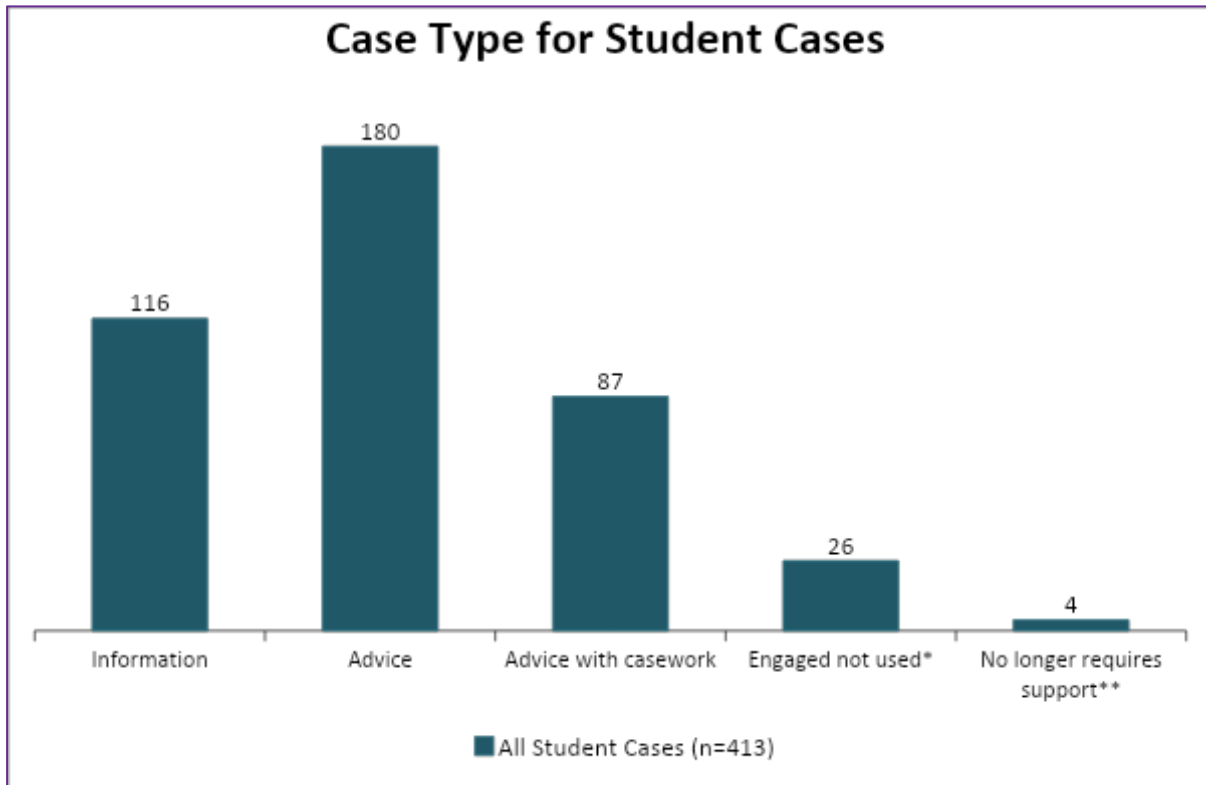
INDIVIDUAL CASEWORK

All students at the University of Cambridge can come to the SAS for support and guidance on any issue or problem they might experience whilst studying here. We support students on a wide range of issues from loneliness, working relationships to exams, intermission, welfare concerns and financial hardship. Student cases are often complex and involve many interrelated issues; for example, mental health concerns, working relationship issues and intermission. When students access the SAS, it is usually with a particular issue; however, during the course of their interactions with an advisor, it is common for additional issues or concerns to emerge. It is rare that a student's situation or issue does not impact on other aspects of their academic or welfare life at the University.

The level of support and guidance provided is informed and led by the student and varies in each case.

In line with the advice sector's framework for defining the types of advice provided, the SAS splits cases into three categories – 'Information', 'Advice', and 'Advice with Casework'.

In 2020-21, the SAS had 116 student cases where the case type was 'Information'; 180 student cases where the case type was 'Advice'; and 87 student cases where the case type was 'Advice with Casework'.



Graph -1 Case type for student cases

**Students who made contact with the SAS requesting an appointment but who either did not respond to appointments offered or did not attend the appointment.*

*** Students who arranged appointments but had resolved or found support elsewhere and therefore no longer required support from the SAS*

“At different points I have gone to the SAS for advice. For example, when I needed to find out about what options were available to me when I was unable to work due to health issues they were able to provide me with all the information on the available options... This was invaluable to me & resulted in me eventually being able to successfully complete my studies. If this help and advice had not been available to me I firmly believe that I would have been unable to complete my studies.”

Feedback from service-user, 2020-21 (shared with permission)

GROUP ADVICE WORK

In 2020-21, the SAS continued to offer two post-examination workshops:

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

Despite experimenting with new dates for the workshops this year, attendance was low. Nevertheless, to ensure the information from these workshops continued to be widely available and accessible to students, the advisors created video recordings. These were shared on our social media platforms and web pages. The advantage of recording the information content from the workshops was that it allowed students to access them at the point of need. The workshops offered the additional benefit of helping to manage staff capacity within the SAS at its busiest time of year by providing key information to students that would inform their decision as to whether they needed to access specialist support from an advisor.

ADVICE RESOURCES

In addition to the post-exam workshop videos, the SAS updated existing resources such as the SAS webpages, and information guides including the 'Guide to getting through Exams'. The SAS also further expanded its digital resources with the creation of:

- Flowchart of Processes for Examination-Related Issues
- Information guide and video on the Examination Review Procedure
- General Information Guide for Students
- Information Guide to Finance
- Information Guide on Managing Supervisor Issues

OTHER TYPES OF ADVICE WORK

The SAS is tailored toward directly supporting students, nevertheless contact by users who are not current Cambridge students is not uncommon. This includes past and prospective students, offer-holders, students on intermission, students who are off the register, and visiting students. In 2020-21, this accounted for 92 (20%) of our 471 service-user cases.

The SAS also records information regarding non-student users; for example, parents, relatives or friends of a student seeking advice for their loved-on. Whilst we provide advice to non-student users, this is often limited and is usually focused on helping the non-student user encourage the student to access the SAS. Our aim is to always work with the student directly. In 2020-21, there were four non-student user cases.

More informally, we also continue to welcome contact from tutors, other service-providers and staff across the Collegiate University who wish to discuss with us 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 SAS. In order to ensure every member of our team continues to provide an excellent standard of support, we have in place multiple quality assurance mechanisms. These include engagement in continued training and knowledge development opportunities in relevant areas affecting students. The SAS team also utilises peer observation and independent file reviews.

In addition to these mechanisms, all advisors meet weekly for reflective practice. Reflective practice provides advisors with the 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 students. Relevant updates are provided and discussed during this meeting; these can include relevant committee updates, planning activities and service development work for the coming weeks, or the identification and discussion of prevalent issues that students highlight to advisors and how to use this information to improve the student experience i.e. resource development or social policy work.

The Head of Advice and Welfare leads the team in maintaining 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

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING

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

- **Formal qualifications:**
 - Senior Leader Masters' Degree Apprenticeship (MBA) – ongoing (Head of Advice and Welfare)
 - Project Management Apprenticeship, completed with distinction (Senior Advisor)
- **Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA):**
 - Advocacy and Support for Students with Complaints
 - Spotlight on Casework: Consumer-Related Complaints
 - Academic Disciplinary Webinar
- **AMOSSHE:**
 - Helping socially isolated students to make social connections
- **UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA):**
 - Supporting Students at Christmas

- **Wellcome Trust:**
 - Bullying and Harassment Policy
- **JISC:**
 - What's the role of data & analytics to support wellbeing?
- **University:**
 - Refresher on Prevent training (University PPD)
 - Communicating Assertively (University PPD)
 - Cambridge Teaching and Learning (CCTL) Forum
 - Postgraduate Funding Management Portal Roadshow (University)
 - Annual visits to College and University service providers and key staff members (e.g. DRC, Accommodation Service, Nurses)
 - Black Advisory Hub Launch event (University)
 - Meeting with key bodies, such as OSCCA
- **Other:**
 - NUS Mentoring Programme
 - Student Case Manager Training (Membership Solutions Ltd)

TRAINING DELIVERED TO ELECTED SABBATICAL OFFICERS

The SAS 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
- Taking Care of Yourself

In addition to this, the elected sabbatical officers were invited to join SAS staff in visiting service-providers across the Collegiate University.

PRESENTATIONS DELIVERED TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STAFF

For the seventh year, the SAS participated in the tutor training programme by delivering a session on the SAS. Due to the pandemic, the SAS was asked to contribute a video as opposed to presenting in person. The video informed tutors about the existence of the SAS, how it works, and the important role it has to play in supporting students.

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 SAS and a general overview of the Collegiate University from an advice and welfare perspective.

TRAINING DELIVERED TO STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

In 2020-21, the SAS provided fourteen 3-hour online training sessions to over 150 student representatives, including JCR/MCR officers, sports welfare officers, liberation campaign officers, and student clubs and societies. The training provided included:

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

Though the response rate to the online feedback questionnaire was low, the written and verbal feedback that was received indicated high satisfaction rates among participants.

C. OUTREACH

STUDENTS AND STAFF

This year, the SAS took part in the following student and staff outreach activities:

- we provided a video for the Disability Resource Centre transitional online event
- we provided a presentation for the Black Students' Hub
- we participated in online meetings with senior tutors and their teams
- we participated in research and discussions for the Strategic Review of Mental Health Provision
- we supported one college in thinking about their induction programme

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 SAS Annual Report 2019-20 to the following committees:

- Health and Wellbeing Committee
- Student Finance and Welfare Committee

D. FEEDBACK

All students who access the SAS are invited to provide feedback on their experience through a confidential and anonymous online questionnaire. In 2020-21, the response rate was very low but of those who responded:

- 100% strongly agreed their concerns were listened to and taken seriously by the Advisor
- 100% strongly agreed the advice they received was relevant and appropriate
- 100% strongly agreed that they were able to access the Service without any difficulty
- 100% strongly agreed that their advisor provided clear and accessible information, advice and guidance in their appointments and/or email correspondences.

When asked the question “What I feel you could do you improve the service for students is...”, we received a similar response to previous years:

Advertise more to students!! I didn't know about you for ages and you're amazing!!!

Increasing the response rate will be an area of discussion and improvement for the SAS team in 2020-21. In the latter half of the academic year, the SAS experienced a disruption in its distribution of surveys due to wider Cambridge SU organisational changes to the survey platform; reducing the number of participants the survey was distributed to. Plans and initiatives for feedback improvement are being implemented at the time of writing this report. Once the survey platform issues have been resolved, we also plan on reintroducing our impact survey.

6. PARTNERS AND LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

A. CAMBRIDGE SU

The SAS is provided by the Cambridge SU. The SAS forms part of the 'non-representational' student support services offered by the Union. This also includes the training, support and guidance provided to the JCR/MCR officers of the Colleges.

The Welfare and Community Officer served as the lead officer in the SAS, and the team of elected sabbatical officers participated in the development of the SAS 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 SAS 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 SAS operates. 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.

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

- University Counselling Service
- Sexual Assault and Harassment Adviser
- 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

C. STUDENT GROUPS

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

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

- JCR/MCR committee members
- Sports Clubs Welfare Officers
- Liberation campaigns
- Student clubs and societies

The SAS 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 SAS 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.

In 2021-22, the SAS will expand to become part of the Cambridge SU Advice and Welfare team. Within this team, there will be a dedicated role which, with the support of the SAS, will provide support and training to all student volunteers and representatives across the Collegiate University where their role involves student welfare.

D. NATIONAL ADVICE COMMUNITY

The SAS 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), UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) and has benefitted from the access to training, resources and advice that membership of these organisations affords.

In addition, the SAS has access to the NUS Workplace platform where students' union advisors from across the higher and further education sector share knowledge and good practice.

The SAS 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. STRATEGIC PLAN AND MISSION

The mission of the SAS 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:

- Increase student's awareness of the SAS
- Increase the SAS role as a force for positive change
- Expand the range of services and resources on offer to students
- Improve further the quality of the service and ensure long term funding for sustainability
- Increase the service's profile within the Collegiate University as an integral part of student support in Cambridge
- Ensure the future-proofing of space and resources for the SAS

In 2021-22, the SAS will be reviewing its plans in light of the new Cambridge SU strategy.

B. KEY INITIATIVES IN 2021-22

In 2021-22, we aim to:

- provide an enhanced comprehensive and professional welfare training programme for College and University student representatives e.g. JCR/MCR Officers, liberation campaigns, Academic Reps
- further improve the Winter Holiday Activities and Guide
- further develop welfare resources for students with a focus on prevention
- continue the development and expansion of information guides and resources for students (examination review procedure, general information guide for students, examination processes flowchart), equipping them with the information and knowledge they need to begin the process of resolving issues themselves

The welfare training provided includes sessions on 'Essential Skills for Supporting Students', 'Supporting a student who may be feeling suicidal' and 'Introduction to Student Mental Health'. Within these training sessions, participants learn about active listening, confidentiality, managing boundaries and expectations, what to do if a student is at risk, and providing information and signposting.

8. STATISTICS AND TRENDS

The SAS gathers information about its service-users through the completion of the registration and monitoring forms. Service-users are asked to complete the forms when they access the service, either via email, phone or video call. All service-users who have received one to one advice via a phone or video call appointment will have completed the registration form and will have been invited to complete the monitoring form. To ensure we comply with General Data Protection Regulations, service-users are not required to provide the information collected by the monitoring form, such as ethnicity, language, or gender, but are encouraged to complete the form. Service-users who correspond 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. Nevertheless, advisors will record the type of issue all service-users bring to them in the case management system. This practice allows the SAS to have a thorough understanding of the types of issues and concerns students are experiencing across the Collegiate University.

Data such as the number of students accessing the SAS, user-demographics and issue areas act as indicators that inform the further development of the SAS. It also helps to identify trends in student welfare needs, and allows the SAS to develop resources and initiatives that are relevant to students' needs. Data relating to issue areas is helpful for identifying any systemic issues students are experiencing. This can be used to feedback to the sabbatical officers and the decision-makers within the wider Collegiate University, in the hope of improving students' experiences. A staff representative of the SAS meets weekly with the students' union elected sabbatical officers to provide regular updates on its activities and trends in student welfare issues. This, in turn, facilitates the officers' wider political work in supporting students.

The following measures of data were taken from the time period 1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021. Noting trends in the types of issues students raised ensures the SAS is well-equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to help the students who approach us. It allows the SAS to adapt, evolve and develop its sources of support to be in-line with student demand and needs.

A. SERVICE-USERS

SERVICE USER NUMBERS

In 2020-21, the SAS worked with a total of 424 services-users of which 366 were students (students = current, intermitting, off the register, past, visiting, exchange, JBS and ICE students).

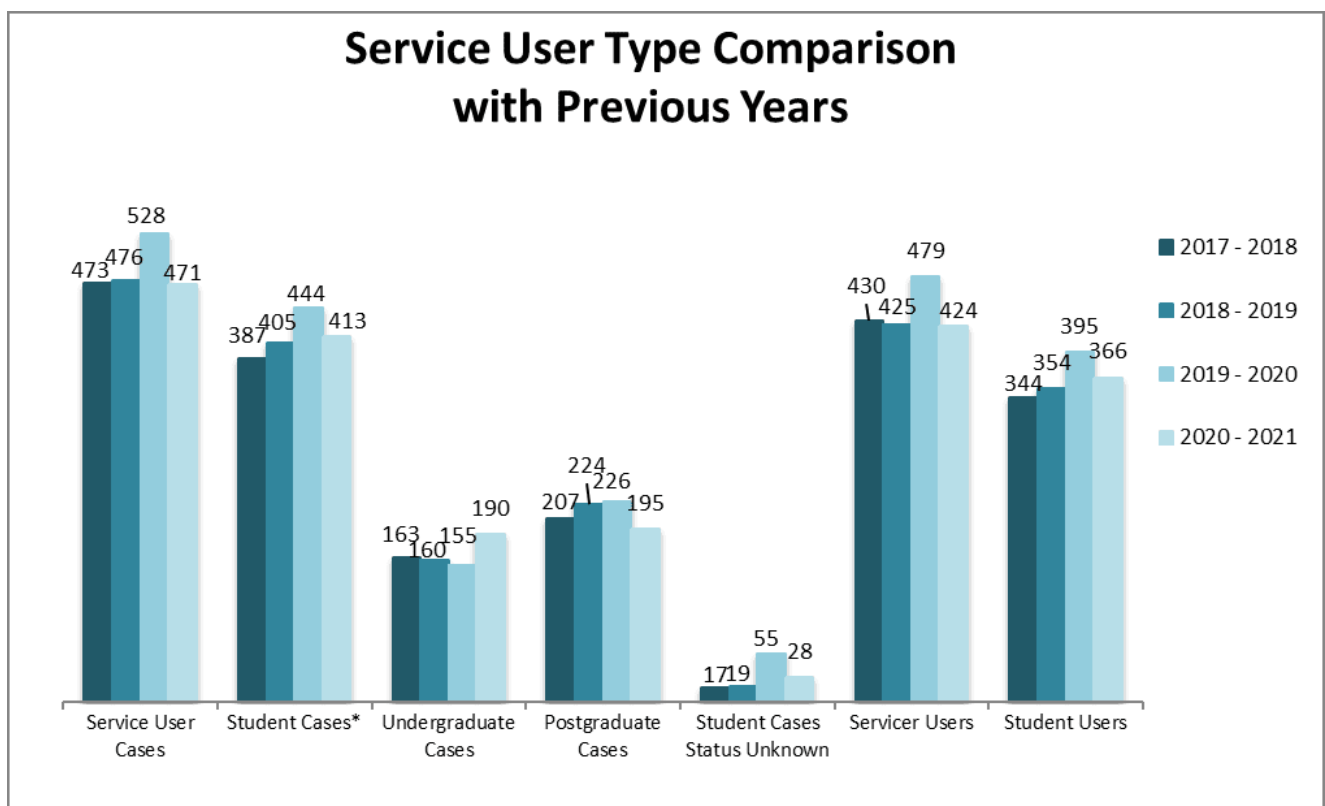
Compared to 2019-20, where the SAS worked with 395 students, 2020-21 saw a small decrease (7%) in the number of students accessing the SAS. This drop was expected as we had determined that the high increase in the number of service-users in the previous year was mainly down to the uncertainties students were experiencing as a result of the pandemic. In 2020-21, the Collegiate University's processes around Covid-19 related matters were more robust and students' awareness of these was much higher. The figures for this year are in line with pre-pandemic figures.

Whilst this year has seen a reduction in students accessing the SAS, we have seen continued growth over the last 7 years. Since 2014-15, there has been a 110% increase in the number of

service-users (students and other service-users), and a 120% increase in the number of students accessing the SAS.

Some students experienced multiple issues throughout the year. When students access the SAS more than once for support on unrelated issues, the new issue(s) are recorded as a new case. In 2020-21:

- 32 students accessed support for two unrelated issues which resulted in two different cases
- 4 students accessed support for three unrelated issues which resulted in three different cases
- 1 student accessed support for four unrelated issues which resulted in four different cases
- 1 student accessed support for five unrelated issues which resulted in five different cases



Graph 2 - Comparison of Service-User Type for period 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021

* When students access the SAS more than once, each time they use the service for a different issue, this is recorded as a new case. There are therefore more student cases than there are student service-users.

** 38 students accessed the SAS more than once.

HOW SERVICE-USERS FOUND OUT ABOUT THE SAS

Of the students who disclosed how they found out about the SAS:

- 26% 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 19% in 2019-20)
- 20% were signposted by Cambridge SU officers or staff members
- 14% were signposted by a College service-provider or staff member, such as Tutor, Senior Tutor, Nurse, Chaplain (as compared to 21% in 2019-20)

Found out about the service via	Number	Percentage
Cambridge SU Officer	20	17%
University Disability Resource Centre	18	15%
College Tutor/Senior Tutor	15	13%
Cambridge SU Website	12	10%
Returning student	8	7%
Other	7	6%
Friend/s	6	5%
University Counselling Service	5	4%
Office for Student Complaints, Conduct & Appeals	5	4%
Web search	5	4%
Cambridge SU Bulletin	3	3%
University Website	3	3%
Cambridge SU Staff	3	3%
University Supervisor	2	2%
Student Advice Service Publicity Material	2	2%
Student Advice Service - Advice Pop-up /Freshers' Fair	1	1%
College JCR/MCR Officer	1	1%
College Chaplain/Nurse/Counsellor/Welfare Advisor	1	1%
Other University Staff	1	1%
Total	118	100%

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

SERVICE USER STATUS

The SAS works with service-users across a range of profiles (Table 2). Current students, non-standard student-users (past, prospective and offer holder students, or intermitting students), as well as non-students (such as relatives or friends of students) may all access the SAS. Advice was also provided to JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation Campaign Officers and Sports Welfare Officers who can access the SAS to discuss their specific role or any concerns they may have about a student in their community.

In 2020-21, 73% of service-users were current students, with past students as the next largest group, followed by prospective students and intermitting students. Relatives and friends of students made up 1% of service-users, this is the same as last year. As an independent service, the SAS is well placed to talk to parents and friends through options available, where the student may be hesitant to access support. College and University staff made up 3% of service-users, this is the same as the previous two years. We also provided support to many individuals who were not eligible to access any of the other University service-providers. This includes intermitting students, students off the register, past students, ICE students and visiting students. These students accounted for 13% of our service-users. Though we are glad to be able to support these individuals, this highlights a gap in support provided by the Collegiate University, and that we may not always have the capacity to fill, thus potentially leaving these individuals isolated without support.

Service Users Client Status	Number	Percentage
Current student	309	73%
Past student	31	7%
Prospective student	23	5%
Intermitting student	22	5%
Offer holder	8	2%
College staff (Senior Tutor/Tutor/Nurse/Tutorial Office)	7	2%
University staff (DRC, USC, Admin, Other)	7	2%
Unknown	4	1%
Relative of a student	3	1%
ICE Student	2	0.5%
Off the register	2	0.5%
Support Officer (JCR/MCR/Peer2Peer)	2	0.5%
SU Officer	2	0.5%
Other	1	-
Friend of a student	1	-
Total	424	100%

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

B. SERVICE-USER DEMOGRAPHICS

TIME OF YEAR

The SAS is open throughout the year, including outside of academic term time. Graph 3 demonstrates the peaks and troughs in the number of cases over the course of the reporting year.

As with previous years, the SAS continued to be busy during the academic term-times and we have continued to see an increase in the number of students accessing the SAS outside of term time. The months of July, September and January were the busiest of the year. The figures were higher during these months due to the continued impact of the pandemic and the uncertainty it

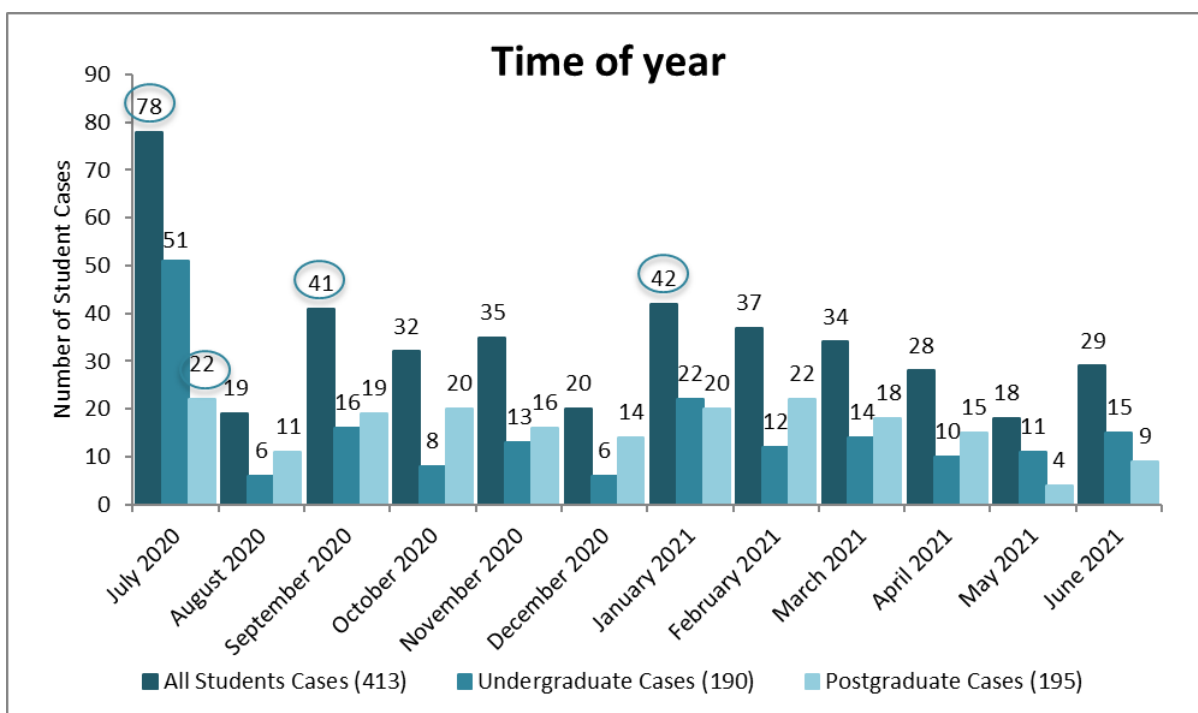
created for students sitting their exams (July 2020), returning to in-person study (September 2020), and students affected by the third national lock down (January 2021).

We continued to see an increase in the number of students accessing the SAS in July, enquiring about examination allowances, examination reviews, disciplinary action (plagiarism) or advice on what options were available in light of their results. Unlike the previous three years, July saw a greater number of undergraduate students (n=51) compared to postgraduate students (n=22). This may be associated with the changes in the examination assessment modes for undergraduate students in 2020.

Overall, for eight of the twelve months, we saw a greater number of postgraduate students accessing the SAS. Of these students, 50% were PhD students (n=87) with a variety of issues.

Whilst we record the number of new cases every month, it is not reflective of the amount of time an advisor may spend on casework during those months. Next year, we will look to report the number of hours advisors spend on casework each month. This additional information will help the SAS plan its resource and development work over the course of the year.

The average number of hours spent on each case was 3 hours and 53 minutes. The most hours spent on a single student’s case was 67 hours and the smallest amount of time was 5 minutes.



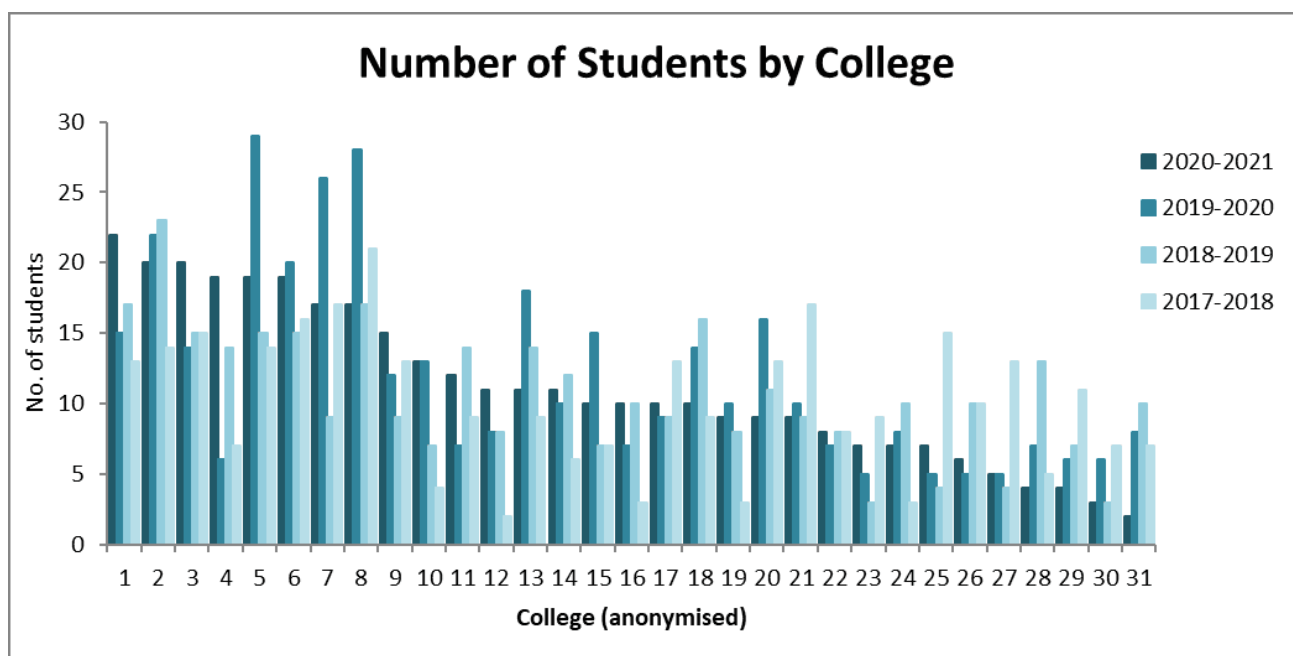
Graph 3 – Number of student cases by month of reporting year

COLLEGE

In 2020-21, the SAS supported students from 31 Colleges (Graph 4). The number of students accessing the SAS from each College varies and is not necessarily linked to the size of the College, the provision available from the College, or its proximity to the SAS.

For the majority of Colleges, we supported between 10 and 22 students. Two graduate/mature colleges featured in the top 3 colleges with the top 10 colleges being a mixture of old and new colleges with varying levels of resource.

The variability of students approaching the SAS 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 Cambridge SU considers it to be good practice for colleges to inform their students that they can receive independent advice via the SAS.



Graph 4 - Number of students accessing the SAS by College (where college information is known n=346)

GENDER

In 2020-21, we have gender data for 31% of the students (n= 115) who accessed the SAS. The service records gender data based on how a student declares their gender on the monitoring form. If a monitoring form is not received, for example, 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 email, then the gender is recorded as undisclosed. In 2020-21, we worked with 248 students whose gender was recorded as 'undisclosed' and 3 students whose gender was recorded as 'prefer not to say'.

For the students who disclosed their gender, 59% were female students compared to 35% of male students, and both 3% of other students and those students who preferred not to say. This is in line with the previous year and sector trends of lower engagement in pastoral and academic support by male students.

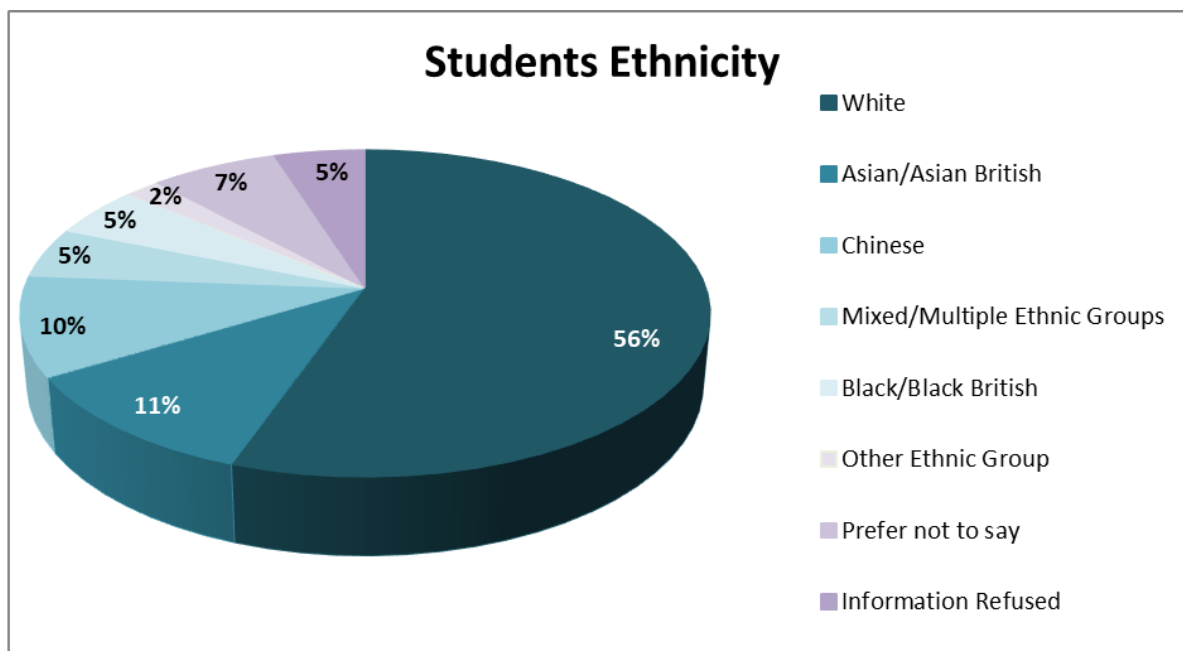
All Students	Number	Percentage
Female	70	59%
Male	42	35%
Other	3	3%
Prefer not to say	3	3%
Total	118	100%

Table 3 - Students accessing the SAS by gender where this information is known

ETHNICITY

In 2020-21, we recorded ethnicity data for 31% of students (n=111) who accessed the SAS.

Of the students who disclosed their ethnicity, 'White' students represented the largest group (56%), followed by 'Asian/Asian British' students (11%), 'Chinese' students (10%), 'Black/Black British' students (5%), 'Mixed/Multiple Ethnicity' students (5%) and other ethnicities (2%). Students from ethnicities other than 'White' represented 33% of students. This is a small increase compared to 2019-20 (36%) and is a significant increase compared to 2018-19 where 17% of student service-users were from other ethnicities.



Graph 5 – Students by Ethnicity where this information is known (n=126)

DISABILITY

Of the 366 students who accessed the SAS this year, 18 disclosed a disability via the monitoring form (Table 4). This represents 5% of students who accessed the SAS. In conversations with their advisor, an additional 61 students (17%) mentioned physical and/or mental health issues or conditions that could qualify as a disability (Table 5) as compared to 45 students (11%) last year. From this data, we can conclude that as many as 79 students (22%) who accessed the SAS may have had a disability (as compared to 26% last year).

All Students	Number	Percentage
Yes	18	5%
No	9	2%
Unknown*	339	93%
Total	366	100%

Table 4 – Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

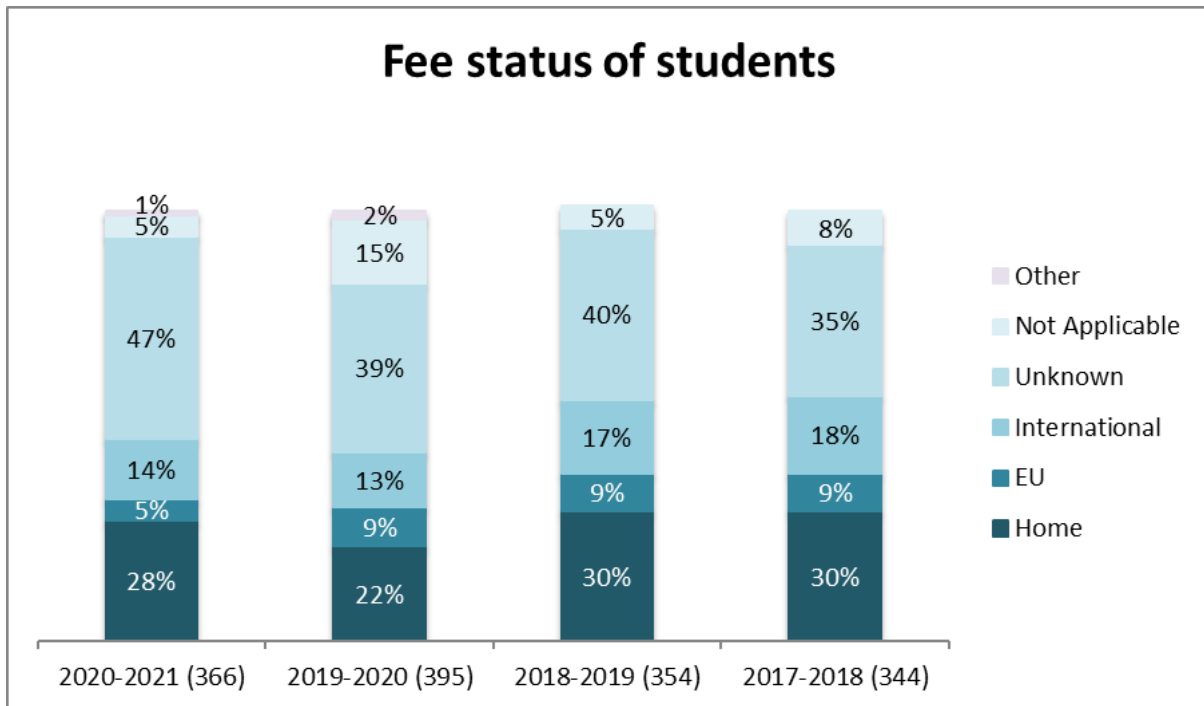
* For those where this information is unknown, it is because they did not complete a monitoring form either due to the completion of this form being optional, or because their support was provided via email or over the phone.

All Student cases	Number	Percentage
<i>Students who disclosed a disability on monitoring form</i>	18	5%
<i>Students who did not disclose a disability on monitoring form but mentioned a disability to the advisor during an appointment</i>	61	17%
<i>Students who did not disclose a disability or this information is unknown</i>	287	78%
Total	366	100%

Table 5 – Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

FEE STATUS

In 2020-21, the proportion of Home, EU and International students remained fairly stable (Graph 6). The majority of students who accessed the SAS were Home students (28%), followed by International students (14%), and then EU students (5%). The number of EU students who accessed the SAS decreased from 9% in 2019-20. This decrease in EU students accessing the SAS highlights the potential need for targeted promotion of the SAS among EU and international students.



Graph 6 – Fee status of students where this information is known

STUDENT STATUS

The SAS continues to support students across a wide range of degrees (Table 6). In keeping with the past three years, for those students where their status is known, more postgraduate students accessed the SAS (173 postgraduates as compared to 165 undergraduate students). This equates to a 49%/51% split as compared to a 63%/38% split last year (Table 7). Unlike previous years, the gap between the number of undergraduate students and postgraduate students who accessed the SAS has levelled out.

The category of 'postgraduate' includes PhD students, MPhil, MFin, MBA, MRes, MSt, MEd, LLM and PGCE students. Within these sub-categories, usage of the SAS varies. The proportions are similar to previous years with the largest number of students who access the SAS coming from Tripos courses, followed by PhD, MPhil, and other postgraduate students. It is the combined figure for postgraduate graduate students that exceeds the number of undergraduate students.

Student Status	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	165	45%
PhD	87	24%
MPhil	48	13%
Other Masters Degrees	36	10%
PGCE	2	1%
Other	3	1%
Not Applicable	2	1%
Unknown	23	6%
Total	366	100%

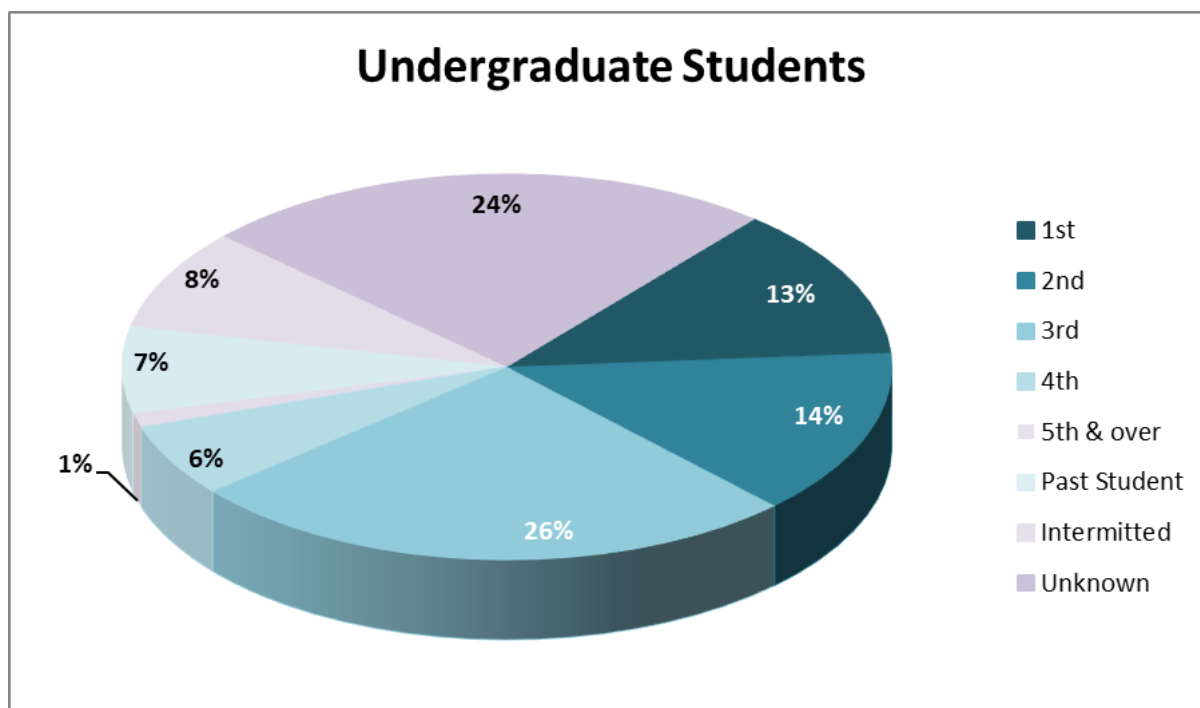
Table 6 - Student service-users by their student status

Student Status	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	165	49%
Postgraduate (PhD, MPhil, Other Masters Degrees & PGCE)	173	51%
Total	338	100%

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

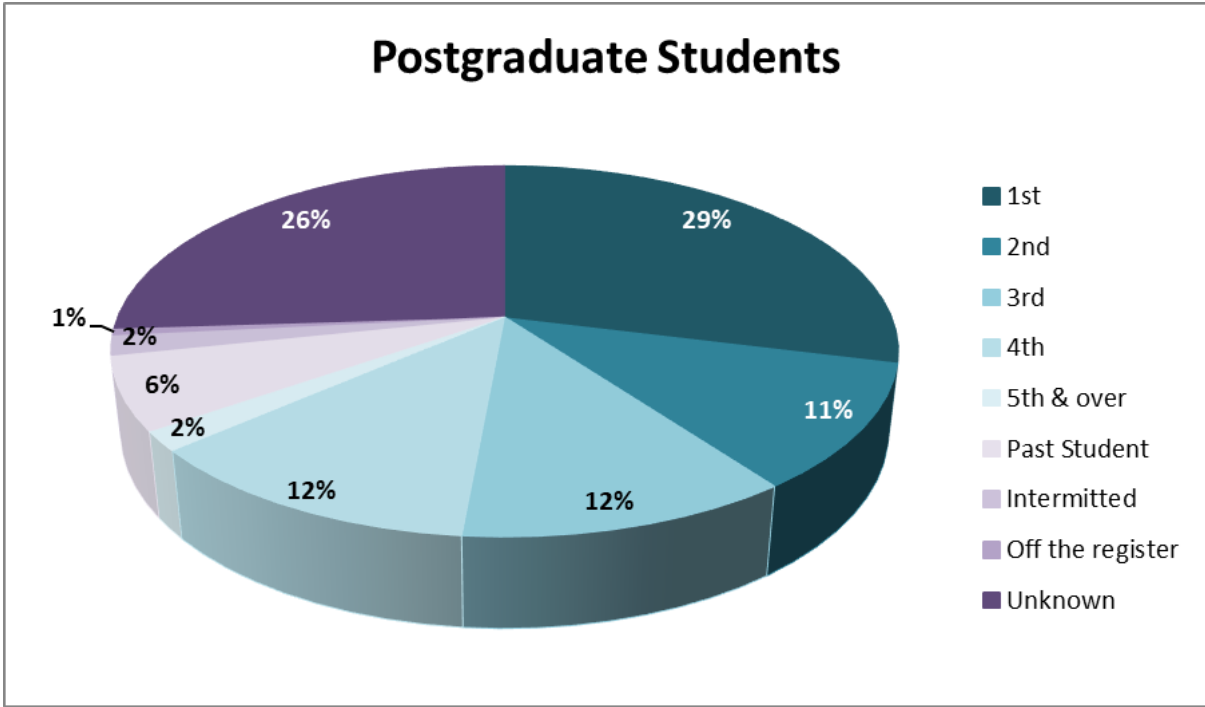
YEAR OF STUDY

In 2020-21, the majority of undergraduate service-users were in their 3rd year of study (26%), followed by 2nd year students (14%), 1st year students (13%) and 4th year students (6%) (Graph 7). There was a small increase in the number of intermitting and past students compared to last year, 6% to 7%, and 7% to 8% respectively, but this figure has remained fairly consistent over the past three years.



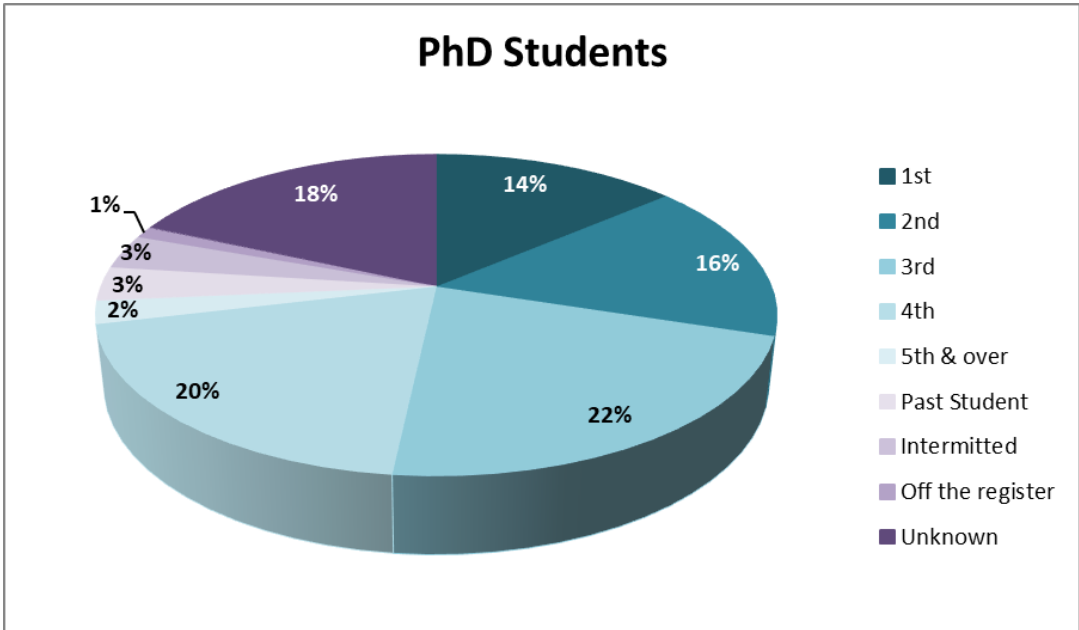
Graph 7 - Undergraduate student service-users by year of study (n=165)

The largest proportion of postgraduate students (29%) accessed the SAS in their first year of study (Graph 8). Of those first-year postgraduate students, MPhil students account for 48%. MPhil students access the SAS during their first and only year of study. We also saw a higher number of past students access the SAS as compared to last year, 7% as compared to 5% last year.



Graph 8 – Postgraduate student service-users by year of study (n=173)

Among PhD students, those in their 3rd and 4th year were most likely to approach the SAS (22% and 20% respectively), followed by an almost equal number of students in their 1st year (14%) or 2nd year (16%) (Graph 9). The main issues 3rd year PhD students sought advice on were academic-related, such as examination failure or review, discipline, and supervisor issues. For 4th year PhD students, the main issues they sought advice on were related to complaints about University or College service provision, and extensions to submission deadlines.



Graph 9 - PhD student users by year of study (n=87)

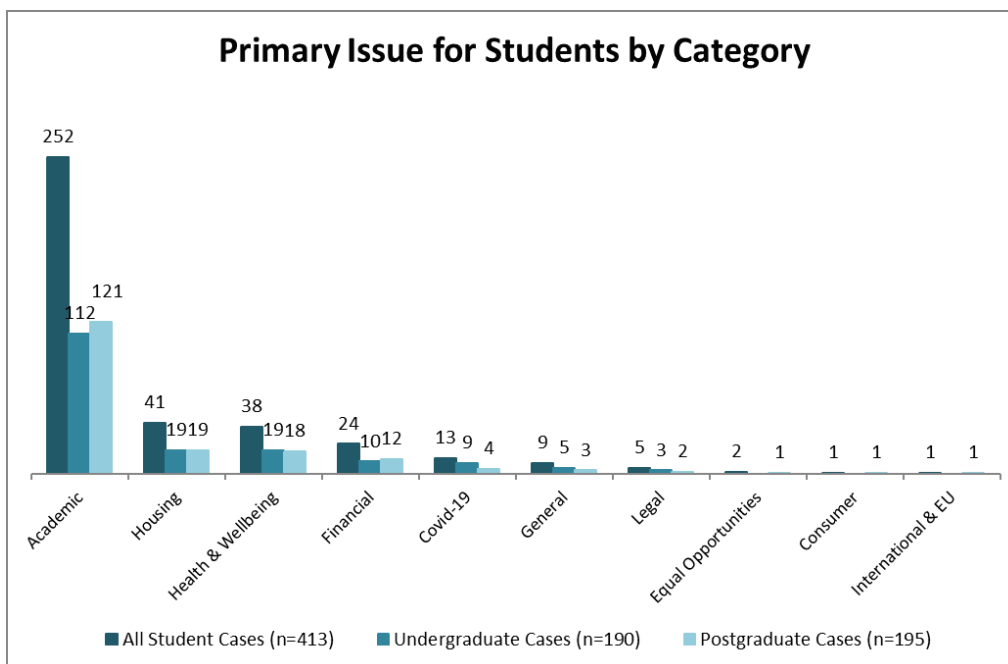
C. TYPES OF ISSUES

The SAS assisted students on a number of issues each year, these range from exam concerns to financial difficulties to intermission and issues regarding student-supervisor relations. Students will often come to the SAS for guidance and support 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 SAS specifically for advice on mental health, many students raise mental health as a factor contributing to the issue for which they require support.

PRIMARY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS BY CATEGORY

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

1. Academic (61%, same as last year)
2. Housing (10%, as compared to 13% last year)
3. Health and Wellbeing (9%, as compared to 6% last year)
4. Financial (6%, as compared to 11% last year)
5. Covid-19 (3%, this category did not appear last year)
6. General (2%, as compared to 5% last year)
7. Legal (1%, same as last year)
8. Equal Opportunities (0.5%, as compared to 0.2% last year)
9. Consumer (0.2%, as compared to 1% last year)
10. International & EU (0.2%, as compared to 1% last year)



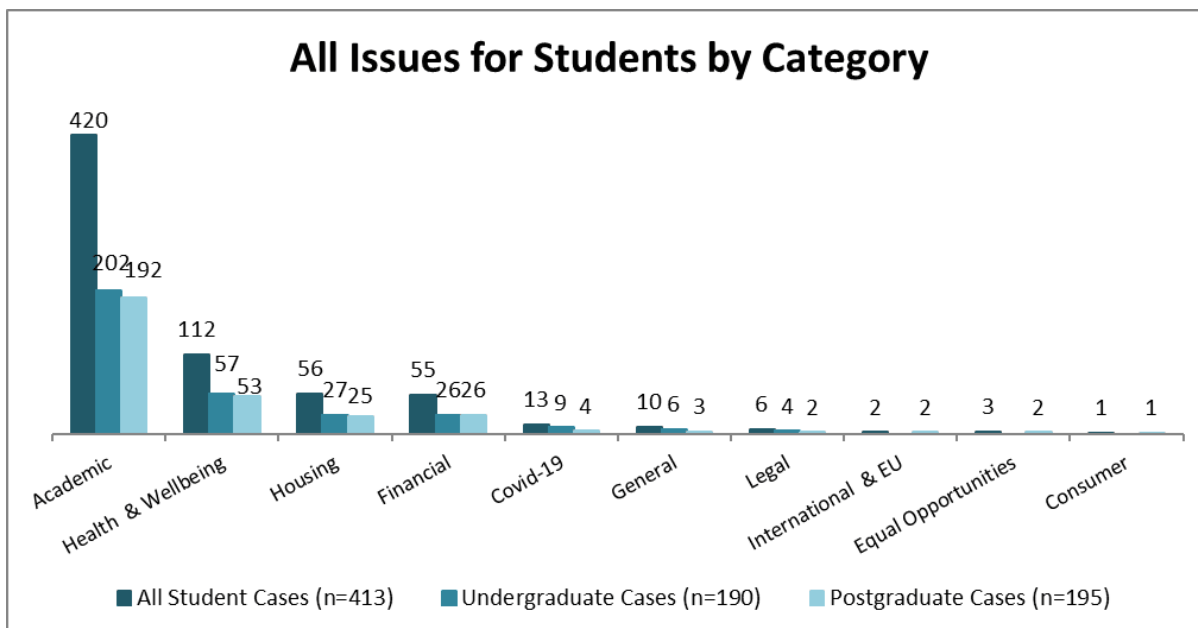
Graph 10 - Primary issue for students by category during the 2020-21 cycle

ALL ISSUES FOR STUDENTS BY CATEGORY

1. Academic (62%, as compared to 60% last year)
2. Health & Wellbeing (17%, as compared to 13% last year)
3. Housing (8%, as compared to 10% last year)
4. Financial (8%, as compared to 12% last year)
5. Covid-19 (2%, this category did not appear last year)
6. General (1%, as compared to 3% last year)
7. Legal (1%, same as last year)
8. Equal Opportunities (0.4%, as compared to 0.3% last year)
9. International & EU (0.3%, as compared to 1% last year)
10. Consumer (0.1%, as compared to 1% last year)

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 undergraduate students (n=31) and postgraduate students (n=23) remained the largest area students sought advice on within the ‘Health and Wellbeing’ category. Within the ‘Financial’ category, ‘Financial Hardship’ was the largest area of advice for undergraduate (n=6) and postgraduate (n=12) students.

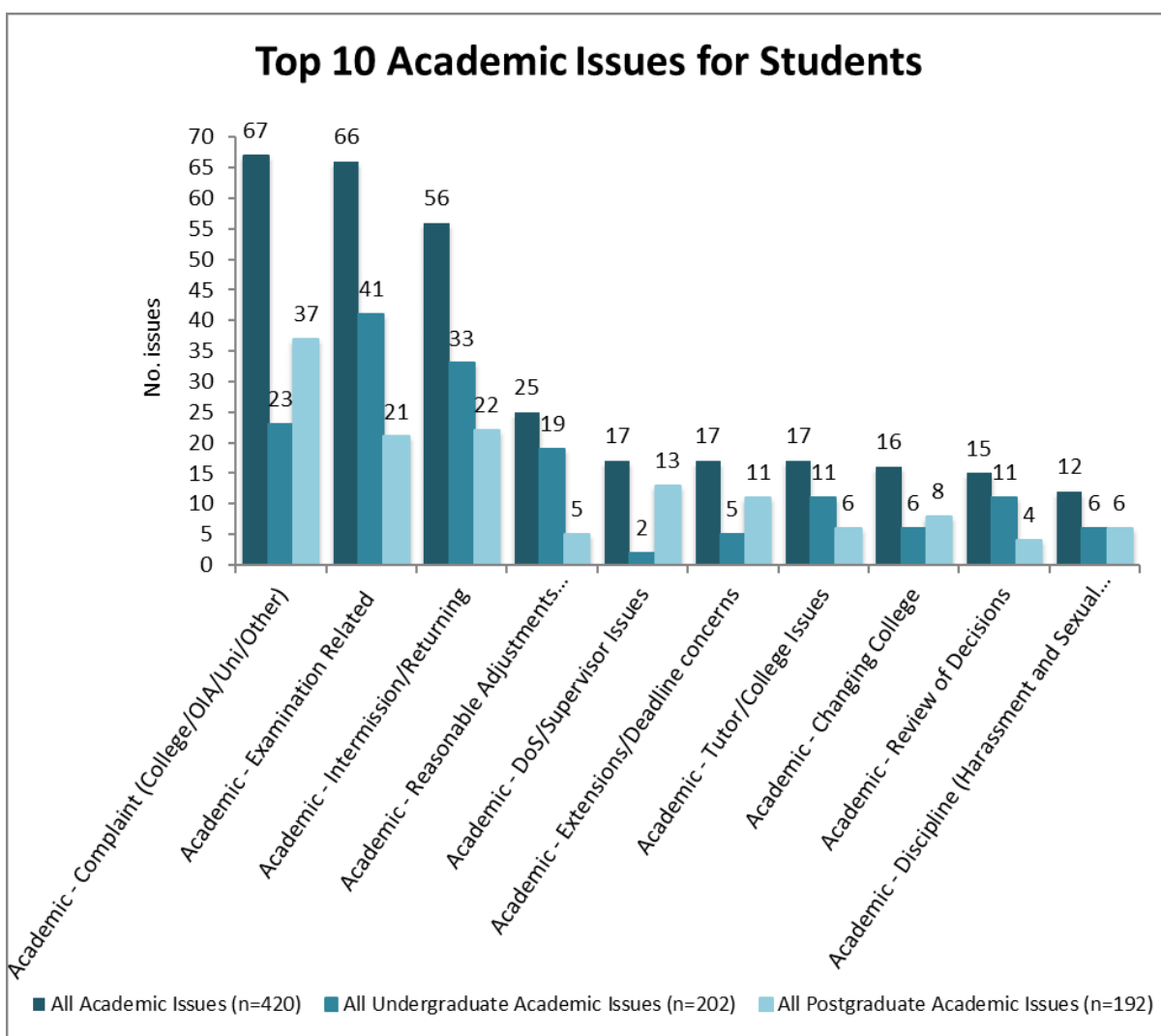


Graph 11 - All issues for students by category during the 2020-21 cycle

ALL ACADEMIC ISSUES BY STUDENT TYPE

As ‘Academic’ was the main category of advice for which students sought support, we have broken this category down into the top ten most common issues recorded in this area (measured as the percentage of all academic issues, where students who accessed the SAS experienced that particular issues):

1. Complaint (College/OIA/University/Other) (16%, as compared to 18% last year)
2. Examination-related (16%, as compared to 21% last year)
3. Intermission/Intermission Returning (13%, as compared 11% last year)
4. Reasonable Adjustments (AMA/Exams/Study) (6%, as compared to 5% last year)
5. DoS/Supervisor Issues (4%, as compared to 5% last year)
6. Extensions/Deadline Concerns (4% same as last year)
7. Tutor/College Issues (4%, same as last year)
8. Changing College (4%, new entry to the top 10)
9. Review of Decisions (4%, as compared to 5% last year)
10. Discipline (Harassment and Sexual Misconduct/Uni/College/Other) (3%, new entry to the top 10)

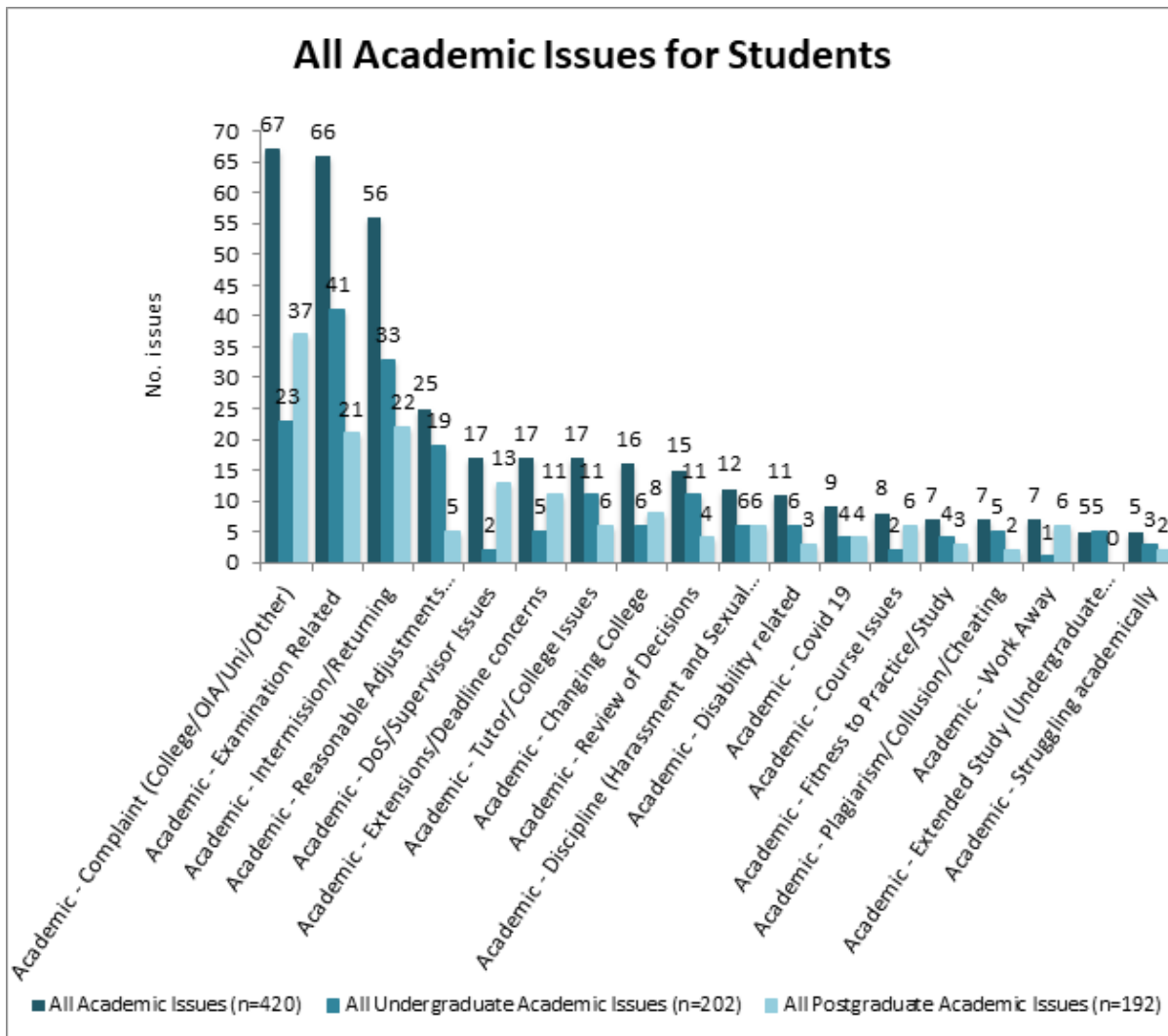


Graph 12 – Top 10 Academic Issues by Student Type

**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 SAS.

2020-21 represents the first time that the greatest number of issues experienced by students related to 'Complaints' (n=67), this was the main area upon which postgraduate students (n=37) sought advice. The second-largest area of advice for postgraduate students was 'Intermission/Intermission Return' (n=22), followed closely by 'Examination-related' issues (n=21). As with previous years, 'Examination-related' issues (n=41) was still the largest area undergraduate students sought advice on. This was followed closely by 'Intermission/Intermission Return' (n=33), with the third main area being 'Complaints' (n=23). More undergraduate students sought advice on issues relating to intermission/intermission return and mental health than postgraduate students.



Graph 13 - 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 SAS.

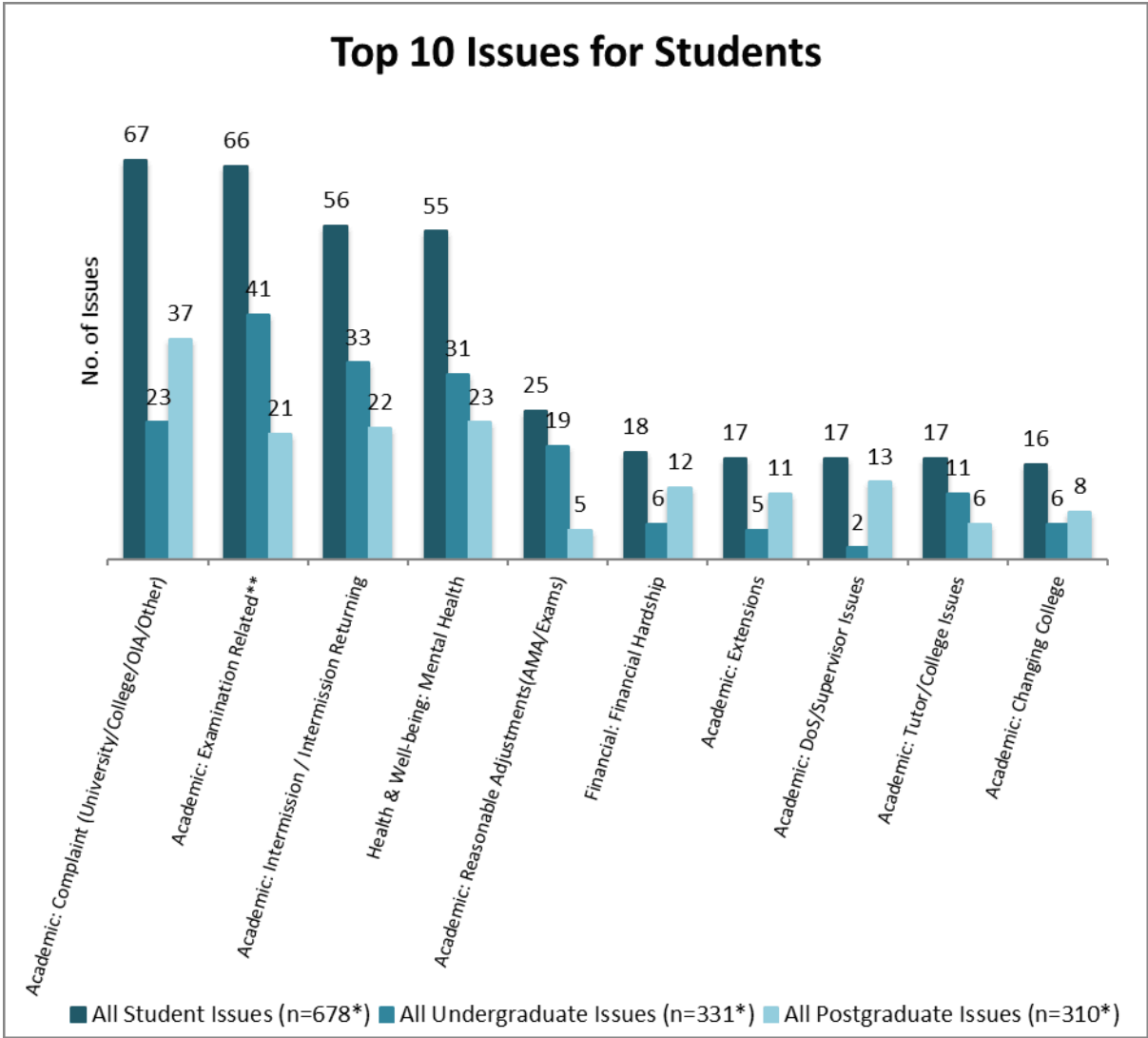
TOP 10 KEY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS

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

The areas on which students most sought advice this year were broadly similar to those encountered every year since 2013-14. This year saw 'Changing College' return to the top 10 list, replacing 'Review of Decision'. For the first time, complaints superseded examination-related issues since 2013-14.

1. Complaint (10%, as compared to 11% last year)
2. Examination-related (10%, as compared to 13% last year)
3. Intermission/Intermission Returning (8%, as compared to 7% last year)
4. Mental Health (8%, as compared to 5% last year)
5. Reasonable Adjustments (4%, as compared to 3% last year)
6. Financial Hardship (3%, as compared to 4% last year)
7. Extensions (3%, as compared to 2% last year)
8. DoS/Supervisor Issues (43 as compared to 3% last year)
9. Tutor/College Issues (3%, as compared to 2% last year)
10. Changing College (2%, new to top 10)

See Graph 14 on the next page



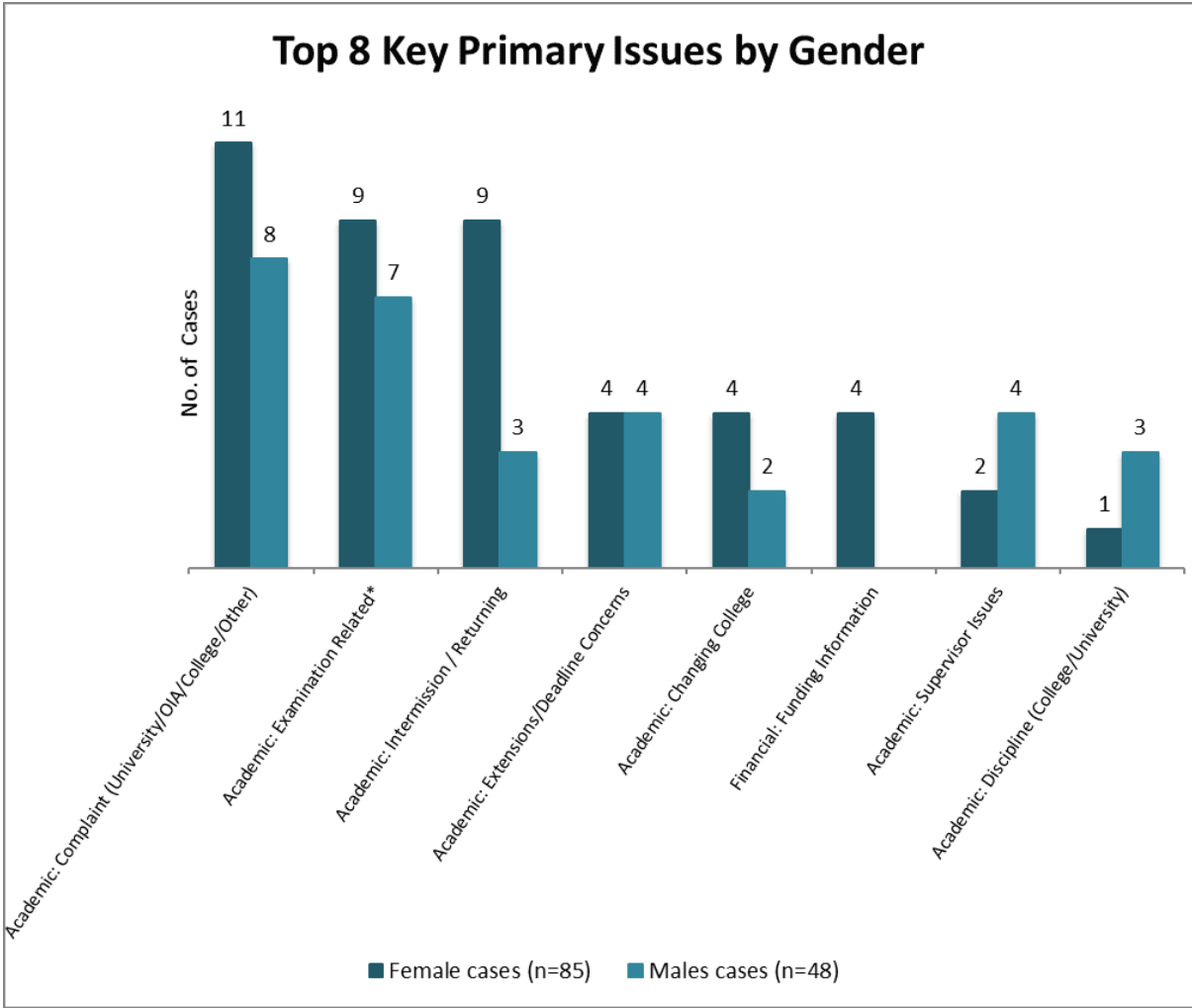
Graph 14 – Top 10 Issues for students by Student Type

* Where issue type is known

**Examination-related includes PhD Registration, Progression to Part III and Degree Classification/Calculation

PRIMARY ISSUES BY GENDER

Due to a greater number of female students accessing the SAS than male and other students, we see a higher number of female students across several categories. However, in 2020-21, there was an equal number of female and male students who requested advice about ‘Extensions and Deadlines’. There was a higher number of male students than female or other students who accessed the SAS for advice on ‘Supervisor Issues’. In light of the fact that male students only represent 37% of service-users who declared their gender, their access to advice on these issues is disproportionately high.



Graph 14 –Primary Issues by Student Gender

*Examination Related includes PhD Registration and Progression to Part III

PRIMARY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS BY ETHNICITY

In 2020-21, ‘complaints’ featured as the top issue students experienced across white (n=12) and BME (n=15) backgrounds.

Of the 66% (n=70) of students who accessed the SAS and identified as white, the most common issues after ‘complaints’ were ‘examination-related’ and ‘extension’.

Other issues raised by the 33% (n=41) of students who accessed the SAS and identified as BME, include ‘changing college’, ‘supervisor issues’, ‘discipline’, ‘mode of study’ and ‘examination related’ issues.

PRIMARY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

In 2020-21, the primary issue raised by students who either declared a disability on their form or mentioned a potential disability to an advisor related to 'Complaints'. This was closely followed by 'Intermission', then by 'Examination-related', and advice on 'Extensions'.