

Briefing: NUS COVID-19 Student Survey Phase 2

October 2020

The National Union of Students (NUS) Insight conducted a survey to understand how students and recent graduates feel about the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This was the second survey in a series taking place during 2020/21 and builds on the Coronavirus and Students Survey April 2020 which garnered 10,000 responses from students. This briefing will provide a summary of the main survey findings. The full findings can be found on the NUS website (sign-in required).¹

Plans for the next academic year

- » The majority of students (around 80%) intend on continuing with their studies as planned when the new term starts. Just 4% say they will defer their studies and only 2% say they no longer plan on studying.
- » At the time of the survey, the vast majority (around 75%) expected to be returning to their studies in September 2020. The remainder largely expect to be returning in October 2020.
- » Key themes emerging included a lack of clarity about how courses will be taught and uncertainty about a second spike.
- » As a result, NUS suggest that more detail is needed for students who were yet to decide what to do, how much teaching delivery will change throughout the academic year, and how institutions planned on maintaining social distancing and hygiene.

Health, Wellbeing and Welfare

- » Concerns about contracting Coronavirus have stayed fairly consistent compared to the Phase 1 survey in March 2020 – with nearly half of respondents suggesting that they are ‘somewhat concerned’.
- » The majority of students feel that they have had the necessary support to deal with Coronavirus. However, where support has been lacking, respondents pointed to the areas of mental health and the lack of counselling provision.
- » Half of respondents are interacting with their family more, perhaps compensating for the reduction in reported interactions with clubs and societies, other students and course mates.

Support from Students’ Unions and Institutions

- » Students generally feel they are being kept up to date more by their institutions than by their students’ unions on news and developments.
- » However, the general feeling is that students are simply not receiving as much information or advice as before, and NUS suggests that this may be because the initial stages of the pandemic are over and institutions / SUs believe students are beyond the point of requiring practical advice.
- » Students would like their SUs to support them better throughout the pandemic by providing more up to date and useful information, including personal contact and providing advice on financial and accommodation issues.

¹ <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/covid-19-and-students-survey-report-phase-2-members-version>

- » On commercial services provided by their SU, half of respondents would prefer to shop/dine in person. Click & Collect options are preferable to on campus deliveries.

Education: teaching and learning experience and academic success

- » The proportion of students who agree that they are able to access online learning sufficiently to complete their studies, and that the online provision is a good standard/quality, has dropped since March 2020.
- » One of the biggest challenges for students who weren't able to complete their studies sufficiently online was the lack of access to physical resources.
- » Suggestions for improved online provision largely focussed on having compulsory online lectures/workshops that meet a certain standard to fulfil the course requirements.
- » Of those who completed an assessment as part of their course, two in three felt satisfied to some extent with the methods used. Two in three students got the marks they expected to get in their assessments, with just under half saying their results are the same as before the pandemic and a fifth saying they are higher.
- » The human interaction, including face-to-face teaching and social interaction, previously experienced by students is what they are missing the most throughout the pandemic.

Employment, income and financial circumstances

- » Three in five students say that Coronavirus has had some degree of impact upon their income. The key impact has been the result of fewer job opportunities, fewer hours/shifts available, losing a job, or being furloughed.
- » As was the case in March 2020, half of students say that the income of someone who supports them financially has been impacted by Covid-19.
- » Looking ahead to beyond the pandemic, three in four say they are concerned about their ability to manage financially.

The future

- » The vast majority of students feel prepared for another wave of Coronavirus. This is largely down to observing social distancing rules, feeling more informed, knowing what to expect and having access to PPE.
- » To increase feelings of preparedness, students would like to have the option of financial assistance, to have more information from their institutions and the government and the reassurance of more and better regulated online learning options.
- » Concerns for longer term careers options focus on a likely lack of job opportunities, fewer options to realise career ambitions and a perceived greater risk of redundancies. Amongst those who have just or are about to graduate there are real concerns around current and longer term career prospects.