

Departmental Student Coordinators

Annual Projects 2015

Welcome Week

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Departmental Feedback, Editing and Report Publication

Introduction and Background

For new students, Welcome Week is their very first non-virtual interaction with Goldsmiths. For continuing students, Welcome Week marks the beginning of a new year, as well as new learning and networking opportunities. Either way, it leaves a lasting impression on students.

Driven by the importance of Welcome Week, our group decided to study students' feedback as to whether Welcome Week provided them with the orientation, networking and socialising opportunities that they needed at the beginning of the academic year.



Aims



The main aim of this project is to highlight both areas of good practice and areas of potential improvement in Welcome Week so that students can be provided the best experience possible.

Our recommendations can be found in the report's conclusion.

Methodology

The group deployed various methods of collecting data and feedback:

- Student surveys
- Face-to-face discussions with students
- Meetings with student representatives
- Contacting relevant staff in each Department (those listed as the point of contact for DSCs, usually the Department Business Manager)
- Data from the Just Joined Survey

Pie charts and graphs have been used to elaborate the findings visually.



Departmental Feedback

Please note that the departments are not listed in alphabetical order, due to spacing constraints, nor is every department represented here. However, those who provided feedback and are represented give a broad overview.

English and Comparative Literature

Student Feedback (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

What Worked Well:

- The activities on the Green
- Events with a focus on meeting new people
- Freshers' Fayre was enjoyable but some students, due to empty tables, got the impression that not everyone had bothered to show up. This is perhaps exacerbated by spreading the Fayre over two days

What Was Missing:

- Events that were more departmental- or course-focused
- Events giving students the opportunity to meet staff and tutors
- Students would like more information before arriving on campus
- Not enough events catered to mature student and students with obligations outside of university
- More events that are non-alcoholic
- More Postgraduate-focused events with both social and academic foci

Areas of Concern:

- Students felt extremely overwhelmed by the mass of information that was provided
- Students on joint degrees often felt that they had 'missed' out on event or information because of clashes. ECL has a lot of joint programs! This should be taken into consideration
- Some students said they found the experience stressful at times
- Some postgraduate students felt that Welcome Week was targeted specifically at undergraduates with no provision for them

Recommendations:

- Students would like to receive more detailed information regarding their courses and the events on campus prior to arriving
- A more diverse range of events. Also consider any potential clashes with orientation talk, such as the Library, whilst programming events
- Orientation talks for the Library, the VLE and such should be offered again in first week of term
- Have more level 5 and 6 students volunteer in the Department and at talks
The student-to-student experience could be very beneficial for integration of the first years into Department, and also to connect with relevant societies.
- Some students expressed an interest in post-Welcome Week events held by the Department where students could share their experiences and socialise

Departmental Feedback - Continued

English and Comparative Literature (cont.)

Staff Feedback

Areas of Concern:

- Due to a move to electronic enrolment for Welcome Week 2014, it was felt that this removed a personal point of contact for students
- Using Warmington Tower as a central hub for all students to check seminar groups and find information leads to severe overcrowding

Recommendations:

- The Department are planning to have separate days for continuing students and for new students in order to provide them with all the required information for seminar groups and courses
- Perhaps a greater use of and pointing to the VLE as a source for seminar lists and course information
- The removal of the personal point of contact due to electronic enrolment may be alleviated by putting greater emphasis on initial meetings with personal tutors

Students' Union

What Worked Well:

- The wristbands provided at Welcome Week 2014 were useful for getting to know students in various halls of residence. This helped with meeting others at the different events across the week

Where is there Room for Improvement?

- There were a lack of wristbands for students not in halls of residence and these ran out early on
- Many students signed up on mailing lists during the Freshers' Fayre but received no follow-up by email; many were unsure whether they were missing meetings
- Some events, such as the quiz, were so over-subscribed that a lack of space and seating made the events uncomfortable
- A number of departments noted that there was no representation from the Students' Union at their induction events and, as such, many of the new intake of undergraduate and postgraduate students had no formal introduction to the Students' Union, its officers or its role in university life

Recommendations:

- Add students into Society groups on Facebook during the Freshers' Fayre to ensure that students are kept up to date in an easy way, and to save confusion about meetings via lack of emails
- Ensure that representatives from the Students' Union attend scheduled induction events

Departmental Feedback - Continued

Theatre and Performance

Student Feedback (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

What Worked Well:

- The welcome drinks within the courses were well received, with undergraduates appreciating having staff and returning students (DSCs and PAL mentors) available to speak with in an informal setting
- Joint honours students noted that they welcomed meetings with tutors to clarify what their specific programme entailed with regards to the information provided to all undergraduates on both single and joint honours degrees
- Undergraduate students enjoyed the practical workshops as a chance to be introduced to others in a less formal setting than their initial class session appeared to be

Recommendations:

- Both groups noted that they would appreciate greater opportunities to meet students at different levels, for example, within the new undergraduate cohort, some students suggested a mixer event with second and third year students
- Postgraduate students also suggested that a follow-up session like that at the welcome drinks be held a few weeks into the Autumn term once intra-course relationships had been formed as some felt that they were concerned with developing relationships within their own cohorts during Welcome Week and have perhaps missed out on developing relationships with those on other programmes

Staff Feedback

What Worked Well:

- Spreading welcome events over the whole week for undergraduate students, but limiting the spread for postgraduate students to one or two days to accommodate those with additional time requirements, for example part-time students
- An informal orientation and tour of the Department in advance of the formal academic welcome, introduced during Welcome Week 2014, in order to make contact with the student cohort as soon as possible and signpost the campus to avoid confusion
- Giving students a clear sense of where help can be obtained on the Monday of Welcome Week appears to massively reduce student anxiety
- Bespoke meetings for joint honours students which are intended to continue in future Welcome Week planning
- Liaising with ECL and ICCE regarding joint honours students continues to be strong and well organised

Recommendations:

- To extend and integrate the technical and practical welcome sessions with the teaching schedule of week one
- To pursue an early and speedy contact point between students and the Department

Departmental Feedback - Continued

CELAW

- Only four CELAW students submitted feedback as most did not participate in Welcome Week activities. The Department consists of international students; some experienced issues securing their Visa on time, others did not receive information relating to Welcome Week on time
- Those who did take part in activities were satisfied with its diversity and efficiency

IMS

Student Feedback (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

What Worked Well:

- Campus tours and the Greenwich tour helped students connect with one other. Students also emphasised the departmental social events, which introduced them to both teachers and students

Recommendations:

- More information provided about each module to help students better understand the course offerings
- Students from both undergraduate and postgraduate courses thought greater emphasis should be given to networking among those within the Department
- The study skills session alongside induction activities were too long, with too much information on one day. Student feedback suggested the day was a little too long: perhaps too much information was delivered in too short a timeframe?

Staff Feedback

What Worked Well:

- Having induction on the same day as official enrolment ensured that postgraduate students got the most out of their trips to Goldsmiths, many of whom have jobs and family commitments
- Advertising activities planned by support departments, especially the Centre for English Language and Academic Writing

Postgraduate Student Feedback

What Worked Well:

- Cross-Campus Events:

The campus tours, various fairs and BBQ events helped students familiarise themselves with Goldsmiths and meet students and staff from departments across campus

Recommendations:

- Module Selection:

Some students feel they were not provided adequate time or information to carefully choose their optional modules. Others were disappointed that the optional module they selected was at full enrolment and they then could not enrol. It is recommended that students are provided with at least one week to research and select their optional modules. If possible, schedule module selection to coincide with other faculties.

- Postgraduate and Departmental Events:

During Welcome Week 2014:

- No postgraduate-specific events were programmed
- One ICCE social event was programmed
- An ICCE Breaker social event was scheduled during the third week of the autumn term but participation was poor as not all students were given advanced notice of the event.

An increase of these would help students to meet people closer to their age/people in their programme

Staff Feedback

Recommendations:

- Enrolment:

Enrolment should be moved entirely online and take place before Welcome Week, instead of the on-campus enrolment in the Great Hall

- This will assist staff in the planning of their classes – staff do not have accurate class numbers until on-campus enrolment during Welcome Week is finished
- This request has been made for at least four years

- Advanced Notice of Event Scheduling:

Knowing the dates/times of the cross-campus events (Warden's talk, society days etc.) as far in advance as possible will help staff with ICCE Welcome Week event scheduling

Departmental Feedback - Continued

Media and Communications

Postgraduate Student Feedback

What Worked Well:

- The BBQ, comedy night, campus tour, Freshers' Fayre and departmental drinks were the most popular events, all of which encourage signing up to activities as well as familiarising students with the facilities on campus

Recommendations:

- Module Selection:
The majority of students surveyed felt ambivalent or positive about the ease of module selection, with only one fifth finding module selection difficult
- Departmental Events:
Ensure departmental events do not clash with cross-college events
- Enrolment:
Clearer information is required from staff and ambassadors. Many students were confused about Great Hall enrolment, with regards to the multiple queues and the exact departmental timetable, for example

Staff Feedback

Recommendations:

- Information Provision:
Too much information is gathered together which can be confusing. Students need more clear information delivered in a short and exact timeframe

CCS

Postgraduate Student Feedback

Module Selection

- Stressful Due to Early Selection:
It would be preferable to have the opportunity to sit in on a seminar first before making the decision of enrolling. If this is not possible, perhaps departments can provide indicative reading lists and detailed module descriptions before the start of term (for example the module descriptions for the Anthropology department, whilst available, are not at all helpful to students making module choices)

Enrolment

- Multiple Methods of Enrolment are Inconvenient:
Students recommended streamlining enrolment – rather than enrolling in person, on paper and online, it would be far more convenient and simple to move enrolment all online

Visual Cultures

Student Feedback (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

What Worked Well:

- Group trips to different areas of London built confidence within students unfamiliar with the city during their first week at Goldsmiths
- Welcome BBQs were a good way to meet other students outside of accommodation and also students from different years of study

Where is there Room for Improvement?

- The Visual Cultures department organised no informal activities during Welcome Week which meant it was difficult for students to get to know one another at an early stage. Introductory sessions within the department were relatively formal and less comfortable as a way of getting to know other students
- Too many people at many of the events, for example the quizzes in the Students' Union, made them less enjoyable because the room was over-full with a lack of seating available

Recommendations:

- A larger number of events could be implemented which facilitate more and better ways of getting to know individuals on the same course and within the same Department

Staff Feedback

Where is there Room for Improvement?

- Welcome Week can be kaleidoscopic and not optimally targeted at preparing students for the coming year

Recommendations:

- Investigate ways of helping students centre their university life around their Department and academic studies, and aid the shift from the mentality of an A-Level (or equivalent) student to that of a BA level student
- Having induction sessions immediately following registration
- Perhaps having staff greet students as they leave registration, before being taken on a personal tour in small groups, on a relatively informal basis with no formal requirement of specific information to be given to students but allowing staff discretion in choosing what to discuss

Departmental Feedback - Continued

Psychology

Postgraduate Student Feedback

What Worked Well:

- Students appreciated being offered events where they did not have to drink alcohol, and where alcohol was not served, including the comedy night

Recommendation:

- A greater number of activities in which students can interact with other new students - natural meeting places outside of parties at night

Staff Feedback

- Planning has not yet started for Welcome Week 2015, but the Department looks to incorporate suggestions that come out of the Welcome Week cross-college review, the GoldStart project and the report on the Just Joined Survey

Sociology

Postgraduate Student Feedback

What Worked Well:

- The informal reception for all postgraduate students - pleasant food and drink helped students mingle and meet each other
- Induction lectures were noted as being useful in providing students with important information

Where is there Room for Improvement?

- Many module descriptions were lacking in clarity and depth, which left students feeling unsure about which were the appropriate modules to choose

Recommendation:

- A review of the information provided in the module description and perhaps some form of presentation or question/answer session with tutors to add clarity

Staff Feedback

- Planning has not yet started for Welcome Week 2015, but following recommendations from the Just Joined Survey the Department will meet to plan ahead. Consensus at the moment is to keep the status quo unless specific areas are noted in the feedback

Where is there Room for Improvement?

- Ensuring that departmental events are clearly signposted to students so that they are aware which events they are required to attend
- Joint honours students have had clashes on some programmed sessions during Welcome Week

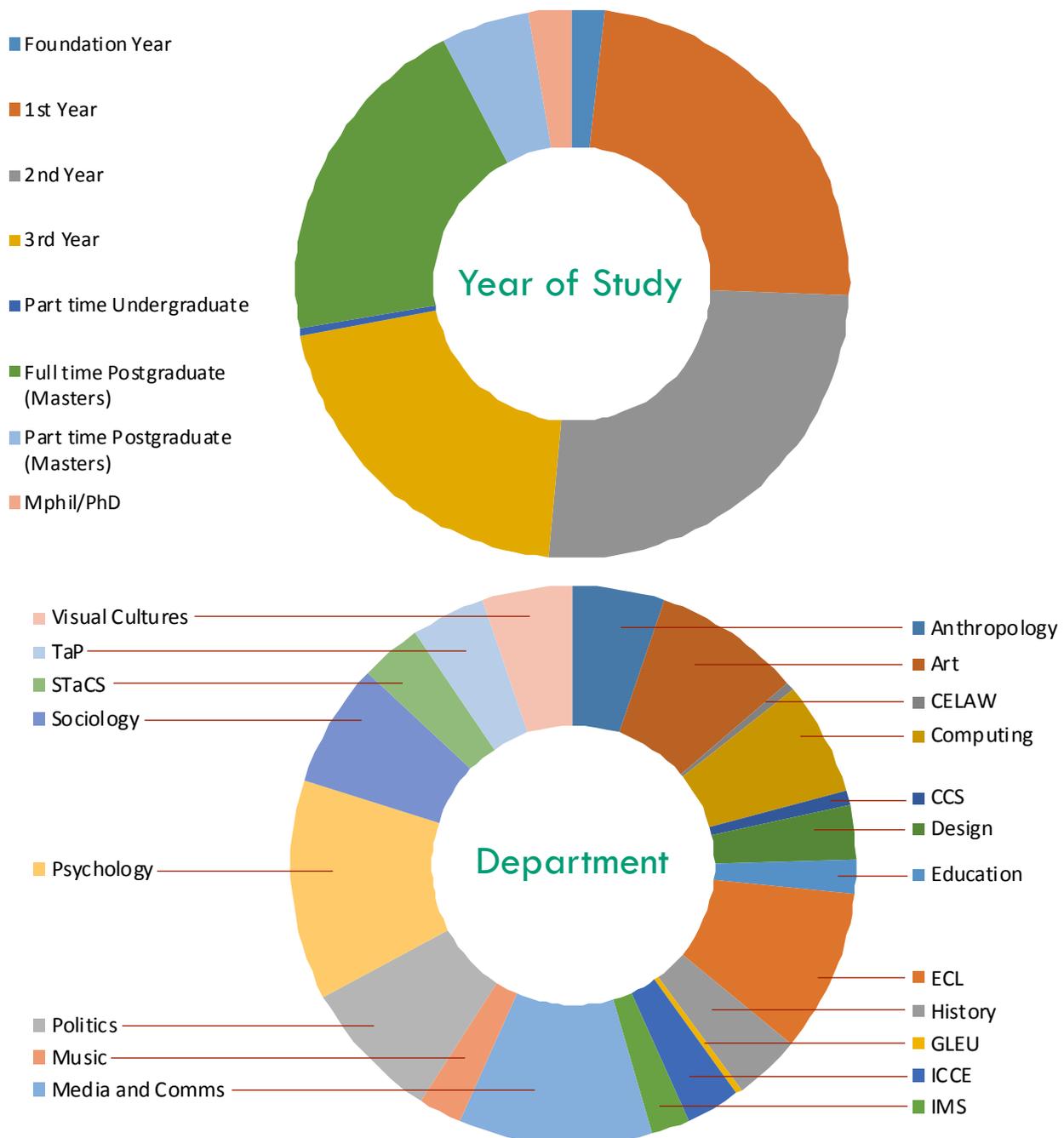
Student Survey Findings

As with the Annual Projects 2014, the Departmental Student Coordinators once again opted for a joint survey amongst all project groups in order to attempt to gain as wide a response rate as possible.

A total of 770 students responded to the survey, with 91.8% of those responding answering the questions specific to this survey on Welcome Week.

The spread of participants can be seen in the two graphs below. There was an approximately equal response from full-time students, specifically the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year undergraduates and the full-time Masters students. The Foundation year students and MPhil/PhD students, whilst a significantly smaller number, also make up a much smaller percentage of the total student body so this is expected.

In terms of departmental response, there was again a broadly even spread, especially when considering the relative sizes of the departments. All departments are represented in the responses.



Student Survey Findings - Continued

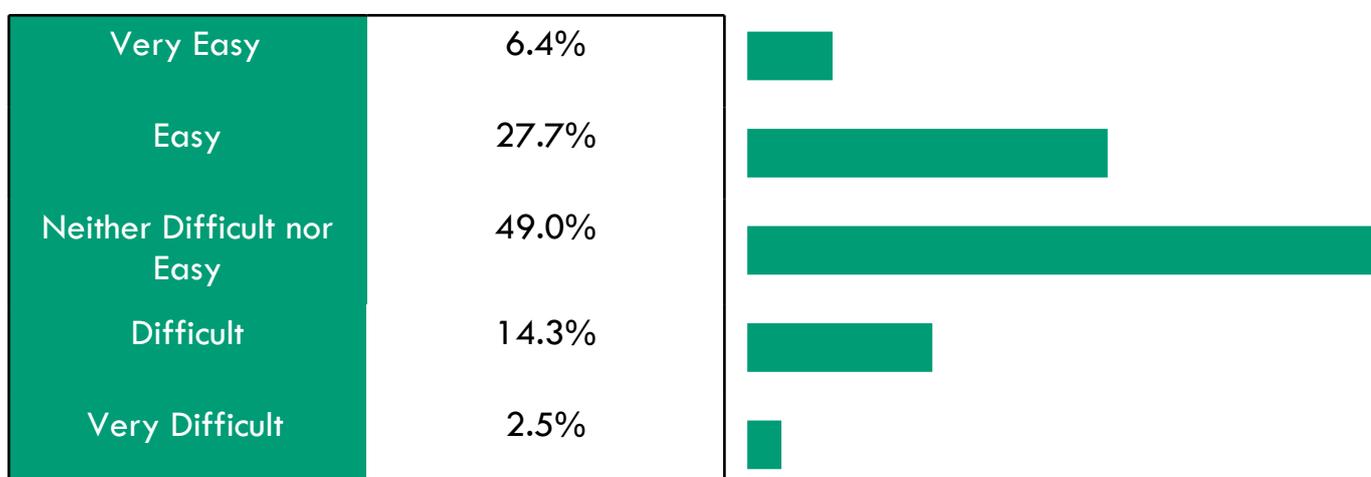
Five Welcome Week-specific questions were included in the survey, after consultation with Bonnie Southcott, Student Engagement Manager. The questions were designed to gain a detailed understanding of the student experience during Welcome Week, particularly those less covered by the Just Joined Survey compiled by the University.

The questions were as follows, with both tabulated and graphic representations of the results.

How would you rate your departmental module selection process?

Students were asked how they rated their departmental module selection process from Very Difficult through to Very Easy with five options.

707 students responded, 91.8% of the total survey respondents

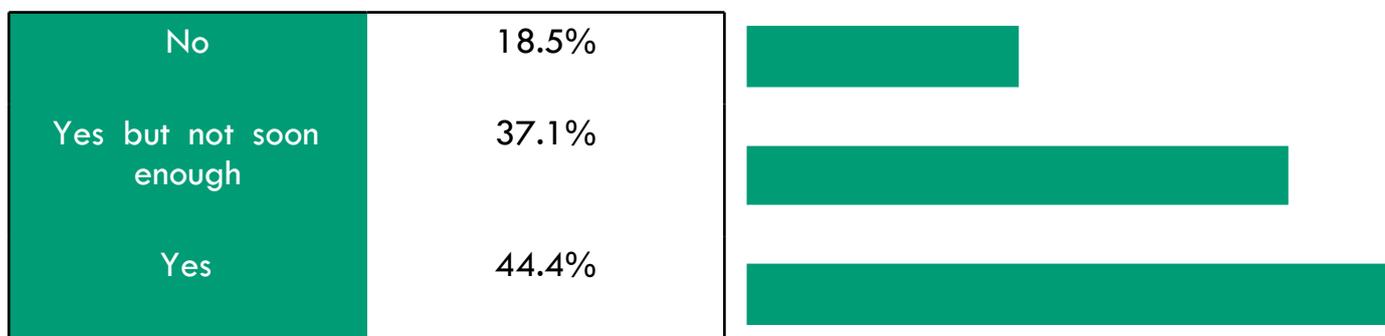


Student Survey Findings - Continued

Do you feel that the information provided to you by your department prior to the start of the year was sufficient?

Students were asked if they felt the information provided to them from the Department before they arrived at Goldsmiths was sufficient, with an optional choice of highlighting a delay in receipt.

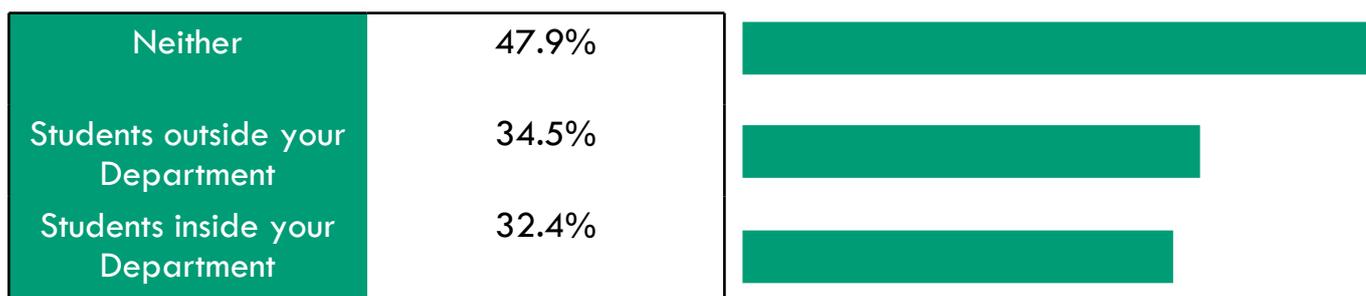
707 students responded, 91.8% of the total survey respondents



Do you think that Welcome Week activities helped you get to know...

Students were given the option of choosing students within or without their Department, or choosing neither, with the option to choose multiple answers. This explains why the sum of the responses yields a figure greater than 100%.

707 students responded, 91.8% of the total survey respondents

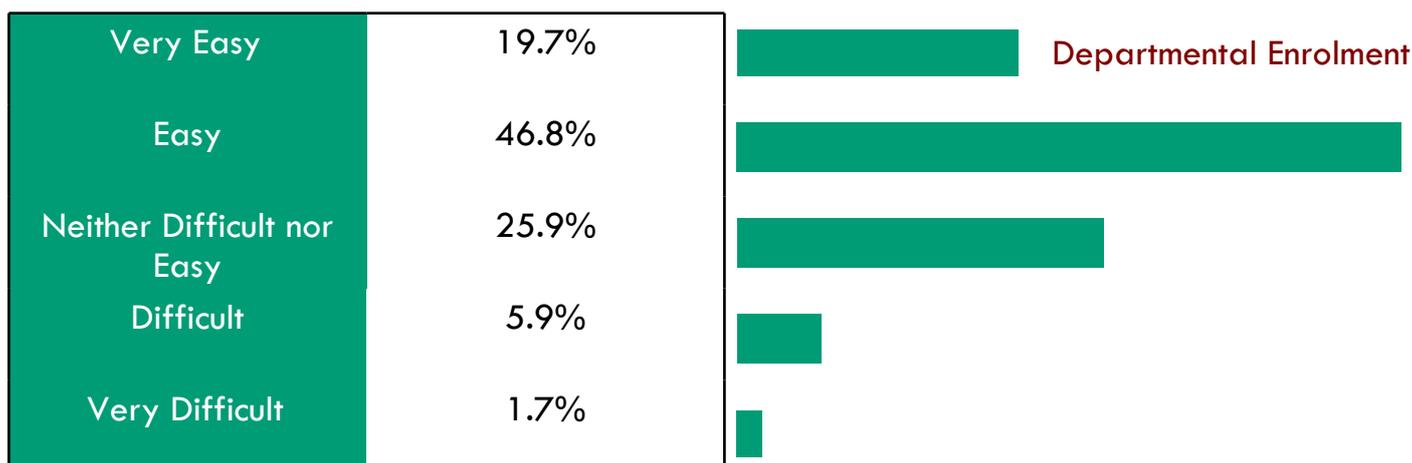
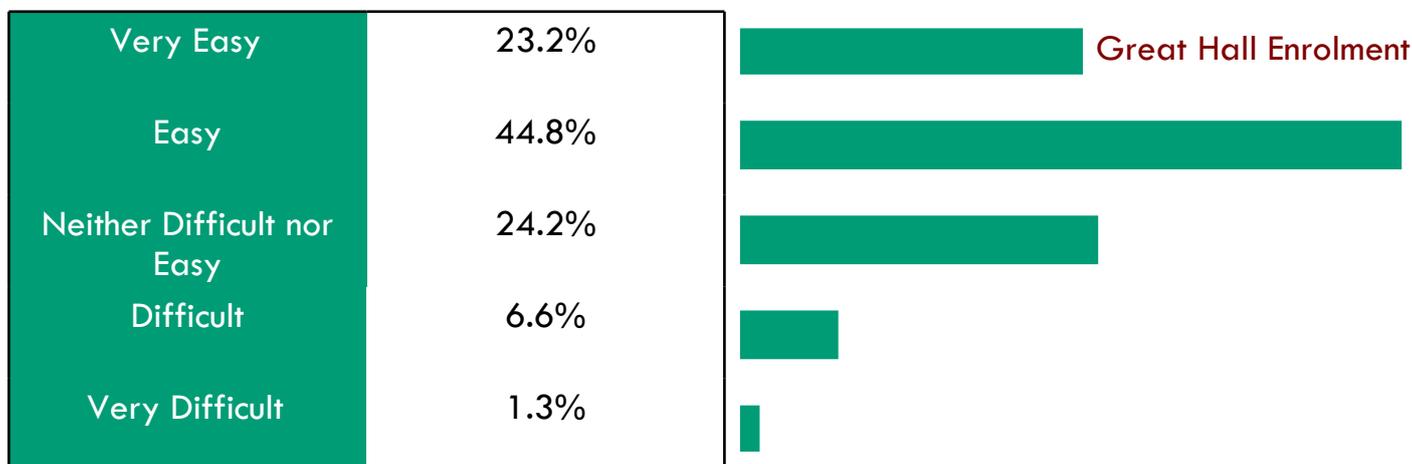
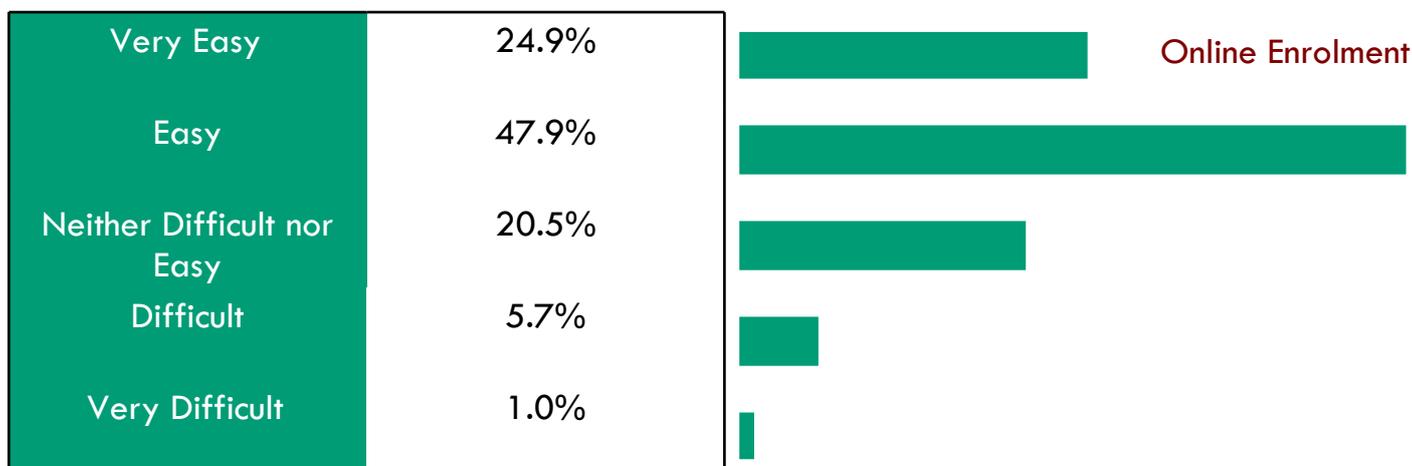


Student Survey Findings - Continued

Thinking back to the stages of enrolment, how easy was the process?

Students were asked to respond to this question in triplicate, with responses regarding Online Enrolment, Enrolment in the Great Hall and Departmental Enrolment separately, rated from Very Difficult to Very Easy with five choices.

699 students responded, 90.8% of the total survey respondents

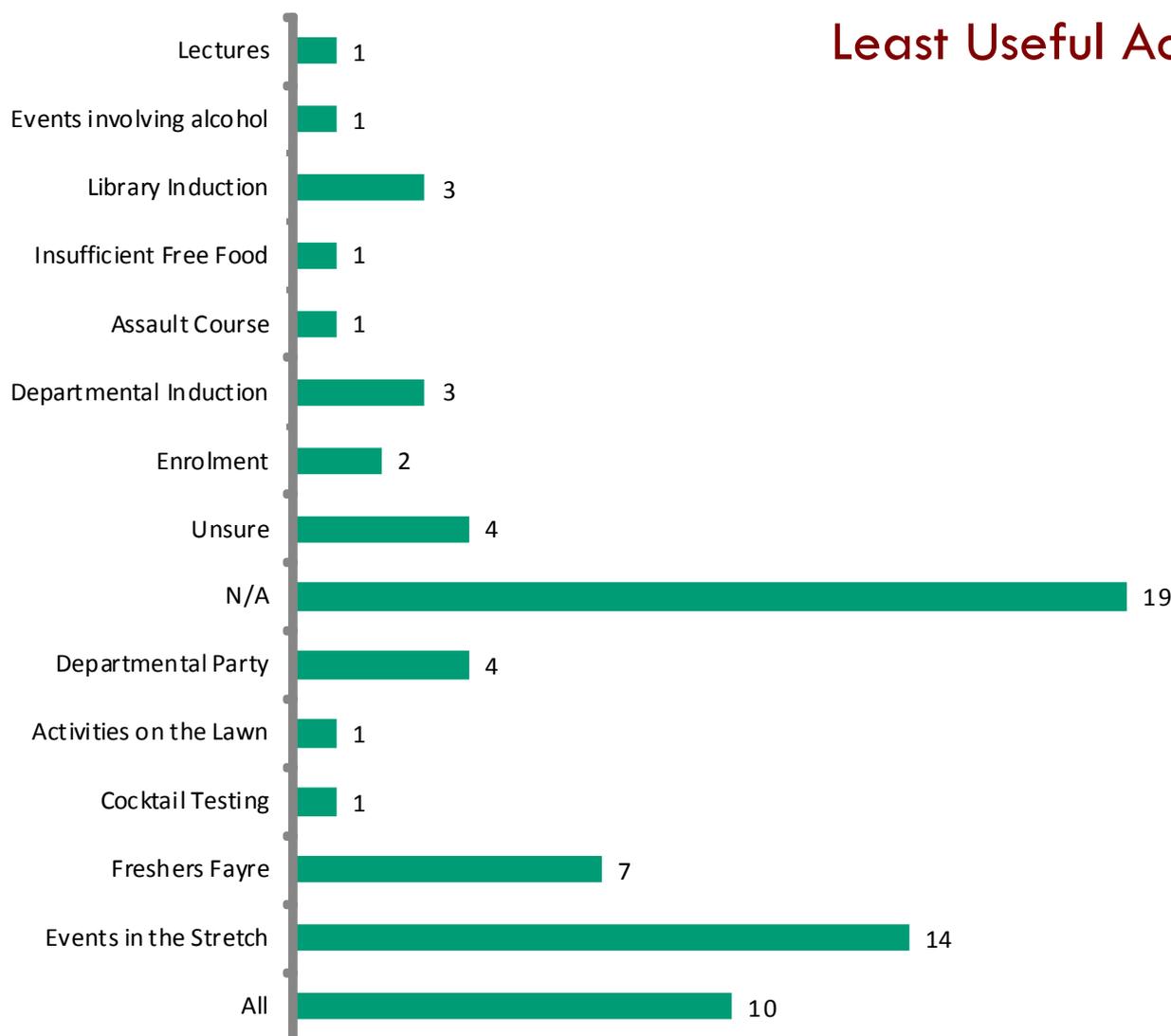


Student Survey Findings - Continued

During Welcome Week, which activities did you find most/least useful?

Students were asked to elaborate once an option was selected. The results were then collated and grouped as seen in the two graphs following, with some additional points raised listed below.

Least Useful Activities



“My timetable did not allow me to partake in activities”

“As a mature student with a disability, I didn’t feel there was anything suitable for me”

This student, however, notes that this was several years ago and not specific to Welcome Week 2014

“Not really applicable for part-time postgrad”

“Postgrads don’t feel as though there are any activities geared specifically to them”

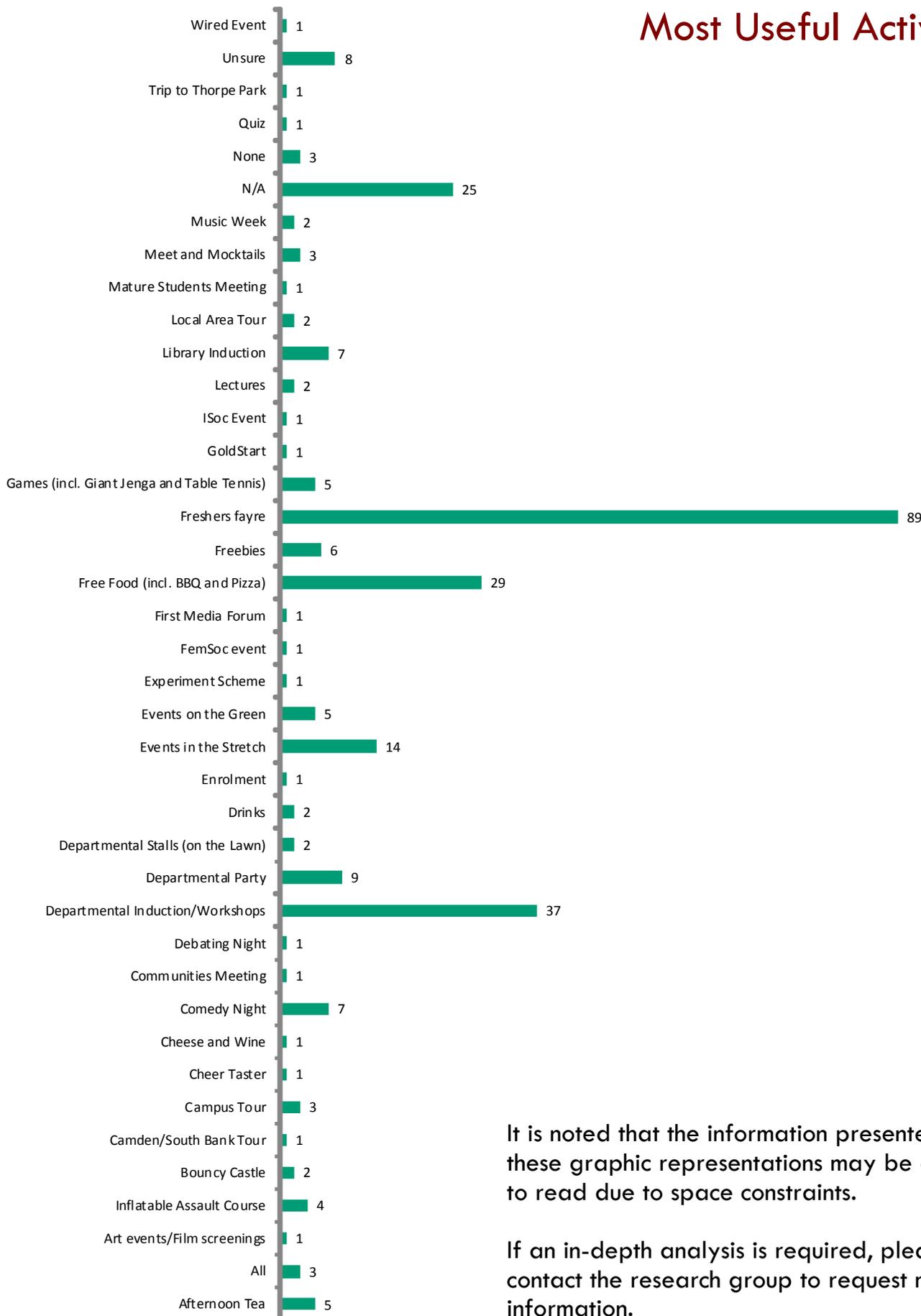
“Coming from private accommodation I didn’t know anyone and it’s hard to meet people during daytime activities on the College Green”

“Much better to start mid-September, especially for staff and students who have children”

“While the inter-modular approach is great, it’s a pain having to enrol in person at the relevant department - meaning three departments in my case. I spent a lot of time wandering around, not really knowing who I should speak to and where”

Student Survey Findings - Continued

Most Useful Activities



It is noted that the information presented in these graphic representations may be difficult to read due to space constraints.

If an in-depth analysis is required, please contact the research group to request more information.

Conclusions

The research, based on anonymous survey results from over 700 students as well as staff and student feedback, reveals significant insight into the Welcome Week experience focusing on enrolment, programming and communication. As Welcome Week is generally the first experience – both academic and social – a student has at Goldsmiths, it is strongly encouraged that the university strive to improve and streamline the offerings available on and off campus.

Positives - Welcome Week 2014

Departmental Module Selection

- 83.1% of students rated the process as neither difficult nor easy, easy, or very easy

Welcome Week Events

- 52.1% of students thought that Welcome Week activities helped them get to know other students in their department and/or other students outside their department

Events with Food and Drink:

Students noted the BBQs, afternoon tea, pizza, and wine and cheese as being enjoyable opportunities to eat good food and meet other students in a relaxed atmosphere.

Departmental Events:

Postgraduates and PhD candidates found these events to be the most relevant for them during Welcome Week. Course inductions provided good introductions to the year ahead, and departmental social events were particular highlights for students.

Freshers' Fayre:

This was the biggest highlight for students, who enjoyed the opportunities to meet new people and learn more about the clubs and services offered on campus.

Tours of the Goldsmiths Campus and Surrounding Community

Students noted that the tours offered a good introduction to their community and helped them make friends.

Pre-Arrival Departmental Communication

- 81.5% of students agree that the information provided by their departments prior to the start of the year was sufficient

Enrolment

- The majority of students did not experience difficulty enrolling at Goldsmiths:

92.2% of students rated Great Hall Enrolment as neutral, easy or very easy

92.4% of students rated Departmental Enrolment as neutral, easy or very easy

93.3% of students rated Online Enrolment neutral, easy or very easy

Recommendations

Recommendations - Welcome Week 2015

Departmental Module Selection

Timing:

- It is noted that this is a recurring issue, with suggestions here building on those previously suggested
- Provide students with at least one week to research and select their modules; this will ensure they make well-informed decisions about which modules will best suit their academic and personal interests
- Investigate the possibility of holding events such as the *You've Got Options* sessions, run by the English Society, during Welcome Week

Welcome Week Events

Increase Departmental Events:

- Students noted that more departmental events such as group or social events should be offered; these make for great opportunities to get to know one another as well as the staff they'll be working closely with over their time at Goldsmiths
- A greater integration of continuing students into events for new students would allow the development of cross-year relationships, and also a means of sharing advice and guidance from one year group to another

Additional On-Campus Events:

- Students noted a lack of events for disabled students, black and minority ethnic students, trans* students, mature students & postgraduate-specific events. These targeted events would make for great opportunities for students to meet other students of similar backgrounds or interests
- It is also suggested that a greater number of non-alcoholic or alcohol-free events be programmed into Welcome Week

Additional Off-Campus Events:

- Running a joint late-night event with other University of London campuses such as a club night would encourage students to get to know other students at other universities, as well as the greater London area

Pre-Arrival Departmental Communication

Reading Lists:

- Make these available at the beginning of the Summer term. Full-time students, parents and students with full-time summer jobs appreciate being offered as much time as possible to read the texts prior to the Autumn term
- Investigate clarifying the information communicated prior to arrival at Goldsmiths, particularly that given to international students. Also ensure that all information is sent out in a timely manner to ensure students are able to receive them before travelling to Goldsmiths

Recommendations - Continued

Enrolment

Arrange for All Enrolment to Take Place Online

- Removing the Great Hall enrolment would save students time not having to wait in long queues. This would also be helpful for teaching staff in the planning of their classes, as they do not have accurate class numbers until enrolment during Welcome Week is finished. This would also ease confusion regarding multiple enrolment requirements (departmental, Great Hall etc.)
- If enrolment is completely online, document presentation (of certificates, visas, identification etc.) which usually takes place during Great Hall enrolment could instead be arranged as required through departments or the Student Centre, with a fixed deadline by which all documentation must be presented

If Online Enrolment is Not Feasible, Ensure Adequate Provision of Enrolment Staff:

- Students expressed significant frustration waiting in long queues to enrol in the Great Hall, and noted that the enrolment team appeared short staffed as well as exhausted – particularly by the end of the day

With thanks to

Fairooz Aniq
Hannah Scott
Bonnie Southcott
Departmental Staff
All Students