



Higher viewpoints: studying Higher Education in a Further Education College
An analysis of student experiences

Paper 1: The experiences of EU/International students studying HE in Further Education Colleges

1. Introduction

This section of the report draws on findings from a survey that was undertaken in February 2013. It is part of a suite of enquiries into the student experience of HE that is undertaken in English FE colleges. It specifically sought the views of EU and International students (i.e., excluding students from the “Home” nations) who were pursuing a course of Higher Education in 2012-2013. We received a total of over 70 valid responses, largely from 18-24 year old students. Our findings are set out below. Annexes 1 and 2 offer a detailed analysis of the responses of both groups

Reliable data on the total number of EU and International students studying HE in FE is difficult to obtain. (See next section.) Whilst our sample size is small, the investigation contributes to the knowledge in this under-researched area. In particular, the report offers insights into the experiences of EU students, who are often overlooked in such exercises or at best ‘categorised’ as Home students owing to their fee paying status.

2. Background

The landscape of Higher Education in England is changing rapidly. A new fees regime supported by student loans was introduced in autumn 2012. This was coupled with controls limiting the enrolment of Full Time student numbers and a policy shift to prompt a more diverse range of providers. In particular, FE colleges were encouraged to bid for student numbers, resulting in more than sixty new directly-funded institutions. The impact of these changes on college HE recruitment is still being assessed. Early

indications are that different parts of the market for Higher Education are responding in different ways, with demand from school and college leavers being maintained, whilst demand from mature and Part Time students appears to have been affected adversely.¹ Whilst International students are largely unaffected by these changes, EU students potentially face a significant rise in tuition fees, albeit one for which student loans are available in England. Like home students, their expectations may rise in parallel to their fees.

It is not certain how many EU and International students are studying their HE in an English FE college. In April 2013, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published a report on the impact of Tier 4 students on FE colleges and the UK economy.² Whilst this suggested that some 9,494 Tier 4 students were attending English colleges, generating £46,200,000 income, Tier 4 covers all post-16 study. The numbers therefore included students pursuing “A” Levels, Access to HE courses and a wealth of Level 3 vocational provision.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) collects and publishes student data in its annual HEIFES 12 return. This return collects student numbers from those institutions with a funding agreement with HEFCE. It will therefore exclude those attending colleges with indirect funding and /or those following Non-Prescribed courses of HE. The current HEIFES return³ suggests that 1,717 International and 399 EU students were enrolled on prescribed HE courses in directly-funded FE colleges in 2012-2013. (In the same year, just over 64,000 Home students were recorded on HEIFES.)

EU students pay the same fee as Home students. In some cases, this will be higher than is the case in their own (EU) countries – in Germany, for example, HE is funded by the state, with no fees being charged to the student. International students pay significantly higher fees for the same course than do Home students. As an example, some International students in the study referred to above were paying between £10,000 - £15,000 per year at a time when Home students in the same college would have been charged between £7,000 - £8,000.

Alongside the changes affecting domestic students, there has been increased concern at the impact of stringent controls imposed by the UK Visas and Immigration Service (formerly the UK Border Agency) on recruitment to UK HE courses. Linked to this there

¹ Higher Education in England: Impact of the 2012 reforms. HEFCE 2013.

² “Evaluation of the value of Tier 4 International students to FE colleges and the UK economy.” BIS.

³ HEFCE June 2013

is emerging evidence of a significant decline in student numbers from some countries, such as India. However, a range of socio-economic factors also impact on student decisions – the reduction in Indian student numbers must be taken in parallel with a considerable devaluation of the rupee, for example, making English fees significantly higher than in previous years. Students from non-EU countries appear to be more sensitive to increases in fees, although as stated above it is difficult to reach absolute conclusions from one year’s experience of higher fees. What is clear from our research, however, is that both groups of students have taken a considered decision to pursue their HE in an FE college setting. They will do so with certain expectations. Are these being met?

3. Key findings

The main points emerging from the survey include:

- The high value students place on possessing an English Higher Education qualification. This has significant implications in terms of the formally-recognised academic quality and standards of those qualifications
- Fee sensitivity: this strongly shapes the EU and International student’s choice to pursue HE in an English FE college rather than at a university
- For International students in particular, the large investment made by students in both financial and personal terms, underlining their commitment to study
- The pivotal importance of an English HE qualification in their future career plans
- The value attached to living and studying in England and doing so through the medium of the English language
- Students prefer to have more diversity in the classroom, including the presence of more English students. Students are very keen to learn about ‘British culture’, which enriches their experience of living abroad.
- Students choose to study HE in FE because they assume that they will receive higher levels of support than would be the case on a similar course at a university. Furthermore, it seems that whilst studying at their college, students consider that

they actually do receive higher levels of support. This suggests that colleges are able to meet student expectations in this area.

- This is also mirrored in the perceived approachability of the college tutors. Most students confirmed that they 'would go to their tutor for help'.
- Although many students would like to continue to a higher level of study in the UK, the majority intend to return to their home countries on completion of those studies. This challenges the perception of International students as long term or permanent migrants in the UK.

Students seem to be broadly satisfied with the quality of their experience and the level of support they receive. However, they are also aware that they pay a significant sum of money for their English HE experience.

This sharpens their expectations, in terms of value for money, and should prompt a process of continuous review of pastoral and academic arrangements by FE colleges.

4. A comparative analysis of the findings from the EU and International student surveys

The survey was completed by 33 EU students and 41 International students. Whilst the latter were attending the college for a longer period of time, some of the EU students were only enrolled for one or two semesters as part of an ERASMUS exchange programme.

The following nationalities were represented by the sample of 33 EU students:

Belgian – 1 student, Dutch - 12, Finnish - 1, German - 4, Hungarian - 2, Italian - 5, Lithuanian - 2, Norwegian - 1, Polish - 8, Portuguese - 3, Romanian - 2, Spanish - 1, Swiss -1.

Of the 41 International students, the majority were from Pakistan (10), India (8) and Bangladesh (6) with 2 students from Mauritius and individual representation from Afghanistan, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Ghana, Hong Kong, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Turkey and the UAE.

Caveat: Owing to the relatively small sample sizes of the two groups, it is not possible to draw strong conclusions from the data. However, we offer an interpretation from the

responses in an effort to shed some light on students' experiences of studying HE in English FE colleges. The data is presented in terms of both frequency count and as the percentage of the total students in each group in order to enable a comparison between the two groups.

4.1 Overview of the results

33 students based in 7 colleges took part in the EU survey whilst the International student survey was completed by 41 students. This latter group are drawn from 11 institutions. Three colleges are represented in both surveys. The EU sample had 55% female and 45% male students, whereas the International student sample had a higher proportion of male students (73%). 18-24 year old students dominated both surveys.

4.2 Present choices and future plans

- Privately rented rooms/houses were predominantly used for accommodation by both groups. Whilst only 15% of EU students lived with family/friends, nearly one third of International students did so. Halls of residence/hostels were less popular amongst both the groups
- In comparison with the EU student group, a smaller proportion of International students were pursuing Foundation degree courses, while Higher Nationals seem to be much more popular amongst this student group. 26% International students were on Higher National programme in contrast with 6% EU students.
- Whilst Business and Management dominated the subject areas represented by both the International (39%) and EU students (33%), Hospitality, Travel and Leisure was significantly more likely to be studied by the EU student group (30%). Computing and IT courses were studied by a much larger proportion of International students (29%) compared with those from the EU sample (12%).
- A majority of International students (71%) were fully-funded by their families, compared to 36% of the EU sample. On the other hand, personal loans were utilised by a larger proportion of EU students (42%) when compared to International students (7%). Neither group had received funding from an employer. Whilst no International student funded their HE through scholarships,

15% of EU respondents had secured some scholarships to pursue their HE in the UK.

- Whilst obtaining an English HE qualification emerged as the most important reason for the EU students to study in England, International students rated the experience of living abroad, and the enhancement of their employability prospects as the prime reasons for choosing to study in England. Both groups rated these three factors as the main 3 reasons underpinning their decision to study in England.
- Unlike the EU student sample that either intended to go back to their home country or seek short-term employment in the UK, the data from International students suggests that a majority intend to study further in the UK, and/or to go back to their home countries. Seeking permanent residency in the UK does not seem to be a key priority for either group of students.
- Asked why they had decided to pursue their HE in a college setting, the EU students rated '*A higher level of support than at a university*' as the strongest factor influencing their decision. International students seem to be more sensitive to the level of tuition fees charged by the college. This may be explained by the higher fees paid by these students, whereas EU students have 'Home student' status for fee-paying purposes.
- Finally, when choosing a particular college, both the EU and the International students are strongly driven by the availability of their preferred course. This was a prime factor for both groups. The location of the college was relatively more important for EU students in comparison with International students, who seem to be more sensitive to the reputation of the college.

A survey of prospective International students carried out by Hobsons in March 2013⁴ reached similar conclusions with regards to post-qualification plans. Only 1 in 17 potential university students regarded permanent settlement in the UK as the main reason for pursuing Higher Education. Most of the respondents regarded an English HE qualification as the means of obtaining a better life in their own country. A majority of students also chose their course before their university or the country of study.

⁴ What International Prospective Students Actually Think. Hobsons 2013.

4.3 Academic experiences

This area of the study set out to find out what students thought of the teaching and learning approaches currently in place at their colleges.

- Asked if the aims and structure of their chosen programmes had been clearly explained before the course commenced, International students (93%) seem to be relatively more satisfied with the clarity of programme aims and structure than EU students (79%). A majority of students from both the EU (82%) and the International student groups (85%) believed that the assessment criteria for their modules were clearly explained to them.
- When compared to EU student responses, International students (98%) seem to find their courses more interesting and they were relatively more convinced than EU students that their course was preparing them well for their chosen career.
- When asked if the numbers in their class were too small, nearly 58% students from both groups were content with their class size.
- Both the EU and International students had a mixed response to whether there were too few English students in their classes. Nearly 33% EU students and 29% International students wanted to study alongside more English students. Similarly, both groups offered a mixed response to whether there should be greater ethnic diversity in the classroom. Just over a quarter of students from both groups preferred to have a wider range of nationalities present in their classrooms
- Although a majority of students did not feel that there were too many students in their class from any particular country/sub-continent, 29% International students and 24% EU students felt that students from non-UK countries dominated their classrooms. Given their response to the previous question, this suggests that both groups of students would like to study with greater numbers of English students, whilst welcoming the more diverse nature of the English HE in FE setting

- EU students (90%) were relatively more satisfied than International students (78%) with the support in academic writing and referencing provided by the college.
- Perhaps linked to this, nearly half of the International students believed that they require more support with their English language, although a notable proportion (24%) of EU students also said that they required help with their English.
- Similar proportions of both EU (94%) and International students (95%) said that they would approach their tutors for help, leading to the conclusion that they found their teachers to be approachable.
- Virtually all International students (98%) and most EU students (88%) said that their tutors knew their names.
- Asked if they had adequate contact time with their teachers, over 95% of International students were satisfied with existing levels of staff contact. 88% of EU students were similarly content. A higher proportion of EU students (12%) wanted more time with their tutors.
- A significantly larger proportion of International students were convinced (61%) that UK teaching styles were better than those in their home country in comparison with EU students (36%).
- In terms of academic support, International as well as EU students rated '*the higher level of support than at a university*' as one of the strongest reasons for choosing to study HE in an FE setting. 64% EU students and 68% International students believe that they are getting more academic support at the college than would have been the case had they pursued the same course at a university. Both groups expressed satisfaction with their course timetables.
- While 64% EU students expressed satisfaction with the range of module options available to them as part of their course, a larger proportion of International students (83%) were satisfied in this area.

- In comparison with EU students (67%), a larger proportion of International students (85%) were confident that their teachers are generally well-informed about their subjects.
- Students value the applied nature of their studies and the currency of their teachers. 90% of International students considered that the taught content of their courses was directly applicable to the world outside the classroom. EU students were less convinced, with only 79% sharing this view.

4.4 Cultural experiences

This area of the survey sought to learn more about the extent to which EU and International students were able to engage with their fellow British students and generally take part in what could be described as an English lifestyle.

- Although only 45% EU respondents indicated their preference to mix more with British students, a much larger proportion of International students (83%) confirmed their interest in doing so. Experiencing life abroad is one of this group's main reasons for choosing to study in England and mixing more with British students seems to be a logical part of this process.
- This approach may also explain why a larger proportion of International students (76%) preferred to mix more with students from different nationalities in comparison with 58 % EU students.
- Only 6% EU students chose to make friends from their home countries. In contrast, 34% of International students expressed a preference to make friends with fellow nationals. Whilst, as stated earlier, most of this group wanted to experience British culture, this response may also reflect a need for access to a shared cultural identity, e.g. in terms of language, food and music.
- Similar proportions of students from the International group (78%), and the EU group (76%) indicated that they would like to learn more about "British culture."
- 73% EU students and 80% International students indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation in the UK. (Although it should be noted that a larger proportion of International students indicated that they live

with family/friends than the EU students.) A relatively larger proportion of International students (32%) confirmed their preference to live with people from their home countries in contrast with EU students (12%).

- Nearly 39% EU students said that their present jobs covered their cost of living, whereas a relatively small proportion of International students (22%) agreed with this assertion. This may be explained, in part, by the visa restriction which limits paid work to no more than 10 hours a week. EU students have no such restrictions.

4.5 Support related experiences

In this section of the questionnaire we wanted to explore the academic support needs of EU/International students. International students had clear preferences and views over some aspects of their learning environment.

- Both the International and EU student groups said that their colleges rarely arranged a pick-up facility from the airport when they first arrived in England. A number of universities offer this for International students. The FE sector does not have such a tradition, perhaps reflecting the smaller cohorts of such students recruited each year.
- A larger proportion of International students (85%) than 76% EU students confirmed that clear information on fee payment and administration was provided by the college.
- 85% EU students were satisfied with the books and learning material available in the Learning Resources Centre (LRC), in comparison with the proportion of International students (73%)
- 42% EU students and 51% International students preferred to have a separate Learning Resources Centre for Higher Education students.
- Whilst 48% EU students supported the idea of separate academic and social spaces for HE students, an even larger proportion of International students (61%) indicated their preference to learn and socialise in distinctively HE areas of the college.

- One of the biggest surprises was the significant number of students from both groups who did not have any views on pastoral support. Nearly 46% International students and EU students neither agreed nor disagreed on whether or not clear information about non-academic support was provided by the college.
- Similarly, a significant percentage of EU (24%) and International students (27%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the quality of their college's Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance service, possibly reflecting a lack of use of this service. However, only a small proportion of students from both groups (International - 2%, EU - 3%) expressed dissatisfaction with their CEIAG provision.
- 51% International students stated that they had special dietary needs and that the college catering facilities could meet those needs.

4.6 Overall experience

This part of the survey focused on the students' perception of their time at college, not just in terms of value for money but also with regards to the totality of their English HE experience.

- A large proportion of students in both the groups rated the overall experience of studying at the college to be satisfactory or very good (EU students -73%, International students - 88%). This latter figure compares well with responses to the same question from other groups of students within this same study.
- A larger proportion of EU students (67%) than International students (59%) strongly confirmed that they would recommend their college to their family/friends.
- Similar proportions of EU (73%) and International students (76%) confirmed that their college was offering them good value for money.

5. Discussion

For colleges which offer HE in FE

Is the recruitment of International and EU students a strategic priority for your college? If so, how are you managing resources and activities to support that strategy? In particular:

- Are you aware of the current UK Visas and Immigration Service procedures surrounding the admission of International students to the UK? Is this reflected in your information to potential applicants?
- Does your college have the systems and procedures required to satisfy compliance with Highly Trusted Status? How do you monitor this?
- Have you considered the level and sensitivity of the fee charged to International students? Would student numbers be affected by a change in fees?
- Are International students a significant part of the student community and if so have you considered what different or additional support needs they may have? Can such support be provided on an individual basis?
- Do you provide appropriate facilities and support for your International students e.g. assistance with housing, dedicated pastoral or related support?
- Can your college support and educate staff, such that they understand the cultural sensitivities that they will encounter when dealing with International and/or EU students?
- Does the level of academic support offered help both groups of students to succeed?
- In addition to the high academic standards and quality of learning experience your students will expect, have you provided opportunities for them to gain a wider knowledge or experience of life in the UK?
- Are you fully informed about EU programmes such as Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig and Jean Monet? Are you familiar with the Lifelong Learning policies of the European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth?
- Is the blend of nationalities in your HE classes as balanced as it can be? Does it enable EU/International students to mix with English students and build networks and friendships outside the classroom?
- Are you taking the opportunities offered by having students from outside the UK to broaden your curriculum with a global context?

For BIS

- Is the potential for growth in International student numbers HE in FE recognised and supported? Are there any barriers to that growth?
- Is there any potential to apply consistent and equitable rules to colleges and universities which recruit International students?
- What are the implications of European HE policies on the HE in FE sector? Can these expectations be delivered under current funding arrangements?
- How does the UK engage in the current debate within the EU about employability, mobility and higher-level skills?
- How might the UK engage with the European Commission to increase the numbers of EU students recruited to higher-level vocational courses offered in FE colleges?

For partner HEIs

- Will partner colleges be supported in their efforts to recruit International students? Is this seen as a welcome development or as unwanted competition?
- Do you propose to involve your college partners in any research projects that you may undertake which are aimed at understanding the needs and expectations of EU/International students?
- What involvement do you currently have with EU students? How does this impact on your institution's academic and pastoral arrangements for your own and your partner college(s) EU students?

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November 2013

Annex 1

Analysis of EU student responses

Key points to emerge from these survey results:

European students appear to value the opportunity to engage with British culture and meet people from other walks of life. They appear to be outward-looking and the experience of living abroad is highly valued.

Personal loans and loans from family members had been used to fund their studies, which were undertaken because great significance was attached to achieving an English HE qualification.

The EU students in this sample were particularly appreciative of their tutors, who were perceived to be approachable and to know their students well.

On completion of their qualification, most EU students intend to return home.

The responses of this group illustrate their linkage of an English HE qualification and the experience of living and working in another country with better employment prospects.

However, in a number of areas, EU students were generally less satisfied with their experiences of HE in FE than their International counterparts. Colleges should take note of these concerns.

Detailed Analysis

(a) Background information

Breakdown on the basis of Gender

Gender	
Male	15 (45.45%)
Female	18 (54.54%)

As highlighted in the table, the EU student sample consisted of nearly 55% female students, and 45% male students.

Breakdown in terms of age group of the students

Age Group	
18-24	20 (60.60%)
25-35	12 (36.36%)
36+	1 (3.03%)

A majority of students were between 18-24 years of age, although nearly 36% of students were aged 25-35. Only one student was more than 36 years of age.

Student accommodation in the UK

Where do you live	
Live with family/friends	5 (15.15%)
Private rented room/house	25 (75.75%)
Student Hostel/ halls of Residence	3 (9.09%)

Privately rented rooms/houses are used by a majority of students, while student hostels/halls of residence are less popular choices for student accommodation.

Name of the college

The following colleges were represented by the student sample:

City of Bristol College – 4 students, City College Norwich - 11, Guildford College - 1, Hadlow College - 1, Leeds City College - 1, NESCOLT- 4, New College Durham - 7, while 3 students named their parent European institutes.

Type of course

Type of course	
Foundation Degree	10 (30.30%)
Higher National	2 (6.06%)
Undergraduate, Honours Degree	17 (51.51%)
Masters, Professional Qualification	4 (12.12%)

The majority of students (nearly 52%) who took part in the survey were studying for an undergraduate/ Honours degree. This is followed by approximately 30% students studying towards a Foundation degree.

Subject areas

Subject area	
Business, Management	11 (33.33%)
Hospitality, Travel and Leisure	10 (30.30%)
Computing and IT	4 (12.12%)
Other	8 (24.24%)

Business and Management, and Hospitality and Leisure are the two key subject areas represented in the student sample. Computing and IT is pursued by relatively fewer students.

Mode of study

Mode of study	
Full time	29 (87.87%)
Part time	4 (12.12%)

Nearly 88% EU students in the sample studied full time and only 4 out of 33 students on a part time basis.

Current year of study

Year of Study	
Final year	14 (42.42%)
First Semester	2 (6.06%)
First Year	11 (33.33%)
Second Year	6 (18.18%)

Although it follows that most students who took part in the survey were in the final year of their HE studies, some students had not lived in the UK for 3 years. Some of these students were only pursuing a top-up degree course or were in the UK on a short term basis on an exchange programme.

How did the students fund their studies

Fund your studies	
Self only	5
Self + Scholarship	1
Self +Family	1
Self + Personal Loan	3
Self +Family +Personal Loan	1
Family only	9
Family + Scholarship + Employer	1
Personal Loan only	9
Personal Loan + Scholarship	1
Scholarship only	2

As the students were allowed to choose different combinations of their HE funding sources, it follows that Personal Loan was used (solely or partly) to fund their studies by 14 students (42.42 % of the respondents), while Family funding was used (solely or partly) by 12 students (36.36% of the respondents), closely followed by self-funding (solely or partly) used by 11 students (33.33% of the respondents). Scholarships were used for funding or part-funding their studies by 5 (15.15%) students and only 1 student was part-funded by their employer.

Your choice to study in England

All the 33 respondents offered a Rank 1 to explain their choice, while Rank 2 was completed by 30 students and 29 students highlighted the 3rd most important factor for their choice to study in England. As some students only ranked one option as Rank 1, and they were asked to assign this rank on the basis of its strength, Rank 1 is used as the key factor for assessing the student choice. This is used in combination with the total number of ranks allocated by the students, although it must be noted that Ranks 2 and 3 were not mentioned by all the respondents. This may be interpreted as Rank 1 being the sole factor underpinning their choice and hence the significance of Rank 1 in the analysis.

Choice to Study in England	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
I wanted to get some experience of living abroad	10 (30.30%)	7 (21.21%)	2 (6.06%)
It will enhance my employability prospects	7 (21.21%)	11 (33.33%)	4 (12.12%)
It is difficult to get a place at a university in my own country		1 (3.03%)	1 (3.03%)
I have friends/family in the UK	1 (3.03%)	3 (9.09%)	3 (9.09%)
It was recommended by an agent in my home country		4 (12.12%)	2 (6.06%)
I wanted to obtain an English HE qualification	14 (42.42%)	4 (12.12%)	9 (27.27%)
It is a route to living permanently in the UK	1 (3.03%)		2 (6.06%)
To improve my English language			6 (18.18%)

'To obtain an English HE qualification' emerges as the strongest factor underpinning student choice to study in England. It was ranked as the number 1 factor by 14 students, and had a total of 27 responses. *'Experience of living abroad'* was ranked as the number 1 factor by 10 students and gathered a total 19 responses, while *'Enhance my employability prospects'* was ranked 22 times but was ranked as number 1 by 7 students.

Intention post-completion of studies

Intention post-completion	
Seek short term employment in the UK	11 (33.33%)
Permanent residence in the UK	6 (18.18%)
Study further in the UK	4 (12.12%)
Go back home	12 (36.36%)

It seems that a majority of EU students either intend to go back to their home country or seek short-term employment in the UK. A relatively small proportion intend to study further in the UK.

Your choice to study Higher Education in a Further Education College

All the 33 respondents offered a Rank 1 to explain their choice. However Ranks 2 and 3 were mentioned by 24 and 19 respondents respectively.

Choice to study HE in FEC	Rank1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Lower fee at the College compared with a University	8 (24.24%)	6	4
Could not secure a place at a University	4 (12.12%)	7	3
Lower entry criteria	2 (6.06%)	5	5
Higher level of support than at a University	12 (36.36%)	6	6
Choices available as part of ERASMUS/European exchange	7 (21.21%)		1

'Higher level of support than at a university' appears to be the strongest factor underpinning student choice to study HE in a FEC. It was given Rank 1 by 12 students with a highest total count of 24 for the three ranks. This is followed by *'Lower fee at the college compared with a university'*. The inability to secure a place at a university has a higher total count (14) than the other ranks, although for 7 students their choice was best explained by the choices available as part of ERASMUS/European exchange.

Your choice of your Further Education College

33 students mentioned their first reason to explain their choice, while Rank 2 and Rank 3 were completed by 27 and 26 students respectively.

Choice of your Further Education College	Rank1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Location	7 (21.21%)	8	4
My friends/siblings study(ied) here	3 (9.09%)	4	1
Reputation of the College	6 (18.18%)	5	6
Offered my preferred course of study	14 (42.42%)	6	7
Lower fee than other colleges		1	5
Limited choices available as part of ERASMUS/European exchange	3 (9.09%)	3	3

This shows that that the key factor influencing student choice for their particular FEC was *'the college offered my preferred course of study'*. This is followed by the location of the college with the third most important factor being the reputation of the college. Friends/siblings and fee compared with other colleges seem to be relatively less important in shaping the EU student choices.

(b) Academic Experiences

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) The programme aims and structure were clearly explained to me at the beginning	9 (27.27%)	17 (51.51%)	3 (9.09%)	1 (3.03%)	3 (9.09%)
b) My course/programme is interesting and stimulating	5 (15.15%)	23 (69.69%)	3 (9.09%)	1 (3.03%)	1 (3.03%)
c) I feel my course/programme is preparing me well for my chosen career	7 (21.21%)	18 (54.54%)	3 (9.09%)	3 (9.09%)	1 (3.03%)
d) I feel my class size is too small	0	2 (6.06%)	12 (36.36%)	14 (42.42%)	5 (15.15%)
e) I feel my class size is too large	1 (3.03%)	3 (9.09%)	11 (33.33%)	13 (39.39%)	5 (15.15%)
f) There are too few English students in my class- there should be more	7 (21.21%)	4 (12.12%)	11 (33.33%)	8 (24.24%)	3 (9.09%)
g) There should be more diverse groups of students in the classroom	7 (21.21%)	2 (6.06%)	16 (48.48%)	6 (18.18%)	2 (6.06%)
h) My class has too many students from one country/sub-continent	6 (18.18%)	2 (6.06%)	11 (33.33%)	9 (27.27%)	5 (15.15%)
i) The assessment criteria for my modules is clearly explained to me	7 (21.21%)	20 (60.60%)	4 (12.12%)	0	1 (3.03%)
j) I am given adequate help and guidance with academic writing and referencing	7 (21.21%)	22 (66.66%)	3 (9.09%)	0	1 (3.03%)
k) I require more support for my English language	1 (3.03%)	7 (21.21%)	14 (42.42%)	7 (21.21%)	4 (12.12%)
l) I know the names of my tutors and would go to them for help	12 (36.36%)	19 (57.57%)	1 (3.03%)	1 (3.03%)	0
m) My teachers know my name	16 (48.48%)	12 (36.36%)	5 (15.15%)	0	0
n) I have adequate contact time with my teachers/ lecturers	6 (18.18%)	20 (60.60%)	3 (9.09%)	3 (9.09%)	1 (3.03%)
o) The styles of teaching in the UK are better than those in my home country	6 (18.18%)	6 (18.18%)	13 (39.39%)	5 (15.15%)	3 (9.09%)
p) I think I get more academic support at the college than I would if I studied the same subject at a university	8 (24.24%)	13 (39.39%)	9 (27.27%)	2 (6.06%)	1 (3.03%)
q) I am satisfied with my course timetable	6 (18.18%)	16 (48.48%)	8 (24.24%)	1 (3.03%)	2 (6.06%)

r) I am satisfied with the range and options of the modules I can study as part of my course	7 (21.21%)	14 (42.42%)	8 (24.24%)	3 (9.09%)	1 (3.03%)
s) My teachers are well informed	6 (18.18%)	16 (48.48%)	7 (21.21%)	2 (6.06%)	2 (6.06%)
t) What is taught relates to the real world	7 (21.21%)	19 (57.57%)	5 (15.15%)	1 (3.03%)	1 (3.03%)

It must be noted that all of the above questions were not answered by every respondent. Some options gathered responses from fewer students, in other words, some of these questions were skipped by the respondents. Therefore, the sum total of all responses is not 33 in all instances.

Following from the above table, below are the main points about each aspect of the academic experience of the students captured in the survey:

a) Clarity of programme aims and structure

26 students either agreed or strongly agreed, and only 4 students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the programme aims and structure were clearly explained to them at the beginning. 3 students did not express a view on this.

b) Course is interesting and stimulating

28 (84.84%) students either agreed or strongly agreed that their course is interesting and stimulating, while only 2 students (6.06%) disagreed or strongly agreed on this statement. The majority of students find their course interesting.

c) Preparation for chosen career

25 (75.75%) students either agreed or strongly agreed, while 4 (12.12%) students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their course is preparing them well for their chosen career.

d) Class size is too small

Only 2 students believed that their class size was too small. While a majority of students (19 students) felt that their class size was not too small, 14 students had no view on this.

e) Class size too large

4 students either agreed or strongly agreed that their class size is too large, whereas over 50% students disagreed (or strongly disagreed) with this. Again, 11 students (about 33%) students had no view on this.

f) Too few English students, there should be more

This question received a notably mixed response. 11 students either agreed or strongly agreed, 11 students either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while another 11 neither agreed

nor disagreed there should be more English students in the class. It follows that one-third of the respondents would prefer to have more English students in their class, which may have implications for student recruitment.

g) There should be more diverse groups of students

Whilst a majority of students (nearly 48%) expressed no views on this statement, a similar proportion of students agreed (nearly 27%) and disagreed (24%) on this subject.

h) Too many International students from one country/sub-continent

14 students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there are too many International students from any one country/sub-continent, which indicates that their class has a fair mix of students and has a reasonable level of diversity in terms of student nationalities. However, 8 students agreed or strongly agreed that their classes are dominated by students from particular countries.

i) Assessment criteria clearly explained

A notable majority of students (27 students or nearly 82% students) either agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment criteria are clearly explained to them. Only 1 student strongly disagreed on this. It follows that colleges are reasonably good in providing clear explanations about assessment criteria.

j) Adequate help with academic writing and referencing

Just over 90% students confirmed that they are given adequate help with their academic writing and referencing. Only 1 student was very dissatisfied with the help provided by the college.

k) Need more support for English

Whilst 14 students had no view on the level of help they needed for their English, and 11 did not seem to require additional language support, 8 students (nearly 24%) felt they required more support for their language skills.

l) I know my tutors' names, would go to them for help

31 out of 33 respondents agreed (or strongly agreed), that they would go to their tutors for help. It seems that most students would approach their tutors for assistance, which may suggest that students find their tutors approachable.

m) My teachers know my name

Whilst 28 students felt that their teachers knew their names, 5 students were less certain on this (they neither agreed nor disagreed).

n) Adequate contact time with teachers

Nearly 79% students felt that they have adequate contact time with their teachers, whereas nearly 12% students believed that they needed more contact time.

o) UK teaching styles are better than those in their home country

A majority of students did not seem to hold any views on this. However, 8 students (nearly 24% of respondents) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this assertion.

p) I get more academic support at the college than at a university

The responses to this statement are particularly interesting as '*Higher level of support than at a university*' was rated to be the strongest reason underpinning the EU students' choice to pursue their Higher Education in an FE setting. 21 students (nearly 64% of the respondents) either agreed or strongly agreed that they were getting more academic support at the college than they would have received if they studied the same subject at a university. 9 students did not seem to have a view on this (perhaps because they had no evidence of the comparable academic experience at a university) while 3 students did not feel that they were getting more academic support at the college than might be available at an HEI.

q) Satisfied with course timetable

Although 22 students (nearly 67% students) were satisfied, 3 students were dissatisfied, and another 8 students were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their course timetable.

r) Satisfied with range and option of modules

21 students seemed to be satisfied with the range and options of modules, whereas 4 students were not satisfied with the options available to them.

s) My teachers are well informed

Again, a similar picture emerges as in the previous questions. 22 students (nearly 67% respondents) felt that their teachers are generally well informed, 7 students did not hold any views on this subject, while 4 students did not believe that their teachers are well informed.

t) Teaching relates to the real world

A majority of students (nearly 79% students) believed that the taught content was practical and could be associated with the real world scenarios.

(c) Cultural experiences

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) I would like to mix more with British students	4 (12.12%)	11 (33.33%)	16 (48.48%)	2 (6.06%)	0
b) I would like to mix more with students from different nationalities	8 (24.24%)	11 (33.33%)	14 (42.42%)	0	0
c) I prefer to make friends with fellow students from my home country	0	2 (6.06%)	20 (60.60%)	8 (24.24%)	3 (9.09%)
d) I would like to learn more about British culture	4 (12.12%)	21 (63.63%)	5 (15.15%)	2 (6.06%)	1 (3.03%)
e) I am satisfied with the quality of my accommodation in the	6 (18.18%)	18 (54.54%)	4 (12.12%)	1 (3.03%)	4 (12.12%)

UK					
f)I prefer to live with people from my home country	1 (3.03%)	3 (9.09%)	15 (45.45%)	9 (27.27%)	5 (15.15%)
g)My present job covers my cost of living	3 (9.09%)	10 (30.30%)	11 (33.33%)	4 (12.12%)	5 (15.15%)

Cultural experiences are not limited to the student mix inside the classrooms. Students engage with their fellow students in a range of settings. Hence, the scope of the responses in this section extends beyond the immediate class/cohort-related experiences. Following from the above table, the main points about each aspect of the cultural experiences of the students captured in the survey are as follows:

a) Preference to mix more with British students

Although 16 students (nearly 48%) had no preferences to mix more with British students, a similar proportion (15 students) either agreed or strongly agreed with this assertion. This is reinforced by the response in the above section (on academic experiences) concerning the presence of more British students in the classroom.

b) Preference to mix more with students from different nationalities

Again, 14 students had no such preferences, 19 students (nearly 58% respondents) indicated their preference to mix more with students from different nationalities. It is noteworthy that no student disagreed with this statement.

c) Preference for friends from home country

A significant proportion of students did not have an opinion on this. 20 students neither agreed nor disagreed, while only 2 agreed that they have a preference to make friends from their home countries. Overall, it seems that students have no such preferences

d) Like to learn more about British culture

25 out of 33 students confirmed that they would like to learn more about British culture. This may be associated with an aspect of learning associated with living abroad (Experience of living abroad was one of the main reasons for studying in England).

e) Satisfied with accommodation

24 students (nearly 73% respondents) were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation in the UK, whereas 5 students (nearly 15%) were dissatisfied. It may be noted that nearly 76% students live in private rooms/houses in the UK.

f) Preference to live with people from home country

Only 4 out of 33 respondents expressed their preference to live with people from their home countries. Most students either had no such preferences or had no views on this subject.

g) Present job covers cost of living

Although 11 students neither agreed nor disagreed, 13 students said that their present jobs covered their cost of living, whereas 11 students considered that their off-site work did not cover their living expenses.

(d) College support related experiences

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) The college arranged to pick me up from the airport when I first arrived in England	4 (12.12%)	3 (9.09%)	11 (33.33%)	4 (12.12%)	11 (33.33%)
b) Information about the pastoral support provided by the college was clearly explained	3 (9.09%)	9 (27.27%)	15 (45.45%)	2 (6.06%)	3 (9.09%)
c) The college provided clear information on fee payment and administration	8 (24.24%)	17 (51.51%)	5 (15.15%)	0	2 (6.06%)
d) The college Learning and Resource Centre is adequately resourced with books and learning materials	7 (21.21%)	21 (63.63%)	4 (12.12%)	1 (3.03%)	0
e) I would prefer to have a separate Learning Resource Centre for higher education students (not shared by FE students)	5 (15.15%)	9 (27.27%)	15 (45.45%)	4 (12.12%)	0
f) The college should have separate designated academic and social building and spaces for Higher Education students	9 (27.27%)	7 (21.21%)	14 (42.42%)	3 (9.09%)	0
g) I can get good and impartial careers advice and guidance at the college	3 (9.09%)	20 (60.60%)	8 (24.24%)	0	1 (3.03%)
h) The college provides satisfactory visa related information and support (non-EU students)					
i) I have religious or health reasons for a particular diet but I am satisfied with the food options available in the college canteen	2 (6.06%)	3 (9.09%)	21 (63.63%)	1 (3.03%)	4 (12.12%)

Following from the above table, below are the notable points about each aspect of the experiences that related to the non-academic support provided by the college:

a) Airport pick-up

A majority of students (15) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the college arranged a pick-up for the students when they first arrived in England. It seems that colleges do not have such a facility in place for EU students.

b) Clear information about pastoral support

Only 36% of the students confirmed that clear information on pastoral support was provided by the college. 15 students neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5 students did not feel that clear information about pastoral support is provided by the college.

c) Clear information on fee payment

Only 2 students (out of 32 that responded to this question) strongly disagreed that clear information was provided by the college on fee payment and administration.

d) Adequately resourced LRC

28 (nearly 85% students) believed that the Learning Resource Centre was adequately resourced with books and learning materials. Only one student thought that the LRC was not adequately resourced.

e) Separate LRC for HE students

15 students neither agreed nor disagreed about having a separate LRC for HE students. However, 14 students (nearly 42%) agreed or strongly agreed that there should be a separate LRC for HE students.

f) Separate academic and social spaces

16 students (nearly 48%) either agreed or strongly agreed that there should be separate academic and social spaces for HE students. In other words, nearly half of the respondents would prefer an element of separation from FE students.

g) Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Only 1 student expressed dissatisfaction towards the CEIAG provided by the college. 8 students were neither in agreement nor disagreement towards the quality of advice provided by the college.

i) Canteen food options

A number of students (21) expressed no opinion towards canteen food options, suggesting that they had no special dietary requirements. Of the 31 students who responded to this statement, 5 said that their college canteen did not appropriately cater for their dietary needs.

(e) Overall experience

a) Overall experience of studying at the college

Overall experience	
Very Good	15 (45.45%)
Satisfactory	9 (27.27%)
Average	8 (24.24%)
Dissatisfactory	
Very Poor	1

It follows from the above table that only 1 student rated the overall college experience to be very poor. A majority of students rated their college experience to be 'very good', or 'satisfactory'.

b) Would you recommend your friends/ siblings to study at the college?

Recommend your friends/siblings	
Yes	22 (66.66%)
Maybe	8 (24.24%)
No	3 (9.09%)

A majority of students said that they would recommend their college to their friends/siblings, although a notable number of students were less certain in doing so.

c) Does the College offer good 'value for money'?

Value for Money	
Yes	24 (72.72%)
No	9 (27.27%)

Annex 2

Analysis of the International student responses

Key points to emerge from these responses:

93% of International students seem to be satisfied with the clarity of programme aims and structures compared to EU students (79%)

98% of International students find their courses interesting when compared to EU students, and were relatively more convinced than EU students that their course was preparing them well for their chosen career

85% of International students (compared to 67% EU students) were convinced that that their teachers are generally well-informed about their subjects

Only 5% of International students considered that teaching styles in their home countries were better than in England, compared to 25% of EU students.

Whilst they derive from a small sample, these figures suggest that colleges meet the expectations of International students – but may have to revise their approach to EU students.

Detailed analysis.

(a) Background information

Breakdown on the basis of Gender

Gender	
Male	30 (73.17%)
Female	11 (26.82%)

Of the 41 International students who took part in the survey, approximately 73% students were male and 27% were female.

Breakdown in terms of age group of the students

Age Group	
18-24	29 (70.73%)
25-35	10 (24.39%)
36+	2 (4.87%)

As noted in the table above, a large proportion of respondents were between 18 and 24 years of age, although about a quarter of the students were aged between 25 and 35.

Student accommodation in the UK

Where do you live	
Live with family/friends	13 (31.70%)
Private rented room/house	22 (53.65%)
Student Hostel/ Halls of Residence	6 (14.63%)

Just over half of the respondents lived in a private rented room/house in the UK. Student hostels/ Halls of residence seem to be a relatively less popular choice for overseas students.

Name of the college

The following colleges were represented by the student sample:

Bradford College – 15 students, City of Bristol College - 1, City College Norwich - 2, Havering College - 2, Leeds City College - 1, Merrist Wood College - 1, New College Nottingham - 3, Newcastle College - 7, Solihull College - 3, Manchester College - 4, Wigan and Leigh - 1, while 1 student named his parent institute overseas.

Type of course

Type of course	
Foundation Degree	8 (19.51%)
Higher National	11 (26.82%)
Undergraduate, Honours Degree	16 (39.02%)
Masters, Professional Qualification	6 (14.63%)

Undergraduate degree courses attracted a majority of students in the survey sample. As indicated in the table above, approximately 27% students were pursuing Higher National studies.

Subject areas

Subject area	
Business, Management, HR	16 (39.02%)
Hospitality, Travel and Leisure	3 (7.31%)
Computing and IT	12 (29.26%)
Engineering	5 (12.19%)
Other	5 (12.19%)

Business and Management studies were the largest subject area represented by the International student group (39%), followed by Computing and IT (29%). These subject areas reflect the subject areas that are popular amongst overseas students studying in the UK (source: UKCISA.)

Mode of study

Mode of study	
Full time	39 (95.12%)
Part time	2 (4.87%)

Most students were studying their HE courses on a full-time basis, which may be explained by the requirement for International students (on student visas) to study on a full-time basis.

Full-time students dominated both the International (95%) and the EU student groups (88%).

Current year of study

Year of Study	
Final year	8 (19.51%)
First Semester	1 (2.43%)
First Year	14 (34.14%)
Second Year	18 (43.90%)

A large proportion of students were in the second year of their studies, while a significant number were first year students. Some of the first year students may not have had a great deal of experience of studying at their college and hence the sample represents students at varying stages of their UK Higher Education studies. It must also be noted that students on their final year may not have lived in the UK for at least 3 years as some students may be pursuing a top-up degree in the UK.

How did the students fund their studies

Fund your studies	
Self only	9
Self + Scholarship	
Self +Family	3
Self + Personal Loan	1
Self +Family +Personal Loan	
Family only	25
Family + Employer	1
Personal Loan only	2
Personal Loan + Scholarship	
Scholarship only	

29 students (70.73%) were funded solely or partly by their families. 12 students (29.26%) were solely or partly self-funded, whereas employers had part funded 1 student, and 3 students (7.31%) funded their studies solely or partly through personal loans.

Your choice to study in England

All the 41 respondents offered a Rank 1 to explain their choice, while Rank 2 was completed by 37 students and 36 students highlighted the 3rd most important factor for their choice to study in England

Choice to Study in England	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
I wanted to get some experience of living abroad	12 (29.26%)	7	6
It will enhance my employability prospects	10 (24.39%)	11	5
It is difficult to get a place at a university in my own country	2 (4.87%)	2	2
I have friends/family in the UK	3 (7.31%)	5	6
It was recommended by an agent in my home country	2 (4.87%)	1	3
I wanted to obtain an English HE qualification	12 (29.26%)	5	6
It is a route to living permanently in the UK		3	4
To improve my English language		3	4

'Experience of living abroad' (with a sum of 25), and *'Enhancement of employability prospects'* (with a total of 26) emerge to be the strongest factors that underpin the student choice to study in England. This is closely followed by *'Obtaining an English HE qualification'* (with a summative rank of 23). *'Having friends and family in the UK'* also seems to be influential, though weakly, in shaping student choices.

Intention post-completion of studies

Intention post-completion	
Seek short term employment in the UK	4 (9.75%)
Permanent residence in the UK	3 (7.31%)
Study further in the UK	22 (53.65%)
Go back home	12 (29.26%)

A majority of respondents intend to study further in the UK. A notable proportion of students also plan to go back to their home countries. A relatively small proportion of students intend to seek permanent residence in the UK.

Your choice to study Higher Education in a Further Education College

All the 41 respondents offered a Rank 1 to explain their choice, however Ranks 2 and 3 were mentioned by 35 and 29 respondents respectively.

Choice to study HE in FEC	Rank1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Lower fee at the College compared with a University	24 (58.53%)	9	3
Could not secure a place at a University	1 (2.43%)	3	5
Lower entry criteria		8	18
Higher level of support than at a University	16 (39.02%)	15	3
Choices available as part of ERASMUS/European exchange			

'Lower fee at the College' (ranked as Rank 1 by 24 students) appears to be the strongest factor underpinning the choice to study HE in an FEC. This is followed by 'Higher level of support than at a university'. 'Lower entry criteria' also seems to be important in steering students to study HE in FECs.

Your choice of your Further Education College

41 students mentioned their first reason to explain their choice, while Rank 2 and Rank 3 were completed by 37 and 34 students respectively.

Choice of your Further Education College	Rank1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Location	6 (14.63%)	10	12
My friends/siblings study(ied) here		2	1
Reputation of the College	13 (31.70%)	11	8
Offered my preferred course of study	18 (43.90%)	10	4
Lower fee than other colleges	4 (9.75%)	4	9
Limited choices available as part of ERASMUS/European exchange			

It follows that the most crucial factor that influenced the student choice for their particular FEC was 'the college offered my preferred course of study' (total 32, with 18 students ranking it as the most important factor). This is closely followed by 'the reputation of the college' (total 32, with 13 students ranking it as the most important factor). Location of the college was also an important factor in guiding student choice.

(b) Academic experiences

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) The programme aims and structure were clearly explained to me at the beginning	13 (31.70%)	25 (60.97%)	2 (4.87%)	1 (2.43%)	0
b) My course/programme is interesting and stimulating	17 (41.46%)	23 (56.09%)	1 (2.43%)	0	0
c) I feel my course/programme is preparing me well for my chosen career	16 (39.02%)	20 (48.78%)	5 (12.19%)	0	0
d) I feel my class size is too small	3 (7.31%)	6 (14.63%)	8 (19.51%)	17 (41.46%)	7 (17.07%)
e) I feel my class size is too large	1 (2.43%)	5 (12.19%)	9 (21.95%)	15 (36.58%)	10 (24.39%)
f) There are too few English students in my class- there should be more	8 (19.51%)	4 (9.75%)	10 (24.39%)	10 (24.39%)	9 (21.95%)
g) There should be more diverse groups of students in the classroom	4 (9.75%)	7 (17.07%)	15 (36.58%)	9 (21.95%)	5 (12.19%)
h) My class has too many students from one country/sub-continent	5 (12.19%)	7 (17.07%)	5 (12.19%)	10 (24.39%)	13 (31.70%)
i) The assessment criteria for my modules is clearly explained to me	13 (31.70%)	22 (53.65%)	4 (9.75%)	2 (4.87%)	0
j) I am given adequate help and guidance with academic writing and referencing	14 (34.14%)	18 (43.90%)	5 (12.19%)	4 (9.75%)	0
k) I require more support for my English language	6 (14.63%)	13 (31.70%)	11 (26.82%)	4 (9.75%)	7 (17.07%)
l) I know the names of my tutors and would go to them for help	19 (46.34%)	20 (48.78%)	2 (4.87%)	0	0
m) My teachers know my name	24 (58.53%)	16 (39.02%)	1 (2.43%)	0	0
n) I have adequate contact time with my teachers/ lecturers	13 (31.70%)	18 (43.90%)	7 (17.07%)	2 (4.87%)	0
o) The styles of teaching in the UK are better than those in my home country	9 (21.95%)	16 (39.02%)	13 (31.70%)	2 (4.87%)	0
p) I think I get more academic support at the college than I would if I studied the same	15 (36.58%)	13 (31.70%)	11 (26.82%)	1 (2.43%)	1 (2.43%)

subject at a university					
q) I am satisfied with my course timetable	17 (41.46%)	15 (36.58%)	6 (14.63%)	2 (4.87%)	1 (2.43%)
r) I am satisfied with the range and options of the modules I can study as part of my course	15 (36.58%)	19 (46.34%)	5 (12.19%)	1 (2.43%)	1 (2.43%)
s) My teachers are well informed	17 (41.46%)	18 (43.90%)	6 (14.63%)	0	0
t) What is taught relates to the real world	15 (36.58%)	22 (53.65%)	3 (7.31%)	1 (2.43%)	0

It must be noted that all of the above questions were not answered by every respondent. Some options gathered responses from fewer students, in other words, some of these questions were skipped by the respondents. Therefore, the sum total of all responses is not 41 in all instances.

a) Clarity of programme aims and structure

38 (approx. 93%) students either agreed or strongly agreed, and only 1 student (2.4%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the programme aims and structure were clearly explained to them at the beginning. 2 students did not express a view on this.

b) Course is interesting and stimulating

40 (98%) students either agreed or strongly agreed that their course is interesting and stimulating, while only 1 student (6%) disagreed or strongly agreed. It seems that students are very satisfied with their courses.

c) Preparation for chosen career

36 (87.8%) students either agreed or strongly agreed, while 5 (12%) students neither agreed nor disagreed that their course is preparing them well for their chosen career.

d) Class size is too small

9 (22%) students believed that their class size was too small whereas 24 (58.5%) students felt that their class size was not too small, and 8 students had no view on this.

e) Class size too large

6 (15%) students either agreed or strongly agreed that their class size is too large, whereas 25 (61%) students disagreed (or strongly disagreed) with this. 9 students (about 22%) students had no view on this.

f) Too few English students, there should be more

This question received a mixed response. 12 (29%) students either agreed or strongly agreed, 19 (46%) students either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while another 10 did not agree or disagree that there should be more English students in the class. Whilst a majority

of students did not believe that there were too few English students in their classes, a notable proportion of students felt that there should be more English students in their cohorts.

g) There should be more diverse groups of students

This question too received a mixed feedback from students. Whilst nearly 37% students expressed no views on this statement, 14 (34%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 11 (27%) agreed or strongly agreed with having more diversity in the classroom.

h) Too many International students from one country/sub-continent

23 (56%) students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there are too many International students from any one country/sub-continent. However, 12 (29%) students agreed or strongly agreed that their classes are dominated by students from particular countries. Colleges may want to consider this factor as part of their review of the overall quality of experience that they offer.

i) Assessment criteria clearly explained

A notable majority of students (35 students or nearly 85% students) either agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment criteria are clearly explained to them. Only 2 students disagreed.

j) Adequate help with academic writing and referencing

32 (78%) students confirmed that they are given adequate help with their academic writing and referencing. 4 (10%) were dissatisfied with the help provided by the college on academic writing.

k) Need more support for English

Whilst 11 (nearly 27%) students had no view on whether or not they needed more help with their English language skills and a further 11 definitely did not require additional language support, 19 students (nearly 46%) felt that they did require more help with their English. This suggests that many International students need more support for their language skills than they currently receive and may be an area where colleges can improve the level of support that they offer to such students.

l) I know my tutors' names, would go to them for help

39 out of 41 (95%) respondents agreed (or strongly agreed), that they would go to their tutors for help. It seems that most students would approach their tutors for assistance, which suggests that students find their tutors approachable.

m) My teachers know my name

Most students (40 out of 41) confirmed that their tutors know them individually by their names. This may be helpful in providing a more supportive environment for the students.

n) Adequate contact time with teachers

Nearly 76% students felt that they have adequate contact time with their teachers, whereas 2 students believed that they probably needed more contact time with their tutors.

o) UK teaching styles are better than those in their home country

A majority of students (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that the UK teaching styles are better than those in their home country, whereas 13 (32%) did not seem to hold any views on this, Only 2 (5%) believed that UK teaching styles were not better in comparison with those in their home countries.

p) I get more academic support at the college than at a university

The responses to this statement are particularly interesting. *'Higher level of support than at a university'* was rated as one of the strongest reasons underpinning the students' choice to pursue their Higher Education in an FE setting. 28 students (nearly 68% of the respondents) either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt that they were getting more academic support at the college than they would have received if they had studied the same subject at a university. 11 students did not seem to have a view on this (possibly because they had no knowledge of what might have been available elsewhere) while 2 students did not feel that they were getting more academic support at the college than at a university.

q) Satisfied with course timetable

Although 32 students (nearly 78% students) were satisfied, 3 students were dissatisfied, and another 6 students were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their course timetable.

r) Satisfied with range and option of modules

34 (83%) students seemed to be satisfied with the range and options of modules, whereas 2 students were not satisfied with the options available to them.

s) My teachers are well informed

No student disagreed (or strongly disagreed) with this statement. 35 (85%) students believed that their teachers were well informed, while 6 students neither agreed nor disagreed with this assertion.

t) Teaching relates to the real world

A majority of students (nearly 90% students) believed that the taught content was practical and could be associated with the real world scenarios.

(c) Cultural experiences

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) I would like to mix more with British students	17 (41.46%)	17 (41.46%)	6 (14.63%)	1 (2.43%)	0
b) I would like to mix more with students from different nationalities	9 (21.95%)	22 (53.65%)	6 (14.63%)	2 (4.87%)	2 (4.87%)

c) I prefer to make friends with fellow students from my home country	2 (4.87%)	12 (29.26%)	14 (34.14%)	7 (17.07%)	4 (9.75%)
d) I would like to learn more about British culture	15 (36.58%)	17 (41.46%)	7 (17.07%)	1 (2.43%)	0
e) I am satisfied with the quality of my accommodation in the UK	12 (29.26%)	21 (51.21%)	8 (19.51%)	0	0
f) I prefer to live with people from my home country	4 (9.75%)	9 (21.95%)	16 (39.02%)	8 (19.51%)	4 (9.75%)
g) My present job covers my cost of living	3 (7.31%)	6 (14.63%)	8 (19.51%)	16 (39.02%)	5 (12.19%)
h) I am satisfied with my current eligibility to work up to ten hours per week	3 (7.31%)	7 (17.07%)	14 (34.14%)	5 (12.19%)	10 (24.39%)

Following from the above table, below are the main points about each aspect of the cultural experience of the students captured in the survey:

a) Preference to mix more with British students

Although 6 students (nearly 15%) had no preferences to mix more with British students, a large proportion of students (83% students) either agreed or strongly agreed with this assertion.

b) Preference to mix more with students from different nationalities

31 students (nearly 76% respondents) indicated their preference to mix more with students from different nationalities. 4 (10%) students disagreed (or strongly disagreed) with this statement.

c) Preference for friends from home country

A notable proportion of students did not have an opinion on this. 14 students neither agreed nor disagreed, while 14 (34%) students agreed that they have a preference to make friends from their home countries, and 11 (27%) students did not have any preference in making friends with students from their home countries.

d) Like to learn more about British culture

32 (78%) students confirmed that they would like to learn more about British culture. This may be associated with an aspect of learning associated with living abroad (Experience of living abroad was one of the crucial reasons for choosing to study in England).

e) Satisfied with accommodation

33 students (nearly 80% respondents) were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation in the UK, whereas no student was dissatisfied with their accommodation.

f) Preference to live with people from home country

This question gathered a mix response from students. Nearly 13 (32%) students indicated their preference to live with people from their home country, 12 (29%) did not have such preferences. A large proportion of students 16 (39%) did not express any views on this subject.

g) Present job covers cost of living

Over half the students in our survey (51%) indicated that their present job did not cover their cost of living. Only 9 students (22%) said that their costs were met by the work that they did outside college. This may reflect the lower working hours limitations imposed on International students studying at a college as opposed to a university.

h) Eligibility to work up to 10 hours per week

15 students (37%) were not satisfied with the restriction to work up to ten hours per week, while 10 (24%) students expressed satisfaction with their present eligibility.

(d) College support related experiences

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) The college arranged to pick me up from the airport when I first arrived in England	4 (9.75%)	2 (4.87%)	7 (17.07%)	11 (26.82%)	13 (31.70%)
b) Information about the pastoral support provided by the college was clearly explained	6 (14.63%)	11 (26.82%)	19 (46.34%)	2 (4.87%)	1 (2.43%)
c) The college provided clear information on fee payment and administration	13 (31.70%)	22 (53.65%)	4 (9.75%)	0	0
d) The college Learning and Resource Centre is adequately resourced with books and learning materials	11 (26.82%)	19 (46.34%)	4 (9.75%)	3 (7.31%)	2 (4.87%)
e) I would prefer to have a separate Learning Resource Centre for higher education students (not shared by FE students)	9 (21.95%)	12 (29.26%)	14 (34.14%)	2 (4.87%)	1 (2.43%)
f) The college should have separate designated academic and social building and spaces for Higher Education students	8 (19.51%)	17 (41.46%)	9 (21.95%)	2 (4.87%)	3 (7.31%)
g) I can get good and impartial careers advice and guidance at the college	9 (21.95%)	17 (41.46%)	11 (26.82%)	1 (2.43%)	0
h) The college provides satisfactory visa related information and support (non-EU students)	9 (21.95%)	16 (39.02%)	9 (21.95%)	1 (2.43%)	1 (2.43%)

i) I have religious or health reasons for a particular diet but I am satisfied with the food options available in the college canteen	5 (12.19%)	16 (39.02%)	12 (29.26%)	2 (4.87%)	3 (7.31%)
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Following from the above table, below are the main points about each aspect of the experiences that related to the non-academic support provided by the college:

a) Airport pick-up

A considerable majority of students (24 or 59%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the college arranged a pick-up for the students when they first arrived in England. It seems that colleges do not have such a facility in place for International students.

b) Clear information about pastoral support

41% of the students confirmed that clear information on pastoral support was provided by the college. Although 19 students neither agreed nor disagreed, only 3 students did not feel that clear information about pastoral support is provided by the college.

c) Clear information on fee payment

No student disagreed or strongly disagreed that clear information was provided by the college on fee payment and administration. 35 students (85%) said that clear information on fee payment and administration was provided by the college.

d) Adequately resourced LRC

30 (nearly 73% students) believed that the Learning resource Centre was adequately resourced with books and learning materials.

e) Separate LRC for HE students

14 students did not hold any views (neither agreed nor disagreed) on having a separate LRC for HE students. However, 21 students (nearly 51%) agreed or strongly agreed that there should be a separate LRC for HE students.

f) Separate academic and social spaces

25 students (nearly 61%) students either agreed or strongly agreed that there should be separate academic and social spaces for HE students.

g) Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Only 1 student expressed dissatisfaction about the CEIAG provided by the college, although 11 students were neither in agreement nor disagreement towards the quality of their CEIAG service.

h) Visa related information and support

27 students (66%) were satisfied with the visa related information and support extended to the students, while 9 (22%) students neither agreed nor disagreed on satisfactory visa

services provided by the college. This presumably reflects the fact that it is often agents who make visa arrangements and not colleges.

i) Canteen food options

A number of students (12) expressed no opinion about canteen food options, which may suggest that they have no special dietary needs. Of the 38 students who responded to this statement, only 5 students felt that their college canteen did not cater for their dietary needs.

(e) Overall experience

a) Overall experience of studying at the college

Overall experience	
Very Good	17 (41.46%)
Satisfactory	19 (46.34%)
Average	3 (7.31%)
Dissatisfactory	
Very Poor	

It follows that a majority of students found the overall experience at the college satisfactory or very good. No student rated the experience to be below average.

b) Would you recommend your friends/ siblings to study at the college

Recommend your friends/siblings	
Yes	24 (58.53%)
Maybe	14 (34.14%)
No	1 (2.43%)

Over half of the respondents confirmed that they would recommend the college to their family or friends, while over a one third of the participants were less certain in doing so.

c) Does the College offer good 'value for money'

Value for Money	
Yes	31 (75.60%)
No	8 (19.51%)

Over 75% students felt that their college was offering them good 'value for money'.