VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

KŌRERO MAI ‘26

STUDENT VOICE SURVEY

FULL RESULTS REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2026





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Executive summary

Kōrero Mai is Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's annual survey of the student experience. Conducted during Trimester 2, 2026, the survey gathered 3,094 usable responses from undergraduate and postgraduate students across all faculties and campuses. The findings provide a comprehensive picture of students' academic experiences, wellbeing, belonging, support services, campus life and priorities for improvement. The respondent profile broadly reflected the wider student population, providing confidence that the survey captured perspectives from a diverse cross-section of students.

Although the response rate was lower than 2025, the respondent profile remained broadly representative of the wider student population, providing confidence in the university-wide findings.

At a glance

Key measures	**2026**	2025	2024	2023	2022
Academic satisfaction	**82%**	83%	80%	75%	75%
Quality of teaching rated good/excellent	**78%**	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*
Considered leaving studies	**26%**	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*
Poor wellbeing (WHO-5)	**56%**	50%	52%	54%	55%
Feel connected to student community	**40%**	43%	41%	36%	30%
Feel proud to be a student here	**75%**	75%	72%	66%	67%
Services and facilities satisfaction	**79%***	82%	77%	75%	76%

*Before 2026 respondents were asked to provide one measure of satisfaction for all services and facilities combined. The approach changed in 2026 with respondents being asked to provide three measures of satisfaction, one each for 'student support services' (77%), 'university services' (81%) and 'university spaces and facilities' (79%). The figure provided here for 2026 is the average of the three measures.

Overall picture

The 2026 findings present a broadly positive picture of the student experience at Te Herenga Waka. Students continue to value the University's core educational experience, with high levels of satisfaction with teaching, learning and academic support. Most students feel safe, respected and proud to be part of the University community, and experiences of the services and facilities students use are generally positive.

At the same time, students are studying in an environment shaped by significant personal, financial and wellbeing pressures. Many are balancing study alongside paid employment, caring responsibilities and other commitments. More than one-quarter seriously considered leaving their studies during the academic year, while wellbeing indicators deteriorated slightly compared with 2025. Across many areas of the survey, students identified opportunities to strengthen connection, improve access to support and make the University easier to navigate.

Key findings

1. The academic experience remains a major institutional strength

Students continue to rate their academic experience highly. Eighty-two percent were satisfied with their overall academic experience and 78% rated the quality of teaching as good or excellent. Students most frequently identified engaging course content, intellectual growth, knowledgeable teaching staff and accessible academic support as the most valuable aspects of their experience. Research supervision was also rated positively by postgraduate research students. These findings reinforce the importance of teaching quality and supportive academic relationships as foundations of student success.

2. Student wellbeing and financial pressure remain significant concerns

The survey highlights the challenging context within which many students are studying. Nearly two-thirds were undertaking paid work and almost one-fifth reported caring responsibilities. Financial pressures, employment commitments and family responsibilities were common obstacles to academic success. More than half of respondents were classified as experiencing poor wellbeing on the WHO-5 measure, while 31% were classified as experiencing moderate or severe psychological distress. Twenty-six percent had seriously considered leaving their studies during the academic year, most commonly because of wellbeing issues, financial pressure or difficulties managing workload.

3. Students feel they belong, but many do not feel strongly connected

Most students expressed positive feelings toward the University, with 70% reporting a sense of belonging, 75% feeling proud to be a student at Te Herenga Waka and 79% willing to recommend the University to others. However, only 40% felt connected to the wider student community. Open-text comments suggest that students are seeking more opportunities to build relationships through courses, clubs, social activities and informal interactions. The findings indicate that strengthening connection and participation remains one of the University's most significant opportunities for improvement.

4. Making the University easier to navigate emerged as a recurring opportunity

A consistent theme throughout the survey was the difficulty students experience finding information, understanding available services and navigating systems, processes and facilities. Similar concerns emerged across academic administration, digital tools, student support services, university services, events and campus spaces. Although students were generally positive about services once they accessed them, many described challenges identifying where to go, how to access assistance and how different parts of the University fit together. Improving discoverability, communication and navigation represents one of the strongest institution-wide opportunities identified in the survey.

Students' priorities for improvement

When asked where the University should focus its efforts next year, students most frequently highlighted community and belonging, student wellbeing and support, teaching quality, affordability, communication and administration, and equity and inclusion. While the specific suggestions varied, they consistently pointed toward four broader priorities:

1. Strengthening connection and belonging.
2. Protecting the educational and support fundamentals.
3. Reducing financial and practical barriers to participation.
4. Making the University easier to navigate.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that students remain highly positive about many core aspects of their experience at Te Herenga Waka, particularly teaching, learning, academic support and the University's overall environment. However, students are studying in the context of rising pressures relating to wellbeing, finances, work and competing responsibilities. The strongest opportunities for improvement are not confined to any single service or area. Rather, they centre on strengthening student connection, supporting wellbeing and success, reducing barriers to participation, and creating a more coherent and navigable student experience. Collectively, these findings provide a strong evidence base for institutional planning, service improvement and decision-making across the University.

Strategic implications for the University

- Continue protecting and investing in the quality of teaching, learning and academic support, which remain key strengths of the student experience.
- Maintain a strong institutional focus on student wellbeing and affordability pressures, particularly given the proportion of students reporting poor wellbeing and considering leaving their studies.
- Strengthen opportunities for community, participation and peer connection, recognising the gap between students' sense of belonging and their connection to the wider student community.
- Improve the discoverability and navigation of services, systems, information and opportunities, which emerged as one of the most consistent themes across the survey..

Introduction

Kōrero Mai | Student Voice Survey is Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's annual survey of the student experience. Introduced as Have Your Say in 2017, the survey provides students with a structured opportunity to share what is working well in their university experience and where improvements may be needed. In 2026 the survey was redesigned and rebranded as Kōrero Mai to improve the respondent experience, modernise question content and strengthen the usefulness of the findings for decision making.

The survey explores a broad range of topics including academic experience, wellbeing, belonging, participation, support services, digital learning, campus facilities and overall student life. The findings are used across the University to understand student experiences, monitor trends over time and inform planning, service improvement and resource allocation.

The 2026 survey was open to all enrolled undergraduate and postgraduate students and was conducted during Trimester 2. A total of 3,094 usable responses were received. Further information about response rates, respondent representativeness and survey methodology is provided later in this report.

The 2026 survey represents the first year of a redesigned survey approach. Changes included a new survey name and visual identity, an anonymous response model, updated questionnaire content, a modular survey structure, and revised measures of service experience. These changes were intended to improve the respondent experience and strengthen the usefulness of findings for institutional decision-making.

A note on the use of open-text comments

Open-text comments provide an opportunity for students to describe their experiences in their own words and identify issues that may not be fully captured by structured survey questions. These comments add important context, explanation and nuance to the quantitative findings presented throughout this report.

However, open-text comments should be interpreted cautiously. Only a subset of respondents choose to provide written feedback, and respondents themselves represent only a subset of the wider student population. Comments also tend to be generated by students with particularly positive, negative or specific experiences and therefore should not be treated as direct measures of prevalence or overall satisfaction.

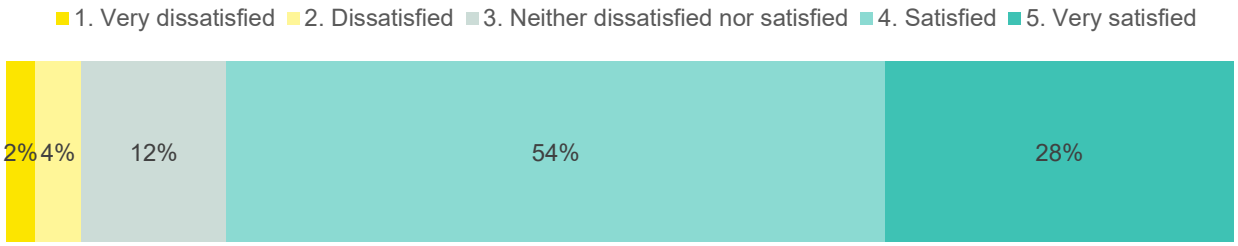
Throughout this report, qualitative findings are used primarily to identify recurring themes, provide context for survey results and highlight issues raised by students. The report does not use sentiment analysis and does not treat individual comments as representative of all students or all student experiences.

Learning and academic experience

This chapter examines students' overall academic experience, their engagement with learning, their experiences of teaching and research supervision, and the aspects of academic life they most value or would like to see improved. Together, the results provide a broad picture of the quality of the learning experience and the conditions that help students engage and succeed.

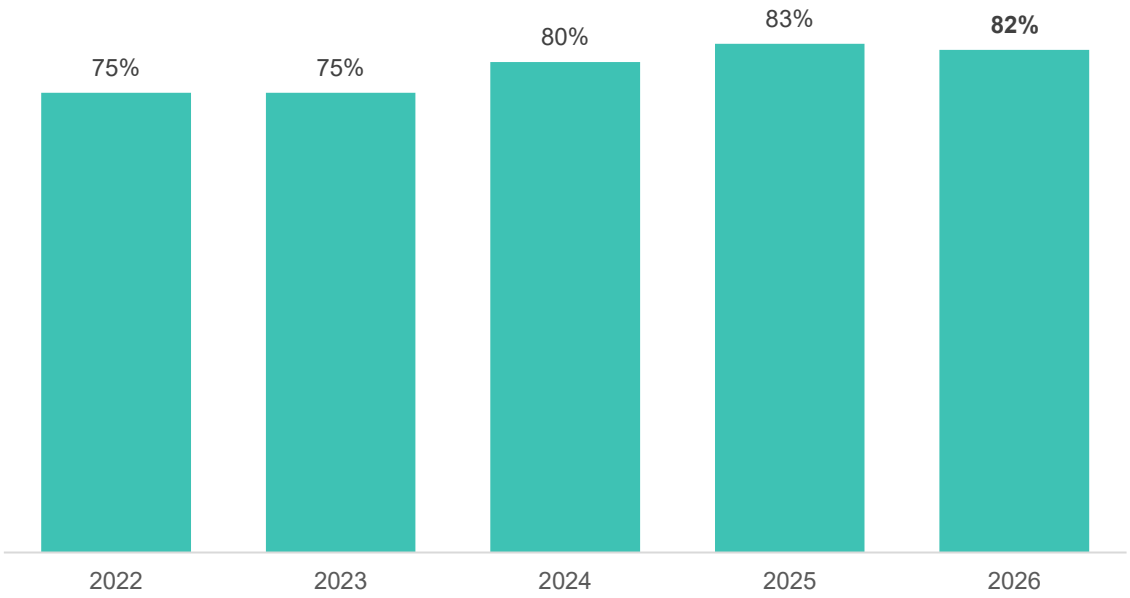
All respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their academic experience. 82% of respondents were satisfied with their academic experience, and only 6% reported being dissatisfied with it.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your academic experience as a student here? (n=2845)

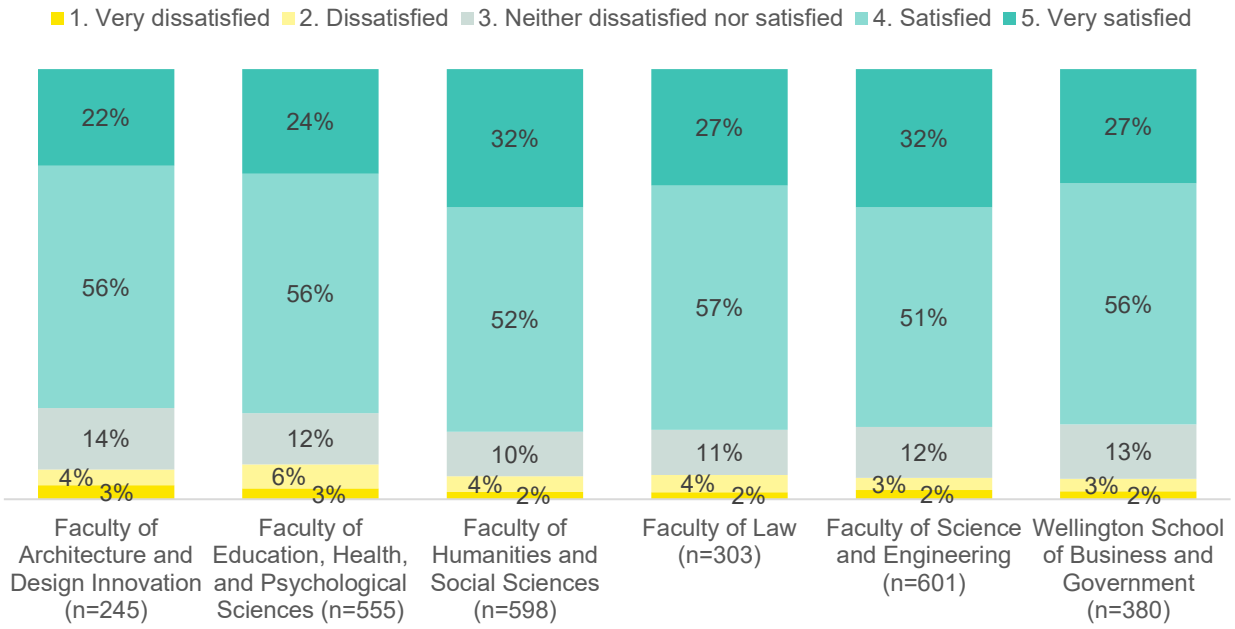


We can track the results for this question over the past five years. Results have remained relatively consistent over the past five years, particularly since 2024. The one percentage point decrease from 2025 was not statistically significant.

Percentage of respondents 'Satisfied' or 'Very satisfied' with their overall academic experience, 2022 to 2026.



Comparing the results to this question across faculties[1] we see very little real difference. The percentage of respondents who report being dissatisfied with their academic experience varies between 9% and 5%.

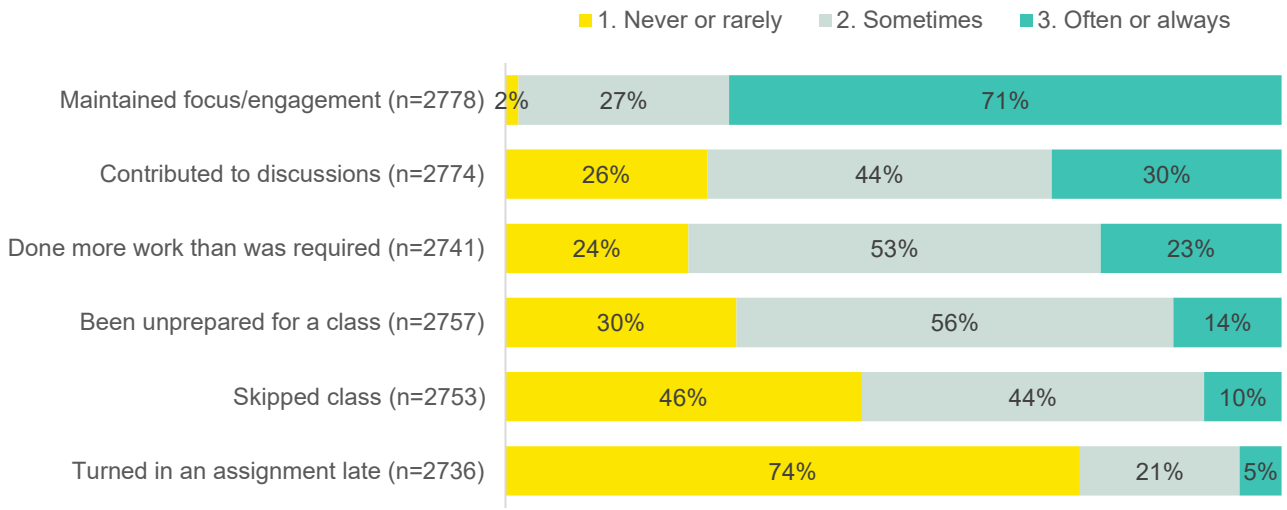


Engagement and teaching

We asked students taking taught classes to tell us how often they have done six specific things to understand their level of class engagement. Over 2,700 students responded to these questions.

The results show high levels of class engagement. 71% reported maintaining focus or engagement often or always and 76% reported finding classes so engaging they did more work than was required at least some of the time. Only 10% reported often skipping classes and 5% often turning in assignments late.

During your classes so far this academic year, how often have you…

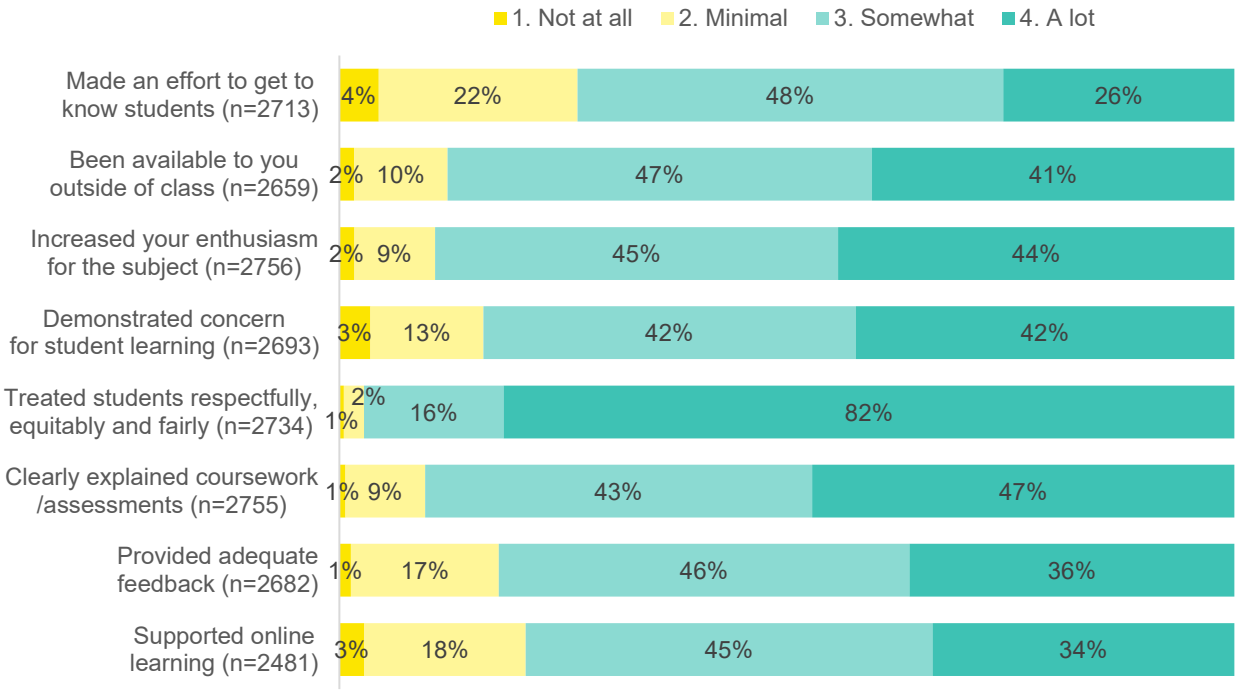


We asked students eight questions to gain insights about how they experienced their lecturers. Overall, lecturers were assessed very positively. Lecturers were reported to be very good at treating students respectfully, equitably and fairly, with 82% of respondents reporting they saw this ‘a lot’ and an additional

[1] Te Kawa a Māui (Iho) has been excluded here as the numbers were too low to be reported.

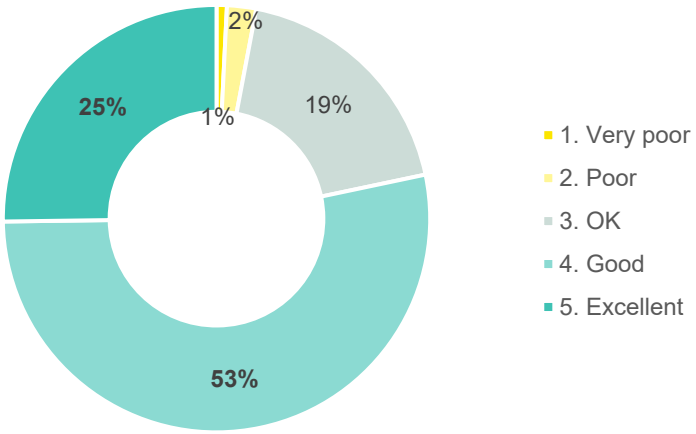
16% seeing this ‘somewhat’. Almost half of respondents (47%) experienced lecturers clearly explaining coursework/assessments ‘a lot’ and 43% experiencing this ‘somewhat’. Making an effort to get to know students was less consistently experienced: 26% reported seeing minimal or no evidence of this. Support for online learning was also less positively rated, with 21% reporting minimal or no support.

During your classes so far this academic year, to what extent have your lecturers…



Respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of the teaching they experienced. Over three quarters (78%) rated it ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’. Only 3% rated it as ‘Poor’ or ‘Very poor’.

How would you rate the quality of the teaching you have experienced so far this academic year? (n=2812)

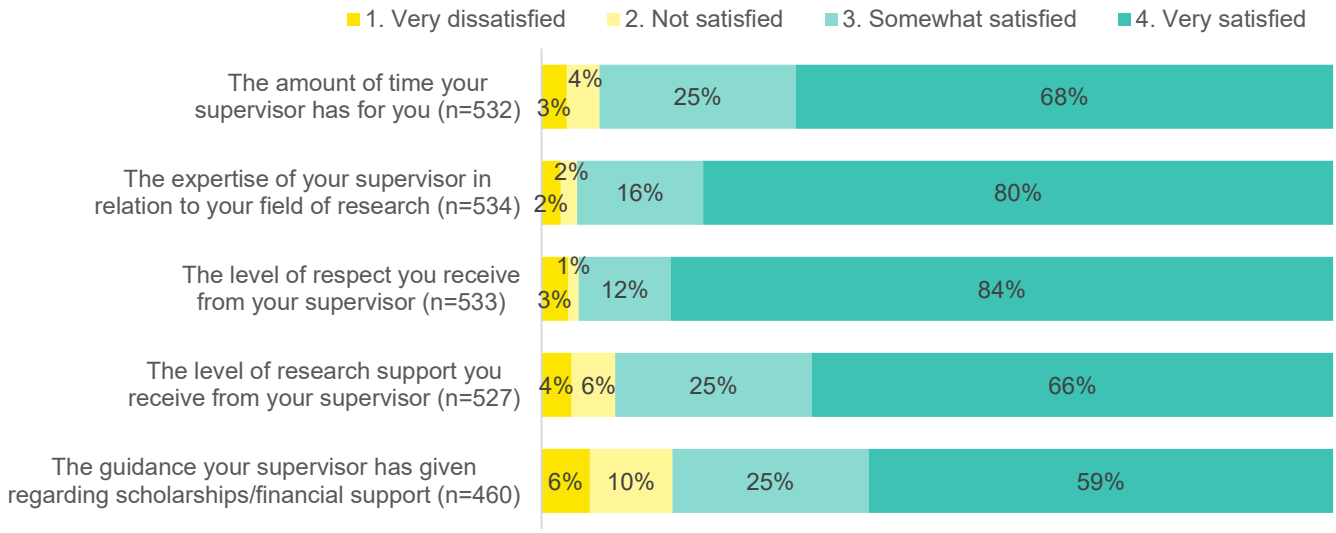


Results were broadly consistent across faculties, with no substantial differences evident.

Research supervision

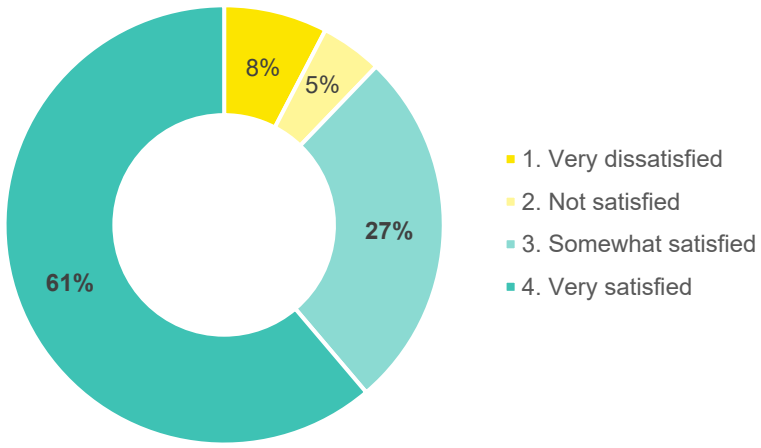
We asked students undertaking courses involving research supervision, how satisfied they were with their supervisors across five questions. Overall, supervisors were rated very highly across these questions. 84% of respondents were 'Very satisfied' with the respect that they were shown and 80% were 'Very satisfied' with their supervisor's expertise. Guidance about scholarships and financial support was the least positively rated aspect of supervision, with 16% reporting that they were dissatisfied or not satisfied.

Thinking about your primary supervisor over the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with…



On a single overall rating of their primary supervisor, 88% of respondents were satisfied.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your primary supervisor? (n=616)



Results were broadly consistent across faculties, with no substantial differences evident.

Student voice: What students value about their academic experience

Students provided 1,931 comments describing the best aspects of their academic experience. Comments were coded to 14 themes, with individual comments assigned to more than one theme where appropriate. Consequently, the percentages below represent the proportion of comments mentioning each theme and sum to more than 100%.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
Interesting and engaging courses/content	Students valued papers, classes and subject matter that were interesting, enjoyable, stimulating or well designed. This theme relates to the appeal and quality of the curriculum itself.	900 / 46.6%
Learning, knowledge and intellectual growth	Students described gaining new knowledge, developing deeper understanding, being challenged intellectually and becoming more confident or capable learners.	657 / 34.0%
Engaging and knowledgeable teaching staff	Students praised lecturers, tutors and course coordinators who demonstrated expertise, enthusiasm and an ability to communicate material in engaging ways.	578 / 29.9%
Academic support and approachable staff	Students valued staff who were accessible, responsive, encouraging and willing to provide guidance or assistance when needed.	508 / 26.3%
Peer connection, collaboration and belonging	Meeting classmates, making friends, exchanging ideas and working collaboratively strengthened students' academic experiences and sense of community.	330 / 17.1%
Assessment, feedback and achievement	Students valued meaningful assessment, useful feedback, successful results and the satisfaction of completing academic tasks or reaching important milestones.	253 / 13.1%

What this means

The comments suggest that students' positive academic experiences are driven by a combination of engaging learning, supportive relationships and personal growth. While interesting course content was the most frequently mentioned aspect, students rarely described content in isolation. Instead, they often linked their learning to enthusiastic teaching, approachable staff and opportunities to exchange ideas with their peers. Together, these findings highlight that students value not only what they learn, but also the environment in which learning occurs. Academic experiences appear strongest when intellectually stimulating courses are supported by high-quality teaching, accessible support and a strong sense of academic community.

In students' words

"I have, in general, really enjoyed the actual subject material of the courses. I find them very intriguing and fascinating."

"I've enjoyed expanding my knowledge on various different topics."

"All of my lecturers have been very passionate about their subjects, and it has stimulated my interest in them."

"I can get help whenever I go to anybody."

"Meeting like-minded people. Great influences at uni, surrounding yourself with people who want more for their futures makes you want to strive to constantly be better."

Student voice: Aspects of the academic experience that could be improved

Students provided 1,802 comments about aspects of their academic experience that were most in need of improvement. The comments were coded into 16 themes. A comment could be assigned to more than one theme but was counted only once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and sum to more than 100%.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
Communication, information and course organisation	Students wanted clearer, more timely and consistently organised information about course expectations, schedules, changes, announcements and academic processes.	435 / 24.1%
Teaching quality and lecturer engagement	Students wanted more consistently effective and engaging teaching, including clearer explanations, well-paced delivery and less reliance on reading from slides or course materials.	414 / 23.0%
Assessment design, clarity and fairness	Students raised concerns about assessment instructions, expectations, task design, examinations, marking criteria, weighting, alignment with teaching and fairness.	396 / 22.0%
Academic support, advice and staff availability	Students wanted timely access to knowledgeable and responsive help, with clearer routes for seeking advice from teaching staff, advisers and support services.	396 / 22.0%
Workload, time pressure and course coordination	Students described heavy workloads, fast pacing and deadlines converging across courses, making it difficult to engage deeply with learning and balance other responsibilities.	213 / 11.8%
Flexible, online and accessible learning	Students wanted greater flexibility in when and where they could participate, including reliable recordings, online or hybrid options and accessible learning formats.	197 / 10.9%

What this means

The themes point to a desire for greater consistency across the academic experience rather than fundamental dissatisfaction with it. Students were most likely to identify issues relating to communication, teaching, assessment and support, all of which influence how manageable and predictable study feels on a day-to-day basis. Many comments described these factors as interconnected. Unclear information can increase workload, inconsistent teaching can affect understanding, and delays in receiving support or feedback can make it more difficult for students to progress confidently. Taken together, the findings suggest that students are seeking a more coordinated and reliable academic experience in which expectations, communication and support are consistently delivered across courses and programmes.

In students' words

"There's been a lot of gaps with communication; most of us, if not all, felt lost and confused coming into second trimester."

"Some lecturers are very knowledgeable in the topic that they are teaching, but they sometimes haven't made sure that their teaching materials are up to date or relevant."

"Assignment instructions seem to contradict themselves throughout the entire description, which makes it so hard to understand what to do."

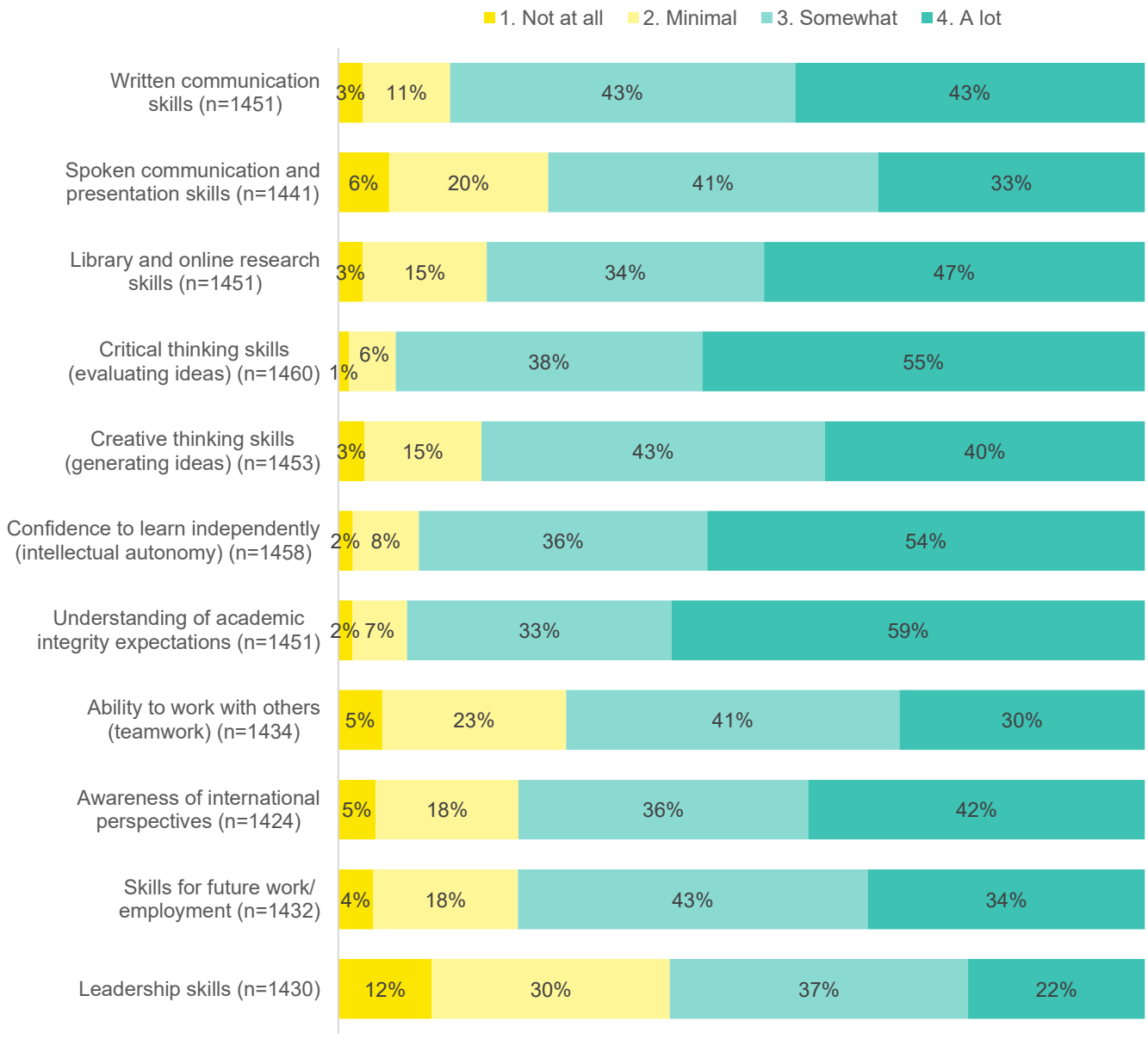
"Support is not able to keep up with more busy periods but is readily available when it is less needed by cohorts."

"Assignment deadlines across papers are often clustered together with little coordination between courses."

Skills and preparation

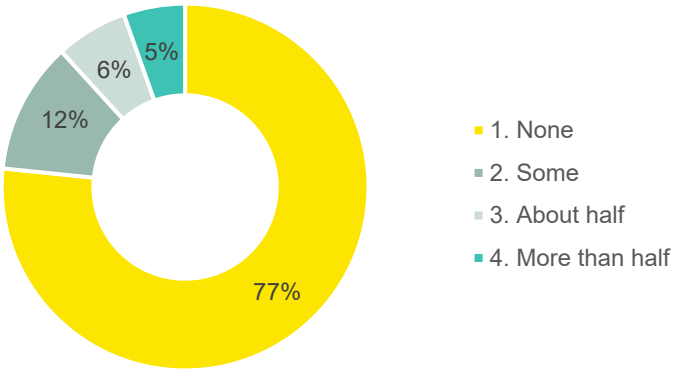
University study supports students to develop a broad range of capabilities for academic learning, independent thinking and future work. We asked students about the extent to which their studies had developed 11 skills and areas of understanding, as well as their exposure to placements, internships or work-integrated learning. Students were also asked how prepared they felt to progress to the next stage of their studies and when they began thinking about what they would do after completing their undergraduate degree.

To what extent have your university studies developed your…

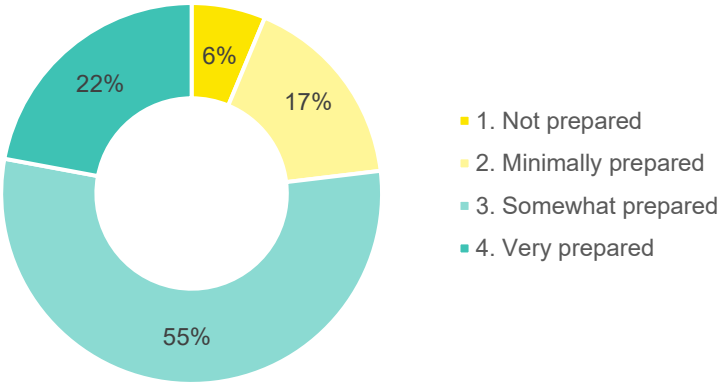


Students generally reported that their studies had developed a broad range of skills. The strongest results were for critical thinking, understanding academic integrity and confidence to learn independently, with nine in ten or more reporting at least some development in each area. More than eight in ten also reported developing their written communication, creative thinking, and library and online research skills. Leadership skills were less consistently developed, with 59% reporting at least some development and 41% reporting minimal or no development.

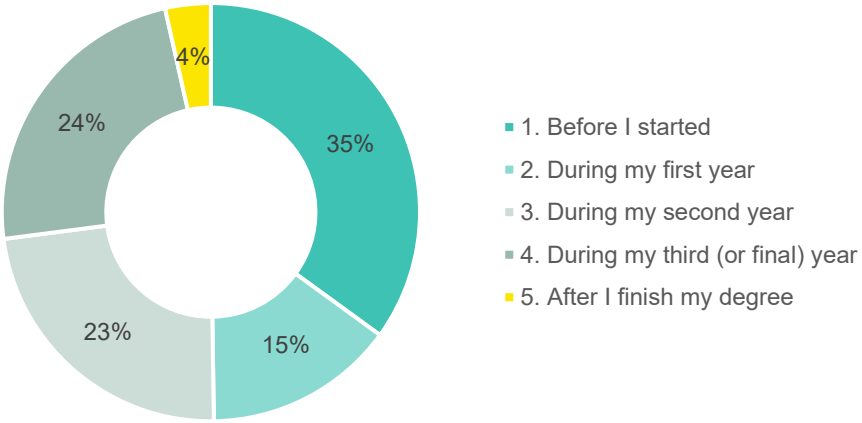
So far this academic year, what proportion of your course has involved activities such as placements, internships or work integrated learning? (n=1326)



Thinking about progressing to the next stage of your studies (whether this is progressing to the next trimester, next year, or progressing through postgraduate studies), how prepared do you currently feel for this? (n= 1368)



At what point did you/will you start thinking about what you'll do after your undergraduate degree? (n=880)



Most respondents reported limited exposure to placements, internships or other forms of work-integrated learning during the academic year. Just over three-quarters said none of their course had involved these activities, while 23% reported at least some involvement and 12% said they accounted for about half or more of their course. Opportunities for this type of learning are likely to vary considerably according to programme and stage of study, so the overall result should be interpreted in that context.

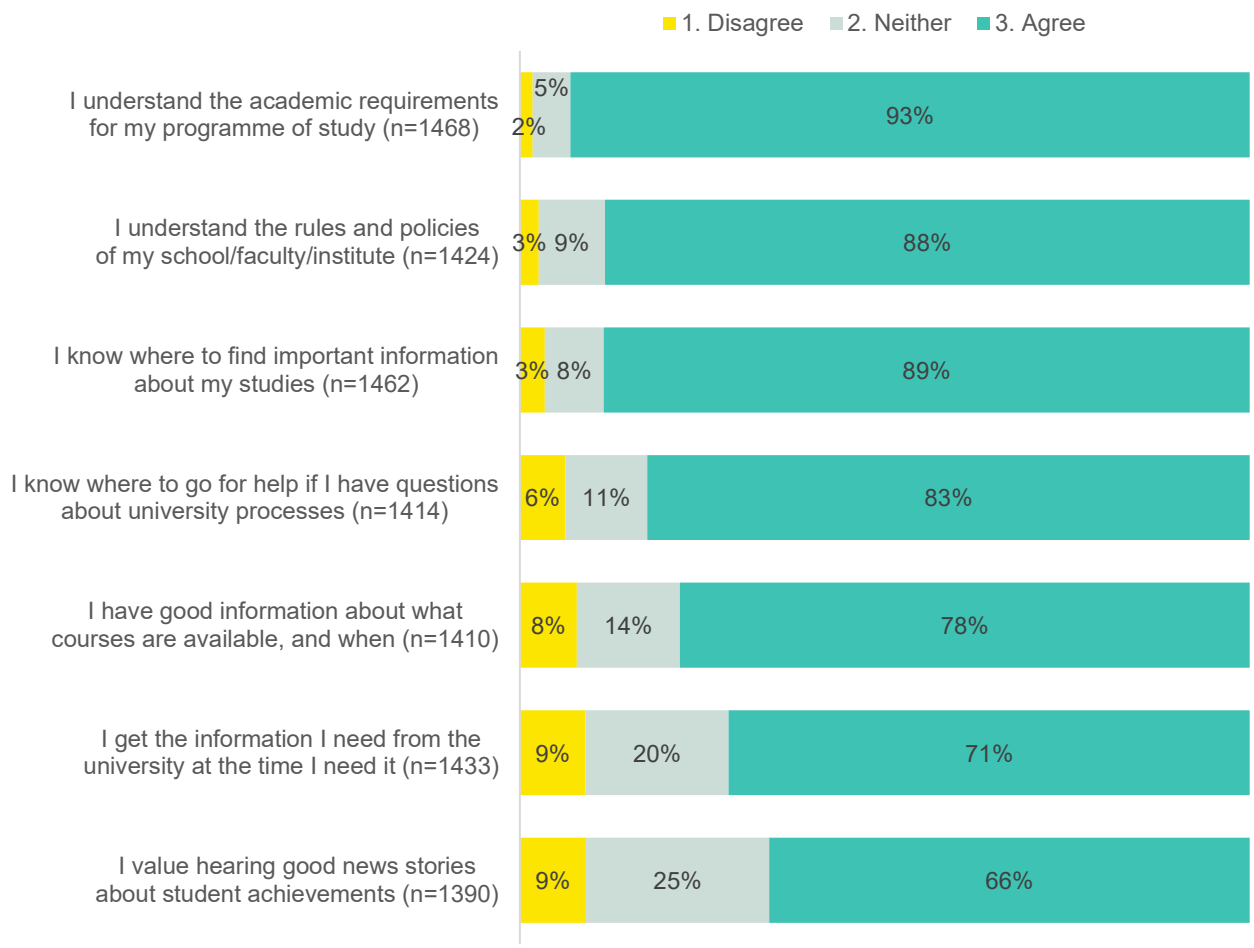
Despite relatively limited exposure to work-integrated learning, most students felt prepared to continue their studies. Just over three-quarters felt somewhat or very prepared to progress to the next trimester, year or stage of postgraduate study. However, 23% felt minimally prepared or not prepared, indicating that a substantial minority lacked confidence about their next stage.

Thinking about life after undergraduate study often began early. Half of respondents said they had started considering their next step before beginning university or during their first year. A further 23% began thinking about it during their second year and 24% during their third or final year. Only 4% expected to wait until after completing their degree.

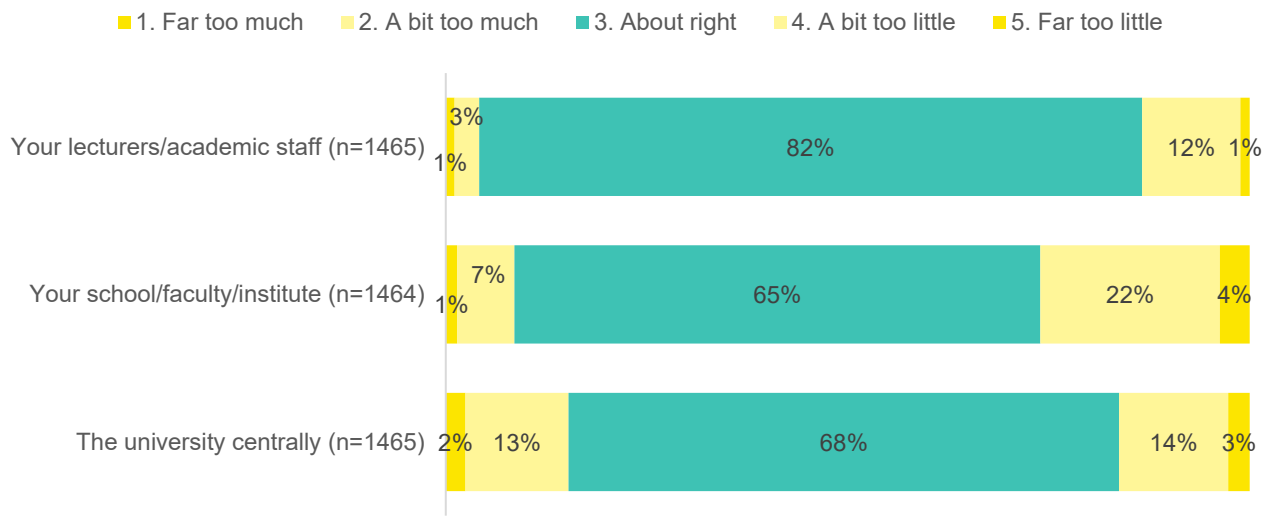
Academic information

Clear, timely and accessible academic information helps students understand what is expected of them and where to go when they need assistance. We asked students about their understanding of programme requirements and relevant rules, their ability to locate information and help, and whether they received the information they needed when they needed it. We also asked whether the amount of communication they received from academic staff, faculties and the University centrally felt appropriate.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following…



Thinking about the last 12 months, how do you feel about the amount of communication you have received from the following areas…



Students generally felt well informed about the fundamental requirements of their studies. More than nine in ten understood their programme requirements, while close to nine in ten understood relevant school or faculty rules and knew where to find important study information. Results were less positive for receiving information at the time it was needed, although 71% still agreed that this occurred.

Most considered the amount of communication they received to be about right. This was particularly true for communication from lecturers and academic staff, at 82%, compared with 65% for schools, faculties or institutes and 68% for the University centrally. Students who were dissatisfied with school or faculty communication were more likely to want more of it, while views about central University communication were divided more evenly between too much and too little.

Key takeaways: Learning and academic experience

Overall, the results present a positive picture of students' learning and academic experience. Satisfaction remained high and broadly stable, students generally rated their teaching and research supervision positively, and most reported developing important capabilities for academic study and independent learning. The qualitative findings reinforce these results while also identifying areas where greater consistency could improve students' experiences.

- **Overall academic satisfaction remained high and stable.** Eighty-two percent of respondents were satisfied with their academic experience. This was broadly consistent with the previous two years, and the one percentage point decrease from 2025 was not statistically significant. Results were also broadly consistent across faculties.
- **Engaging content, effective teaching and supportive relationships underpin positive academic experiences.** Students most often valued interesting course content and intellectual development, alongside knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching staff, approachable academic support and connections with peers. Seventy-eight percent rated the overall quality of their teaching as good or excellent.
- **Research supervision was generally experienced positively.** Eighty-eight percent of research students were somewhat or very satisfied with their primary supervisor. Respect and supervisor expertise were particularly highly rated, while guidance about scholarships and financial support was less consistently positive.
- **Students reported developing strong academic and independent-learning capabilities.** Critical thinking, understanding academic integrity and confidence to learn independently were the most consistently developed areas. Leadership was less commonly developed, and most respondents reported no involvement in placements, internships or work-integrated learning during the academic year. Nevertheless, more than three-quarters felt at least somewhat prepared to progress to the next stage of their studies.
- **Students generally understood academic requirements, but consistency and timeliness remain important.** Most understood their programme requirements and knew where to find important study information. However, receiving information at the time it was needed was less consistently experienced. Open-text comments also highlighted communication and course organisation, teaching consistency, assessment clarity and access to academic support as leading areas for improvement.

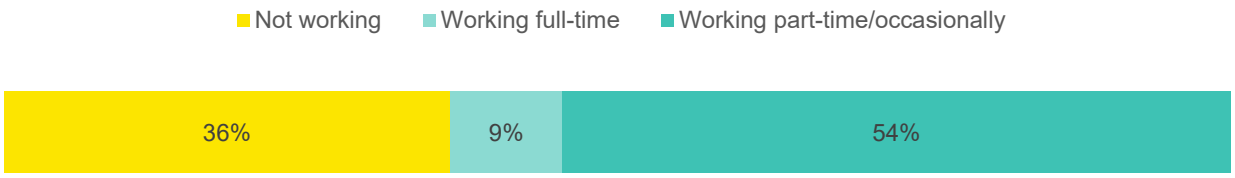
Managing study and life

Students' capacity to participate in university life is shaped not only by their studies, but also by their employment, whānau and caring responsibilities, living circumstances, health and wellbeing. This chapter examines the wider circumstances in which students are studying, the pressures that can make academic participation or continuation more difficult, and the role that online and flexible learning can play in supporting access. It also presents measures of student wellbeing and psychological distress.

Work, whānau and personal circumstances

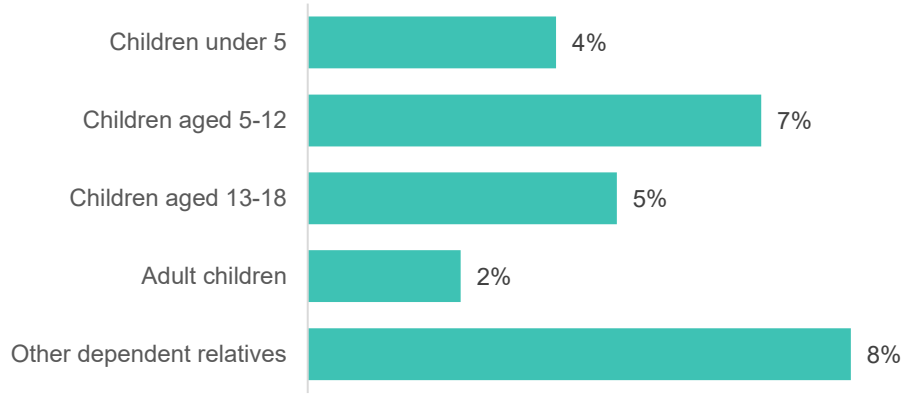
Students combine university study with a wide range of responsibilities and personal circumstances. To understand this wider context, we asked about paid employment, caring responsibilities, living arrangements, disability and long-term health conditions, and whether students were studying full-time or part-time.

Are you undertaking paid work while studying? (n=3063)



Students were asked about caring responsibilities they may have at home. 81% reported that they had no caring responsibilities, and 19% reported having some form of caring responsibilities.

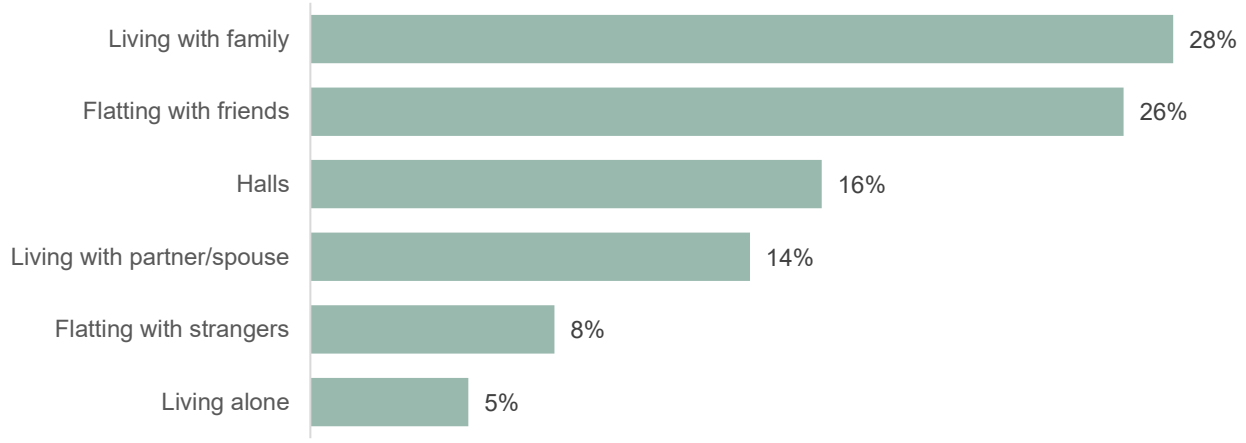
Do you have caregiving responsibilities for any of the following at home? (n=2377)



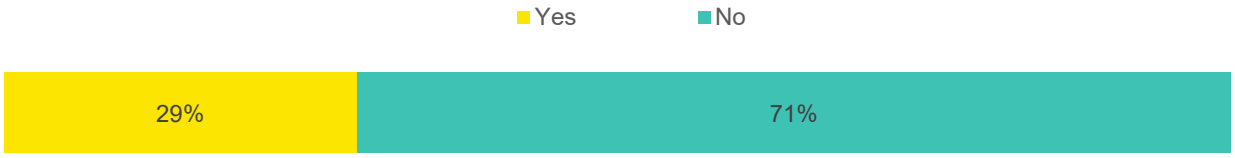
Respondents could select more than one caring responsibility, so category percentages may sum to more than the overall proportion with caring responsibilities.

We also asked about where students were living and who with. Twenty-eight percent reported living with family and a further 14% were living with a partner or spouse.

What type of accommodation are you currently living in? (n=3091)



Do you describe yourself as disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, tāngata whaikaha Māori, tagata sa'ilimalo, or living with a long-term physical, sensory, or mental health condition or impairment? (n=2360)



The results show that many students are balancing study with employment and other commitments. Almost two-thirds were undertaking paid work while studying: 55% were working part-time or occasionally and 9% were working full-time. Most respondents were also studying full-time (86%), meaning that paid employment commonly sat alongside a substantial academic workload.

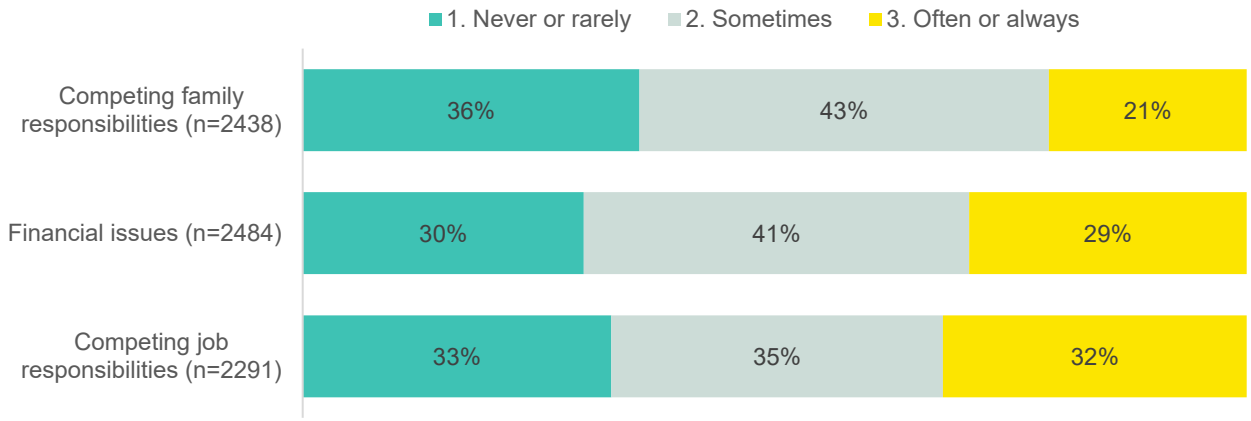
Nineteen percent of respondents reported at least one caring responsibility. These included caring for children of different ages, adult children and other dependent relatives. Students' living arrangements were also diverse: 28% were living with family, 26% were flatting with friends, 16% were living in a hall of residence and 14% were living with a partner or spouse.

In addition, 29% identified as disabled, Deaf, neurodivergent, tāngata whaikaha Māori, tagata sa'ilimalo, or as living with a long-term physical, sensory or mental health condition or impairment. Taken together, these findings show that students are engaging with university from a wide range of circumstances and that, for many, study is one of several significant demands on their time and energy.

Obstacles to continuing studies

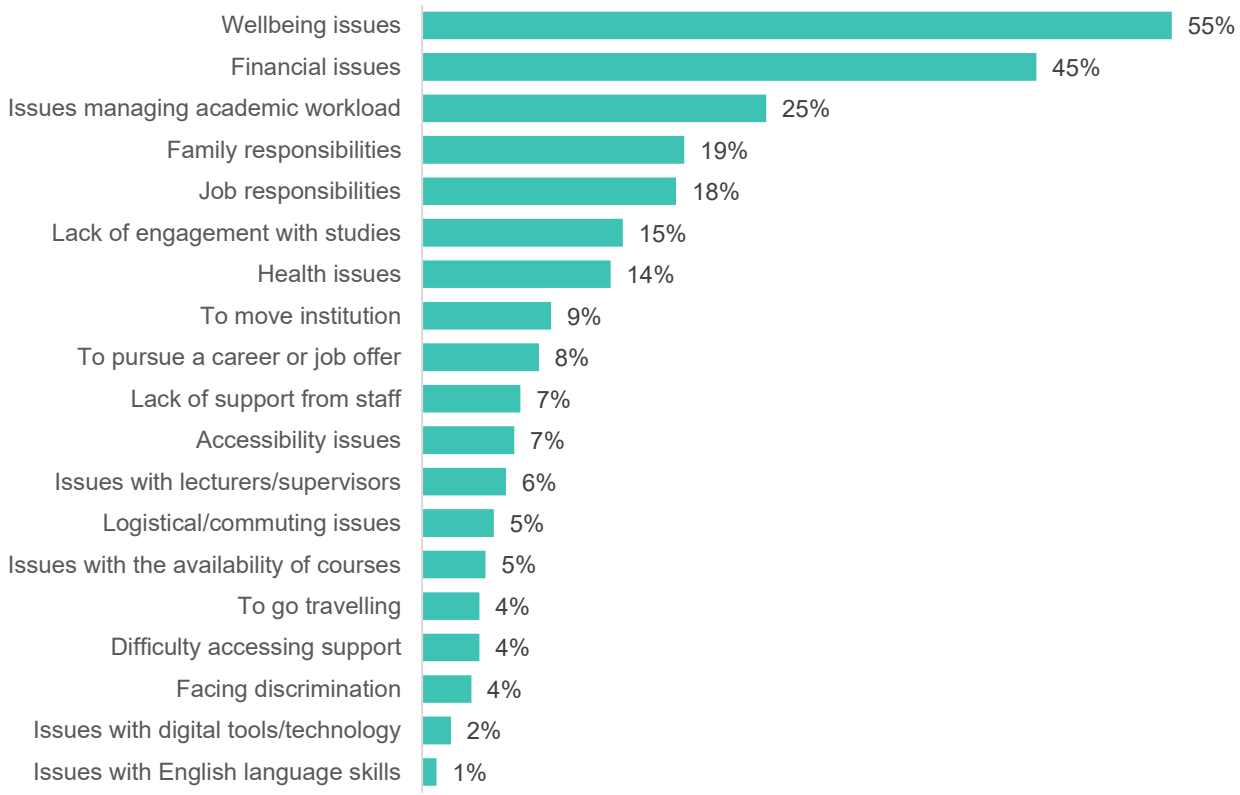
Responsibilities and pressures outside university can affect the time, resources and attention students have available for their studies. We asked how often family, financial and employment responsibilities had been obstacles to academic work or success. Students were also asked whether they had seriously considered leaving the University or their studies during the academic year and, if so, what factors had contributed to this.

During this academic year, how often have each of the following been obstacles to your academic work or success…



2,552 students were asked whether they had seriously considered leaving the university or their studies this academic year. 26% responded that they had.

Reasons for considering leaving (n=671).



Respondents could select more than one reason, so percentages sum to more than 100%.

Financial issues, employment and family responsibilities were common obstacles to students' academic work or success. Almost one-third said competing job responsibilities had been an obstacle often or always, while 29% said the same about financial issues and 21% about competing family responsibilities. When students who experienced these issues sometimes are included, around seven in ten reported financial issues as at least an occasional obstacle, while approximately two-thirds said the same about employment and family responsibilities.

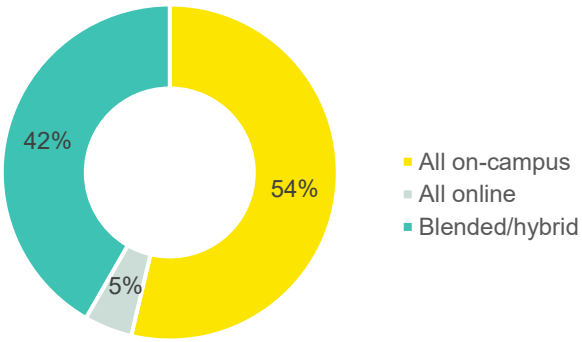
Twenty-six percent of the 2,552 students asked said they had seriously considered leaving the University or their studies during the academic year. Among the 671 students who gave reasons, wellbeing was the most frequently selected factor, identified by 55%, followed by financial issues at 45%. One-quarter identified difficulties managing their academic workload, while around one in five selected family responsibilities or job responsibilities.

Other students identified factors connected more directly with their university experience, including lack of engagement with their studies, lack of support from staff, accessibility issues, experiences with lecturers or supervisors, difficulty accessing support, course availability and digital tools. The range of reasons selected shows that decisions about continuing study need to be understood across personal, financial, academic and institutional dimensions.

Online and flexible learning

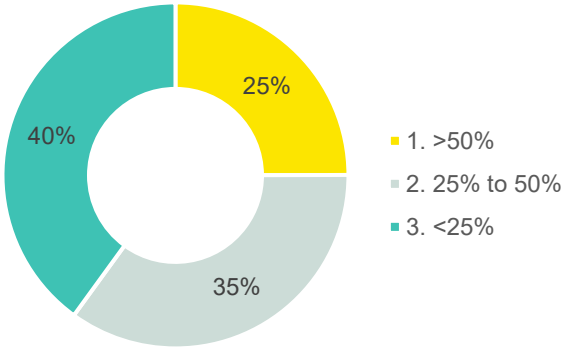
Online and flexible learning can provide students with options for engaging with their studies alongside employment, whānau, health and other commitments. We asked taught students how they had engaged with their courses during the year, how much online participation formed part of blended or hybrid study, and whether they wanted greater access to online learning or a fully online qualification.

Which of the below best describes how you have engaged with your taught courses this year? (n=2831)

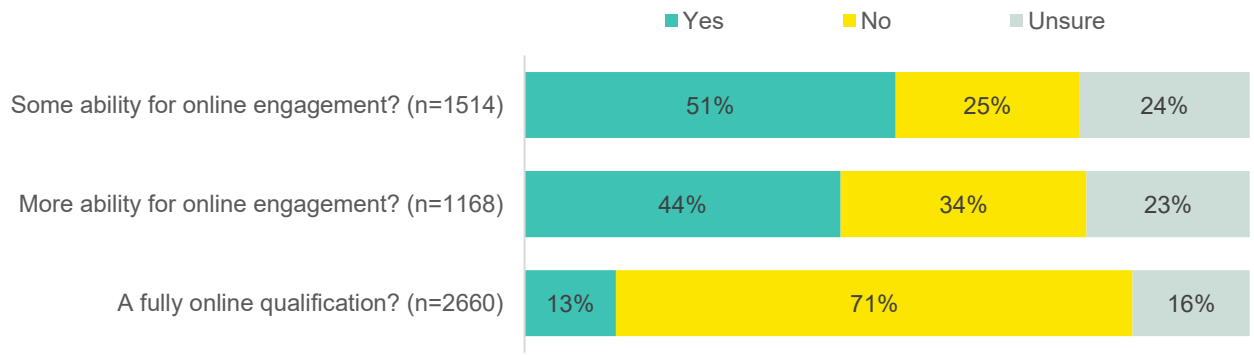


The 42% of students who reported 'blended/hybrid' engagement were asked…

Approximately how much of your course engagement has been online? (n=1170)



Students learning entirely on campus (1,514 students) were asked whether they wanted some ability to engage online, while those experiencing blended or hybrid learning (1,168 students) were asked whether they wanted more online engagement. Both groups (2,660 students) were also asked whether they wanted the option of a fully online qualification.



Just over half of taught students engaged with their courses entirely on campus, while 42% experienced a blend of online and on-campus learning. Only 5% studied entirely online. Among students in blended or hybrid courses, 40% reported completing less than one-quarter of their engagement online, 35% completed between one-quarter and one-half online, and 25% completed more than half online.

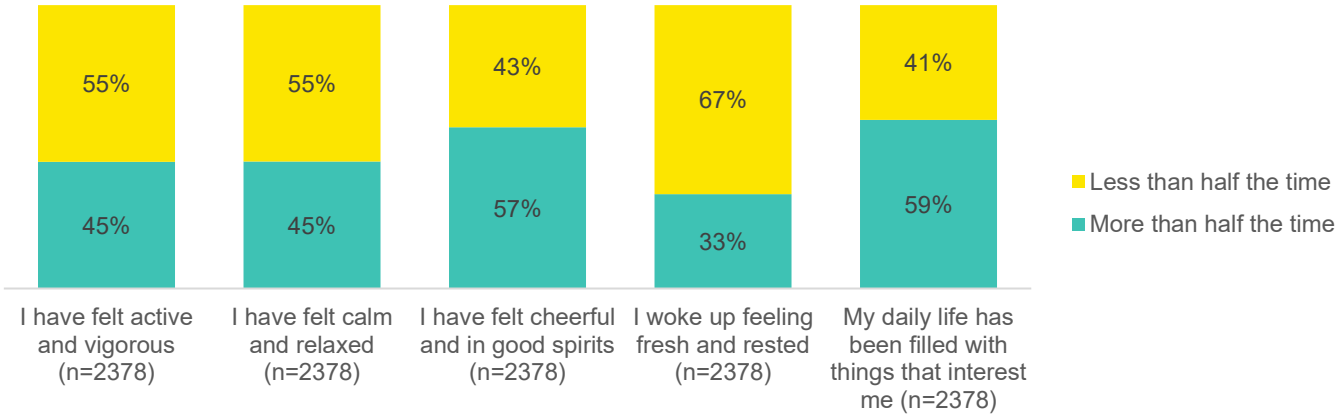
There was considerable interest in retaining or expanding some online access. Just over half of students currently learning entirely on campus wanted some ability to engage online, while 44% of those in blended or hybrid courses wanted more online engagement. Around one-quarter of both groups were unsure, indicating that preferences were not always firmly established.

Interest in flexibility did not generally translate into demand for fully online qualifications. Thirteen percent wanted a fully online qualification, compared with 71% who did not and 16% who were unsure. Taken together, the results suggest that many students value online learning as a component of their experience, while most do not want it to replace on-campus study entirely.

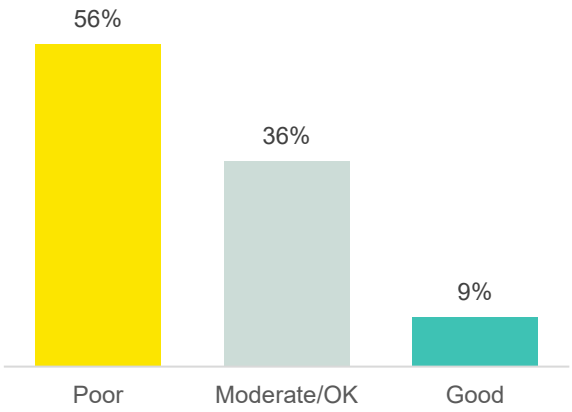
Student wellbeing and mental health

Student wellbeing was assessed using the World Health Organization Five Well-Being Index, or WHO-5. Respondents were asked how often they had experienced five positive aspects of wellbeing during the previous two weeks: feeling cheerful and in good spirits, calm and relaxed, active and vigorous, fresh and rested on waking, and interested in their daily life. Responses were combined to provide an overall wellbeing score and grouped into poor, moderate or good wellbeing categories for reporting.

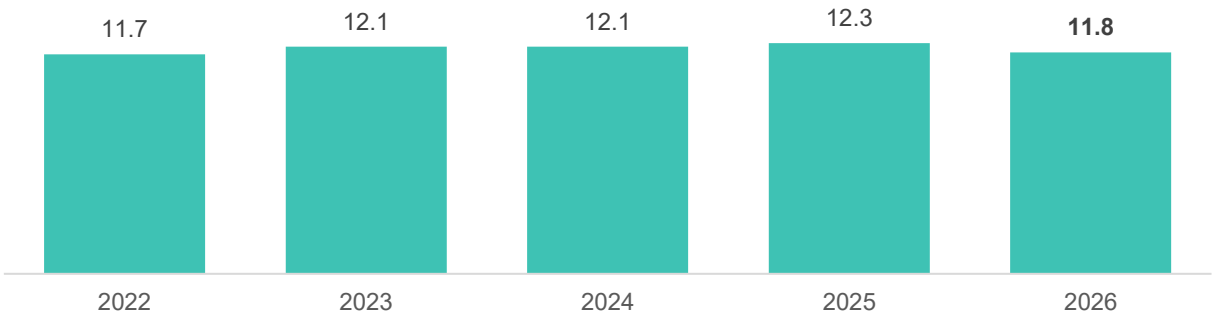
Please indicate how you have been feeling over the last two weeks…



Distribution across the WHO-5 wellbeing groupings (n=2378)



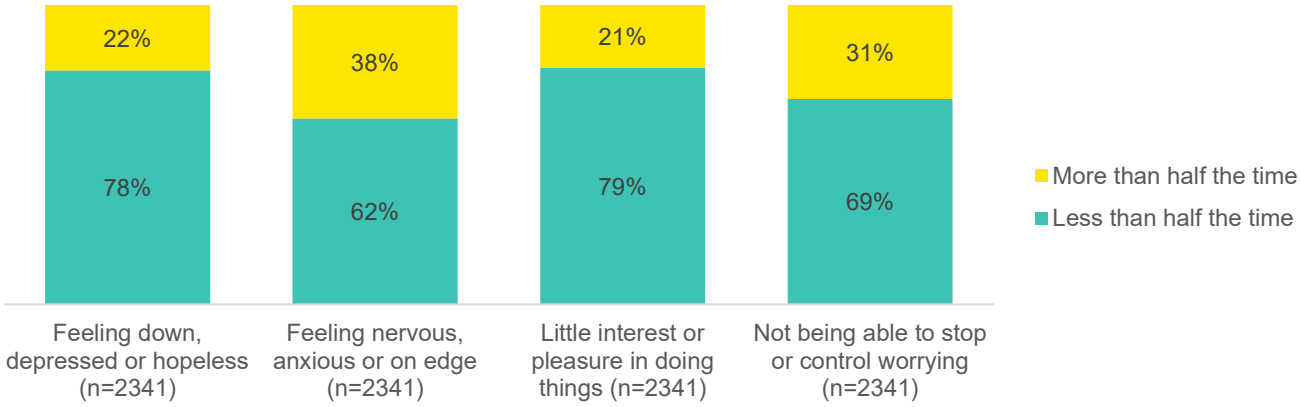
The average WHO-5 Score for 2026 was 11.8. We can compare this across the last 5 years.



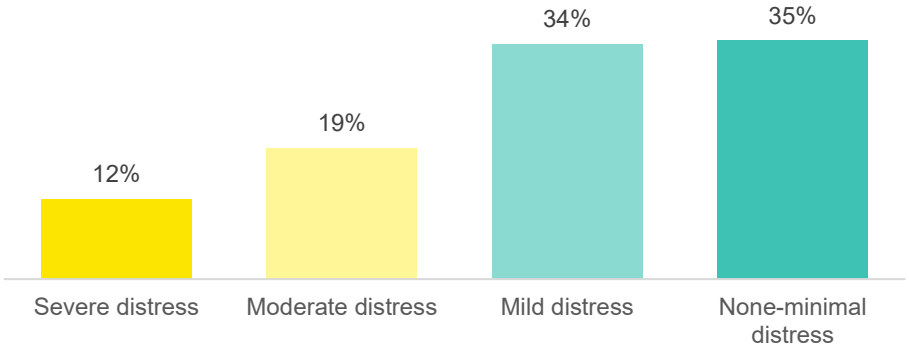
The average WHO-5 wellbeing score decreased from 12.3 in 2025 to 11.8 in 2026. Although this difference was statistically significant, the year-to-year change was modest and does not represent a large shift in overall wellbeing. Consistent with this result, the proportion of respondents in the poor wellbeing grouping increased from 50% to 56%.

Students were also asked the four questions that make up the Patient Health Questionnaire for Depression and Anxiety, or PHQ-4. This brief screening measure asks about experiences associated with anxiety and depression during the previous two weeks. Responses were used to describe overall levels of psychological distress and the proportion of respondents whose answers met the screening thresholds for possible anxiety or depression. These results indicate the prevalence of reported symptoms within the survey sample; they do not constitute clinical diagnoses.

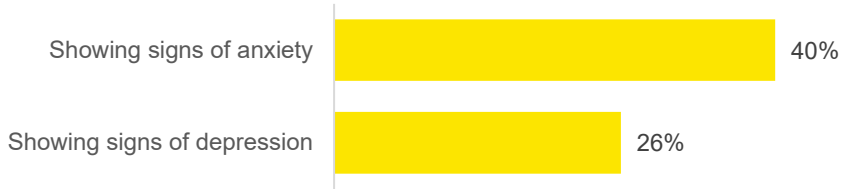
Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?



Distribution across the PHQ-4 distress groupings (n=2341)



PHQ-4 anxiety and depression screens (n=2341)



The results show that many respondents were not regularly experiencing positive aspects of wellbeing. Only one-third reported waking feeling fresh and rested more than half the time, while 45% felt active and vigorous and 45% felt calm and relaxed this often. Overall, 56% were classified in the poor WHO-5 wellbeing grouping and 9% in the good grouping. The average WHO-5 score decreased from 12.3 in 2025 to 11.8 in 2026. Although statistically significant, the change was modest and wellbeing levels remain broadly consistent with those observed in recent years.

The PHQ-4 results indicate that psychological distress was also common among respondents. Thirty-one percent were classified as experiencing moderate or severe distress, 40% met the screening threshold for possible anxiety and 26% met the screening threshold for possible depression. These screening results indicate reported symptoms within the survey sample and should not be interpreted as clinical diagnoses.

Key takeaways: Managing study and life

The results show that students are pursuing their studies alongside varied employment, whānau, health and personal circumstances. Paid work is common, a substantial minority have caring responsibilities, and many experience financial, employment or family pressures as obstacles to academic work. Online engagement provides valued flexibility for many students, while the wellbeing measures show that limited positive wellbeing and psychological distress are significant features of the context in which students are studying.

- **Paid employment is a common part of the student experience.** Almost two-thirds of respondents were working while studying, including 55% working part-time or occasionally and 9% working full-time. Most respondents were studying full-time, meaning that many were combining employment with a substantial academic workload.
- **Students are managing a range of responsibilities and circumstances outside their studies.** Nineteen percent reported caring responsibilities, while 29% identified as disabled, Deaf, neurodivergent, tāngata whaikaha Māori, tagata sa'ilimalo, or as living with a long-term condition or impairment. Students also reported a diverse range of living arrangements.
- **Financial, employment and family pressures can present recurring obstacles.** Thirty-two percent reported that competing job responsibilities were often or always an obstacle to their academic work or success, while 29% said the same about financial issues and 21% about family responsibilities.
- **A substantial minority had seriously considered leaving their studies.** Twenty-six percent of those asked had considered leaving during the academic year. Among these respondents, wellbeing and financial issues were the most frequently selected reasons, followed by difficulties managing their academic workload.
- **Students generally wanted online flexibility rather than fully online study.** Forty-two percent had experienced blended or hybrid learning. Just over half of entirely on-campus students wanted some online engagement and 44% of blended or hybrid students wanted more, but only 13% wanted a fully online qualification.
- **The wellbeing findings identify an important area of concern.** Fifty-six percent of respondents were classified in the poor WHO-5 wellbeing grouping, while 31% were classified as experiencing moderate or severe distress under the PHQ-4. Forty percent met the screening threshold for possible anxiety and 26% for possible depression. These are screening results rather than clinical diagnoses, but they show that many respondents were studying in the context of limited positive wellbeing or psychological distress.

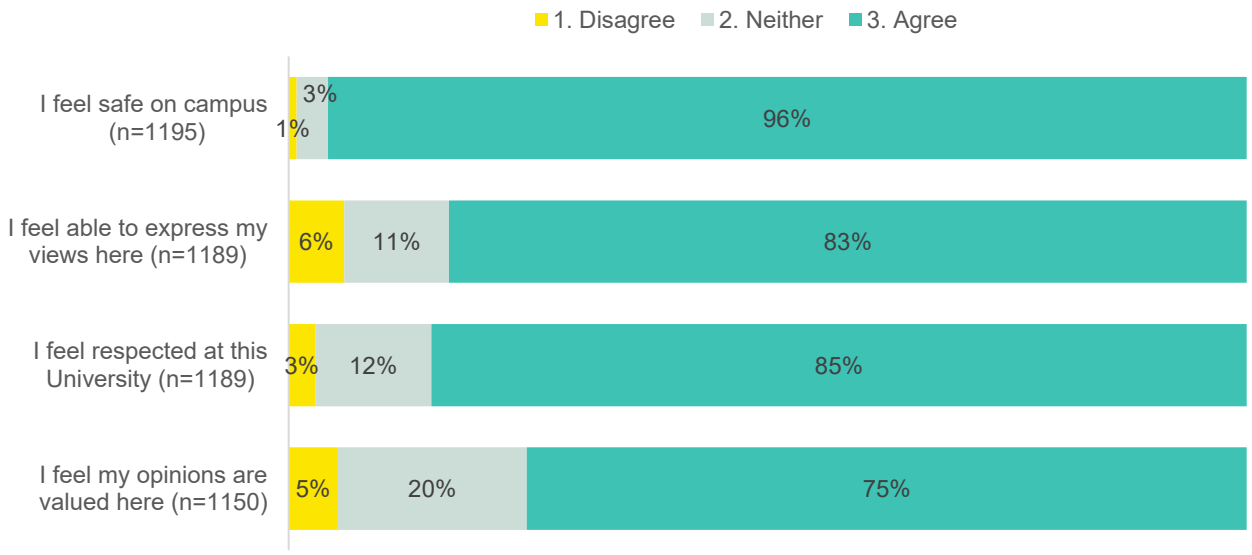
Belonging, respect and participation

A sense of belonging is shaped by whether students feel safe, respected, included and able to participate in university life. This chapter examines students' experiences of safety, respect, inclusion and freedom of expression; the extent to which they feel connected with other students and the wider university community; and their engagement with student activities and VUWSA services. Open-text comments provide further insight into how students believe safety, inclusion and community could be strengthened.

Respect, safety and inclusion

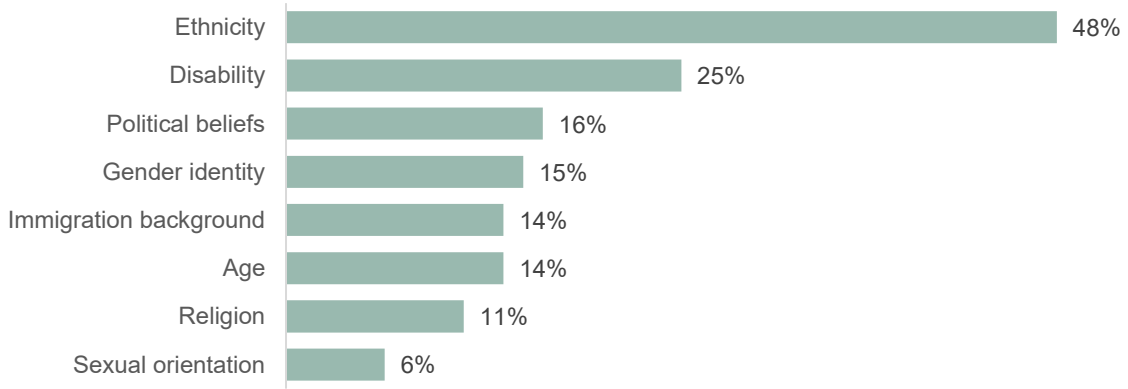
Students were asked about their feelings of safety and respect, their ability to express their views, and whether they felt that their opinions were valued. We also asked about experiences of discrimination or unfair treatment, the diversity of respondents, and students' perceptions of how effectively the University provides a safe and inclusive environment and responds to student concerns.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following…



7% of respondents reported being treated unfairly or being discriminated against. Ethnicity was the most frequently selected basis for the reported unfair treatment or discrimination.

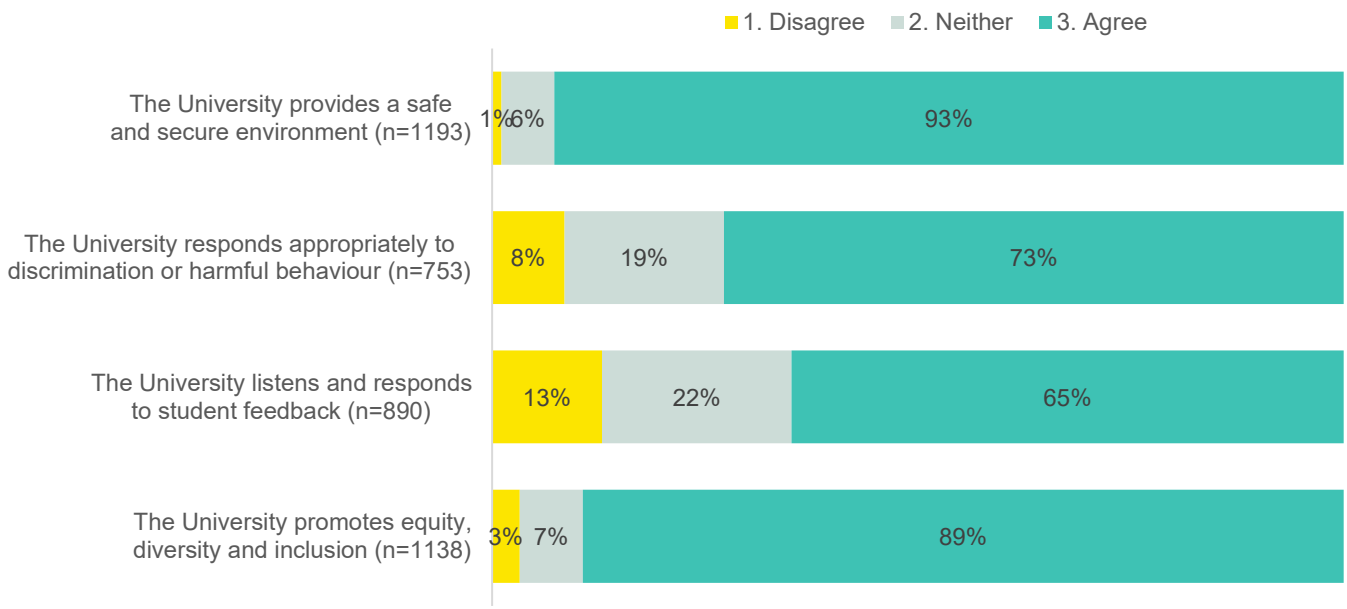
What do you think the discrimination or unfair treatment was related to? (n=81)



Respondents could select more than one factor, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Results are based on the 81 respondents who provided information about what the unfair treatment or discrimination related to and should be interpreted with caution.

The survey included respondents from a wide range of backgrounds and identities. A full profile is provided in ‘About our respondents’ section. This diversity is important context for interpreting the findings on safety, respect, inclusion, community and participation, as these aspects of university life may be experienced differently by different groups of students.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following…



Most respondents reported positive experiences of safety and respect. Ninety-six percent agreed that they felt safe on campus, while 85% felt respected at the University and 83% felt able to express their views. Feeling that their opinions were valued was less consistently experienced, although three-quarters still agreed with this statement.

Seven percent reported that they had experienced unfair treatment or discrimination. Among the 81 respondents who identified what the experience related to, ethnicity was the most frequently selected factor, at 48%. Disability was selected by 25%, political beliefs by 16%, gender identity by 15%, and immigration background and age by 14% each. Respondents could identify more than one factor, so these percentages should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive.

Students were also generally positive about the wider University environment. Ninety-three percent agreed that the University provides a safe and secure environment and 89% agreed that it promotes equity, diversity and inclusion. Results were less positive for the University’s responsiveness: 73% agreed that it responds appropriately to discrimination or harmful behaviour, while 65% agreed that it listens and responds to student feedback.

Taken together, the results indicate that most respondents experienced the University as safe, respectful and inclusive. However, feeling personally valued and having confidence that the University listens and responds were less consistently positive than perceptions of physical safety and the University’s broader commitment to inclusion. The experiences reported by the minority who encountered discrimination or unfair treatment also remain important, particularly because the overall percentages can conceal experiences concentrated within particular groups.

Student voice: Improving safety, inclusion, respect and freedom of expression

Students provided 480 comments about what could improve safety, inclusion, respect and people's ability to express themselves at the University. The comments were coded into 14 themes. A comment could be assigned to more than one theme but was counted no more than once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
Inclusive representation and support for diverse groups	Students wanted people from different cultural, ethnic, gender, sexuality and international backgrounds to be visible, welcomed and appropriately supported.	135 / 28.1%
Respectful culture, empathy and everyday behaviour	Students emphasised listening, kindness, consideration and respect for different experiences and perspectives in everyday interactions.	105 / 21.9%
Physical safety, security and campus environment	Students identified practical safety issues, including security visibility, lighting, building access and moving around campuses after dark.	92 / 19.2%
Community connection, events and participation	Students wanted more opportunities to meet others, participate in clubs and events, share cultures and build relationships across different groups.	91 / 19.0%
Freedom of expression and constructive dialogue	Students wanted to express ideas, opinions and beliefs without intimidation, while maintaining respect and enabling constructive disagreement.	53 / 11.0%
Education, training and awareness	Students proposed education and training to strengthen understanding of respectful behaviour, inclusion, culture, disability and relevant responsibilities.	50 / 10.4%

What this means

Students described inclusion as something that is experienced through everyday interactions as much as through formal policies or initiatives. While many comments focused on representation and support for diverse communities, students also emphasised the importance of respectful behaviour, opportunities to build understanding across differences, and practical measures that contribute to a safe environment. Notably, freedom of expression and inclusion were generally presented as complementary goals rather than competing priorities. Students wanted to be able to share different perspectives while maintaining respect, empathy and constructive dialogue. Overall, the findings suggest that creating an inclusive university culture depends on both visible institutional commitment and the quality of students' day-to-day experiences.

In students' words

"Representation within the university. While we have some, more would be good as this would allow diverse people to feel included, heard and seen."

"Creating more opportunities for students from different cultural backgrounds to share their experiences and traditions could help build greater understanding."

"At night some areas of the campus can get quite dark… Having more lighting at night would increase safety."

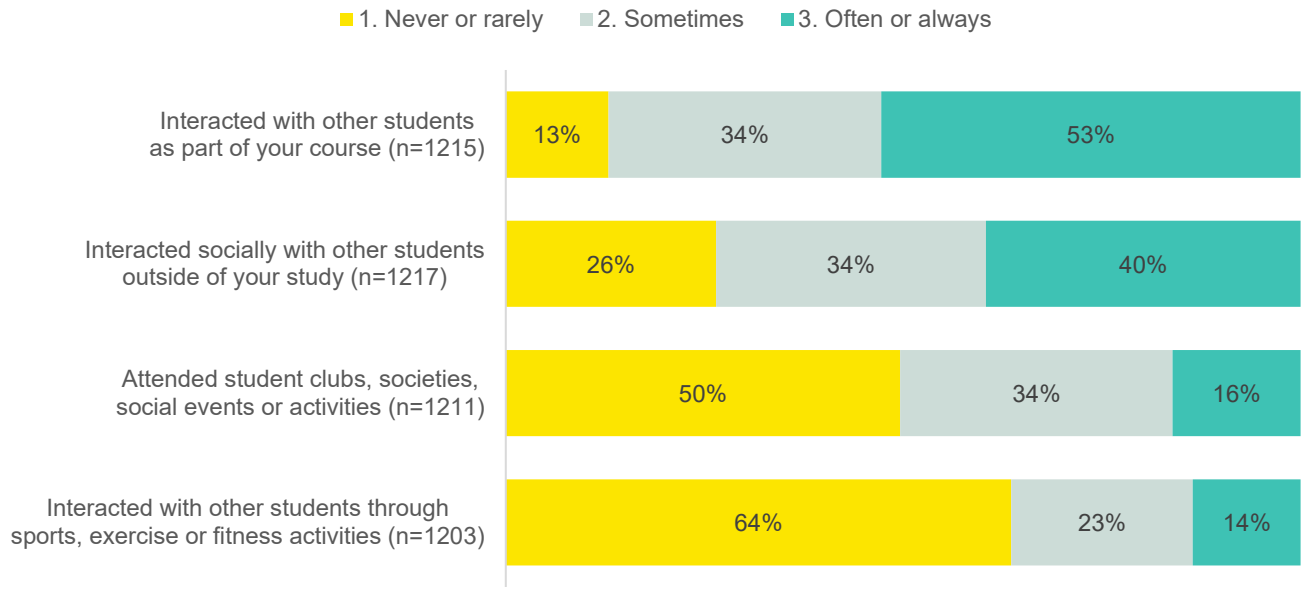
"More opportunities for postgrad students to connect with each other outside and within their own department."

"Lecturers and tutors being explicitly open and encouraging of hearing different viewpoints around a topic, without judgement."

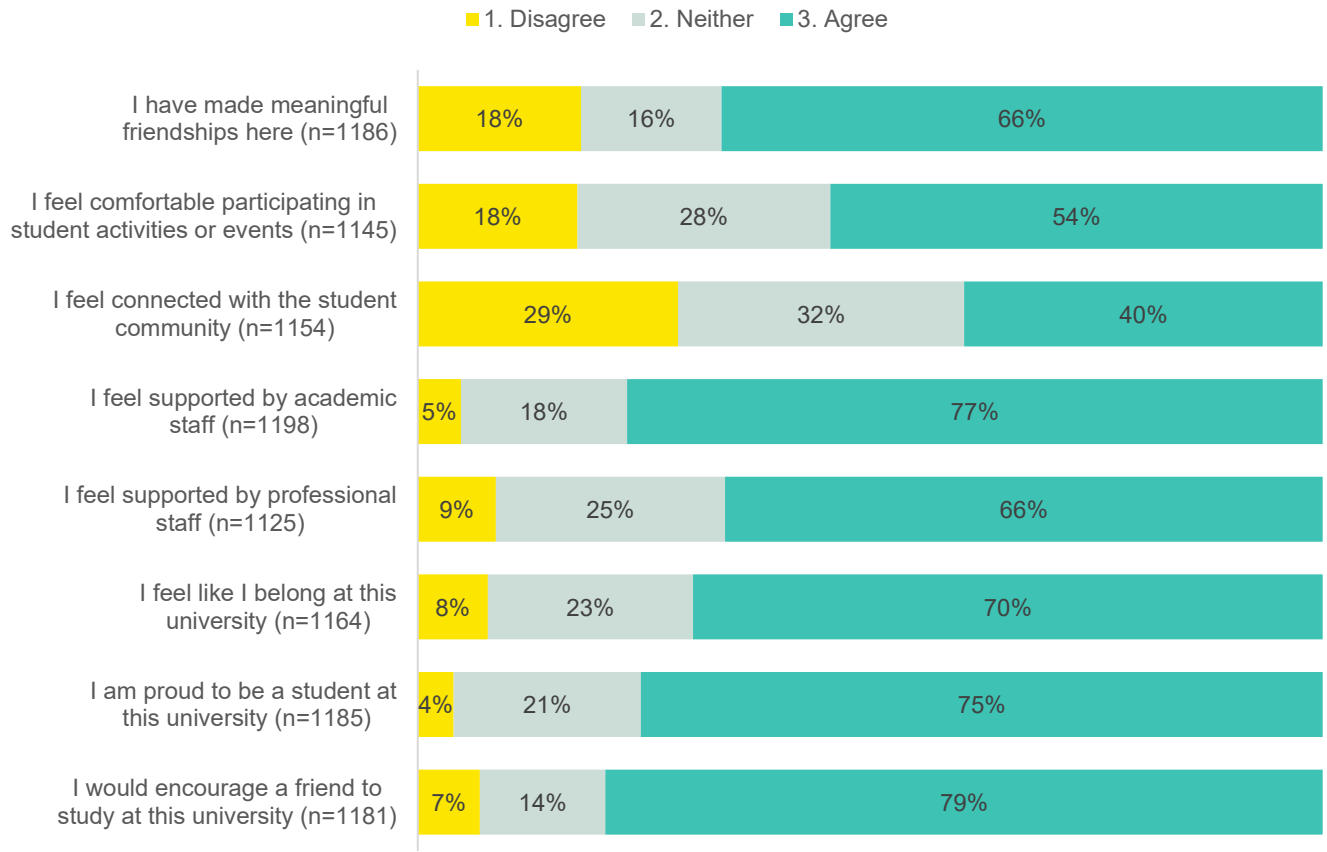
Community and connection

Connection with other students can develop through classes, friendships, clubs, events, sport and informal participation in university life. We asked students how often they had interacted with others through different activities, whether they had formed meaningful relationships, and how strongly they felt supported, connected and part of the University community.

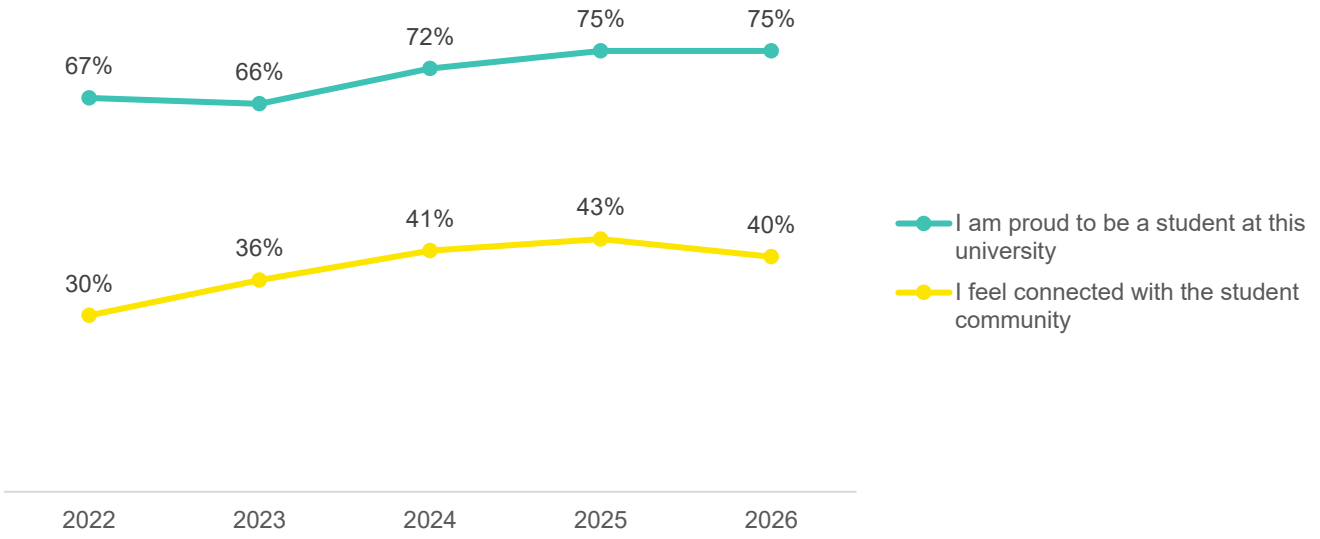
Over the past 12 months, how often have you…



Thinking about the last 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following…



The feeling of pride of being a student here, and the feeling of being connected to the student community can be tracked over time.



Students were most likely to interact with others through their courses. Just over half reported interacting with other students as part of their course often or always, while 40% interacted socially with other students outside their studies this frequently. Participation through organised extracurricular activities was less common: 16% often or always attended clubs, societies, social events or activities, and 14% frequently interacted with other students through sport, exercise or fitness. Around half rarely or never attended clubs or student activities, while almost two-thirds rarely or never connected with other students through sport or fitness.

Students generally reported positive feelings about staff support and their relationship with the University. Seventy-seven percent felt supported by academic staff, 70% felt that they belonged at the University, 75% were proud to be a student here, and 79% would encourage a friend to study here. Two-thirds reported having made meaningful friendships and a similar proportion felt supported by professional staff.

Feeling connected with the wider student community was the least positive result. Forty percent agreed that they felt connected, while 29% disagreed and 32% selected neither. Just over half felt comfortable participating in student activities or events. These results suggest that positive feelings towards the University and individual experiences of friendship or support do not always translate into feeling connected with the student community as a whole.

Pride in being a student at the University remained at 75%, unchanged from 2025 and higher than the 67% reported in 2022. Student-community connection was 40% in 2026, compared with 43% in 2025 and 30% in 2022. The three percentage point decrease from 2025 was not statistically significant.

Students can feel proud of and positive towards the University without necessarily feeling connected to its student community.

Student voice: Enhancing community and connection

Students provided 581 comments about how community and connection could be enhanced across the University. The comments were coded into 14 themes. A comment could be assigned to more than one theme but was counted no more than once within each theme. Percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
More social events and shared activities	Students wanted regular, varied and low-pressure opportunities to connect through social events, food, games, sport, cultural activities and other shared experiences.	272 / 46.8%
Peer connection within courses and classes	Students wanted courses, tutorials and academic cohorts to provide more opportunities to meet classmates, discuss ideas, study together and build relationships.	121 / 20.8%
Clubs, societies and student-led communities	Students saw clubs, societies, sports teams and interest-based groups as important pathways to sustained connection and wanted them to be easier to discover, join and maintain.	115 / 19.8%
Connection across campuses, faculties and disciplines	Students wanted activities and communication to extend more evenly across campuses and create opportunities for people from different academic areas to interact.	106 / 18.2%
Welcoming, inclusive and cross-cultural connection	Students wanted activities that bring together people from different cultures, nationalities, identities and backgrounds in genuinely welcoming environments.	88 / 15.1%
Improved promotion and a central source of information	Students wanted clearer, earlier and more coordinated information about events, clubs and other opportunities through a reliable central source.	78 / 13.4%

What this means

The comments help explain one of the report's most significant findings: many students feel positive about the University without necessarily feeling strongly connected to the wider student community. Students consistently described connection as something that develops through repeated opportunities to interact, rather than through individual events alone. They wanted multiple pathways into community, including social activities, clubs, academic cohorts, informal spaces and opportunities tailored to different campuses and student circumstances. The findings suggest that strengthening connection is less about creating a single flagship initiative and more about building an environment where opportunities to meet, participate and belong are visible, accessible and sustained throughout the student journey.

In students' words

"More social events and activities where students from different courses can meet and connect would be helpful."

"Just more icebreakers in class maybe? I don't really meet with people that are within my lecture, and see them more as faces."

"Perhaps having more societies for every or most degrees… would help enhance a sense of community."

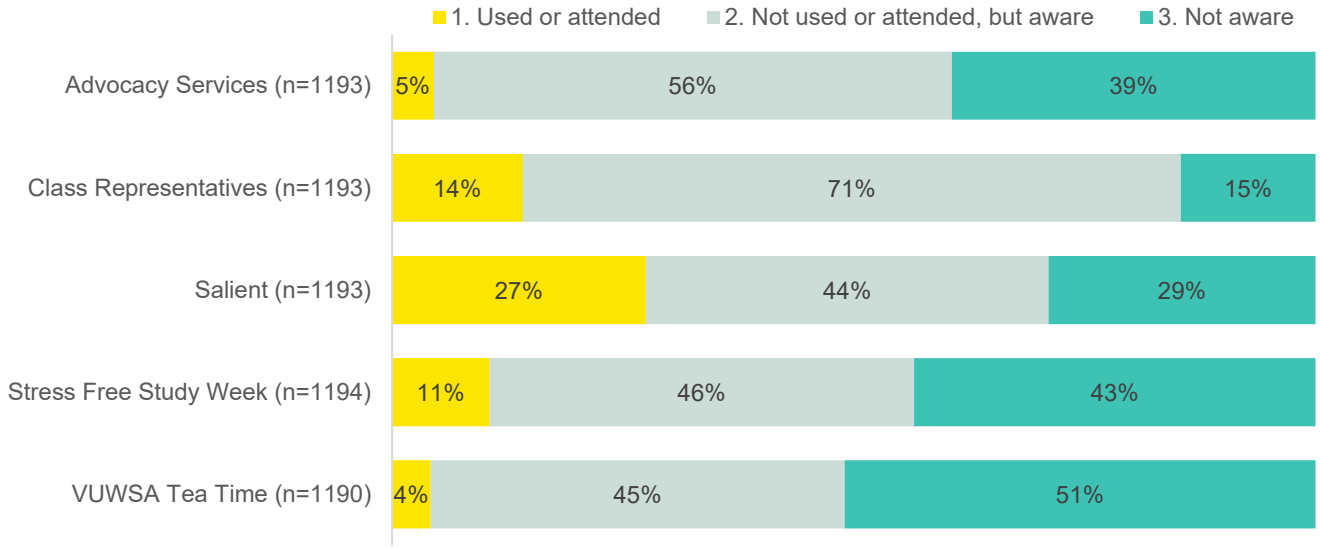
"Students from the other two campuses are a little bit reluctant. It is better if students from all three campuses can join the events equally."

"I find it hard to know when events are on… it's just hard to know when and where events actually are."

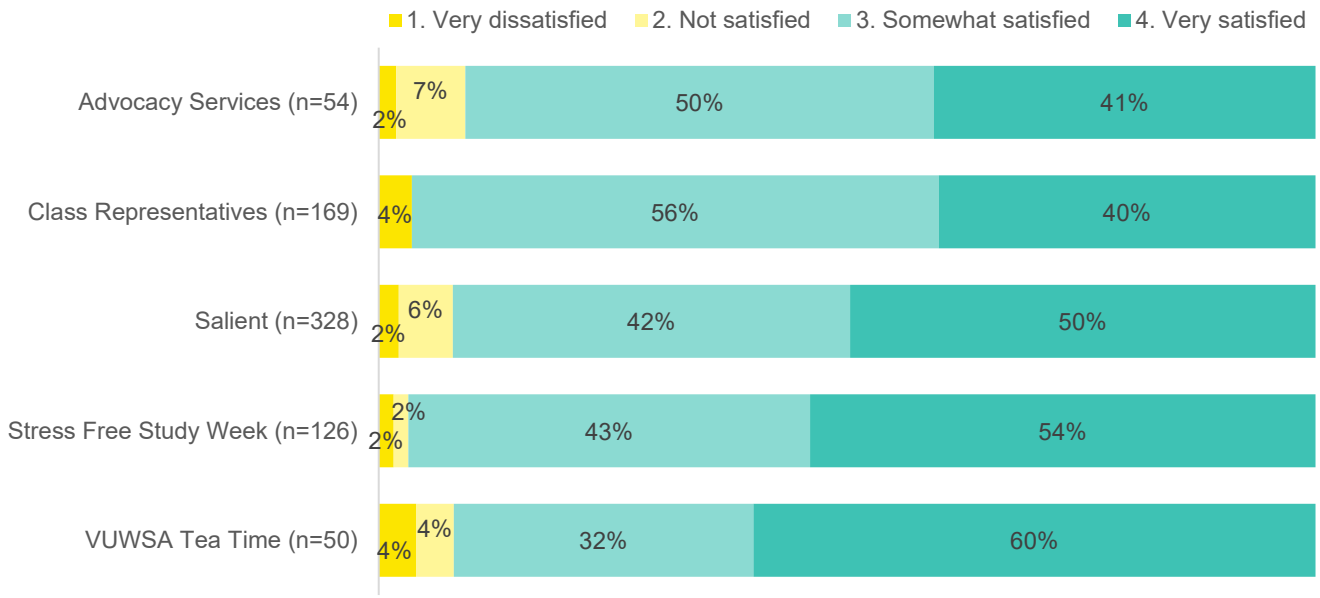
VUWSA

VUWSA provides representation, services, information and activities for students. We asked respondents whether they were aware of or had used selected VUWSA services and events during the previous 12 months. Those who had used or attended each service or event were then asked about their satisfaction.

Which VUWSA services or events have you used or attended, over the past 12 months?



How satisfied have you been with the VUWSA services or events you reported using or attending, over the past 12 months?



Satisfaction results include only respondents who reported using or attending each service or event. Some results are based on small numbers and should be interpreted with caution.

Awareness and use varied considerably across the selected VUWSA services and activities. Salient had the highest reported use, with 27% having used or engaged with it during the previous 12 months, followed by class representatives at 14% and Stress Free Study Week at 11%. Advocacy Services and VUWSA Tea Time were each used or attended by around 4% to 5% of respondents.

Class representatives had the highest overall awareness, with 85% having either used them or knowing about them. Seventy-one percent were aware of or had engaged with Salient, while 61% were aware of Advocacy Services and 57% of Stress Free Study Week. VUWSA Tea Time had the lowest awareness, with 51% reporting that they had not heard of it.

Satisfaction among users was generally high. Between 91% and 97% of those who had used or attended each service or event were somewhat or very satisfied. Very satisfied ratings were highest for VUWSA Tea Time at 60% and Stress Free Study Week at 54%, although these results are based on relatively small numbers of users.

The results indicate a distinction between reach and experience. Use of several services and events was limited, but respondents who had engaged with them were generally satisfied. Awareness, relevance and access may therefore warrant consideration alongside service quality, although the survey does not establish why students did or did not participate.

Key takeaways: Belonging, respect and participation

Overall, most respondents experienced the University as safe and respectful and expressed positive feelings towards being a student here. However, the results also show a distinction between feeling positive about the University and feeling connected to its wider student community. Student comments emphasised that inclusion and belonging are shaped through everyday interactions, representation, accessible opportunities to participate, the physical environment, and confidence that concerns and feedback will be addressed.

- **Most respondents felt safe, respected and able to express their views.** Ninety-six percent felt safe on campus, 85% felt respected and 83% felt able to express their views. Feeling that their opinions were valued was less consistently experienced, at 75%.
- **Perceptions of the University's safety and inclusion were positive, but responsiveness was less highly rated.** Ninety-three percent agreed that the University provides a safe and secure environment and 89% agreed that it promotes equity, diversity and inclusion. Sixty-five percent agreed that the University listens and responds to student feedback.
- **A minority reported discrimination or unfair treatment.** Seven percent reported this experience. Among those who identified what it related to, ethnicity was the most frequently selected factor, followed by disability. These results are based on a comparatively small number of respondents and should be interpreted carefully.
- **Pride and willingness to recommend the University were stronger than connection with the student community.** Three-quarters were proud to be students at the University and 79% would encourage a friend to study here, but only 40% felt connected with the student community.
- **Course-based interaction was the most common form of student connection.** Fifty-three percent frequently interacted with other students through their courses, compared with 40% who frequently interacted socially outside study. Frequent participation in clubs, events, sport or fitness was less common.
- **Students wanted multiple, accessible ways to build connection.** Open-text comments prioritised social activities, stronger peer connection within courses, clubs and societies, cross-campus opportunities, inclusive activities and clearer promotion. Students also emphasised affordability, timing, informal spaces and sustained opportunities beyond orientation.
- **Experience of VUWSA services was generally positive among users but reach varied.** Use was highest for Salient and class representatives, while several other services and events had relatively low participation or awareness. More than nine in ten users of each listed service or event were at least somewhat satisfied, although some results were based on small user groups.

Tools, services and the campus environment

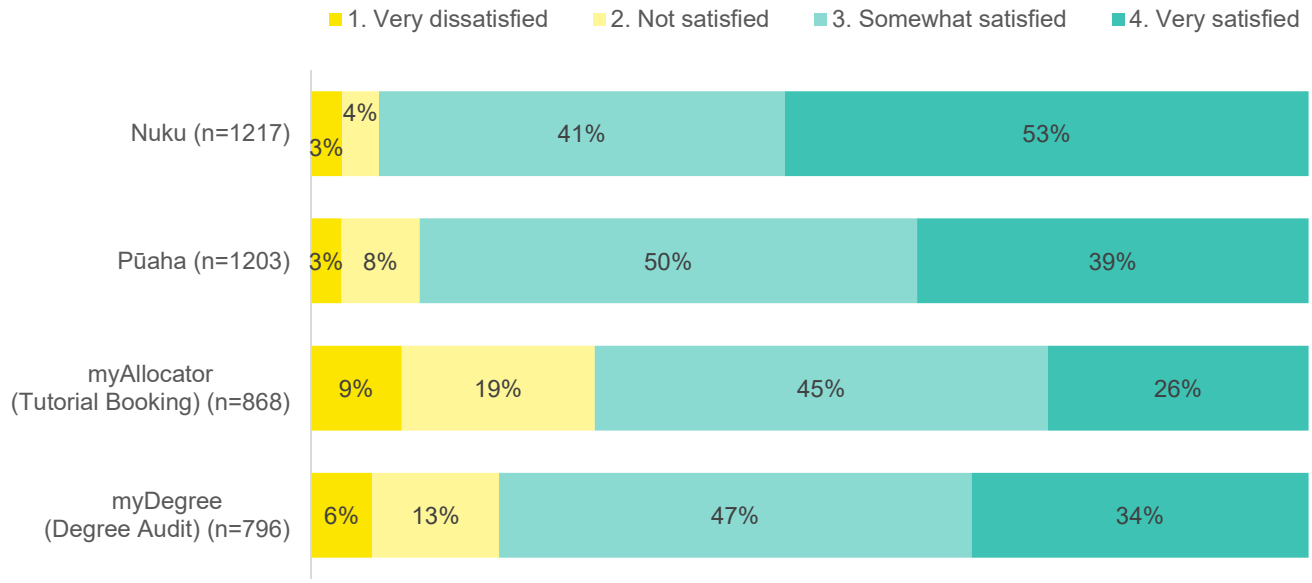
The University provides a wide range of digital tools, services, spaces and facilities that support students' learning, wellbeing and day-to-day experience. This chapter examines how students use these resources, how they rate their experiences, and where they see opportunities for improvement. The findings cover digital platforms, student support services, University services, spaces and facilities, and sustainability and travel.

Digital tools and AI

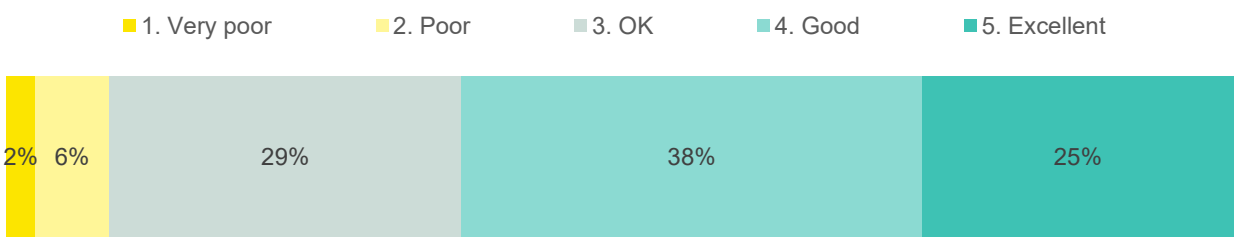
Digital tools play an important role in students' learning experience, helping them access course materials, manage administrative requirements, communicate with staff and peers, and complete academic work. We asked students about their experiences with key University platforms, their interactions with Digital Solutions Support Services, and their use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in learning and study.

Nuku is widely used by students, 94% of taught students reported using Nuku to access course content 'Often or always'. It also had a 94% satisfaction rating with 94% of students using Nuku responding that they were somewhat or very satisfied with it.

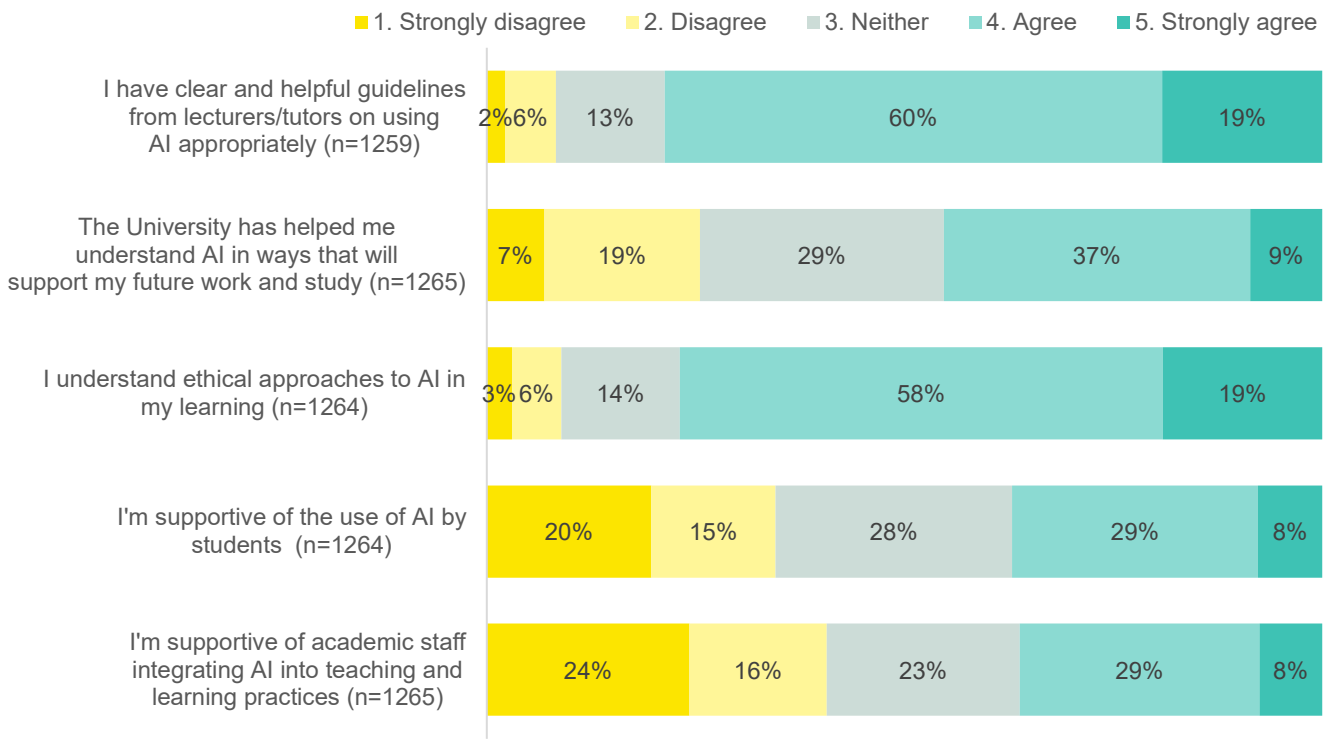
Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with these digital tools/platforms/apps…



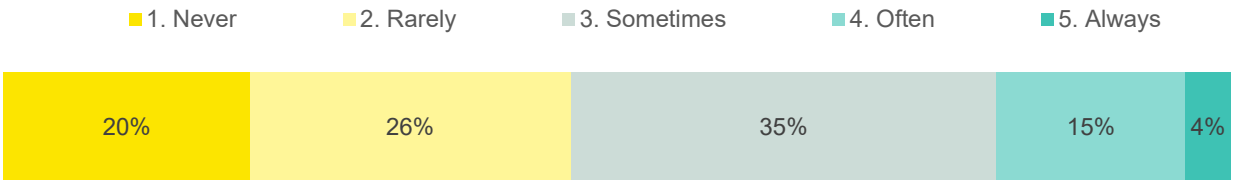
Thinking about the last 12 months, how would you rate your experience with the Digital Solutions Support Service? (n=610)



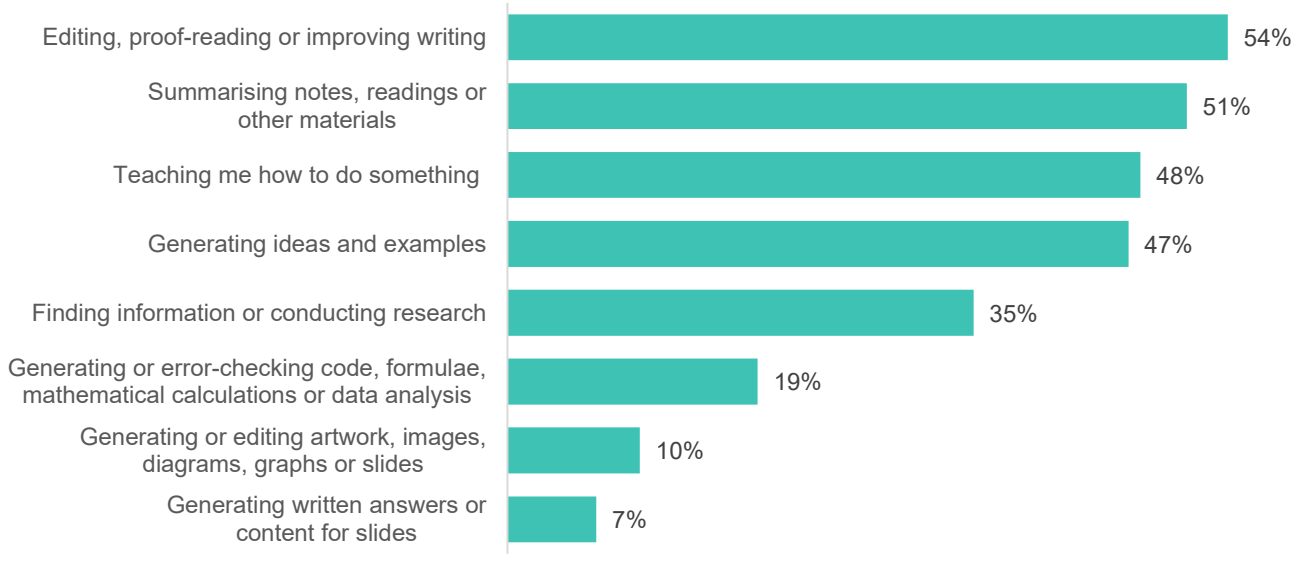
Regarding Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) use, to what extent do you agree/disagree with the following…



How often have you used AI to support you in your coursework or studies so far this academic year? (n=1247)



What do you use AI for? (n=1002)



Overall satisfaction with the University's core digital tools was positive. Nuku received the strongest ratings, with 94% of taught students reporting that they used it often or always to access course content and more than nine in ten users reporting at least a somewhat satisfactory experience. Satisfaction was also generally positive for Pūaha, myAllocator and myDegree, although respondents were more likely to report neutral or mixed experiences for the latter two systems.

Students who had used the Digital Solutions Support Service generally reported positive experiences, with 63% rating the service as good or excellent and only 8% rating it poor or very poor.

AI use was widespread. Half of respondents reported using AI sometimes, often or always in support of their studies, and only one in five reported never using it. The most common uses were editing and improving writing, summarising material, learning how to do something, generating ideas and conducting research. Much less common were generating artwork, code or complete written answers.

Students were generally supportive of AI in learning and teaching. Around six in ten supported student use of AI and the integration of AI into teaching and learning. However, respondents were less confident that the University had helped them understand AI in ways that would support their future study and employment, and many remained uncertain about appropriate use. The results suggest that students are engaging with AI as a normal part of study, while continuing to seek clear guidance and support regarding effective and ethical use.

Student voice: Improving the digital learning environment

Students provided 601 comments about how the University's digital learning environment could be improved. The comments were coded into 14 themes. Individual comments could be assigned to more than one theme but were counted no more than once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
Nuku usability and consistent course design	Students wanted Nuku course pages to be easier to use and organised more consistently, with materials, assessments and weekly content placed in predictable locations.	95 / 15.8%
Findability, navigation and clear organisation	Students wanted simpler navigation, clearer menus and fewer steps when locating learning materials, instructions and other important information across the digital environment.	92 / 15.3%
Digital skills, training and user support	Students wanted clearer guidance, onboarding and responsive support, as well as greater confidence and consistency among staff using digital tools.	86 / 14.3%
Integrated, modern and streamlined systems	Students wanted fewer fragmented or outdated platforms, better connections between systems and a clearer central point for accessing core digital services.	83 / 13.8%
Communication, notifications and calendar coordination	Students wanted accurate and coordinated notifications, due dates, announcements, timetable changes and calendar information across courses and systems.	76 / 12.6%
Connectivity, reliability and performance	Students wanted dependable Wi-Fi and digital services that load quickly, remain available and function consistently, particularly for time-sensitive academic tasks.	75 / 12.5%

What this means

Students' comments indicate that their experience of digital learning is shaped less by individual platforms and more by how well the overall environment works together. Across the themes, students repeatedly described challenges locating information, navigating multiple systems and understanding where key resources were stored. While some feedback focused on specific tools, the underlying expectation was for a digital environment that feels coherent, consistent and easy to use. The findings suggest that improvements in navigation, integration, communication and digital capability may have a greater impact on the student experience than enhancements to any individual platform. More broadly, students appear to be seeking a digital environment that supports learning in a predictable and intuitive way.

In students' words

"More consistency between how lecturers and courses use and structure Nuku."

"There are far too many different websites with no clear central hub."

"I believe having an introduction to digital learning resources at the beginning of each trimester would be beneficial."

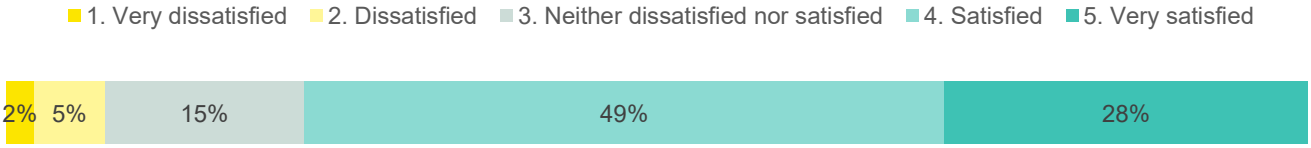
"Better notifications for deadlines and announcements. Faster and more reliable university websites and apps."

"The campus Wi-Fi is not good. As a student who can't afford a big mobile data package, it's quite frustrating sometimes."

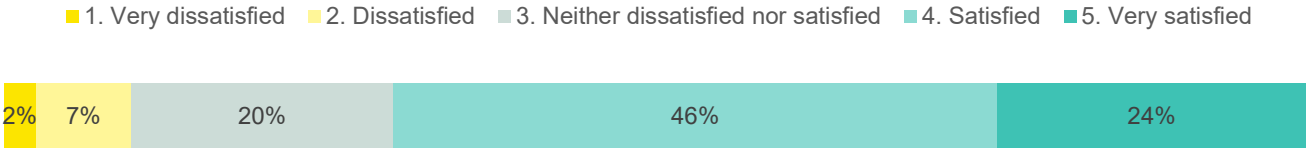
Student support services

Student Support Services assist students with wellbeing, health, financial hardship, disability support, learning support, cultural support, careers, conflict resolution and other aspects of student life. Students were asked about their awareness and use of these services, their overall experience of services they had accessed, and how they viewed the quality of information and communications provided.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the Student Support Services you've engaged with over the past 12 months? (n=1997)

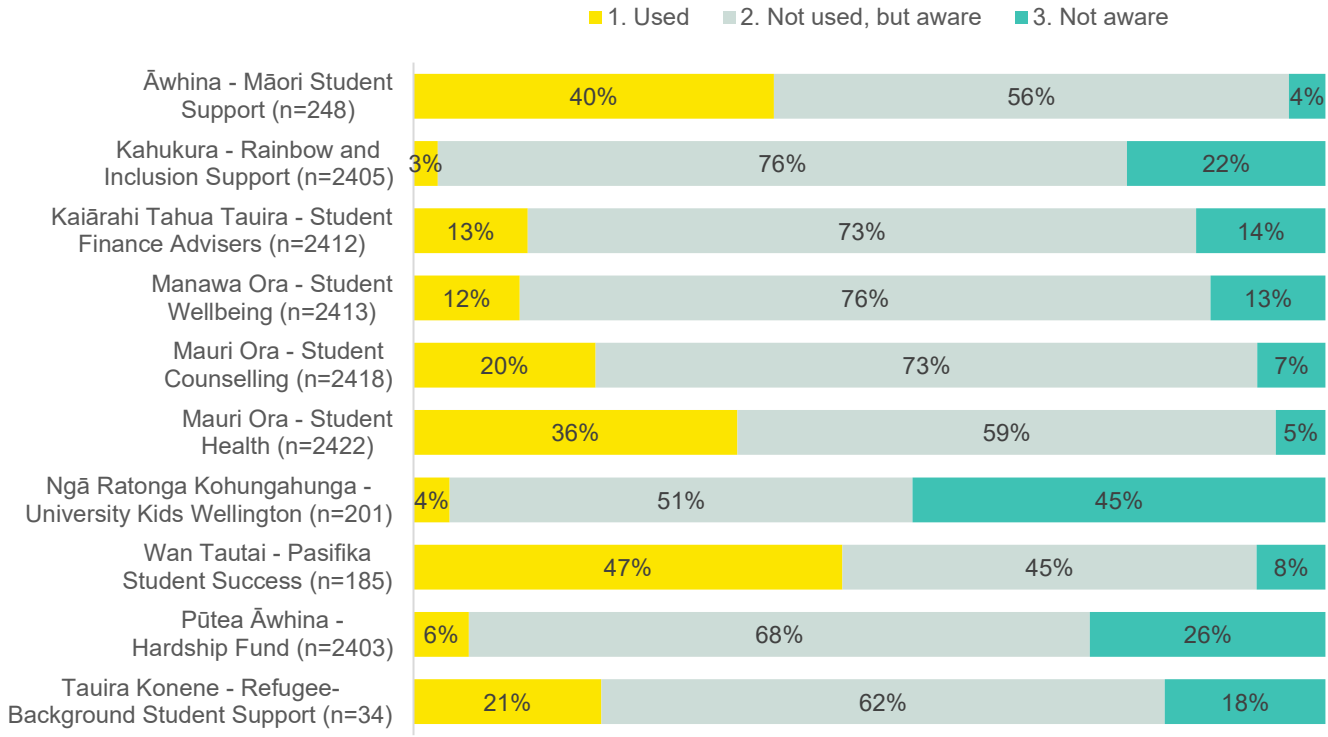


How satisfied are you with the quality of information/communications you've received about Student Support Services? (n=2446)

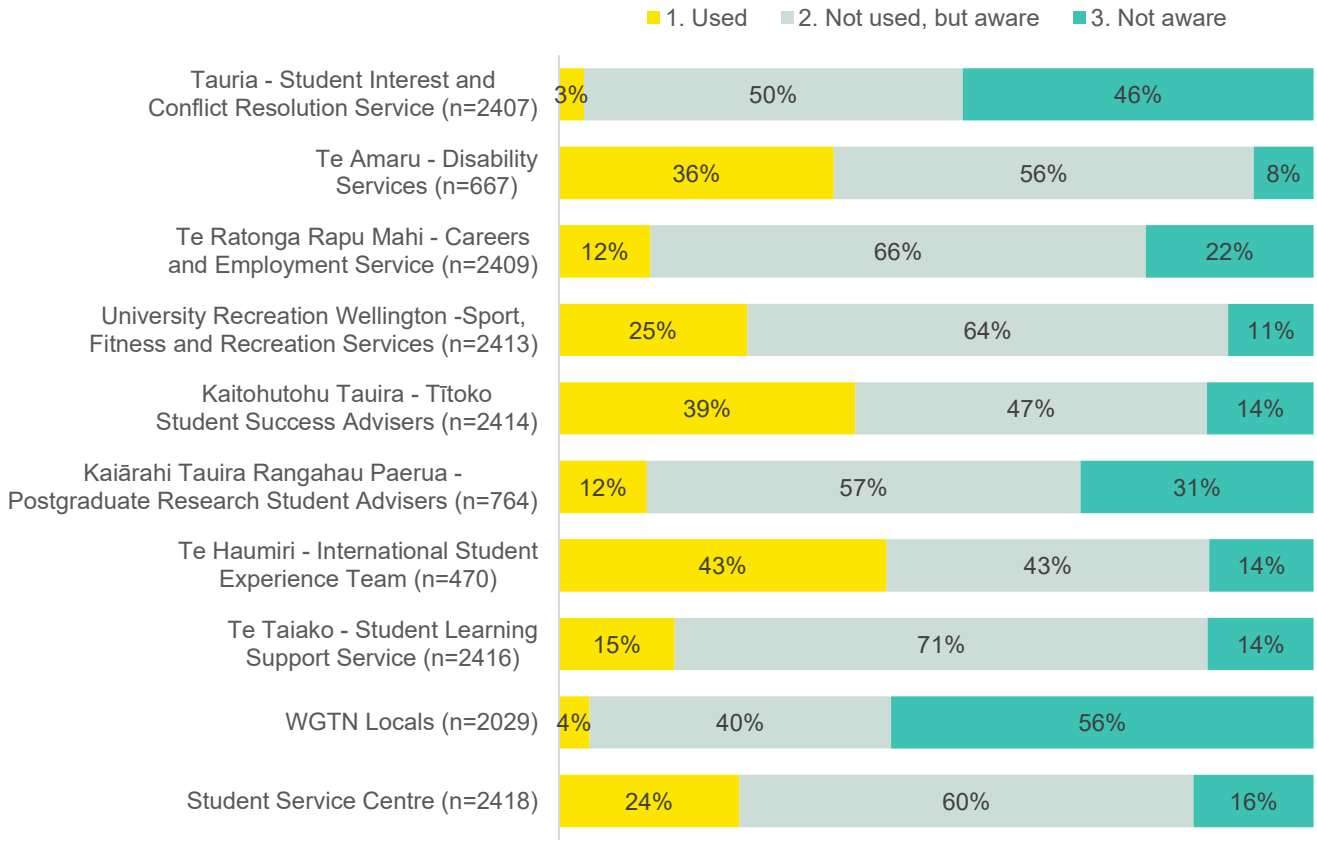


Use and awareness of student support services

Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following Student Support Services have you used?



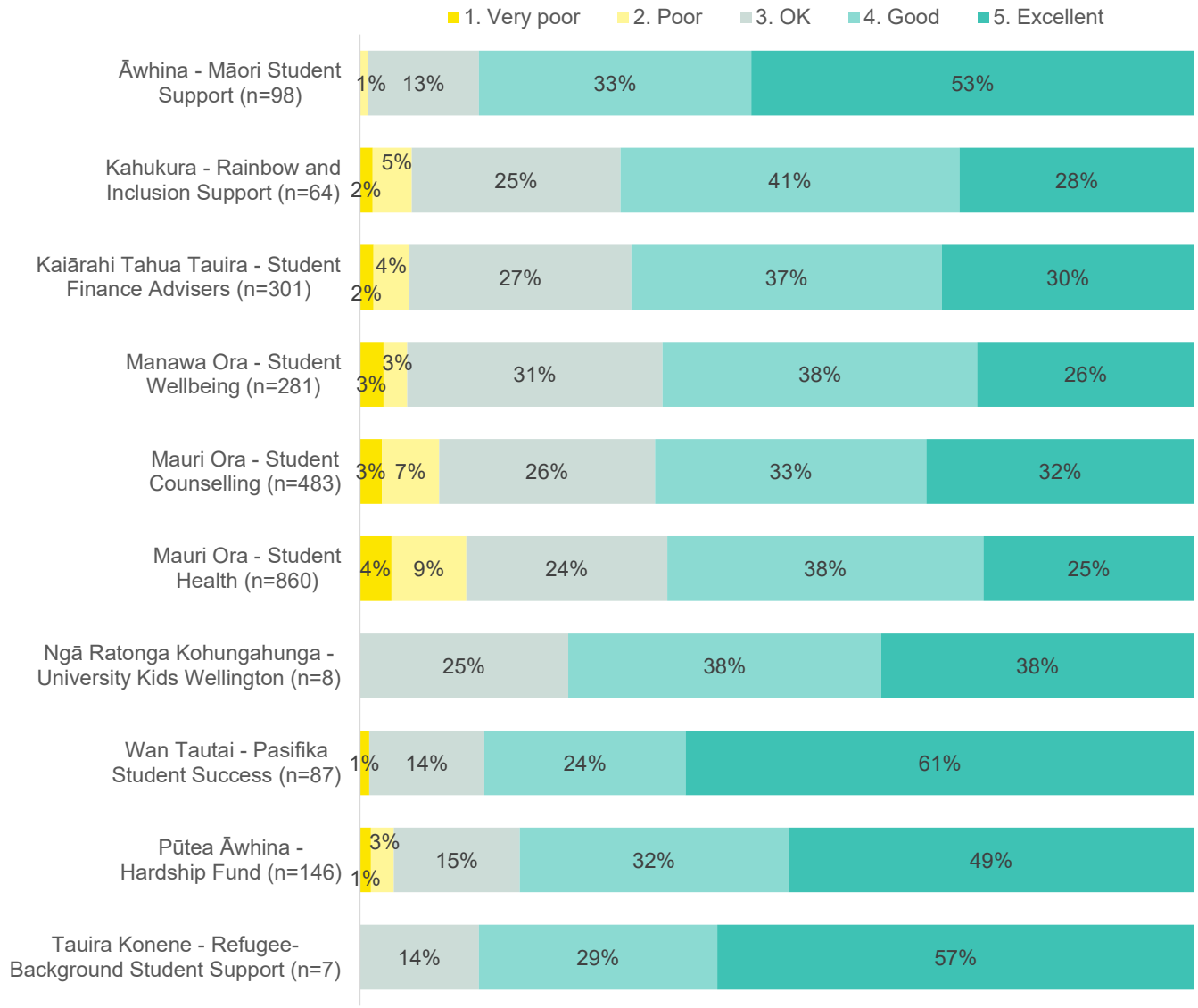
Note: Only respondents identifying as Māori were asked about Āwhina – Māori Student Support, only respondents with caregiving responsibilities for children under 5 were asked about Ngā Ratonga Kohungahunga – University Kids Wellington, only respondents identifying as Pasifika were asked about Wan Tautai – Pasifika Student Success, and only respondents identifying as from a refugee background were asked about Tauira Konene – Refugee-Background Student Support.



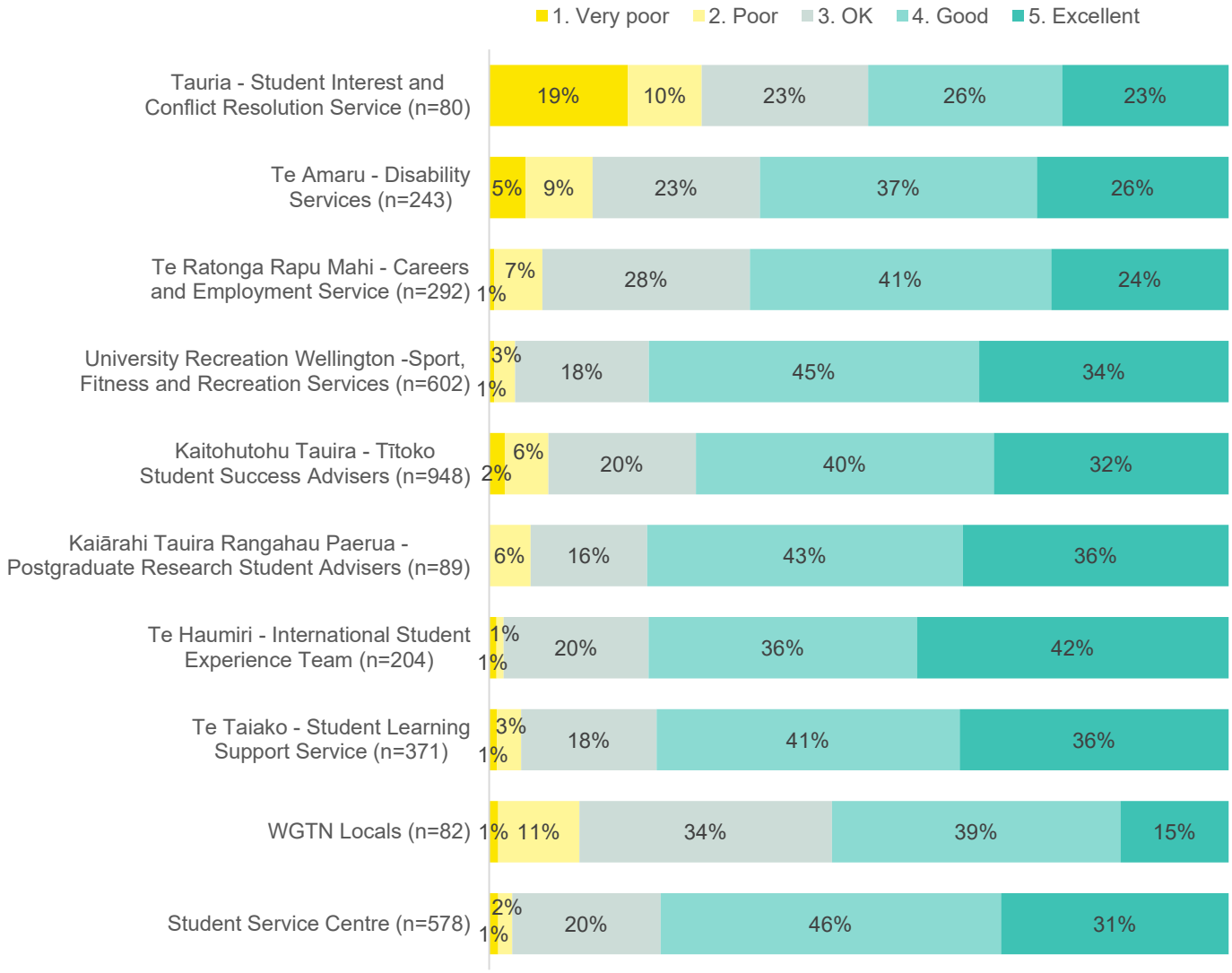
Note: Only respondents identifying as having a disability, being neurodivergent or having a long-term health condition were asked about Te Amaru – Disability Services, only postgraduate respondents were asked about Kaiārahi Tauira Rangahau Paerua – Postgraduate Research Student Advisers, only international respondents were asked Te Haumiri – International Student Experience Team, and only respondents not in halls were asked about WGTN Locals.

Experience of student support services

Thinking about the last 12 months, please rate your experience of the Student Support Services listed below. These questions were only asked of those who had reported that they had used the service in the last 12 months.



Please note that some results are based on very low sample sizes and should be interpreted with caution.



Overall perceptions of Student Support Services were positive. Seventy-seven percent of respondents who had engaged with a Student Support Service were satisfied or very satisfied overall, while 70% were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of information and communications they had received.

Awareness and use varied considerably between services. Mauri Ora Student Health was the most commonly used service, with 36% reporting use during the previous 12 months. Other services with relatively high use included Student Finance Advisers, Student Counselling, Student Success Advisers and the Careers and Employment Service. Several services were characterised by relatively high awareness but low use, suggesting that many students knew services existed but had not needed to access them.

Experiences were generally positive among those who used services. Most services received a majority of ratings in the good or excellent categories, with particularly strong results for Mauri Ora Student Health, Student Learning Support, Student Success Advisers, and Māori and Pasifika student support services. Results for some services were based on small numbers of users and should be interpreted with caution.

Taken together with the open-text comments, the results suggest that awareness, navigation and access remain crucial considerations. Students were generally positive about the support they received when engaged with services, but they also highlighted challenges in knowing what services exist, which service is appropriate, and how to access support quickly when it is needed.

Change to service ratings in 2026: Prior to 2026, students who had used a service were asked to rate their satisfaction on a five-point scale (Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied). In 2026, the survey was redesigned and respondents were instead asked to rate their overall experience of the service using a five-point experience scale (Very poor to Excellent).

This change reflects a broader emphasis on understanding the quality of students' interactions with university services. An experience-based measure encourages respondents to reflect on the service they received and how well it met their needs, providing a more meaningful basis for evaluating service performance and informing service improvement. It also establishes a robust baseline measure for monitoring changes in service experience over time.

As the question wording and response categories differ from those used previously, results from 2026 are not directly comparable with earlier years and should be interpreted as a new baseline for future trend reporting.

This change also applies to the ratings for university services and spaces and facilities.

Student voice: Enhancing student support services

Students provided 889 comments about how Student Support Services could be enhanced. The analysis identified 13 themes, including a category for respondents who did not suggest a specific enhancement. Individual comments could be assigned to more than one theme but were counted no more than once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%. A further 299 comments were too vague, individual or ambiguous to assign reliably to a recurring theme.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
Access, capacity and waiting times	Students wanted shorter waits, more appointments and staff, simpler booking processes, quicker responses and greater availability during busy periods.	220 / 24.7%
Awareness, signposting and navigation	Students wanted clearer information about which services exist, what each provides, who is eligible and how to find or contact the appropriate service.	209 / 23.5%
Communication, responsiveness and follow-through	Students wanted enquiries acknowledged promptly, information to be accurate and consistent, agreed actions completed and clearer ownership of unresolved matters.	140 / 15.7%
Health, counselling and wellbeing support	Students sought more timely access to health practitioners and counsellors, easier booking, continuity between appointments and appropriate follow-up.	122 / 13.7%
Careers, employment and transition support	Students wanted practical and discipline-relevant career guidance, employment preparation, placements, internships and stronger support for the transition into work.	68 / 7.6%
Academic advice, course planning and enrolment	Students wanted accurate and knowledgeable advice about course selection, programme requirements, degree planning, prerequisites, enrolment and academic progression.	66 / 7.4%

What this means

The findings suggest that the central challenge is not simply service quality, but students' ability to successfully access support when they need it. Students frequently highlighted issues relating to awareness, navigation, waiting times and communication, indicating that barriers often arise before support is received. At the same time, comments emphasised the importance of continuity and follow-through once contact has been made. Collectively, these findings point towards the value of viewing support from a student perspective, where awareness, access, responsiveness and resolution are experienced as parts of a single support journey rather than separate service functions. Improving how students discover and move between services may therefore be just as important as increasing service capacity itself.

In students' words

"A full list of all these services, what they do and how to use them."

"Response time is often very poor for emailed requests."

"If they followed through to help with the process rather than handing it off to someone else."

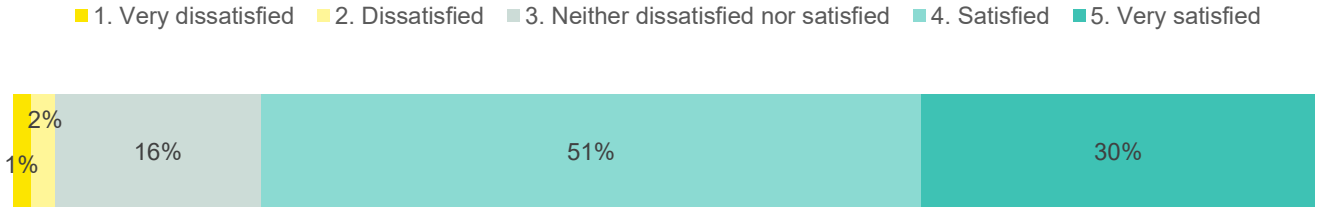
"More GPs at Mauri Ora to decrease wait times for appointments."

"I found little actual advice on structuring courses, merely discussions of available papers."

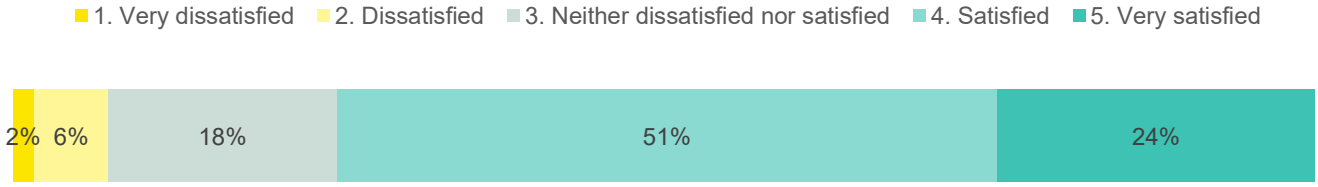
University services

University Services support students' enrolment, academic administration, library access, scholarships, security, accommodation and research activities. Students were asked about their use and awareness of these services, the quality of their experiences, and their overall satisfaction with the information and support provided.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the University Services you've engaged with over the past 12 months? (n=1102)

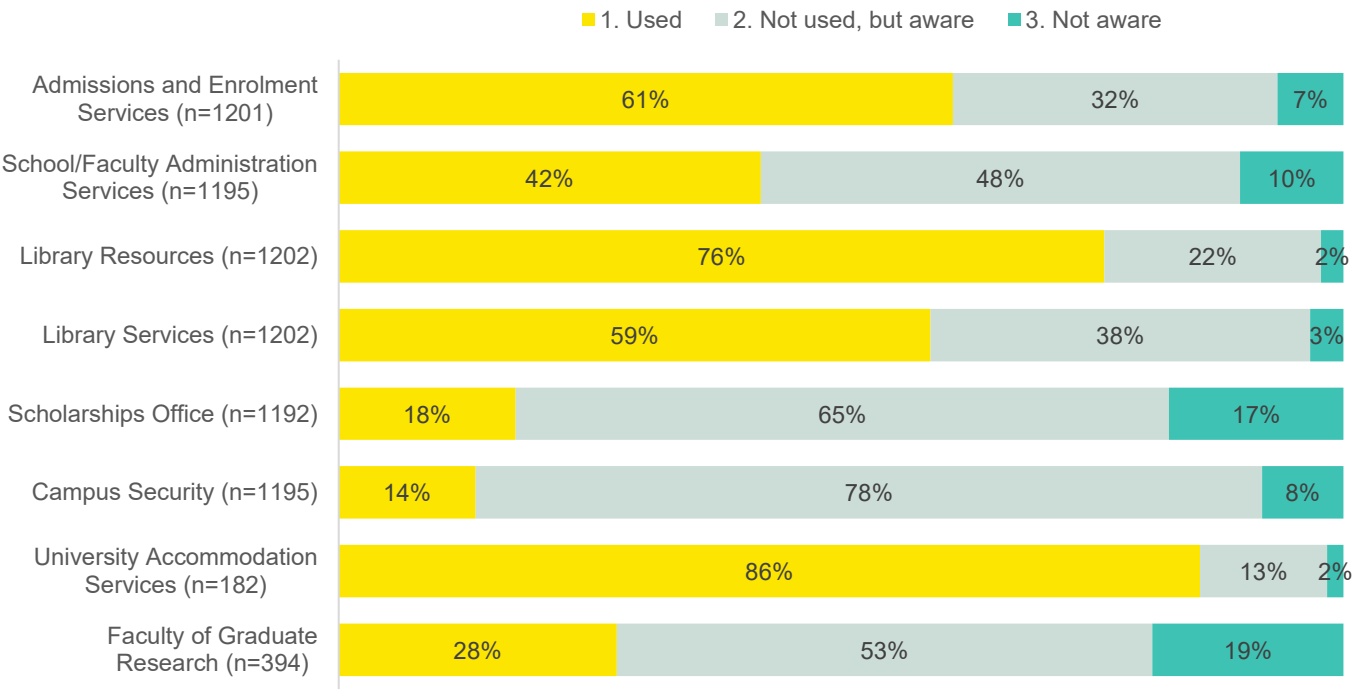


How satisfied are you with the quality of information/communications you've received about the University Services? (n=1209)



Use and awareness of university services

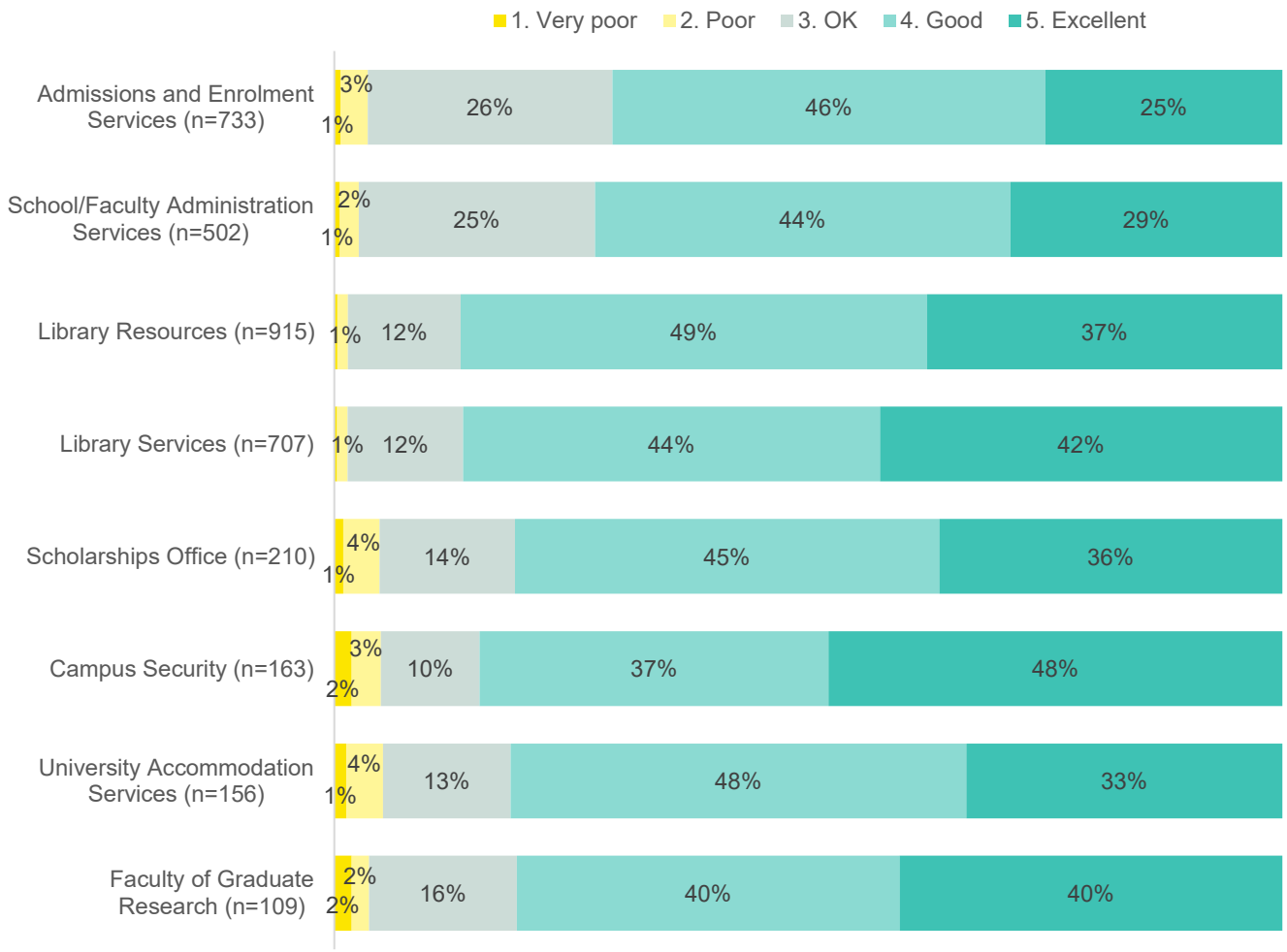
Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following University Services have you used?



Note: Only respondents identifying as being in halls were asked University Accommodation Services and only graduate researchers were asked about the Faculty of Graduate Research.

Experience of university services

Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following University Services have you used? These questions were only asked of those who had reported that they had used the service in the last 12 months.



Respondents generally reported positive experiences with University Services. Eighty-one percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the University Services they had used, while 75% were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of related information and communications.

The most frequently used University Services were Library Resources, Library Services, Admissions and Enrolment Services, and School or Faculty Administration Services. Awareness of these services was also high, suggesting they form part of many students' routine interactions with the University.

Among users, experience ratings were strongest for Library Resources, Library Services and Admissions and Enrolment Services, with most respondents rating their experiences as good or excellent. Satisfaction was also generally positive for Campus Security, Scholarships and the Faculty of Graduate Research, although some services were assessed by comparatively small numbers of users.

Student comments indicate that the main opportunities for improvement relate less to the quality of individual services and more to how students discover, access and navigate them. Information, communication, responsiveness and clearer pathways into services emerged as recurring themes throughout the qualitative analysis.

Student voice: Enhancing university services

Students provided 335 comments about how University Services could be enhanced. The analysis identified 10 recurring enhancement themes, together with a separate category for respondents who did not suggest a specific enhancement. Comments could be assigned to more than one theme where they contained distinct ideas but were counted no more than once within each theme. Percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%. A further 113 comments were not assigned to a recurring theme because they were vague, highly specific or did not contain enough information to interpret reliably.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
Clearer information, awareness and service navigation	Students wanted a clearer overview of available services, what each service provides and more obvious pathways to the right source of assistance.	96 / 28.7%
Communication, updates and responsiveness	Students wanted communications that were clear, relevant and timely, together with prompt responses and appropriate updates about services and changes.	63 / 18.8%
Digital systems, portals and online usability	Students wanted simpler and more intuitive websites and portals, fewer fragmented processes and a more integrated digital entry point for University Services.	44 / 13.1%
Wider access, opening hours and inclusive delivery	Students wanted services to be accessible across campuses, locations, study modes and schedules, with appropriate online and in-person options.	44 / 13.1%
Faster, simpler and better coordinated administration	Students wanted requests and applications processed more efficiently, with simpler procedures, clearer status updates and better coordination between departments.	40 / 11.9%
Library collections, research resources and learning support	Students wanted easier access to readings, books, databases and research resources, alongside improved search tools and clearer guidance on using Library services.	38 / 11.3%

What this means

Students generally viewed University Services through the lens of accessibility and ease of navigation. Many comments indicated that students were uncertain about which services existed, what they provided, or how to identify the right point of contact. Communication and responsiveness were recurring expectations, but students also wanted administrative processes that felt coordinated and straightforward. The findings suggest that students are less concerned with organisational structures than with achieving outcomes efficiently. A clearer front door to University Services, supported by integrated information and simpler processes, may therefore improve students' experiences across a wide range of service interactions.

In students' words

"Making sure everyone knows about them and how to access them."

"Students need to be made aware of events and services before they happen, not after or during."

"It will be perfect if there was an app to do all the registration or booking in one place."

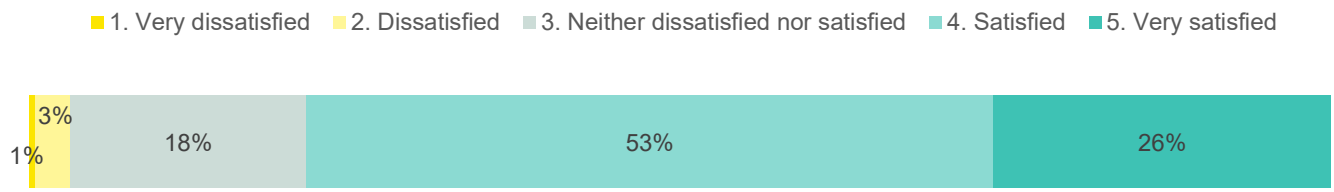
"The collation of information between these services could be better to streamline inquiries."

"Quite often access to particular readings required for courses has been near to impossible."

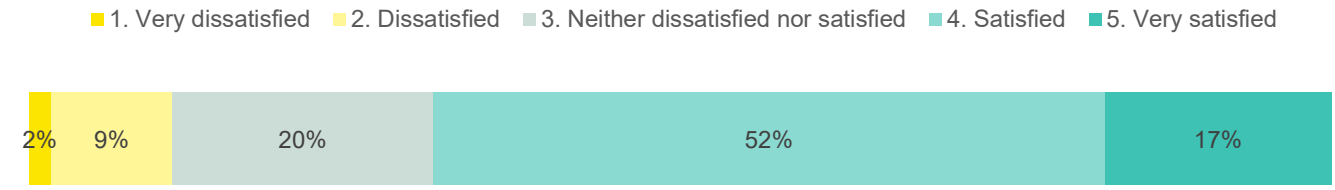
Spaces and facilities

University spaces and facilities influence both academic work and broader student experience. We asked students about their awareness and use of key facilities, how often they struggled to locate spaces on campus, their experiences of facilities they had used, and how they believed campus environments could be improved.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the University Spaces and Facilities that you've used over the past 12 months? (n=1150)

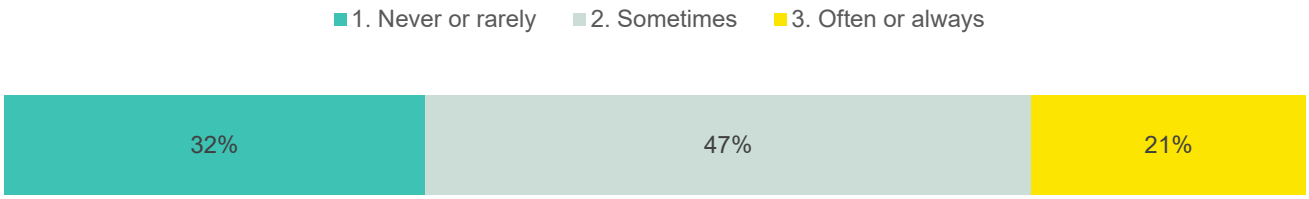


How satisfied are you with the quality of information/communications you've received about the University Spaces and Facilities? (n=1169)

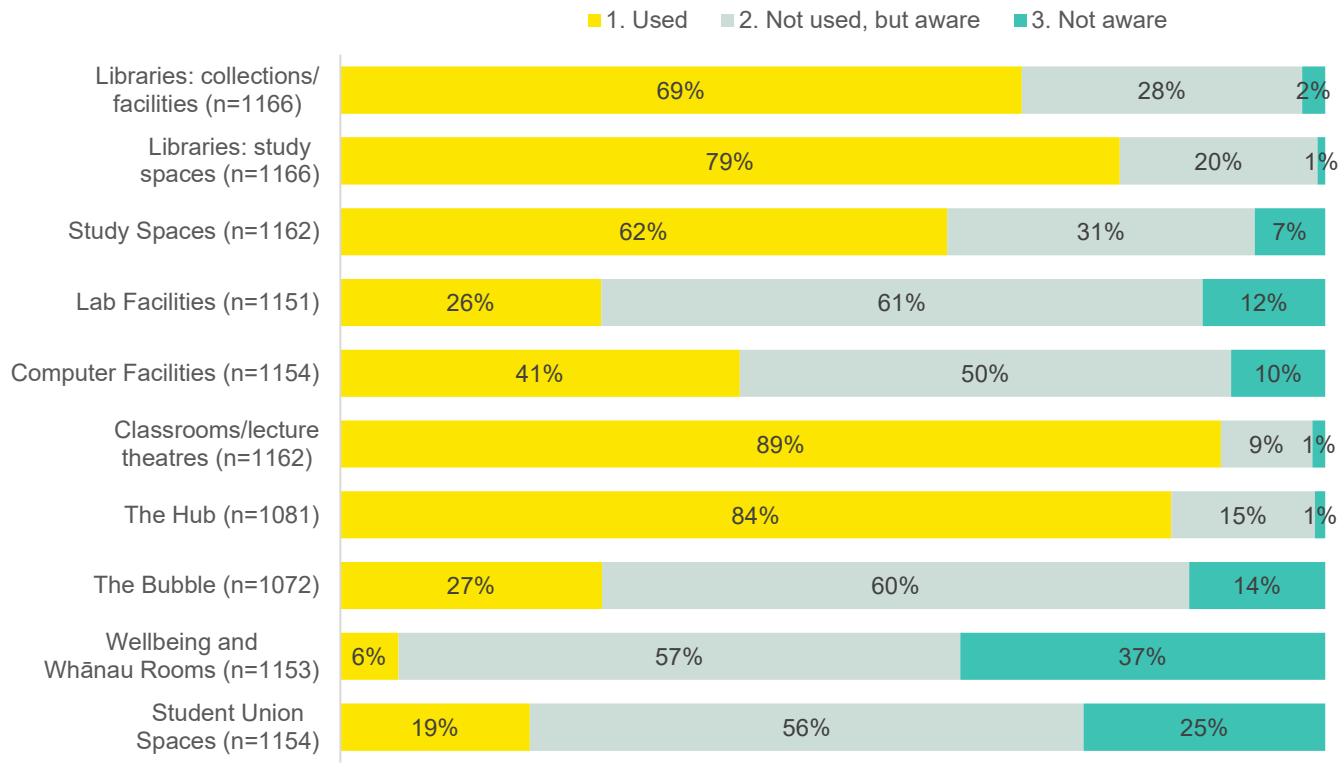


Use and awareness of spaces and facilities

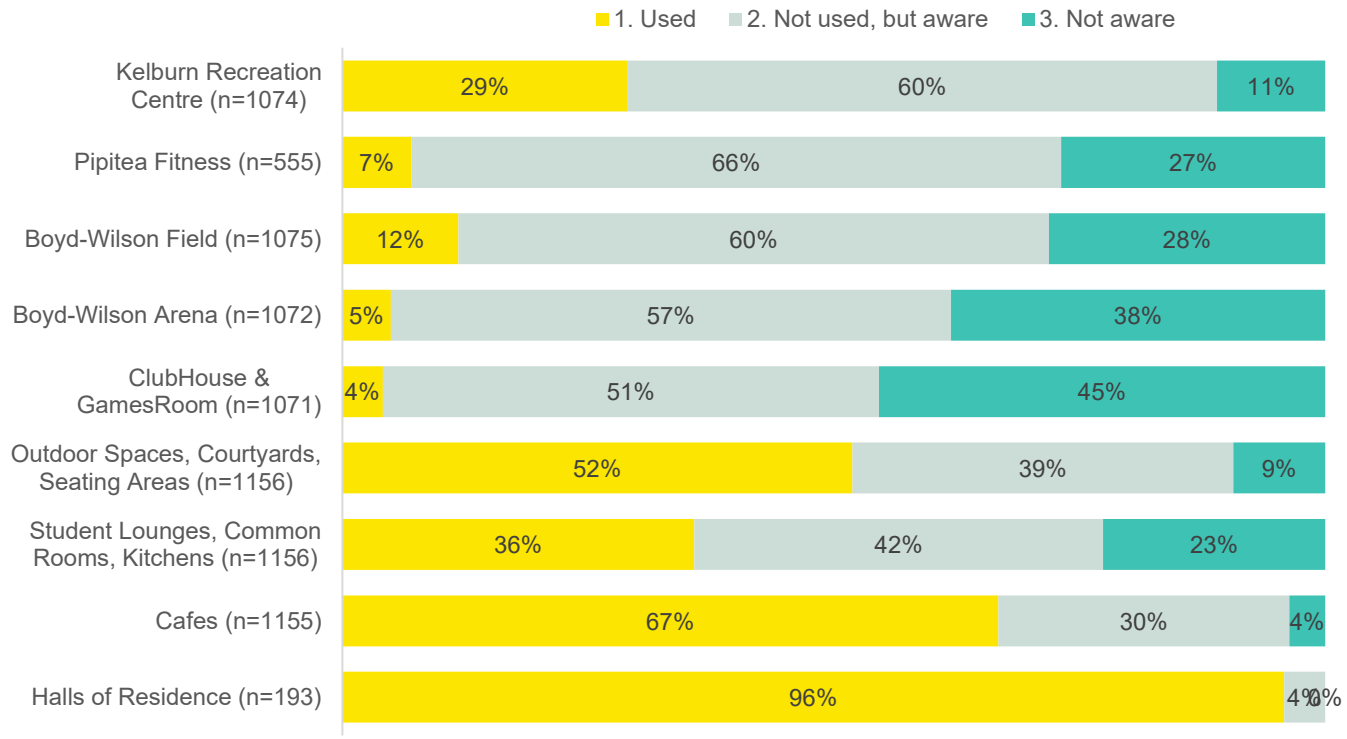
Over the past 12 months, how often have you struggled to find the room or space you're looking for on campus? (n=1152)



Thinking about the past 12 months, which of the following University Spaces and Facilities have you used?



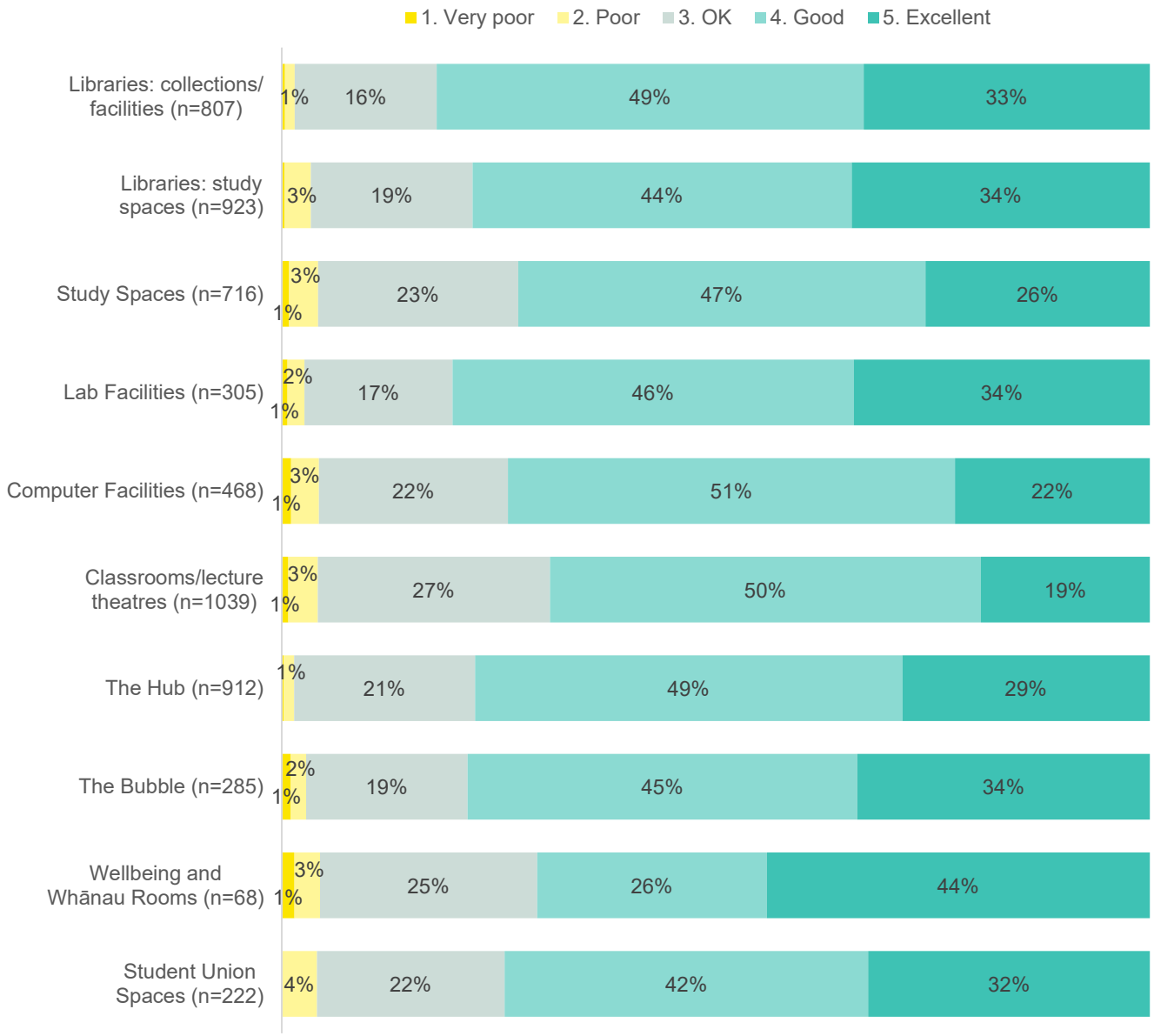
Note: Only respondents who reported they had been at Kelburn campus were asked about The Hub.

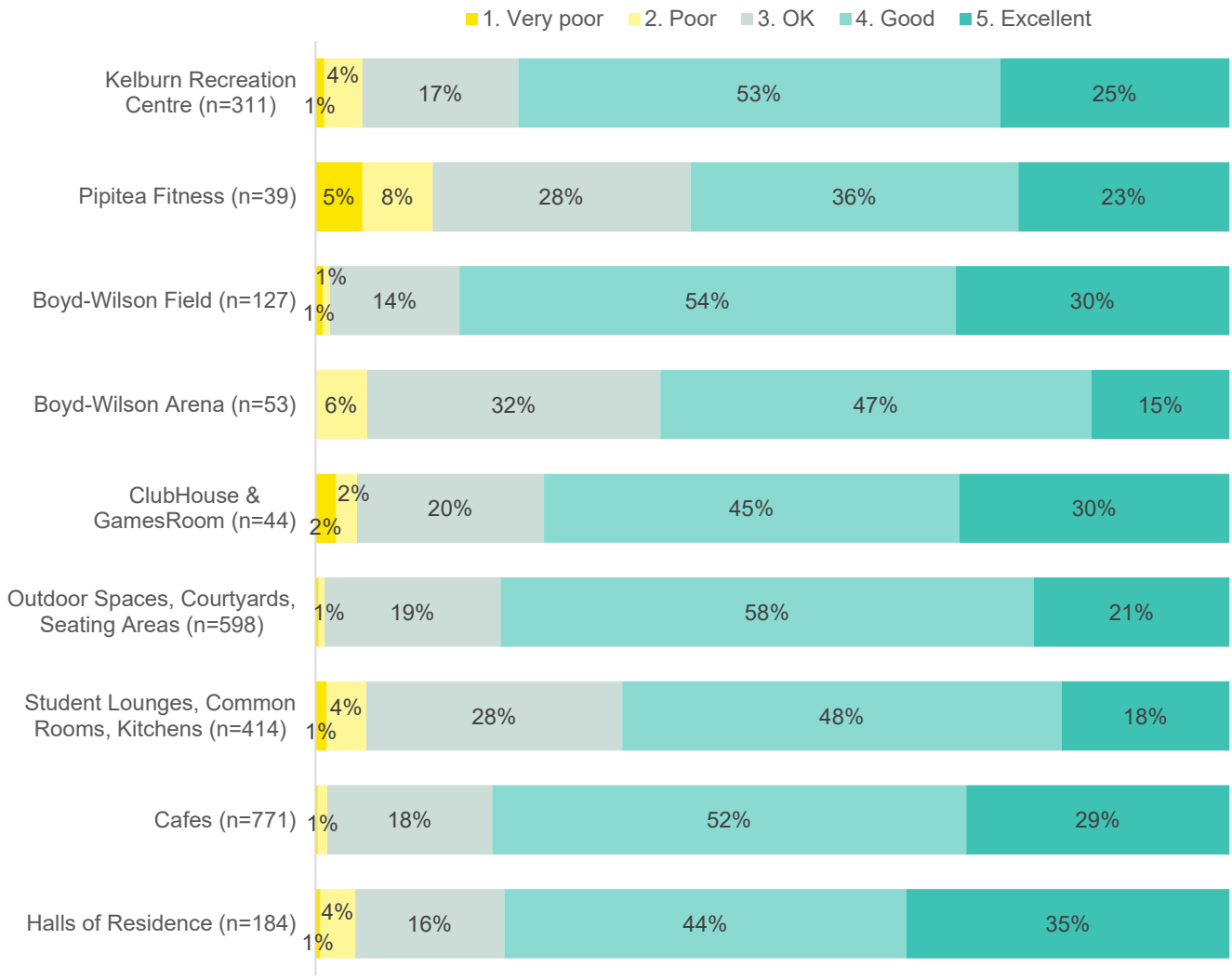


Note: Only respondents who reported they had been at Pipitea campus were asked about Pipitea Fitness, only respondents who reported they had been at Kelburn campus were asked about Kelburn Recreation Centre, Boyd-Wilson Field, Boyd-Wilson Arena and the ClubHouse & GanesRoom, and only respondents who reported that they were in halls were asked about halls of residence.

Experience of spaces and facilities

Thinking about the past 12 months, please rate your experience of the University Spaces and Facilities listed below. These questions were only asked of those who had reported that they had used the space or facility in the last 12 months.





Overall satisfaction with spaces and facilities was positive. Seventy-nine percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the spaces and facilities they had used, while 69% were satisfied or very satisfied with the information and communications provided about them.

Libraries, study spaces, classrooms and The Hub were among the most widely used facilities. Most respondents reported using library collections, library study spaces, general study spaces and classrooms during the previous 12 months. However, approximately one in five respondents reported that they often or always struggled to find the room or space they were looking for on campus.

Experience ratings were generally strongest for library facilities, study spaces, outdoor spaces and cafes. Ratings were more mixed for some recreational facilities and student spaces, although sample sizes varied considerably between facilities.

The qualitative findings highlight that students experience campus facilities as an interconnected environment rather than a series of individual assets. Increased study space, clearer wayfinding, better maintenance, affordable food, comfortable environments and access to power, technology and Wi-Fi emerged as the most common areas for improvement. The findings suggest that visibility, usability and capacity are often as important as the existence of facilities themselves.

Student voice: Enhancing university spaces and facilities

Students provided 461 comments about how the University's spaces and facilities could be enhanced. Comments were multi-coded where they contained distinct ideas, but each comment was counted no more than once within an individual theme. Percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%. The analysis identified 11 core enhancement themes, with two less frequent themes retained in the thematic workbook, as well as a separate category for respondents who did not suggest an enhancement. A further 86 comments were not assigned to a recurring theme because they were broad, ambiguous, highly specific or lacked sufficient detail for reliable classification.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
More study space, seating and places to work	Students wanted more desks, tables, booths and other places where they could sit, study or work, particularly during busy periods.	149 / 32.3%
Awareness, information, maps and signage	Students wanted clearer information about which spaces and facilities were available, where they were located, who could use them and how to access them.	94 / 20.4%
Cleanliness, maintenance and quality of facilities	Students wanted shared spaces, bathrooms, equipment and furniture to be consistently clean, functional, repaired and kept in good condition.	90 / 19.5%
Affordable, varied and accessible food options	Students wanted cheaper and more varied food, provision for different dietary needs, longer opening hours and better facilities for preparing their own food.	70 / 15.2%
Comfort, heating, lighting and ambience	Students wanted comfortable furniture, appropriate temperatures and lighting, and spaces that felt welcoming and suitable for sustained study or time on campus.	69 / 15.0%
Technology, power, Wi-Fi and specialist equipment	Students wanted more power and charging points, reliable Wi-Fi, docking stations and functional computers, printers and specialist equipment.	61 / 13.2%

What this means

Students' comments indicate that campus facilities are experienced as part of a broader ecosystem that supports learning, participation and wellbeing. Additional study space was the most common request, but comments also highlighted the importance of visibility, comfort, maintenance, affordability and access to supporting infrastructure such as power, Wi-Fi and food. Importantly, many students described challenges not only in the availability of facilities but also in finding and understanding what already exists. The findings therefore suggest that improving campus facilities may involve both investment in physical spaces and improvements in how students discover, access and use them. A focus on usability, visibility and inclusiveness may unlock significant value from both existing and future facilities.

In students' words

"More spaces for students to sit, or more study spaces."

"A list of where these facilities are and map of how to get there."

"The communal kitchens are so useful, but it would be great if they were cleaned more regularly throughout the day."

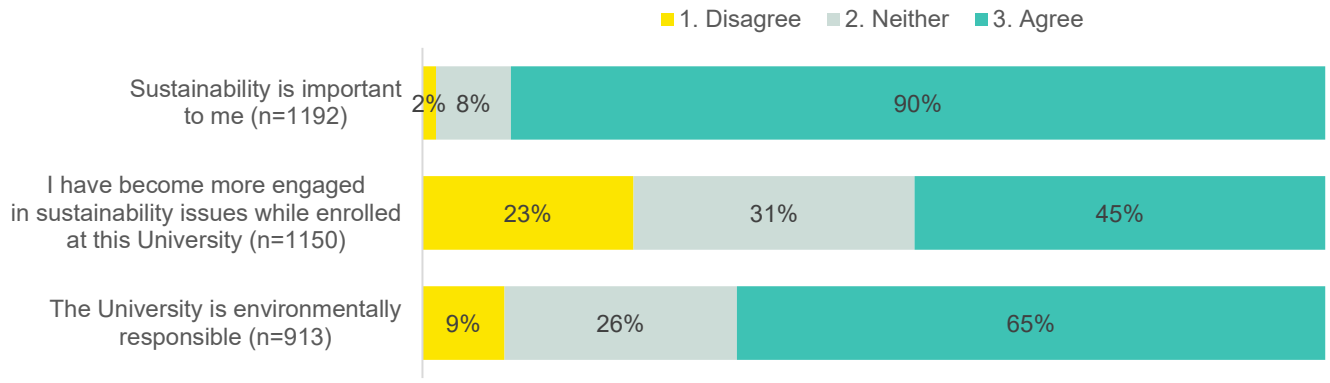
"Cafes are so expensive for students."

"The availability of more charging points in the cafes would be a great addition."

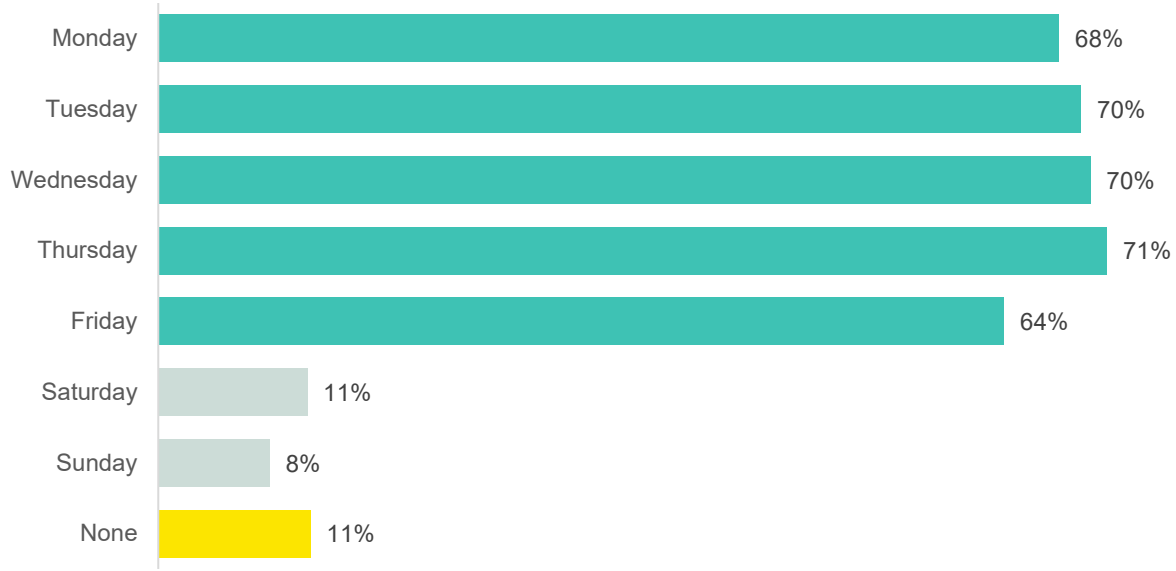
Sustainability and travel

Sustainability and travel affect both students' day-to-day experiences and the University's environmental impact. Students were asked about their attitudes towards sustainability, their travel patterns, the distances they travel to campus and the transport modes they typically use.

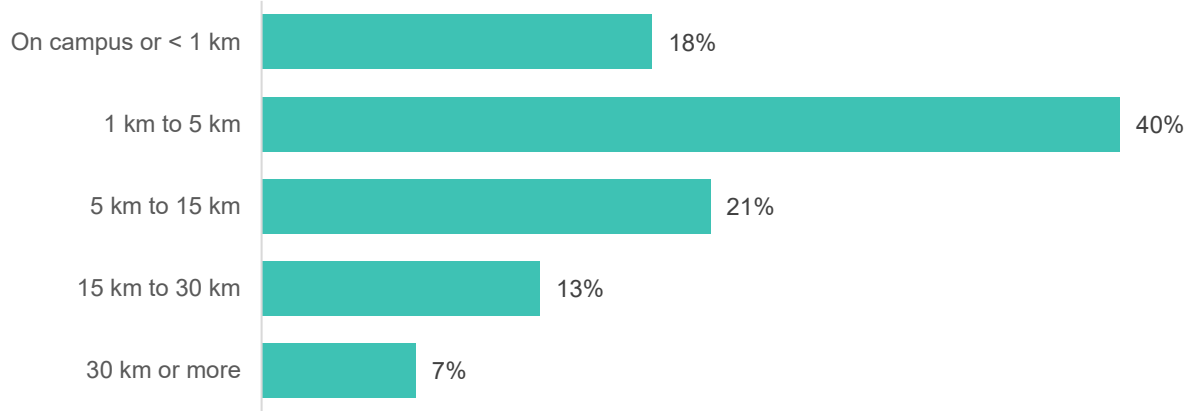
To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following…



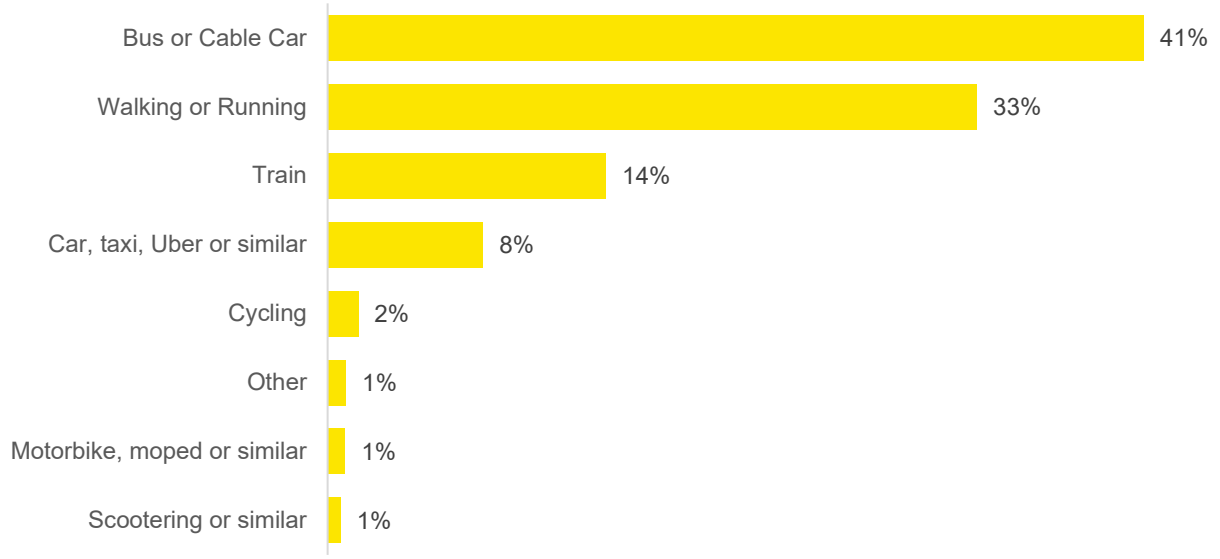
In a typical week, which days do you visit a university campus or facility? (n=2414)



How far do you live from the university? (n=2127)

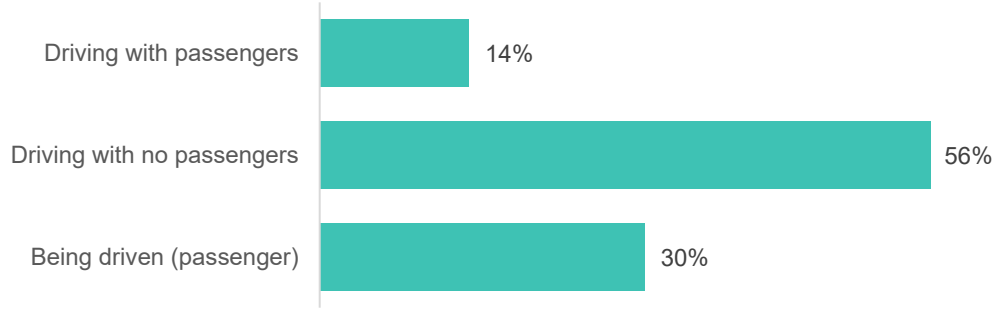


What is your main form of transport to and from university? (n=2129)

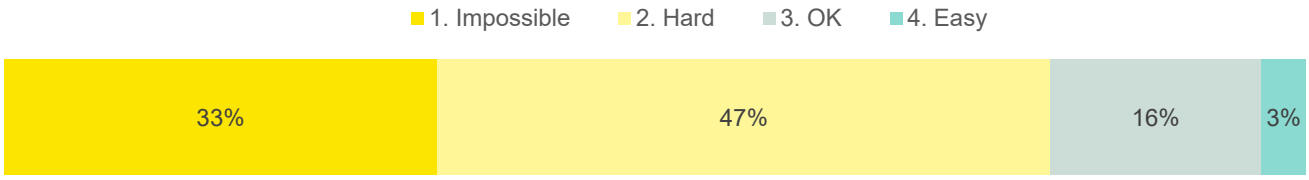


30% of students who come to university by car, taxi, Uber or similar, or by motorbike, moped or similar are doing so in an **electric or hybrid vehicle**.

When you travel by car, taxi, Uber or similar, which best describes the usual situation… (n=167)



What is your experience of finding a car park on or around campus? (n=117)



Sustainability was an important issue for most respondents. Ninety percent agreed that sustainability is important to them personally, while 65% agreed that the University is environmentally responsible. Less than half agreed that their time at University had increased their engagement with sustainability issues, suggesting that sustainability is valued more strongly than it is actively experienced through students' university journeys.

Most students visited campus during the main teaching week, with between 64% and 71% attending on weekdays. Attendance on weekends was much less common. Forty percent lived between one and five

kilometres from campus and a further 21% lived between five and fifteen kilometres away. Eighteen percent lived within one kilometre of campus.

Public and active transport dominated travel to campus. Buses and the Cable Car were the most common mode of transport, used by 41% of students, followed by walking or running at 33% and trains at 14%. Only 8% identified cars, taxis or ride-share services as their primary mode of transport. Among those who did travel by car or similar vehicles, 30% reported doing so in an electric or hybrid vehicle.

Parking was often challenging for those who travelled by car. Almost half reported that finding a car park on or around campus was hard or impossible, compared with only 19% who reported that it was easy.

Overall, the results suggest that most students are already using relatively sustainable transport modes, while sustainability remains an area of strong personal importance. The greatest opportunity may be increasing students' sense that sustainability is being meaningfully embedded into their university experience.

Key takeaways: Tools, services and the campus environment

Overall, students generally reported positive experiences with the University's digital tools, services, spaces and facilities. The strongest results were typically associated with resources that students used most frequently, including Nuku, Library services and study spaces. However, a recurring theme across both the quantitative and qualitative findings was that students often found it difficult to navigate, discover or access the resources available to them. Students consistently highlighted the importance of clear information, coordinated systems and straightforward pathways to assistance.

- **The University's core digital learning platforms were generally well regarded, but students continue to seek a more integrated and intuitive digital experience.** Nuku was widely used and positively rated, while AI use was common and generally supported by students. Open-text comments focused less on individual platforms and more on consistency, navigation, integration and clear guidance across the University's digital environment.
- **Students generally report positive experiences with support services once they access them.** Services such as Mauri Ora Student Health, Student Counselling, Student Success Advisers and Student Learning Support received generally positive experience ratings. However, awareness, service navigation and access emerged as major themes, suggesting that finding and accessing support can be as important as the quality of support itself.
- **University Services were generally viewed positively, with Libraries standing out as highly valued resources.** Library Services and Library Resources were among the most frequently used and most positively rated services. Nevertheless, students frequently highlighted the need for clearer communication, easier navigation, more responsive service delivery and better coordination between administrative units.
- **Students value campus spaces and facilities but want more usable, visible and accessible environments.** Most respondents were satisfied with the spaces and facilities they had used, particularly libraries, study spaces and learning environments. Open-text feedback placed strong emphasis on increasing study space capacity, improving wayfinding and signage, maintaining facility quality, providing affordable food options and ensuring access to technology, Wi-Fi and power.
- **Discoverability is a recurring challenge across the student experience.** Students frequently reported difficulties finding information about services, events, facilities and digital resources. Themes relating to communication, signposting, navigation, promotion and awareness appeared consistently across digital tools, student support services, University services and campus spaces. Together, these findings suggest that improving discoverability may have benefits across multiple areas of the student experience.
- **Students support sustainability and already rely heavily on sustainable transport options.** Sustainability was personally important to most respondents, and public transport, walking and active travel were the dominant ways students travelled to campus. While most students viewed the University as environmentally responsible, fewer felt that their engagement with sustainability issues had increased while studying, suggesting opportunities to make sustainability initiatives more visible and meaningful within the student experience.
- **Flexibility, accessibility and inclusion influence how students experience both physical and digital environments.** Across comments relating to services, facilities and technology, students repeatedly identified affordability, accessibility, availability across campuses, and support for different student circumstances as important contributors to a positive experience. The findings suggest that students benefit most when tools, services and environments are coordinated around the way students navigate university life.

Students' priorities for improvement

At the end of the survey, students were asked to identify the one thing the University should focus on improving next year. In total, 1,339 students provided a comment. These responses covered many aspects of the student experience, but the most prevalent priorities concerned community and belonging, student support and wellbeing, teaching quality, affordability, communication and administration, and equity and inclusion.

Comments could be coded to more than one theme where students identified several distinct priorities. Percentages therefore indicate the proportion of comments mentioning each theme and should not be added together.

Most prevalent themes (see Appendix 1 for full details of all themes coded).

Theme	Description	Count and percentage
Community, belonging, events and student life	Stronger student communities, more opportunities to connect, livelier campuses, and better support for events, clubs and societies.	261 / 19.5%
Student support, wellbeing and pastoral care	More accessible and responsive academic, personal, health and wellbeing support, including earlier intervention for students who are struggling.	236 / 17.6%
Teaching quality, course design and academic experience	Improved teaching practice, course organisation, assessment design, feedback, workload management and consistency across courses.	227 / 17.0%
Affordability, fees and financial support	Reducing the financial burden of study through lower or stable fees, scholarships, hardship assistance and more affordable food, housing and transport.	220 / 16.4%
Communication, information and administrative processes	Clearer, more timely and consistent information, simpler administrative processes and better coordination between academic and service areas.	206 / 15.4%
Equity, inclusion, accessibility and cultural responsiveness	More equitable and accessible teaching, services and facilities, with stronger recognition of diverse student circumstances, identities and needs.	145 / 10.8%

What this means

Students' priorities were wide-ranging, but they were connected by a consistent expectation that the University should make the student experience more supportive, manageable and worthwhile. Students wanted greater opportunities to form relationships and participate in university life, while also calling for strong investment in the fundamentals of their experience: high-quality teaching, accessible support, affordable participation, clear communication and functional systems and spaces.

The findings also suggest that students do not experience these priorities in isolation. Financial pressure can affect wellbeing, time available for study and participation in university life. The quality of teaching, assessment and communication can either reduce or compound stress. Access to support depends not only on whether a service exists, but also on whether students know about it, can navigate it and receive assistance when they need it. Similarly, facilities, events and inclusive practices contribute to whether students feel connected to the University and able to participate fully.

Several priorities were important across the student population, particularly community, teaching, affordability and physical facilities. Other concerns were more pronounced among particular groups. Postgraduate and international students were especially prominent in comments about support and wellbeing. International students were also more likely to raise communication, inclusion and employment preparation. Postgraduate research students identified a distinct need for better supervision, research support, funding and connection. Students based at Te Aro and Pipitea, as well as remote and working students, emphasised equitable access across locations and modes of study.

University-wide themes emerging from the survey

Taken together, the comments point toward four overarching themes or priorities:

1. **Strengthen connection and belonging**, including more inclusive opportunities for students to build relationships, participate in campus life and develop a sense of community.
2. **Protect the educational and support fundamentals**, including teaching quality, academic guidance, wellbeing services and responsive student support.
3. **Reduce financial and practical barriers**, including the costs of fees, food, accommodation, transport and unpaid placements.
4. **Make the University easier to navigate**, through clearer communication, coordinated administration, integrated digital systems and more consistent provision across campuses and modes of study.

The priorities identified by students align closely with patterns seen elsewhere in the survey. For example, concerns about affordability mirror the financial pressures reported in the study and life chapter, while calls for stronger community reflect lower ratings for connection with the student community. Requests for clearer communication and easier navigation are also consistent with findings relating to digital systems, support services and university services.

In students' words

"Facilitating more community and connection amongst students."

"Making sure all student are okay, you'll see a lot of happy faces and happy smiles but will never know what's behind every smile."

"Lecturers should be teachers, tutors should be taught how to teach."

"Measures to alleviate the impact of the recent cost of living increases on students."

"Providing more consistent, timely, and easy-to-find information across all courses and university services would make a big difference to the student experience."

About our respondents

A total of 3,094 students provided usable responses to the 2026 Kōrero Mai survey. Because participation was voluntary, respondents represent a subset of the University's student population rather than a complete census of all enrolled students. Understanding who responded is an important part of interpreting the findings, as survey results provide the greatest value when the respondent profile broadly reflects the wider student population. The comparisons presented in this section provide context for assessing the representativeness of the survey sample and the extent to which findings can reasonably be interpreted as reflecting broader student experiences.

Respondent profile and representativeness

Understanding who responded is important because survey findings are most informative when the respondent profile broadly reflects the wider student population. To assess representativeness, the demographic characteristics of respondents were compared with current enrolment data across a range of characteristics, including faculty, age, gender, ethnicity, domestic and international status, level of study and research status. This comparison helps identify groups that may be over- or under-represented and provides context for interpreting the survey findings.

		Survey Respondents (n=3,094)	Student Population (n=~20,000)
Faculty	Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation	9%	11%
	Faculty of Education, Health, and Psychological Sciences	19%	13%
	Faculty of Graduate Research	8%	7%
	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	20%	28%
	Faculty of Law	11%	10%
	Faculty of Science and Engineering	20%	19%
	Wellington School of Business and Government	13%	15%
Age Group	25 and Over	33%	30%
	Under 25	67%	70%
Gender	Male	31%	40%
	Female	63%	58%
	Diverse	6%	2%
Ethnicity	European	67%	67%
	Māori	10%	11%
	Pasifika	8%	6%
	Asian	26%	24%
	MELAA	5%	4%
	Other	3%	2%
International / Domestic	Domestic	80%	81%
	International	20%	19%
Taught / Research	Taught Student	91%	90%
	Research Student	9%	10%
Student Type	Undergraduate Student	66%	68%
	Postgraduate Student	31%	30%
	Non-matriculated Student	3%	3%

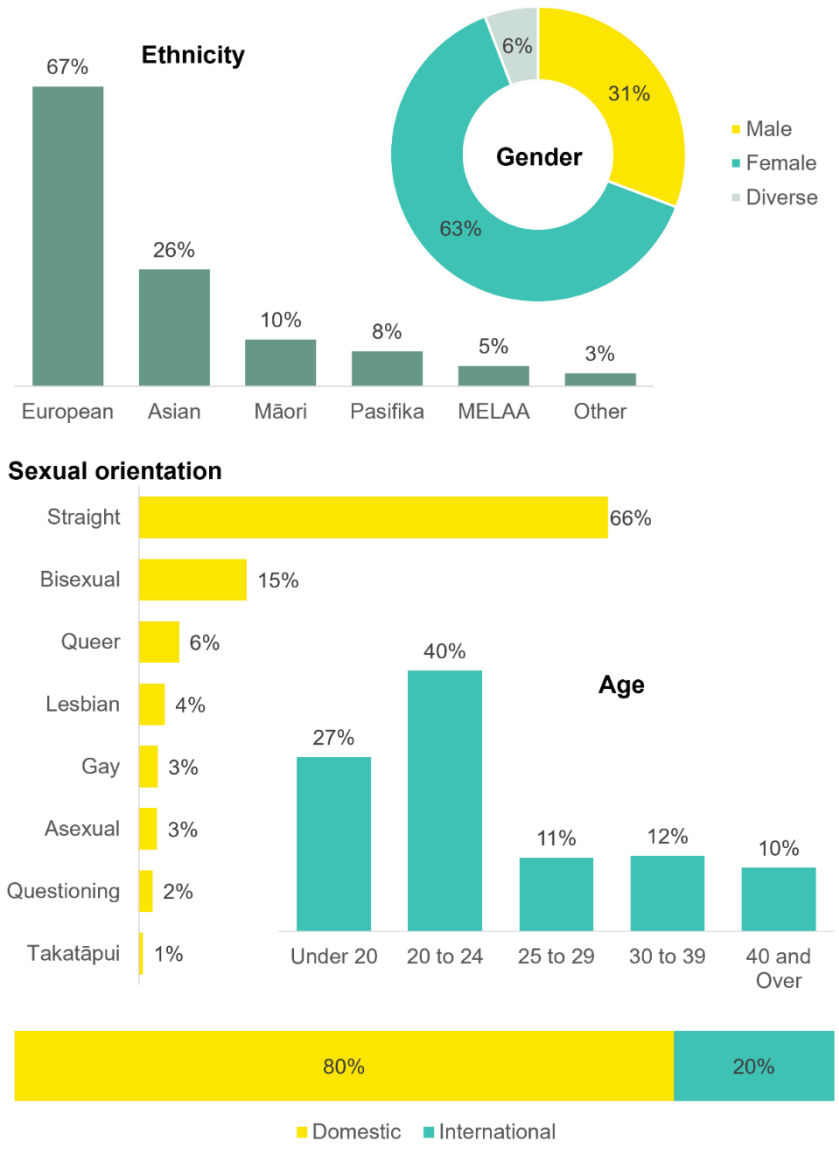
The demographic profile of Kōrero Mai respondents was compared with that of the overall student population. The respondent sample broadly reflected the wider student population across age, ethnicity, domestic and international status, research status and level of study. Differences across these characteristics were generally small, typically between one and three percentage points. The largest differences were observed for faculty and gender composition. Students from the Faculty of Education, Health and Psychological Sciences were over-represented, while students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and male students were under-represented relative to their share of the overall student population. These differences should be considered when interpreting University-wide findings, particularly where experiences vary across faculties or demographic groups. Nevertheless, the overall profile suggests that Kōrero Mai captured responses from a broad and diverse cross-section of the student population.

While no voluntary survey can eliminate all sources of response bias, the overall alignment between respondents and the student population provides confidence that the survey captured perspectives from a broad cross-section of the University community. The strongest cautions relate to gender and faculty differences, particularly where findings vary substantially across these groups. Consequently, results presented throughout this report should generally be interpreted as representative of broad patterns and trends rather than precise estimates of the views of every subgroup of students.

Diversity of respondents

The respondent population reflects the diversity of the University community across a range of demographic characteristics. Respondents included students from many ethnic backgrounds, a wide range of age groups and study levels, and students with differing gender identities, sexual orientations and cultural experiences. This diversity is important context for interpreting the survey findings, particularly for topics relating to belonging, inclusion, wellbeing, safety and support. While no survey can capture every perspective equally, the breadth of respondents provides insight into the experiences of a wide range of students across the University.

Demographic profile of survey respondents

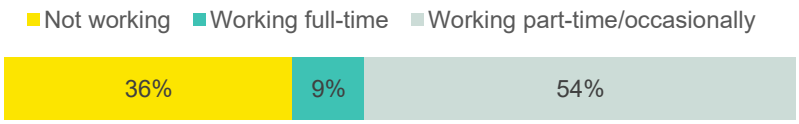


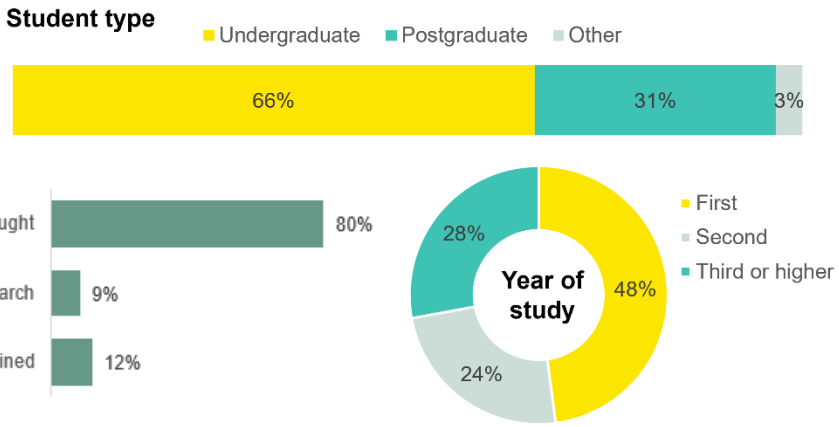
The respondent population included students from a wide range of backgrounds and identities. Multiple ethnic communities are represented, alongside substantial numbers of international students, postgraduate students and respondents identifying with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This breadth of perspectives helps ensure that findings relating to inclusion, belonging, safety, wellbeing and support are informed by a wide range of student experiences rather than reflecting only the experiences of a single demographic group.

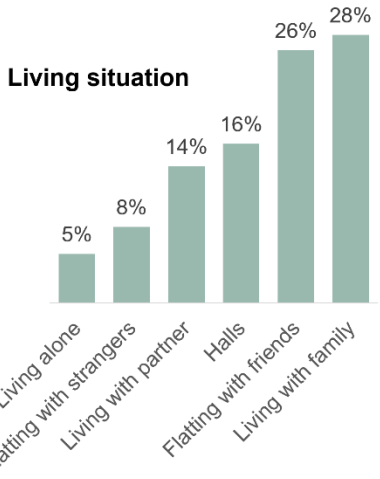
Study and life circumstances

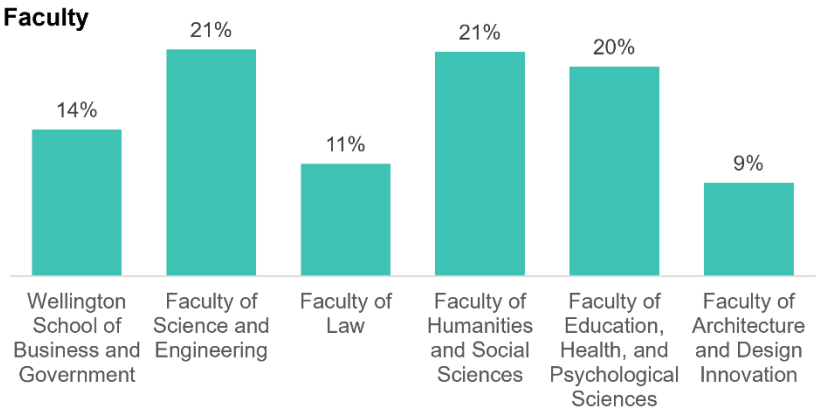
Students also differed in the circumstances in which they were undertaking their studies. Respondents included students studying full-time and part-time, students balancing study with paid employment, students with caring responsibilities, students living in a range of accommodation situations, and students with differing health, disability and support needs. These characteristics provide important context for understanding findings relating to student wellbeing, participation, academic engagement and the challenges that students may encounter while studying.

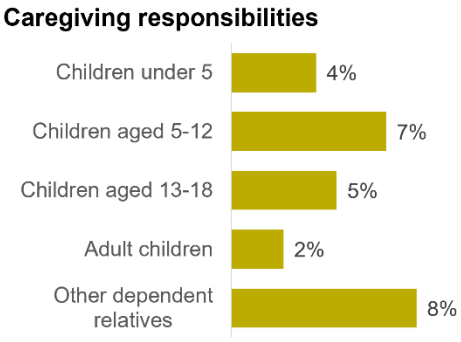
Study, work, caregiving and personal circumstances of respondents











In addition, 14% were studying part-time, 29% of respondents identified as disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, tāngata whaikaha Māori, tagata sa'ilimalo, or as living with a long-term condition or impairment, and 1% identified as an asylum seeker, current refugee or person from a refugee background.

Understanding these circumstances is important because many of the issues explored throughout this report, including wellbeing, belonging, participation, academic engagement and continuation, occur within the context of students' wider lives. Students' experiences are shaped not only by what happens within the University, but also by their employment, family responsibilities, financial circumstances, health, living arrangements and support needs. The diversity illustrated below helps explain why student experiences and priorities can vary substantially across the student population.

Overall, the survey captured responses from students representing a wide range of demographic backgrounds, educational pathways and personal circumstances. While some groups participated at slightly higher or lower rates than others, the respondent profile broadly reflects the composition of the wider student population. The findings presented throughout this report should therefore be understood as describing the experiences of a diverse student community rather than any single student cohort.

Methodology

Response counts vary throughout the report because some questions were presented only to relevant respondents, some questions formed part of the survey's modular design, and respondents were able to skip individual questions if they preferred not to answer them.

Results reported in this document are based on unweighted survey responses. Comparisons with population data are provided to assist interpretation of representativeness.

Results for smaller groups or low-incidence experiences should be interpreted with caution, as they may be subject to greater sampling variability than results for the overall respondent population.

Survey approach

The 2026 Kōrero Mai survey was administered using the Qualtrics online survey platform and was available to all enrolled students at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. The survey was conducted anonymously, with no identifying information attached to individual responses. This represented a significant methodological change from previous years and was intended to strengthen trust, encourage honest feedback and improve accessibility.

Routing was used throughout the questionnaire so that respondents were only presented with questions relevant to their circumstances and experiences. For example, questions about research supervision were only presented to students involved in supervised research, while questions relating to specific services were shown only to respondents who were eligible to answer them.

To reduce respondent burden, the survey adopted a modular design consisting of a set of core questions completed by all respondents and a series of rotating modules. This approach reduced completion time while maintaining coverage across a broad range of student experience topics. The survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Response rate and data quality

Following survey closure, responses were reviewed and cleaned before analysis. Records containing insufficient usable data, duplicate submissions or responses failing quality checks were excluded from reporting. The resulting dataset contained 3,094 usable responses. This is equivalent to an overall response rate of approximately 16%. This represents a notable decline from 2025, when the survey achieved a response rate of 26%.

Several factors may have contributed to the lower response rate. The 2026 survey introduced a number of significant changes, including a new survey name (Kōrero Mai replacing Have Your Say), a move to an anonymous survey design, changes to the incentive structure, and a revised questionnaire structure requiring students to provide demographic and study information that had previously been sourced from university records. The survey was also conducted during a period when students had recently been invited to participate in other University and student association surveys, potentially contributing to survey fatigue.

While the lower response rate is important to acknowledge, response rate alone does not determine the quality or usefulness of survey findings. The more important consideration is whether respondents are broadly representative of the wider student population. Analysis of the respondent profile suggests the survey continues to provide a robust basis for university-wide reporting. However, additional caution should be exercised when interpreting findings for smaller cohorts and subgroups, where reduced sample sizes may increase uncertainty.

The 2026 survey should be viewed as the first year of a substantially redesigned approach. The University will consider the response rate outcomes alongside survey quality, respondent experience, and representativeness when determining whether any changes should be made for future iterations. Although response rates declined from 2025, respondent representativeness remained broadly comparable with the wider student population across most demographic characteristics. Consequently, confidence in university-level findings remains high.

Open-text analysis

Open-text responses were analysed using a thematic coding approach that was refined iteratively during analysis, with themes reviewed and adjusted to ensure conceptual consistency and sufficient distinction between categories. Microsoft Copilot was used to assist with the initial organisation and identification of recurring themes across large volumes of qualitative comments. Human review was undertaken throughout the process to validate interpretations, refine theme definitions, review coding decisions and select illustrative quotations. Because comments could be assigned to multiple themes, percentages reported in qualitative sections commonly exceed 100 percent and should be interpreted as the proportion of comments mentioning a theme rather than the proportion of students expressing a particular view.

Quotations included in this report have been lightly edited where necessary to correct spelling, punctuation or minor grammatical errors. No changes have been made that alter the meaning of the original comment, and identifying information has been removed where appropriate.

Statistical testing

Where comparisons are made over time or between groups, statistical testing was undertaken to help determine whether observed differences were likely to reflect genuine variation rather than random sampling error. Unless otherwise stated, statistical significance was assessed using a threshold of $p < .05$. Statistical significance should be interpreted alongside effect sizes and practical importance, as statistically significant differences may still represent only small changes in students' experiences. Statistical testing was only undertaken where sample sizes were considered sufficient to support meaningful comparison.

Limitations

Like all survey research, Kōrero Mai has limitations. Participation is voluntary and the findings therefore reflect the views of students who chose to respond. Despite the respondent profile broadly reflecting the wider student population, some groups participated at higher or lower rates than others. Response counts also vary across questions because of routing, modular questionnaire design and item non-response. Findings should therefore be interpreted as indicators of broad patterns and experiences rather than precise estimates of the views of all students.

WHO-5 Wellbeing Index

Student wellbeing was assessed using the World Health Organization Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5). The WHO-5 was selected because it provides a brief, validated measure of positive wellbeing suitable for population-level monitoring that has been widely used in clinical, research and public health settings. The measure focuses on positive aspects of wellbeing rather than symptoms of ill health.

Respondents were asked how often they had experienced each of the following during the previous two weeks:

- I have felt active and vigorous
- I have felt calm and relaxed

- I have felt cheerful and in good spirits
- I woke up feeling fresh and rested
- My daily life has been filled with things that interest me

Responses were recorded on a six-point scale ranging from “At no time” (0) to “All of the time” (5). Scores were summed across the five questions to produce a total wellbeing score ranging from 0 to 25, with higher scores indicating higher levels of wellbeing.

For reporting purposes, WHO-5 scores were grouped into the following categories:

- 0-12: Poor wellbeing
- 13-19: Moderate/OK wellbeing
- 20-25: Good wellbeing

These groupings are intended to provide an indication of overall wellbeing within the survey population. The WHO-5 is a screening and monitoring tool and should not be interpreted as a clinical diagnostic measure.

PHQ-4 Psychological Distress Measure

Student psychological distress was assessed using the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4). The PHQ-4 was selected because it provides a brief and validated screening measure of symptoms associated with anxiety and depression while minimising respondent burden. It combines two questions relating to anxiety (GAD-2) and two questions relating to depression (PHQ-2).

Respondents were asked how often they had been bothered by each of the following during the previous two weeks:

- Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge
- Not being able to stop or control worrying
- Feeling down, depressed or hopeless
- Little interest or pleasure in doing things

Responses were recorded on a four-point scale:

- Not at all = 0
- Several days = 1
- More than half the days = 2
- Nearly every day = 3

Scores from the first two questions were summed to produce an anxiety screening score, while scores from the final two questions were summed to produce a depression screening score. A score of 3 or more on either screening scale is commonly used as a threshold indicating elevated symptoms that may warrant further attention.

Scores were also summed across all four items to produce an overall PHQ-4 distress score ranging from 0 to 12. For reporting purposes, total scores were grouped into the following categories:

- 0-2: None-minimal distress
- 3-5: Mild distress
- 6-8: Moderate distress
- 9-12: Severe distress

The PHQ-4 is designed as a screening measure rather than a diagnostic instrument. Results reported in this study indicate the prevalence of self-reported symptoms within the survey population and should not be interpreted as evidence of clinically diagnosed anxiety or depression.

Appendix 1: Complete qualitative coding framework and thematic results

What students value about their academic experience

Students provided 1,931 comments describing the best aspects of their academic experience. Comments were coded to 14 themes, with individual comments assigned to more than one theme where appropriate. Consequently, the percentages below represent the proportion of comments mentioning each theme and sum to more than 100%.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
Interesting and engaging courses/content	Students valued papers, classes and topics that were interesting, enjoyable, stimulating or well designed. This theme concerns the appeal and quality of the curriculum itself, rather than the attributes of the person teaching it.	900 / 46.6%	“I have really enjoyed the class content and the teaching.”	“The course content is super interesting and engaging, and the workloads are the right amount.”
Learning, knowledge and intellectual growth	Students described gaining new knowledge, developing stronger understanding, encountering new ways of thinking and growing in academic confidence or capability.	657 / 34.0%	“Probably getting to learn things that I’m passionate about.”	“Postgrad has definitely developed my critical thinking skills.”
Engaging and knowledgeable teaching staff	Students valued lecturers, tutors and course coordinators who demonstrated subject expertise, enthusiasm, clarity and an ability to bring material to life.	578 / 29.9%	“I enjoy the lecturers and how they are passionate about what they do.”	“Passionate lecturers that get you excited about ideas.”
Academic support and approachable staff	Students valued staff who were accessible, responsive, encouraging and willing to provide guidance or assistance with academic work or personal circumstances affecting study.	508 / 26.3%	“Support is easy to find, and quality of support is high when it is required.”	“The staff are super passionate and helpful despite how busy they are.”

Peer connection, collaboration and belonging	Students valued friendships, peer discussions, group work, shared perspectives and a sense of belonging within a cohort or academic community.	330 / 17.1%	“Collaborating with my peers and building connections.”	“The students! The culture of community.”
Assessment, feedback and achievement	Students valued meaningful assignments, constructive feedback, successful results and the satisfaction of making progress or reaching academic milestones.	253 / 13.1%	“Being able to see improvements in my work through going to get feedback.”	“Getting good grades because of my hard work.”
Practical, applied and experiential learning	Students valued opportunities to put theory into practice through laboratories, studios, fieldwork, placements, projects, case studies and other hands-on activities.	247 / 12.8%	“The hands-on learning… the labs have been an excellent way for me to properly learn and enjoy the courses.”	“Practical projects and hands-on experience with systems and ideas that are applicable to potential careers.”
Learning resources, facilities and campus environment	Students valued libraries, study spaces, equipment, Nuku, campus facilities and other physical or digital resources that supported their learning.	201 / 10.4%	“Having information laid out well on Nuku… makes work from home or finding key details so much easier.”	“I really appreciate the access to the vast library resources. Online databases are very useful.”
Research, thesis and supervision	Students valued pursuing meaningful research, developing research capability, progressing their thesis, receiving effective supervision and sharing their work.	196 / 10.2%	“The freedom to research my thesis on my own, but with the support from my supervisors.”	“My research supervisors have been phenomenal. They have been so kind and generous with their time and expertise.”
Tutorials, seminars and interactive classes	Students valued tutorials, workshops, seminars and other interactive classes that created opportunities to participate, ask questions, discuss ideas and deepen their understanding.	168 / 8.7%	“I’ve really enjoyed all my law tutorials; I found the smaller, more personable environments make it really easy to ask lots of questions.”	“I feel like I’ve done a lot more learning in those classes over lectures.”

Flexibility and accessible learning	Students valued recordings, online and hybrid options, adaptable arrangements and the ability to study across different times, places or personal circumstances.	145 / 7.5%	“If I’m unable to attend a lecture in person I am able to just watch it online… and not have to miss out on anything.”	“The flexibility… has made it easy for me to work towards meaningful things outside of uni.”
Choice, independence and academic freedom	Students appreciated being able to choose papers, topics, projects or research directions aligned with their interests and to take ownership of their learning.	122 / 6.3%	“I love getting the free opportunity to CHOOSE what I want to learn.”	“The best aspects of my academic experience is actually learning stuff I am curious about.”
Career preparation and professional relevance	Students valued experiences that developed employment skills, professional confidence, industry connections or understanding of future careers and professional practice.	91 / 4.7%	“Good course content that directly supports my current role and prepares me for the next step of my career.”	“The information and content is very relevant and I feel will help me get a career in engineering.”
Cultural inclusion and diverse perspectives	Students valued Māori, Pasifika, international and other cultural knowledge, culturally responsive learning and opportunities to encounter perspectives different from their own.	70 / 3.6%	“It has connected me to other Māori students in Vic and also Otago Polytech.”	“Having a space for Pasifika students that makes us feel welcomed and feel comfortable.”

Aspects of the academic experience that could be improved

Students provided 1,802 comments about aspects of their academic experience that were most in need of improvement. The comments were coded into 16 themes. A comment could be assigned to more than one theme but was counted only once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and sum to more than 100%.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
Communication, information and course organisation	Unclear, late, incomplete or inconsistently organised information about courses, expectations, schedules, changes and academic processes.	435 / 24.1%	“Organisation of the course. Weekly modules are always released late, everything is organised last minute and requires chasing up.”	“Critical info should be either on Nuku in announcements, or in emails, or both.”
Teaching quality and lecturer engagement	The effectiveness, clarity, pacing and engagement of teaching, including passive delivery, limited explanation and inconsistency between teaching staff.	414 / 23.0%	“Some teachers need to learn how to be more engaging as I have one who speaks for two hours straight.”	“Pedagogical skills of lecturers are often very poor or lacking.”
Assessment design, clarity and fairness	The clarity, structure, weighting, alignment and fairness of assignments, tests and examinations, including rubrics and marking expectations.	396 / 22.0%	“The assignments can be very unclear and confusing.”	“Assessment quality and consistency; robust and coherent tasks with clearly defined expectations.”
Academic support, advice and staff availability	Access to timely, knowledgeable and responsive help from lecturers, tutors, advisers and academic support services.	396 / 22.0%	“Sometimes it feels like I need more support.”	“It would help if emails were answered within a reasonable time, or if students were clearly told who else they could contact.”
Workload, time pressure and course coordination	The volume and pace of academic work, deadline clustering and limited coordination of demands across courses or programme components.	213 / 11.8%	“Too heavy a workload where it becomes extremely difficult to manage multiple courses on top of normal life.”	“Assignment due dates are all at the same time and courses could work together to prevent this.”

Flexible, online and accessible learning	Flexibility in the mode, time and place of study, including recordings, online or hybrid participation, attendance requirements and accessible formats.	197 / 10.9%	“It was difficult not having online options for lectures, so if I was unwell it was quite difficult to catch up.”	“All my learning is through online classes. Sometimes activities are not structured for online learners.”
Learning resources, digital systems and facilities	The quality and accessibility of learning platforms, libraries, study spaces, classrooms, equipment, internet access and specialist resources.	181 / 10.0%	“Navigating the university website and different systems has been quite difficult.”	“Nuku remains difficult to navigate, as every lecturer structures it differently.”
Feedback quality and turnaround	The timeliness, detail, consistency and usefulness of grades, comments and other information returned after assessed work.	168 / 9.3%	“It is frustrating to write for assignments but not get feedback on them for improvement.”	“Faster feedback, even if it’s brief, would make a big difference.”
Practical application and career relevance	Opportunities to apply theory through placements, projects, laboratories and authentic tasks, and to connect learning with employment or professional practice.	158 / 8.8%	“More practical learning opportunities, such as industry projects, internships, or workplace experience, would better prepare students for future employment.”	“I feel a little unprepared about transitioning to an industry job.”
Peer interaction and group-work experience	Opportunities to connect and learn with peers, alongside concerns about limited interaction, compulsory group work, uneven contributions and group allocation.	140 / 7.8%	“I feel there needs to be more opportunities for students to work with one another.”	“Any team or group-work assignments need improvement in terms of structuring delegation and accountability.”
Research supervision and postgraduate experience	Supervisor availability and guidance, thesis progression, research training, postgraduate processes and the wider research environment.	119 / 6.6%	“At the start of my PhD I had different supervisors and the support I received was not sufficient.”	“There needs to be clearer guidance as to what to look for or ask a supervisor before engaging with them.”

Financial pressure and affordability	Fees, living costs, study materials, funding and the need to work alongside study where these constrained students' academic experiences.	114 / 6.3%	"I struggle to focus on my studies due to financial pressure."	"Rent eats up most of my weekly StudyLink, and then I get to choose whether I want vegetables or to socialise or work in my office."
Inclusion, disability and cultural responsiveness	Disability access and accommodations, neurodiversity, cultural responsiveness and the inclusion of students with differing backgrounds and circumstances.	104 / 5.8%	"As a disabled student with an invisible disability, I would like more access to live-streamed lectures."	"The inclusion and exploration of Indigenous science perspectives is something that is typically overlooked in science papers."
Course choice, availability and programme structure	The range and availability of courses, prerequisites, compulsory requirements, timetable clashes and programme structures affecting choice or progression.	40 / 2.2%	"More courses could be made online friendly for students that want to study part time."	"It was very strange that the courses that I was required to do for my degree didn't even fit together on a timetable."
AI use and academic integrity	The use and governance of artificial intelligence in teaching and assessment, including acceptable use, inconsistent expectations and concerns about integrity.	39 / 2.2%	"Clarity about the requirements of using AI."	"There is variability and it would be good to have a similar approach across courses."
No improvement identified or generally satisfied	Comments from students who could not identify an area needing improvement or described their academic experience as generally satisfactory.	19 / 1.1%	"I'm pretty happy with everything."	"I am satisfied with my academic experience so far and do not have any major areas that need improvement at this stage."

Improving safety, inclusion, respect and freedom of expression

Students provided 480 comments about what could improve safety, inclusion, respect and people's ability to express themselves at the University. The comments were coded into 14 themes. A comment could be assigned to more than one theme but was counted no more than once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
Inclusive representation and support for diverse groups	Recognition, representation, belonging and appropriate support for students from different cultural, ethnic, gender, sexuality and international backgrounds.	135 / 28.1%	"Freedom to be different and have different beliefs or be proud of where they come from."	"It would be great for the university to give students more opportunities to meet people from their own culture and other cultures."
Respectful culture, empathy and everyday behaviour	Kindness, empathy, listening and respect for different experiences, identities, beliefs and perspectives in routine interactions.	105 / 21.9%	"Encouraging people to listen to each other without judgement can also help everyone feel more confident expressing themselves."	"Just being respectful of others and their beliefs and having an open mind is key."
Physical safety, security and campus environment	Security presence, lighting, building access, movement after dark and other practical aspects of feeling physically safe on campus.	92 / 19.2%	"More lights on campus at night, particularly the walkways to and from uni."	"Campus security number could be more frequent and visible around campus."
Community connection, events and participation	Clubs, events, cultural activities and other opportunities to meet people, participate and build relationships across different groups.	91 / 19.0%	"More communal events which inspire a sense of wider community across the University."	"More events in the hub that allow people to interact without having the commitment of a club."
Freedom of expression and constructive dialogue	The ability to share ideas, opinions and beliefs, encounter different perspectives and disagree constructively without intimidation.	53 / 11.0%	"I would like to be able to have open discussions about different views."	"Creating spaces where students feel comfortable expressing their opinions without fear of judgement would

				help build a stronger sense of belonging.”
Education, training and awareness	Education and capability-building relating to respectful behaviour, inclusion, cultural understanding, disability and relevant responsibilities.	50 / 10.4%	“More cultural training for staff, including TAs.”	“Regular inclusion training builds awareness and empathy.”
Safe reporting, anonymous feedback and accountability	Accessible, confidential or anonymous ways to raise concerns, together with visible follow-up and confidence that appropriate action will result.	49 / 10.2%	“Staying responsive to students’ feedback and experiences and taking seriously concerns raised about any of these issues.”	“Having a simple, low-pressure way to flag things, anonymously if needed, might catch problems earlier.”
Staff capability, conduct and leadership	The role of lecturers, tutors, supervisors, professional staff and leaders in modelling respectful conduct, understanding different needs and using authority responsibly.	47 / 9.8%	“Staff should be neutral in their stance and responses, so that people feel respected and free to share.”	“More staff who can listen, and get things done.”
Disability access and neurodiversity	Disability-specific access, consistent accommodations, staff understanding and the removal of barriers in teaching, services and physical spaces.	40 / 8.3%	“Comprehensive disability inclusion: make the university accessible to anyone and accommodate their access needs.”	“More funding towards disability services so they can support students even better.”
Inclusive spaces, facilities and visible signals	Safe, quiet, cultural or faith spaces, appropriate facilities, inclusive signage and other practical or visible indications that different communities are welcome.	39 / 8.1%	“Better physical or social quiet or no-tech spaces, somewhere to sit and reflect or think for a bit.”	“Advertise your safe spaces more. Some people don’t know they exist.”
Responding to discrimination, bullying and harmful conduct	Prompt and serious responses to discrimination, bullying, harassment, racism and other conduct that causes harm or exclusion.	22 / 4.6%	“Ensuring the environment discourages discrimination and making sure concerns	“More serious action taken towards harmful students, specifically prejudiced students.”

			are responded to appropriately.”	
No improvement identified or generally positive	Comments from students who could not identify an improvement or who already experienced the University as safe, respectful and inclusive.	19 / 4.0%	“I have always felt included and respected.”	“I am not sure what they could improve on as I think they are doing a good job.”
Clear policies, standards and consistent enforcement	Clear expectations about acceptable conduct and consistent application of relevant policies, rules and standards.	17 / 3.5%	“Share and make clear the rules and boundaries.”	“Clearer guidelines on what to do when questionable behaviour is occurring.”
Student voice, consultation and co-design	Student involvement in shaping safety and inclusion initiatives, including consultation, listening to affected groups and visible responses to feedback.	2 / 0.4%	“Regular, genuine follow-up on survey results… so people can see that feedback actually leads to change.”	“A university chat may help… and allow another venue for student voice that professors can easily access and address.”

Improving community and connection

Students provided 581 comments about how community and connection could be enhanced across the University. The comments were coded into 14 themes. A comment could be assigned to more than one theme but was counted no more than once within each theme. Percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
More social events and shared activities	Regular, varied and low-pressure opportunities to gather through events, food, games, sport, cultural activities and other shared experiences.	272 / 46.8%	“More social events that aren’t tied to any specific group or degree, just kind of general events.”	“More local, small-scale student-led events that are fun and foster interaction.”
Peer connection within courses and classes	Relationship-building within courses, tutorials, lectures and academic cohorts through discussion, study groups, collaboration and purposeful introductions.	121 / 20.8%	“Being able to get to know other people in your classes more.”	“During lectures and tutorials, if we were encouraged to meet people we don’t know, that would be awesome.”
Clubs, societies and student-led communities	Ongoing clubs, societies, sports teams and interest-based groups that enable repeated contact, shared identity and sustained relationships.	115 / 19.8%	“There are a lot of clubs and societies, so I would say there is a great range of options to choose from.”	“More financial support for clubs and sports, as these are a good way to connect with other students.”
Connection across campuses, faculties and disciplines	Activities, communication and interaction that bridge geographical and organisational separation between campuses, faculties, schools and disciplines.	106 / 18.2%	“More events at Te Aro campus as I feel isolated from the events at Kelburn.”	“Allowing different faculties to have social events together.”
Welcoming, inclusive and cross-cultural connection	Opportunities that welcome students from different cultures, nationalities, identities and backgrounds and encourage interaction across communities.	88 / 15.1%	“More opportunities for international students to connect with Kiwi students.”	“I think there should be a festival where all the communities perform their own culture.”

Improved promotion and a central source of information	Clearer, earlier and more coordinated information about events, clubs and activities through accessible and reliable communication channels.	78 / 13.4%	“Promoting events more. Often I will hear about things I probably would have attended and enjoyed, but I didn’t know about them.”	“Maybe an overview of upcoming events… so I can plan ahead.”
Accessibility, affordability and timing of participation	Practical barriers involving cost, scheduling, employment, disability, transport and other commitments that affect students’ ability to participate.	78 / 13.4%	“Student events that are cheaper… the tickets are a bit too expensive for a lot of students.”	“Make the times more accessible. Most students work in the afternoons or evenings.”
Informal social and communal spaces	Comfortable physical spaces where students can sit, eat, relax, study socially or interact without attending an organised activity.	70 / 12.0%	“More third spaces… not necessarily study space but comfy spaces.”	“Having spaces on campus which encourage students to spend their time there.”
Targeted connection for postgraduate, mature and non-hall students	Opportunities designed for postgraduate, research, mature, commuter and non-hall students whose circumstances may not align with mainstream student activities.	41 / 7.1%	“I’ve come in as a postgraduate student… I think it’s difficult to find community in postgraduate courses.”	“Please provide something for mature students. As a 63-year-old I have struggled to integrate into the social components of the University.”
Staff-student relationships and approachable support	Approachable staff, mentoring and informal interaction that help students feel recognised, supported and connected to an academic community.	37 / 6.4%	“Greater emphasis on teaching that requires tutors or lecturers to engage meaningfully with their students.”	“Improving lecturer-to-student connection.”
Orientation, transition and sustained first-year connection	Relationship-building during transition into university that continues beyond O Week and includes mid-year entrants and first-year students outside halls.	33 / 5.7%	“More events for first-year students not living in halls of residence.”	“Providing events for the wider student body that are not just O Week.”

Online and distance community	Virtual spaces, online events and communication that enable students without regular campus attendance to form social, academic and professional relationships.	31 / 5.3%	“Creating more opportunities for online students to be connected with others and build a community.”	“I’m a remote student and there is no encouragement or connection.”
Smaller groups and structured introductions	Low-pressure mechanisms such as buddy systems, peer mentoring, small groups, facilitated introductions and icebreakers that actively help people meet.	19 / 3.3%	“More events that don’t encourage going with a group of people, but instead icebreaking events.”	“More time with each other in classes and smaller groups of people.”
No improvement identified or generally positive	Comments from students who could not identify an improvement or considered existing community and connection opportunities adequate.	13 / 2.2%	“Honestly, it’s pretty good… as a whole there are a lot of opportunities.”	“I think the University is doing a great job in building community and connection across the University.”

Improving the digital learning environment

Students provided 601 comments about how the University's digital learning environment could be improved. The comments were coded into 14 themes. Individual comments could be assigned to more than one theme but were counted no more than once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
Nuku usability and consistent course design	The usability and structure of Nuku course pages, including consistent placement of materials, modules, assignments, announcements and activities.	95 / 15.8%	"Ensuring everyone uses Nuku the same. It switches from class to class and it can be stressful."	"It's really good when a course is incredibly organised on Nuku, especially with ample information on assignments, test dates and lab structure."
Findability, navigation and clear organisation	The ease with which students can locate digital information, resources and instructions through clear menus, layouts, links and search pathways.	92 / 15.3%	"User-friendly design like simpler menus helps students find assignments and grades much faster."	"There is almost too much information, and it's hard to know where to look."
Digital skills, training and user support	Guidance, onboarding and practical assistance for students and staff using digital platforms, software and online learning tools.	86 / 14.3%	"Staff who know how to confidently use the digital tools at their disposal."	"Having clear instructions on how to use them, or simplifying the experience."
Integrated, modern and streamlined systems	The integration, modernisation and simplification of the wider digital ecosystem, including reducing fragmentation, duplication and reliance on outdated platforms.	83 / 13.8%	"Way too many different platforms; centralisation and standardisation are needed."	"One system to do all the different things required for me to do."
Communication, notifications and calendar coordination	Accurate, timely and coordinated notifications about deadlines, announcements, timetable changes and other time-sensitive academic information.	76 / 12.6%	"A dashboard to show all assessment deadlines."	"Better organisation of upcoming deadlines; it can be a little bit of a maze."

Connectivity, reliability and performance	The availability, speed and dependable operation of Wi-Fi, platforms, applications and other digital services.	75 / 12.5%	“Better Wi-Fi consistency.”	“It working properly and not being incredibly slow.”
Access to devices, software and digital resources	Access to suitable computers, monitors, specialist software, licences, databases, e-books and other resources required for digital learning.	54 / 9.0%	“More student discounts and licences for computer programmes such as Adobe.”	“More ready access to programs and apps, and better-quality PCs.”
Lecture recordings and multimedia quality	The completeness, timeliness and technical quality of recorded lectures and multimedia, including sound, video, captions, transcripts and classroom discussions.	52 / 8.7%	“Recording the full lecture; often the end is cut off.”	“Some of the recorded lectures have problems, like noise or no voice.”
Flexible online and hybrid participation	Online, hybrid and remote options that allow students to participate around work, health, disability, caring responsibilities or distance.	36 / 6.0%	“Better online learning alternatives for in-person courses when students are sick or away for extended periods of time.”	“More options for online, no compulsory in-person classes.”
Accessible and inclusive digital content	Digital platforms and materials that support equivalent participation through captions, transcripts, readable formatting and compatibility with different access needs.	28 / 4.7%	“Lecture and tutorial recordings badly need captions, or better captions where they exist.”	“I need larger text, and that often isn’t an option with required reading.”
Engaging and interactive digital pedagogy	The use of discussion, collaborative tools, quizzes, polls and other interactive approaches to make digital teaching more active and engaging.	22 / 3.7%	“Making quizzes more interactive than just clicking an answer from a list of choices.”	“More online and interactive activities during class instead of sitting and listening to the lecturer speak.”
No improvement identified or generally satisfied	Comments from students who could not identify a needed improvement or	18 / 3.0%	“I am satisfied with the digital learning environment overall.”	“I would say it is pretty good.”

	considered the existing digital learning environment adequate.			
AI tools and guidance	Explicit suggestions or concerns about artificial intelligence tools, appropriate use, guidance, detection and integration into learning.	8 / 1.3%	“Not forcing integration of AI.”	“Talk about AI critiques.”
Less digital learning or stronger in-person focus	A preference for less reliance on digital delivery and greater emphasis on face-to-face teaching, interaction or support.	4 / 0.7%	“Less of it.”	“If they are able to come and solve the issues we need face-to-face, rather than remotely.”

Enhancing student support services

Students provided 889 comments about how Student Support Services could be enhanced. The analysis identified 13 themes, including a category for respondents who did not suggest a specific enhancement. Individual comments could be assigned to more than one theme but were counted no more than once within each theme. The percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%. A further 299 comments were too vague, individual or ambiguous to assign reliably to a recurring theme.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
Access, capacity and waiting times	Appointment availability, waiting periods, staffing, queues, booking processes, opening hours and the ability to obtain help when it is needed.	220 / 24.7%	“Shorter wait times for appointments.”	“Having an easier way to book an appointment.”
Awareness, signposting and navigation	Awareness of available services and the ability to understand what each provides, determine where to go and locate accurate contact information.	209 / 23.5%	“More clarity on what each service offers.”	“I think it would be good if people know exactly what they’re used for. A lot of people don’t know.”
Communication, responsiveness and follow-through	Timely acknowledgement, clear and consistent answers, progress updates, completion of agreed actions and continuity after initial contact.	140 / 15.7%	“If they respond to emails and follow through with the plans they put in place.”	“Clear communication, responding to emails, fulfilling requests in a timely manner.”
Health, counselling and wellbeing support	Access to Mauri Ora, counselling and wellbeing assistance, including practitioner availability, booking, continuity, appropriate care and follow-up.	122 / 13.7%	“More availability for counselling, have tried but been told it’s very busy and a long wait.”	“More resources for Mauri Ora and student counselling.”
Careers, employment and transition support	Career guidance, employment preparation, internships, placements, work experience and support for moving from study into employment.	68 / 7.6%	“More personal reach out, and more visibility about what happens in the services, ie, career appt.”	“Expanding career guidance workshops… tailored for international and part-time students.”

Academic advice, course planning and enrolment	Accurate advice about programme structures, course selection, degree audits, prerequisites, enrolment, changing programmes and academic progression.	66 / 7.4%	“Knowledge about new enrolments can be improved. Example, upgrading a qualification, next steps.”	“Everyone I spoke to was very nice, but nobody could really help me with the answers I needed to progress.”
Tailored support for diverse student circumstances	Support designed around different study modes, stages and circumstances, including international, postgraduate, mature, part-time, remote and student-parent experiences.	64 / 7.2%	“Better support for part time mature postgrad students.”	“More targeted guidance for postgraduate international students.”
No specific enhancement suggested	Comments indicating that services were working well, no improvement came to mind or the respondent lacked enough experience to make a suggestion.	43 / 4.8%	“I found it to be very seamless, and helpful. I have no suggestions.”	“Overall, I think the Student Support Services are really good, and I can’t think of anything that needs improvement at the moment.”
Quality, empathy and professionalism of staff	Staff knowledge, professionalism, empathy, respect, consistency, active listening and the ability to provide personalised and reliable assistance.	42 / 4.7%	“Having people who actually know what they’re talking about.”	“I’d like to receive more personalised support.”
Flexible delivery, campus coverage and service design	Choice in how and where support is accessed, including online and in-person appointments, drop-ins, self-service options and provision across campuses.	33 / 3.7%	“Please have an online booking for counselling.”	“Better accessibility on all campuses to the services and directions and promoting for services placed around all campuses.”
Disability, neurodiversity and learning accommodations	Disability and neurodiversity support, including support plans, assessment conditions, appointment continuity and consistent implementation of accommodations.	29 / 3.3%	“Disability services following up about future appointments.”	“More tailored/disability-specific, e.g. ADHD-specific support, would greatly enhance experiences at Disability Services.”

Financial, housing and practical assistance	Support with financial hardship, affordability, food, housing, transport and other practical pressures that can affect participation in study.	21 / 2.4%	“Can we international students have more financial support.”	“More support for those in study and financial hardship needing diagnosis.”
Advocacy, complaints and resolution of complex cases	Advocacy, escalation and complaint pathways for complex, disputed or unresolved matters that involve multiple teams or institutional processes.	12 / 1.3%	“Having clear ways to communicate wrongdoing by staff and ease in complaints and following up after incidents occur.”	“Did not receive advocacy in graduation matters, wasn’t given options and support needed to navigate my situation.”

Enhancing university services

Students provided 335 comments about how University Services could be enhanced. The analysis identified 10 recurring enhancement themes, together with a separate category for respondents who did not suggest a specific enhancement. Comments could be assigned to more than one theme where they contained distinct ideas, but were counted no more than once within each theme. Percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%. A further 113 comments were not assigned to a recurring theme because they were vague, highly specific or did not contain enough information to interpret reliably.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
Clearer information, awareness and service navigation	Awareness of available services, understanding what each provides and being able to identify and locate the appropriate source of assistance.	96 / 28.7%	“More information about what they provide, where to find help.”	“What is University Services? It would help if that’s described.”
Communication, updates and responsiveness	Clear, relevant and timely communications about services, events and changes, together with prompt responses to student enquiries.	63 / 18.8%	“More consistent communication and updates.”	“More precision and labelling in the communication about them.”
Digital systems, portals and online usability	The usability and integration of websites, portals and other digital service environments, including navigation, bookings and online processes.	44 / 13.1%	“Some of the websites can be a bit non-intuitive to use.”	“A more user-friendly online portal with all services in one place.”
Wider access, opening hours and inclusive delivery	Access to services across different campuses, locations, schedules and study modes through appropriate online and in-person delivery.	44 / 13.1%	“More online support for students who live away from campus.”	“Making sure it’s accessible for both online and in person.”
Faster, simpler and better coordinated administration	Efficient processing, simpler procedures, clear confirmation and progress updates, and coordination between departments handling student requests.	40 / 11.9%	“Efficiency and faster response time.”	“Faster response times for enquiries, extended service hours during busy periods, and better coordination between different departments.”

Library collections, research resources and learning support	Access to required readings, books, databases and research resources, together with effective search tools and guidance on using Library services.	38 / 11.3%	“More intuitive library search.”	“Clearer information on how students can request journal articles not subscribed to by the university library.”
Affordability, funding and value of services	The cost of services, the use of student-service fees, funding for service provision and students’ perceptions of the value they receive.	25 / 7.5%	“Providing more free services for students paying high prices for education.”	“I pay a lot in fees and yet do not access many of the services mentioned in this survey.”
No specific enhancement suggested	Comments indicating satisfaction, a positive experience or insufficient use of University Services to identify a particular improvement.	15 / 4.5%	“Based on my experience so far, I am satisfied with the University Services.”	“They are really good, no notes for improvement.”
Tailored services for different student groups	Services, guidance and communications designed for different study stages and circumstances, particularly postgraduate, research, international, mature and distance students.	14 / 4.2%	“It would be good to provide more clear guidance for postgraduate research students.”	“Care and support directed towards distance students.”
Staff helpfulness, expertise and service quality	The approachability, knowledge, responsiveness and professional quality of staff providing University Services.	11 / 3.3%	“Everyone seems nice and approachable.”	“More training around the University Services so that people know where to direct students.”
Security, safety and building access	Security services, vehicle safety, key-card arrangements and access to buildings, rooms and lifts during and outside standard hours.	7 / 2.1%	“Better security for vehicles at OGB.”	“Provide students with swipe card access to campus buildings after hours.”

Enhancing university spaces and facilities

Students provided 461 comments about how the University's spaces and facilities could be enhanced. Comments were multi-coded where they contained distinct ideas, but each comment was counted no more than once within an individual theme. Percentages therefore represent the proportion of comments associated with each theme and intentionally sum to more than 100%. The analysis identified 11 core enhancement themes, with two less frequent themes retained in the thematic workbook, as well as a separate category for respondents who did not suggest an enhancement. A further 86 comments were not assigned to a recurring theme because they were broad, ambiguous, highly specific or lacked sufficient detail for reliable classification.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
More study space, seating and places to work	The quantity and availability of desks, tables, booths, individual workstations and other places to sit, study or work.	149 / 32.3%	"More seating, everywhere."	"More spaces to sit and study especially at Pip."
Awareness, information, maps and signage	Information about available facilities, their locations, intended uses, eligibility, access arrangements and booking requirements.	94 / 20.4%	"Make people more aware of what University Spaces and Facilities are available to them."	"More info on them and where they are and what they offer."
Cleanliness, maintenance and quality of facilities	The cleanliness, condition, upkeep and renewal of shared spaces, bathrooms, furniture, teaching rooms and equipment.	90 / 19.5%	"Sometimes I feel the cleaning is not enough."	"Repair the holes in the rec centre walls."
Affordable, varied and accessible food options	The price, range and availability of food and drink, including dietary options, cafés, kitchens, microwaves and facilities for preparing food.	70 / 15.2%	"More cost effective cafes and food outlets. Option for a Kelburn campus shop."	"Providing more low-cost food options for students."
Comfort, heating, lighting and ambience	Furniture comfort, ergonomics, temperature, heating, lighting, natural light and the overall atmosphere of campus spaces.	69 / 15.0%	"More study spaces with more comfortable seating."	"Some spaces in University are cold. It would be better if more heaters are provided."

Technology, power, Wi-Fi and specialist equipment	Access to power outlets, charging points, Wi-Fi, docking stations, monitors, computers, printers, audiovisual systems and specialist equipment.	61 / 13.2%	“More docking stations in library plsss.”	“More charging points at study spaces at Te Aro campus.”
Quiet, group and bookable spaces	Clearly differentiated environments for quiet individual work and collaborative activity, including private and bookable study rooms.	53 / 11.5%	“Better access to quiet spaces would be helpful.”	“Would like to have a few more ‘loud’ group study rooms.”
Better provision across campuses	The distribution of study, food, recreation, social and other facilities across Kelburn, Pipitea and Te Aro.	46 / 10.0%	“A café, gym and more study spaces at Te Aro campus would enhance studying there.”	“More study rooms at Pipitea, better ventilation and more water fountains.”
Outdoor, green and social spaces	Outdoor, sheltered, green and communal areas where students can study, eat, relax, meet others and spend time between classes.	36 / 7.8%	“Having more outdoor spaces available with some shelter that get good sun.”	“Have more outdoor seating including some tables with shelter from Wellington wind and rain.”
Recreation, exercise and wellbeing facilities	Gym, exercise, sport, games, creative activity and rest facilities that support physical activity, relaxation and wellbeing.	33 / 7.2%	“A bigger gym space and maybe some new machines.”	“Perhaps more quiet zones for breaking… just quiet rest space between class.”
Accessibility and inclusive design	Spaces and facilities that can be located, reached and used safely and independently by people with different physical, sensory, health and family needs.	23 / 5.0%	“Parent rooms, cleaner bathroom facilities.”	“A safe and inclusive space either in private or collective for students with chronic or health conditions that may need an occasional resting area.”

Students' priorities for improvement

At the end of the survey, students were asked to identify the one thing the University should focus on improving next year. In total, 1,339 students provided a comment. These responses covered many aspects of the student experience, but the most prevalent priorities concerned community and belonging, student support and wellbeing, teaching quality, affordability, communication and administration, and equity and inclusion.

Comments could be coded to more than one theme where students identified several distinct priorities. Percentages therefore indicate the proportion of comments mentioning each theme and should not be added together.

Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Quotes	
Community, belonging, events and student life	Requests for stronger student communities, more opportunities to meet people, livelier campuses, inclusive events, and better support for clubs and societies.	261 / 19.5%	"Social groups and activities for a wider range of interests and hobbies."	"Better student life initiatives, to create a better engagement with the student community."
Student support, wellbeing and pastoral care	Calls for visible, accessible and responsive academic, personal, health and wellbeing support, including counselling, Mauri Ora and proactive assistance for students who are struggling.	236 / 17.6%	"In halls of residence, don't let people fall under the radar and suffer."	"Students' well being, more services and better access to it so less waiting."
Teaching quality, course design and academic experience	Improvements to teaching practice, lecturer capability, course content and organisation, assessment design, marking, feedback, workload and course availability.	227 / 17.0%	"Course quality, making sure we are learning up to the best standards."	"Developing staff awareness of assessment best practice and ensuring consistency across courses."
Affordability, fees and financial support	Reducing the financial burden of study through lower or stable fees, scholarships, grants and more affordable food, housing, transport and other essential costs.	220 / 16.4%	"Making everything cheaper around university to encourage students to be at university more."	"Helping students with cost of living."

Communication, information and administrative processes	Clearer and more timely information about courses, assessments, services and requirements, alongside simpler processes, reliable advice and better coordination between areas.	206 / 15.4%	“Communication. There should be clear and precise communication about what matters to students.”	“The main thing the university should focus on improving next year is communication between students and teaching staff.”
Equity, inclusion, accessibility and cultural responsiveness	More equitable and accessible teaching, services and facilities, with stronger recognition of disability, culture, identity, family responsibilities and diverse student circumstances.	145 / 10.8%	“Developing and adopting an anti racism strategy.”	“Support for working class/disabled students. Helping those who don’t fit the mould be able to fit in.”
Campus facilities, study spaces and maintenance	More and better-quality study and teaching spaces, including seating, quiet and group rooms, power outlets, bathrooms, heating, maintenance and renewal of older facilities.	140 / 10.5%	“More and better seating, chairs and tables EVERYWHERE.”	“I think one big thing would be giving some TLC to the older classrooms.”
Careers, employment and practical opportunities	Stronger preparation for employment through career guidance, internships, paid placements, industry connections, networking and practical learning opportunities.	105 / 7.8%	“Connection between careers services and advice with ‘real-world’ organisations.”	“Increase more career support and internships.”
Digital systems, online learning and technology	More reliable, integrated and user-friendly digital systems, alongside consistent use of Nuku, accurate online information, recorded teaching and accessible online learning.	90 / 6.7%	“Digital services, everything is so disconnected and looks straight out of 2005.”	“ECS and Nuku confusion. Please just pick one and stick to it.”
Access across campuses, remote study and scheduling flexibility	More equitable provision across Kelburn, Pipitea and Te Aro, with flexible study modes, online options and scheduling that recognises remote, working and caring students.	76 / 5.7%	“More flexibility on options to allow distance study students to engage in courses.”	“I think making sure the other campuses have fun too since it always seems like Kelburn gets all the fun.”

University priorities, funding choices and staffing	Concerns about institutional priorities and resource allocation, including funding for student-facing services, academic programmes, clubs, teaching staff and technical staff.	67 / 5.0%	“Working more for their students and less for their profits.”	“Hire more teaching staff and technicians, and value them more.”
Postgraduate research and supervision	Better postgraduate orientation, supervision, supervisor training, research support, funding, doctoral stipends, academic development and dedicated facilities.	53 / 4.0%	“More support for PhD students when supervisors are away.”	“Better onboarding and support for PhD students starting out, particularly international students.”
Artificial intelligence use, policy and academic integrity	Clearer and more consistent approaches to AI, including academic-integrity expectations, ethical use, staff and student capability, and protection of authentic learning.	48 / 3.6%	“Encouraging students to engage with AI in a critical and sensible way.”	“Provide every student and staff with AI skills training.”
Sustainability and environmental responsibility	Stronger environmental action, including recycling, composting, reduced waste, reusable products, lower emissions, greener campuses and transparent sustainability commitments.	44 / 3.3%	“Actively working towards being a carbon net-zero university.”	“More clarity and signs around recycling and what exactly can go in each bin.”
Transport, parking and getting to campus	More affordable and accessible public transport, additional or cheaper parking, better campus connections and support for students travelling to placements or commuting long distances.	44 / 3.3%	“Free bus passes.”	“Parking for people who drive 140km round trip to get in.”