

# UPP Annual Student Experience Study 2017



Context and Objectives	5
Methodology	7
Executive Summary	10
<b>Section 1: Having a good student experience</b>	11
<b>Section 2: Choosing a university</b>	11
<b>Section 3: Choice of accommodation</b>	12
<b>Section 4: Views on campus facilities</b>	12
<b>Section 5: Accommodation satisfaction and preferences</b>	12
<b>Section 6: Investment in education</b>	13
<b>Section 7: Apprenticeships</b>	13
<b>Section 1: What makes a good student experience?</b>	15
What makes a good non-academic student experience?	15
How will first year students and applicants react to fewer EU students?	18
How satisfied are first year students with their non-academic experience?	21
How do first year students cope with the transition to university life?	23
<b>Section 2: Choosing a university</b>	25
What are the most important factors in choosing a university?	25
How do first year students/applicants' and parents' opinions differ when it comes to choosing a university?	28
<b>Section 3: Choice of accommodation</b>	31
Where do applicants expect to live in their first year at university?	31
Where do first year students live in their first year at university?	33
<b>Section 4: Views on campus facilities</b>	35
How important are the quality of campus facilities to first year students and applicants?	35
What facilities are most important for having a good time on-campus?	38
How satisfied are first year students with campus facilities?	41
<b>Section 5: Accommodation Satisfaction and Preferences</b>	43
What is most important for first year students/applicants when it comes to accommodation?	43
Do first year students/applicants and parents view accommodation differently?	45
<b>Section 6: Investment in Education</b>	48
Would a good TEF rating influence applicants' choice of university?	48
Will applicants pay more for a good TEF ranking?	50
Would first year students and applicants pay more for a degree that offered a higher starting salary?	52

<b>Section 7: Apprenticeships an alternative to university</b>	<b>55</b>
How viable are apprenticeships as an alternate route to university?	55
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Apprenticeships - Summary</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Mental Health - Summary</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Diversity - Summary</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>TEF - Summary</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Parents Poll - Summary</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Weighting</b>	<b>72</b>

## Objectives and Methodology

## Context and Objectives

University Partnership Programme (otherwise known as UPP) provides student accommodation and facilities management to higher education institutions in the UK.

The UPP Student Experience survey has drawn comparisons between expectations and the reality of university life, examined satisfaction with the most important aspects of the student experience (both academic and non-academic) and suggested how institutions can better meet first year students' needs since 2012.

### Overall Research Aim:

The main research aim is to give UPP up-to-date insight and trending data into the lives of first year students and applicants, their accommodation satisfaction, expectations and preferences.

In detail, the objective is to:

- understand what aspects of university make up good non-academic experience, monitoring any changes with these over time
- understand whether differences in accommodation preferences between applicants and first year students persist, and
- measure changes (if any) in satisfaction with purpose-built accommodation
- understand the perceptions of apprenticeships and how applicants choose between apprenticeships and university
- gauge applicant's perceptions, and willingness to pay for, universities with a gold or silver TEF score
- understand how first year students and applicants might feel post-Brexit if fewer EU students are to attend UK universities
- explore the extent to which parents are involved in the decision of where to live and study at university

## YouthSight

Since 2012, YouthSight has conducted the fieldwork for UPP's annual Student Experience surveys. We also delivered a full report in 2012, 2013 and 2016.

YouthSight clients see the world through the eyes of young people, first year students and young professionals, with specialist practice teams providing the insights and data that universities, brands and policy-makers need. YouthSight own and manage The OpinionPanel Community - the UK's largest youth research community, comprised of 135,000 16-30 year olds.



YouthSight also runs State of the Youth Nation, the most up-to date youth tracker in the UK. SYN keeps youth brands, broadcasters and policy makers in touch with Millennials and Generation Z.



It is important that young people are able to complete surveys on whichever device they are most comfortable with. In 2014 YouthSight won one of our industry's most prestigious awards, for its 'mobile first' approach to surveys which allowed young people to take part in research in a way that best suited them.

## Methodology

This survey was hosted online using YouthSight's award-winning survey platform, as it was in previous years. It took roughly 10 minutes to complete and all participants completed the survey between the 17<sup>th</sup> April and the 28<sup>th</sup> April. All participants were invited to the survey via email link and sampled as detailed below.

Data was processed and cleaned by YouthSight. During data quality checks, 40 participants were removed from the final sample who answered the questionnaire too quickly or did not answer questions properly (i.e. selected responses via a pattern). Following this, the data was weighted according to 2014/15 HESA data to ensure that the student and applicant cells were both representative of their populations (see 'Survey Sample' for more details).

This sample design maintains consistency with previous years of research in order to allow for year-on-year comparisons and analysis of emerging trends. Participants were incentivised with 100 points (equal in value to £1) which can be redeemed as vouchers at a number of high street stores.

### Survey sample

A sample of 1117 participants including 555 first-year, full time, undergraduate students at UK universities and 562 university applicants were included in this research. As the survey was fielded in June 2017, all first year students were just ending their first year of study at the time the survey was conducted.

Though the roughly 50-50 split between first year students and applicants was imposed by design, each of these two cells was recruited to representative quotas by gender and age according to 2014/15 HESA data for first year, full time undergraduates at UK universities. Following completion of fieldwork, all data was weighted according to the same HESA specifications. Therefore, each of these cells is broadly representative of the wider population that they represent.

The weighting matrix is included in an appendix.

As in previous years, all qualifying participants were randomly selected from YouthSight's Applicant and Student panels, which are the UK's premier source of higher education sample<sup>1</sup>. All applicants confirmed that they intend to begin their studies in Sept 2017.

### Changes to the survey

Each year, the questionnaire is amended and a different set of questions on a topic of interest is added.

- In 2015, questions covering apprenticeships and employability were added. Of the two, only the apprenticeship questions have been carried forward to 2017 although the 'thought experiment' question remains for this wave.

---

<sup>1</sup> Panellists are recruited each year to these panels through a special agreement with UCAS and screened to ensure their identity and collect background demographics.

- The MaxDiff analysis into important factors at university introduced in 2016 was not repeated, and the conjoint analysis of previous years is also not repeated
- In 2016, questions were added regarding importance of the TEF in future university choices and the factors that make it difficult for first year students to cope at university. Questions on the TEF have been continued and expanded, while the mental health question has been rephrased so no tracking data is available
- New questions for 2017 include questions on diversity, as well as the new mental health question and additional TEF question already mentioned
- We also polled parents of applicants and parents of first year students as to their involvement and opinions on choice of university and choice of university accommodation

### **Notes on the report**

As the survey sample is composed of both applicants and first year students, descriptions of the sample at the overall level are made of 'participants'. This refers to all who completed the survey.

Throughout 'first year students' refers only to first year students as no other students were sampled for this report. Similarly, 'applicants' describes only applicants to UK universities.

Differences between subgroups (i.e. first year students versus applicants, differences between genders, etc) are described only if the difference is considered significant at the 95% confidence level.

In charts, the following key is used:

<b>*</b>	Significantly different to other subgroups in chart
<b>^</b>	Significantly higher than the previous year
<b>▼</b>	Significantly lower than the previous year

### **Notes on data from previous years**

Throughout the report, comparison is made with data from previous years whenever possible (usually only limited by questionnaire changes since the original survey in 2014). However, it should be noted that prior to 2012 and 2013 the sample was representative (by way of quota groups and weighting) of all undergraduate students rather than limiting student recruitment, quotas and balancing to first year university students only (representative here means proportionate by gender and age).

In order to make appropriate comparisons to 2012 and 2013, data from these years excludes all students except first year students.

The change in sampling in 2014 was made in order to better suit the objectives of investigating expectations of and reactions to purpose-built accommodation, which is used most frequently in the first year of university.

## Parents' Poll - Methodology

For the first time in 2017 an accompanying survey interviewing parents of first year students and parents of applicants was run across the same time period. This online survey was hosted on the YouthSight platform and fieldwork was conducted by Panelbase and Viga. It took roughly 4 minutes to complete and all participants completed the survey between the 12<sup>th</sup> April and the May 9<sup>th</sup> 2017. All participants were invited to the survey via email link and sampled as detailed below.

Data was processed and cleaned by YouthSight. 515 completed the survey. During data quality checks, 9 participants were removed from the final sample, where the participant completed the questionnaire too quickly or did not answer questions properly (i.e. selected responses via a pattern) leaving a total of 506 included in the research.

### Survey sample

We interviewed 248 parents of applicants and 258 parents of first year undergraduate students, where the child is aged between 17 and 19. In the event that parents had more than one child within that age range, they were asked to think specifically about their oldest child.

52% of participants are female, 48% are male. The data is unweighted.

**It should be noted that the parents sampled are unrelated to the first year students and applicants participating in the Student Experience Survey.**

## Executive Summary

## Section 1: Having a good student experience

Making new friends and having a good campus atmosphere continue to be the most important aspects of a good non-academic experience. The overall order of importance was unchanged from 2016. Last year's report raised questions as to whether or not the social side of university was becoming less important, but there isn't a concrete case that this is a trend as the percent of first year students saying the new friends made was important is significantly up this year (in-line with earlier findings). However, last year's dip in the amount of first year students/applicants rating reasonable prices at social venues / affordable social activities as important didn't recover, so we will continue to monitor this in 2018.

First year students continue to report high levels of satisfaction with their non-academic student experience, and report similar levels of satisfaction to previous years across most metrics. However, there has been a slow decline in the amount of first year students saying they are satisfied with the amount of time they have to socialise (85% in 2012 to 77% in 2017).

As 2 in 5 first year students/applicants feel that meeting a variety of different people is an important part of their student experience, missing out on the chance to meet people from different countries will certainly impact this. Almost half of first year students/applicants would feel disappointed if there were to be fewer EU students at their university.

We also found that first year students find the transition to university difficult, as the majority (87%) found it difficult to cope with one or more of the issues we asked about.

## Section 2: Choosing a university

Course is by far the most important factor in choice of university and has been since we first asked this question in 2015. Location (43%) and reputation (40%) are the factors ranked second and third in importance. Along with employment (32%) and academic facilities and resources (32%), these are the only factors to be rated as important by more than, or close to, a third of first year students.

While course and reputation are very important to both parents and first year students, parents are more concerned about practical things like finances and quality of accommodation, while first year students/applicants are more likely to think about their day-to-day life at university - what they'll be studying, where they'll be located and their social life. Parents also see themselves as being more involved in the decision about which university to attend than first year students/applicants do. 3 in 4 parents say they had a mid/high level of involvement in the decision, while just under half of first year students/applicants say the same. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle - either

way, this suggests that parents do have a very important role to play in choice of university.

## **Section 3: Choice of accommodation**

As in all previous years, applicants are most likely to think they'll be living in halls of residence during their first year - 65% think they'll live in halls and 69% think they'll live in some kind of purpose-built accommodation.

Similarly, first year students are most likely to actually live in halls of residence, with 64% living in halls and 71% living in any kind of purpose-built accommodation.

There have been no significant changes in accommodation preference from applicants in the last three years.

## **Section 4: Views on campus facilities**

First year students and applicants have high expectations of campus facilities - over 80% say that the quality of spaces for socialising, quality of outside spaces, quality of accommodation and quality of eating/food venues are important, while over three quarters feel the quality of the Student Union and of entertainment venues is important.

Overall, the majority of first year students are satisfied with the campus facilities asked about, and are as satisfied as they were last year. However, when we look at the percent of first year students who are satisfied with facilities compared to those who think the quality of those facilities are important to having a good time, it seems that satisfaction metrics could be improved with accommodation, dining/food venues and shops on campus.

The top 3 facilities most important to having a good time on-campus haven't changed since the survey started. WIFI continues to be by far the most important factor to having a good time on-campus, followed by chill-out areas with no obligation to buy anything and campus bars. Good quality cafes/coffee shops and gyms were rated more important than the Student Union this year, showing a gradual shift towards an interest in health and socialising outside of drinking venues.

## **Section 5: Accommodation satisfaction and preferences**

When it comes to aspects of accommodation first year students/applicants consider to be important, not much has changed in the past 3 years. Affordable rent and a favourable location continue to be the top two most important considerations for first year students/applicants, and are considerably more important than other aspects of

accommodation (though en-suite facilities and cleanliness are also important to half those surveyed). Fewer first year students/applicants said security was important compared to 2015. However, security was identified as the top priority for parents of first year students/applicants.

## Section 6: Investment in education

When asked about the impact of the TEF on the choice of which university to attend without reference to price increases, the majority (70%) of applicants still feel that a good TEF ranking would influence their choice of university. However, this number is significantly down from last year when 85% agreed.

Far more applicants say a good TEF score *wouldn't* influence their choice of university compared to last year. This year 1 in 5 applicants say this wouldn't influence them, compared to just 6% last year.

On the whole applicants are not accepting of fee increases in relation to gold or silver TEF rankings - 58% wouldn't pay more gold or silver ranked universities even if price increases are in line with inflation. Just over a third (36%) say that they would pay more for a university with a gold TEF ranking, which rises to 44% in those planning to attend Russell Group universities.

There was a significant increase in the average proportion of first year students and applicants who are willing to pay more tuition for a job that guarantees a starting salary of £24K. First year students would now pay on average £2,064, a full £612 more than in 2016. Though there was no obvious cause for this increase, this speaks to the anxiety that first year students and applicants have about finding work after graduation.

As in previous years, first year students/applicants felt that the extra money would be best spent on employability programmes, emphasising the importance of gaining experience and developing skills on-the-job.

## Section 7: Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are increasingly being considered as an alternative to university - almost 1 in 3 first year students/applicants say they considered apprenticeships before applying to university this year compared to 1 in 4 who said the same in 2016.

Although both males and females are more likely to be considering apprenticeships this year, the year on year growth is highest in females - 18% considered last year vs. 26% this year. In contrast, males saw a smaller (but still significant) increase from 31% in 2016 to 36% in 2017.

Fewer schools and friends/family are promoting degrees over apprenticeships compared to 2 years ago, suggesting that apprenticeships are more widely accepted by key advice-givers as an alternative to university.

## Main Report

## Section 1: What makes a good student experience?

### What makes a good non-academic student experience?

Making new friends and having a good campus atmosphere continue to be the most important aspects of a good non-academic experience

#### What's stayed the same?

- Making new friends and having a good campus atmosphere continue to be the two most important aspects of a good non-academic experience
- The overall order of importance was the same as in 2016
- Last year's dip in amount of first year students/applicants saying reasonable prices at social venues / affordable social activities are important was sustained this year

#### What's changed?

- Significantly more participants rated making new friends as important compared to last year (70% vs. 65% in 2016)
- Significantly more participants rated a good campus atmosphere as important compared to last year (67% vs. 63% in 2016)
- Last year participants who lived/intended to outside of purpose-built accommodation were significantly less likely to rate most social aspects of university as important, but this was not the case this year

The new friends made (70% agree) and having a good campus atmosphere (67% agree) were the top 2 aspects that make up a good non-academic experience, remaining unchanged in rank from all previous waves. Incidentally, both those aspects saw significant increases from 2016, bringing the results in line with findings seen in 2012/13/14.

Last year we were surprised to see a drop in first year students rating reasonable prices at social venues/affordable social activities as important (58% in 2014 to 44% in 2016). It did not recover in importance this year, staying constant with a small (but not significant) increase to 47%. This finding links to the fact that young people today are drinking less and becoming less hedonistic.

As with last year, a good campus atmosphere continues to be more important to applicants than first year students (71% vs. 63% in 2017, 68% vs. 57% in 2016), possibly due to the fact applicants are still window-shopping. For applicants, the campus atmosphere is actually the most important feature, ranked joint-most-important along with the new friends made (both 71%).

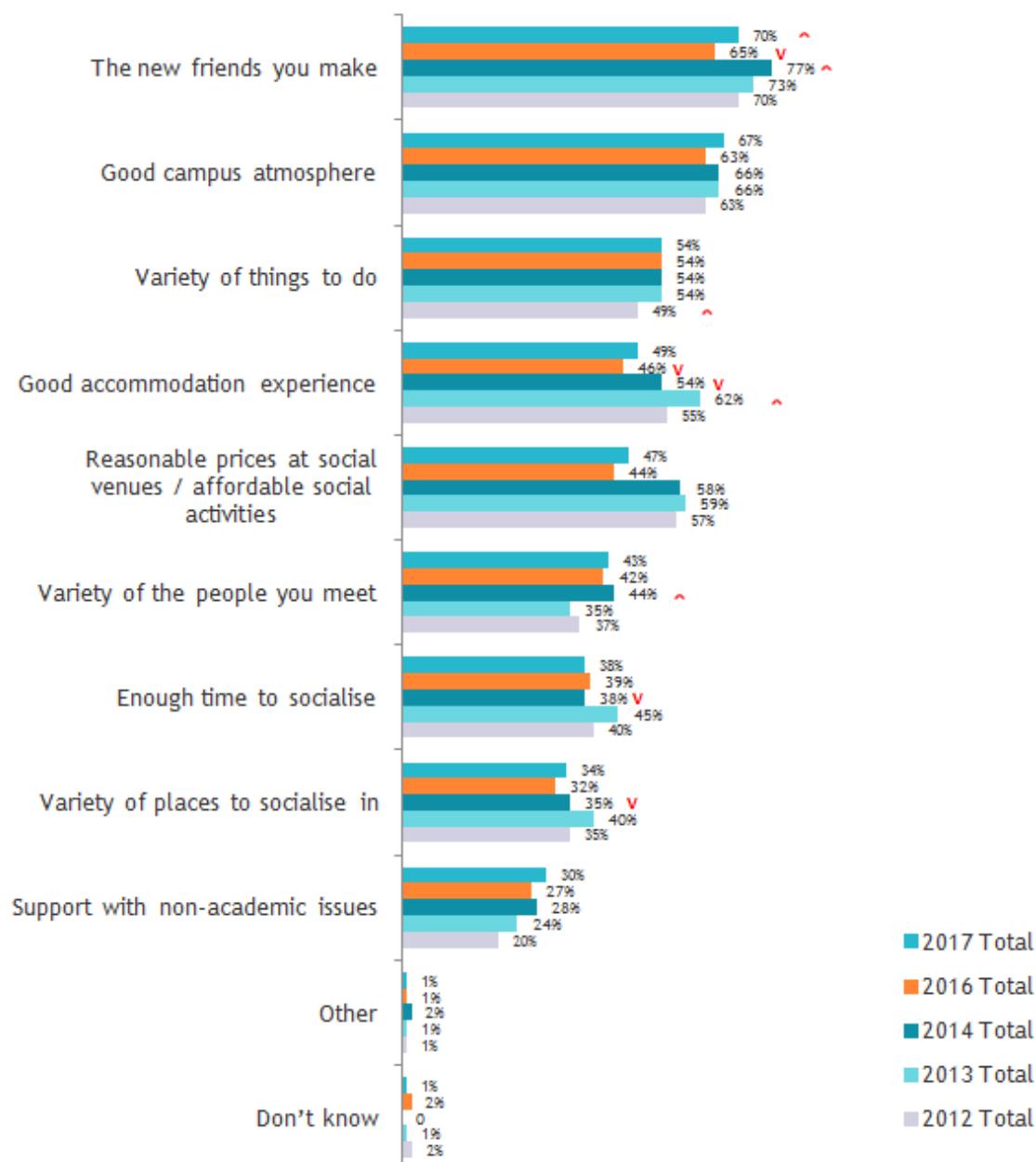
Females are significantly more likely to say that support with non-academic issues is important to them (34% vs. 23% of males), though females are generally more likely to ask for help and support than males. Later in the survey we see that females also experienced

more difficulty coping with university life than males, so universities should ensure support services are well signposted.

Last year's results saw that participants who live/intend to live in purpose-built accommodation were significantly more likely to value a good accommodation experience than those who live/intend to live in other builds (60% vs. 17%). They were also more likely to value the new friends made (68% vs. 60% others), variety of things to do (57% vs. 47%), and having enough time to socialise (41% vs. 34%), suggesting that these participants might see university as a more social experience. However, this is not what the 2017 findings suggest, as except for a good accommodation experience (62% vs. 17% non in purpose-build) those in purpose-builds weren't significantly more likely to rate any one aspect as higher than those in non-purpose builds. This change appears to have been driven more by an increase in the importance of those social activities from those who *don't* live/plan to live in purpose-builds than a decline from those who do, suggesting the social side of university is important for both groups.

Those not in purpose-builds are more likely to want support with non-academic issues (36% vs. 27% in purpose-builds), as they may lack a support network established by friends made in halls of residence.

QC3 Some young people like you have told us what they consider to be a GOOD NON-ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE at university. How important are these things to you? *Chart shows important or very important. Base: 1117 participants, (1108 in 2016, in total, 1459 in 2014, 680 in 2013 and 1039 in 2012). 562 applicants and 555 first year students in 2017*



## How will first year students and applicants react to fewer EU students?

As 2 in 5 first year students/applicants feel that meeting a variety of different people is an important part of their student experience, missing out on the chance to meet people from different countries will certainly impact this. Almost half (45%) of first year students/applicants would feel disappointed if there were to be fewer EU students at their university

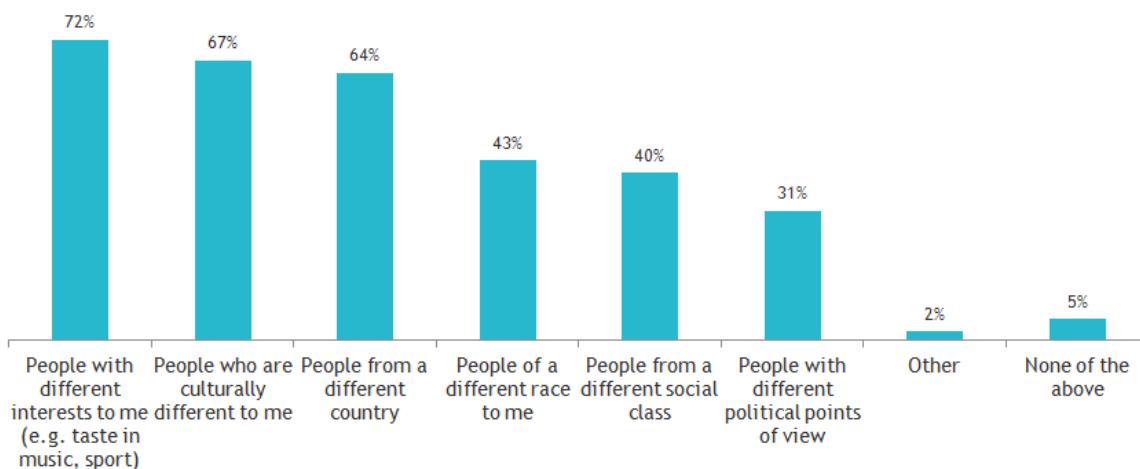
*This question was introduced new for 2017 - no trending data is available.*

### 2017 Summary:

- 43% of first year students say the variety of people they meet at university is important to them
- First year students define a variety of different people as meeting people with different interests and from different cultures/countries
- Almost half (45%) of first year students/applicants said that they would be disappointed if there were fewer EU students at their university

Meeting a variety of people at university was important to 2 in 5 first year students/applicants (43%), sustaining the finding from last year when 42% identified this as being important to them. We asked this 43% what they had in mind when thinking of the variety of people they met at university.

**VAR.1. You said that the variety of people you meet is an important part of a good non-academic experience. Which, if any, of the below did you have in mind when thinking about the variety of people you meet at university? Base: 1117 first year students/applicants**



Participants said that meeting a variety of different people mostly means meeting those with different interests to them such as music and sport (72% agree), people who are culturally different (67%) or people from a different country (64%). They were least likely to be thinking about people with different political points of view (31%).

Around 2 in 5 participants meant meeting people of a different race to them (43%) or a different social class (40%) when thinking about the variety of different people. This suggests that participants who view meeting a variety of different people as important are thinking generally and looking to meet people that might broaden their horizon by introducing them to different interests and cultures. They are less likely to be thinking specifically about politics, race and class.

However, that almost 2 in 3 (64%) of those who viewed meeting a variety of different people as important *were* thinking about people from other countries suggests that a reduction in the amount of EU students attending university would impact on their overall student experience.

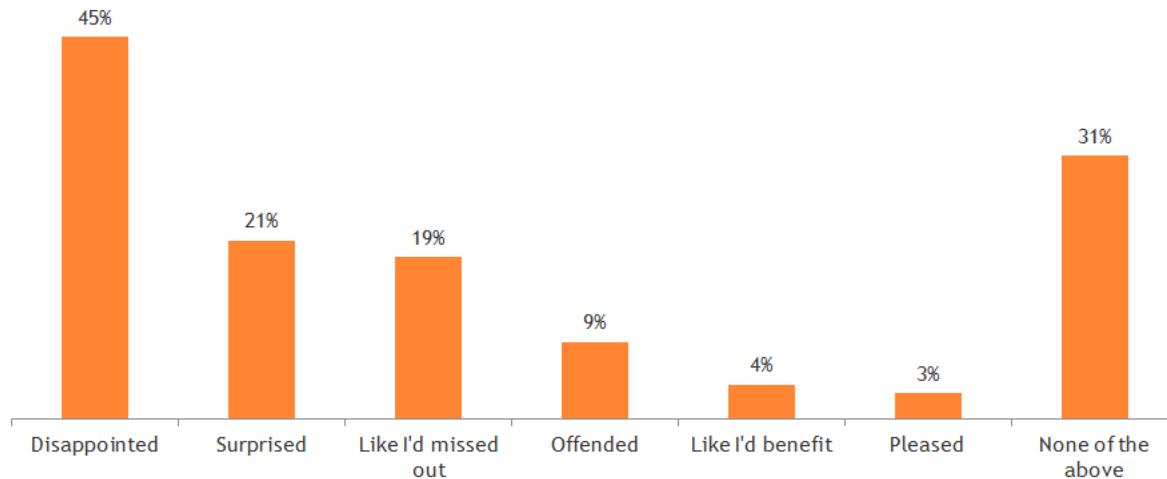
First year students from Russell Group universities are significantly more likely to say they think of meeting people who are culturally different to them (79% vs. 61% other universities) and people with different political points of view (42% vs. 25% other universities). Those living/planning to live in purpose-built accommodation are significantly more likely to think about meeting people with different interests to themselves than those living/planning to live outside of purpose-builds (76% vs. 65%), suggesting that they are more likely to be open to exploring new hobbies at university.

The potential impact of Brexit on higher education, student numbers and the future of EU and international first year students in British universities is still at this stage very much an unknown. However, early figures released by UCAS in February 2017 indicate that EU applications were down by 7% for higher education courses starting in 2017, highlighting the possible influence of Brexit on EU and international first year students' decision to study at British universities.

Overall, first year students/applicants are very aware and concerned about the potential reduction in EU and international students at British universities. Nearly half (45%) stated that they would be disappointed if this reduction in EU and international students materialised. Those from/planning to attend Russell Group universities were more likely to report that they would be disappointed (50% Russell Group universities vs. 43% non-Russell Group universities).

1 in 5 would feel surprised if there were substantially fewer EU and international first year students at their university. There was also a sense that first year students/applicants would feel like they would miss out if there were fewer EU and international students. This reinforces earlier findings showing that the majority of those who valued meeting a variety of people as part of their university experience want to meet people from different countries. Around 1 in 10 first year students/applicants would feel offended by a reduction in EU/international students.

VAR.2. Imagine you have found out that next year there will be substantially fewer EU and international students at your university. We have listed some of the ways students may feel about this change below. Would any of the following apply to you? Base: 1117 first year students/applicants



Less than a tenth of first year students/applicants felt that there would be positive benefits to a reduction in EU and international first year students. 4% felt that they would benefit from such a change and a further 3% reported that they would be pleased.

## How satisfied are first year students with their non-academic experience?

First year students continue to report high levels of satisfaction with their non-academic student experience, with similar levels of satisfaction to previous years across most metrics

### What's stayed the same?

- There were no significant shifts from 2016 in satisfaction with new friends made, the variety of things to do, the variety of places to socialise in, having enough time to socialise, reasonable prices at social venues / affordable social activities, support with non-academic issues, accommodation experience or campus atmosphere

### What's changed?

- A greater proportion of first year students were satisfied with the variety of people they'd met this year over last (85% vs. 80% last year), reversing last year's dip and bringing figures back consistent with 2012/13/14
- Although figures were steady on 2016, only 77% of first year students were satisfied with the amount of time they had to socialise in 2017, compared to 85% in 2012

The social aspects of university rank highest for student satisfaction. They are most satisfied with the variety of people met (85%), followed by the new friends made (84%) and the campus atmosphere (84%).

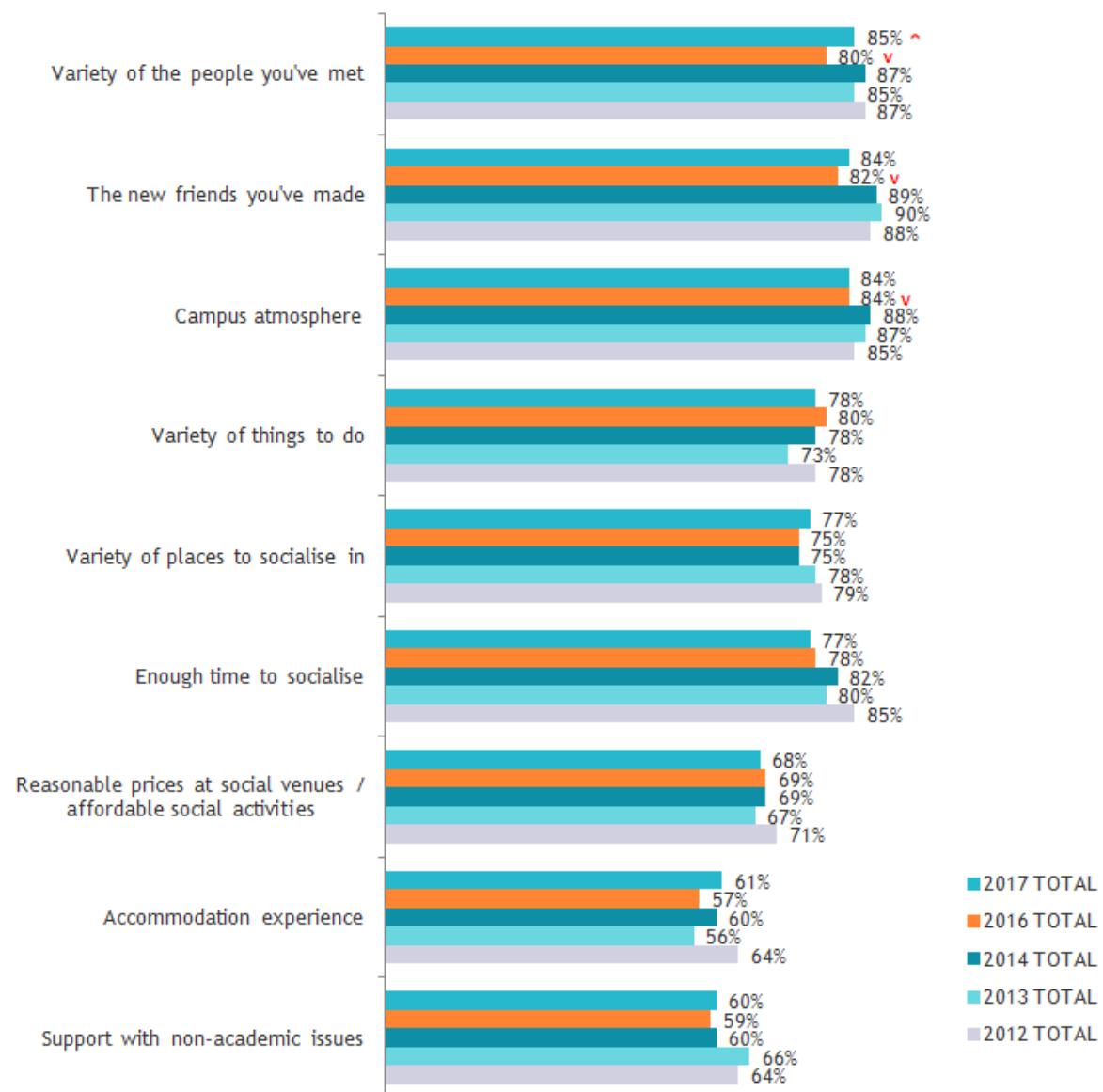
However, there has been a gradual decline in satisfaction with the time they have to spend with those friends. In 2012 85% were satisfied with the amount of time they had to socialise, which has seen a significant decline to 77% in 2017. This is also significantly lower than the 82% reported in 2014. Males are significantly more likely to say that they are satisfied with the time they have to socialise (82% vs. 74% of females).

Those living in purpose-built accommodation are significantly more likely than those living outside of purpose-built accommodation to be satisfied with their accommodation experience (74% vs. 29%) and the new friends they've made (86% vs. 79%). This suggests they enjoy living in their accommodation and that living there has helped them make friends at university, as they have the opportunity to meet people through their accommodation as well as their course. They are also significantly more likely to be satisfied with the prices at social venues/affordable social activities (71% vs. 62%), However, this could be because those living outside of purpose-builds are doing so for financial reasons and therefore are more likely to struggle with social costs.

However, in 2016 those living in purpose-built accommodation were significantly more likely to give higher satisfaction ratings for the campus atmosphere (86% vs. 77%), variety of things to do (83% vs. 71%), variety of people met (82% vs. 74%), enough time to socialise (81% vs. 73%) and variety of places to socialise (78% vs. 67%). Yet in 2017 there were no

significant differences between those in and outside of purpose-built accommodation this year, which appears to have been driven by an increase in satisfaction from those outside of purpose-built accommodation.

**QC4 How SATISFIED are you with your non-academic experience so far? Base: 555 first year students (558 in 2016, 730 in 2014, 180 in 2013 and 288 in 2012)**



## How do first year students cope with the transition to university life?

First year students struggle to adjust to their new life at university, particularly young women

*This question was introduced new for 2017 - no trending data is available.*

### 2017 Summary

- The majority of first year students have trouble coping with at least one aspect of the transition to university - 87% of first year students said they had found it difficult to cope with one or more of the issues we asked about. This figure was much higher in females than males (91% vs. 82%)
- The stress of studying was the area first year students find it most difficult to cope with - 59% of first year students and 64% of Russell Group first year students struggle with this
- A third of first year students found that financial difficulties made it hard for them to cope, a figure that was actually similar across genders

Nearly nine-tenths (87%) of first year students found it difficult to cope with social or academic aspects of university life. Females found it particularly difficult to cope; 91% reported difficulties coping with one or more of the issues asked about, compared to just over four-fifths of males (82%).

The stress of studying was the key area first year students were finding difficult to cope with. Around three-fifths (59%) reported that the stress of studying had made it difficult for them to cope at university and this did not vary across the subjects studied. Females in particular found the stress of studying difficult to cope with (67% females vs. 48% males). The institution first year students attended also appeared to influence stress levels, with those from Russell Group universities being more likely to identify the stress of studying as an issue (64% Russell Group vs. 56% non-Russell Group).

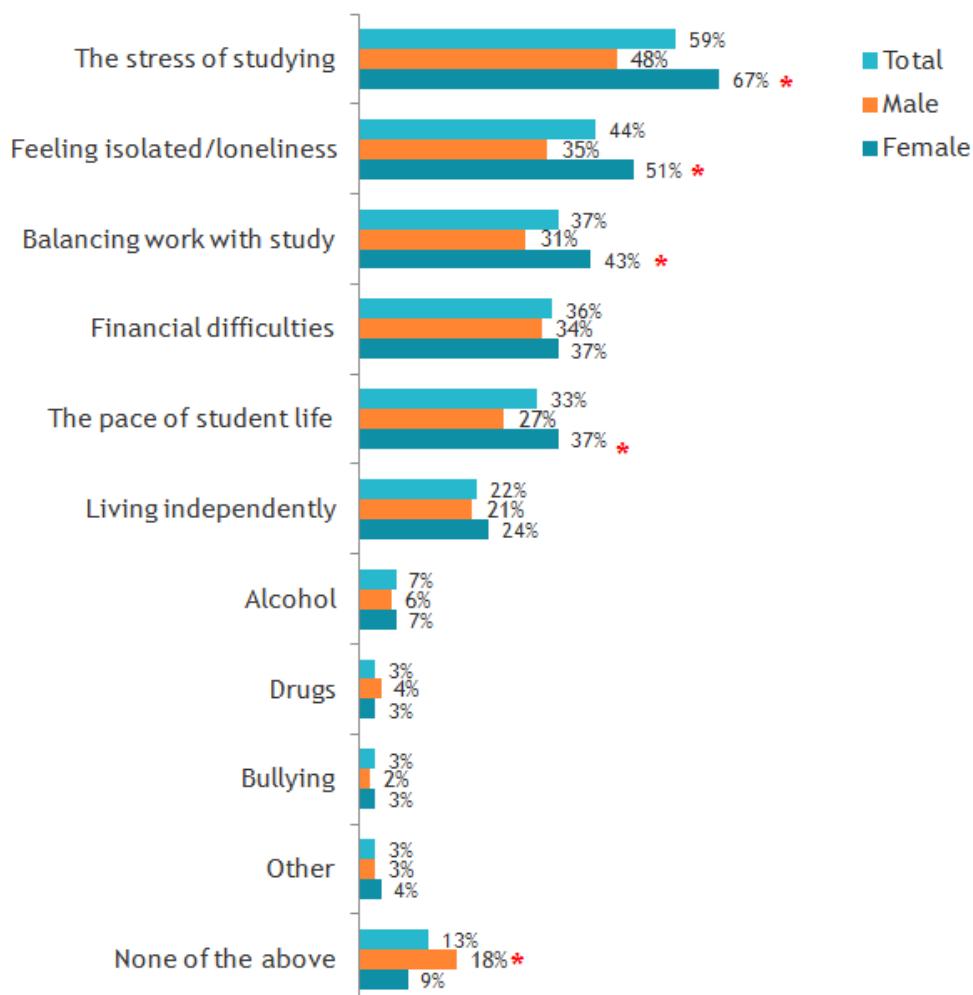
Feeling isolated or lonely was a challenge for over 2 in 5 first year students. Female first year students specifically struggled more with isolation and loneliness with half (51%) reporting this as an issue with university life, compared to just over one in three male first year students (35%). Further to this, over a third of first year students found it difficult to balance work with study (37%), with this also being more pertinent for female first year students (43% females vs. 31% males).

Over 1 in 3 first year students identified financial difficulties as an aspect of university life that was difficult to cope with. Although this was the same for both males and females, the type of institution attended by the first year students did impact on how prevalent an issue this was. Two-fifths (40%) of first year students who attended a non-Russell Group university reported financial difficulties as difficult to cope with, compared to just over a quarter (28%) of first year students who attended Russell-Group universities.

Coping with living independently was a challenge for around 1 in 5 first year students (22%). International first year students (from outside the EU) found this aspect of University-life particularly challenging. Over 1 in 3 of international first year students identified this as being an area that was difficult to cope with, compared to a fifth of British or EU first year students.

A tenth of first year students reported difficulties with coping with alcohol or drug use, with first year students in purpose-built accommodation more likely to report finding it difficult to cope with alcohol use (9% vs. 3% in non-purpose-built).

**QR4. Some people find university difficult. Have any of the following made it difficult for you to cope while at university? Base: 555 first year students (248 Male, 307 female)**



## Section 2: Choosing a university

### What are the most important factors in choosing a university?

Course is by far the most important factor in choice of university and has been since we first asked this question in 2015. Location (43%) and reputation (40%) are the factors ranked second and third in importance. Along with employment (32%) and academic facilities and resources (32%), these are the only factors to be rated as important by a third or more of those surveyed.

#### What's stayed the same?

- Course is still the most important overall consideration by some distance - 68% think it is important while location is the next-most-important consideration, at 43%, then reputation (40%)
- Last year saw a significant drop in the amount rating course as important (71% in 2016 vs. 75% in 2015), which was sustained this year (e.g. did not recover to previous levels)

#### What's changed?

- 40% of first year students/applicants rated reputation as important. This is significantly down on last year (44%) and 2015 (48%)
- There was a slight decline in the amount of first year students/applicants rating employability as important compared to 2015 (32% rate as important in 2017 vs. 36% in 2015)
- Social life and culture was rated significantly higher than in 2015 (22% now vs. 18% then)

Course is still by far the most important consideration for first year students/applicants, with 68% of first year students/applicants rating this as important. Females and those at non-Russell Group universities are significantly more likely to say that course is important to them (73% females vs. 63% males, 70% other universities vs. 64% Russell Group). One reason for this could be that non-Russell Group universities are likely to offer a wider range of industry-related courses (e.g. sound engineering or digital marketing).

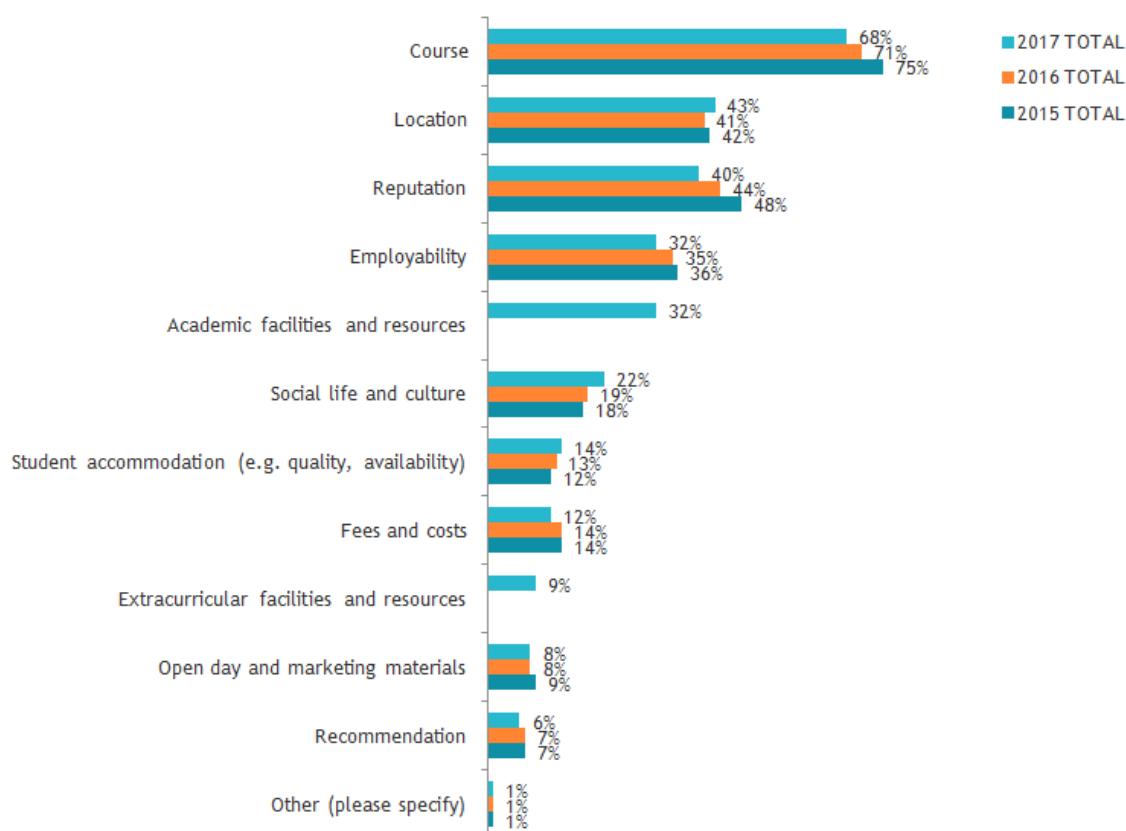
Males and those at Russell Group universities place more weight on reputation (45% vs. 36% females, 60% vs. 30% at non-Russell group universities). This suggests that males value the prestige of organisations more than females who would like to focus more on the detail of what they study (e.g. the specifics of the course). It makes sense that those who attend/plan to attend Russell Group universities value reputation more, as they attend some of the most well-known and sought-after institutions.

Interestingly location was also more important to females than males (47% vs. 38% of males), although there is no obvious reason for this. This is consistent with last year's data (45% vs. 36% of males) so we will continue to monitor this to see if this trend continues.

Only 1 in 3 respondents (32%) rated employability as important, which is surprisingly low as employability scores are included in the TEF rankings. In fact, fewer participants felt employability was important compared to 2015 when 36% agreed. Males were significantly more likely to consider employability as important compared to females (35% vs. 29%), and were also more likely to say that fees were important (14% vs. 10%).

Overall this suggests that males are more likely to think about university as a transaction - they place more value on how the university is perceived externally (reputation, likelihood to help them get a job), as well as how much it costs. It may be that university is more vocational for females who focus most on course.

**QPU4. Which of these factors were most important in your decision about which university to apply to?**  
 Base: 562 applicants and 555 first year students (1108 in 2016, 1105 in 2015)



This year we made the decision to expand the answer code 'academic facilities and resources' into two separate codes 'academic facilities and resources' and 'extracurricular facilities and resources'. 32% of first year students/applicants said that academic facilities and resources were important, which is consistent with score given to the single-code 'facilities and resources' in previous years (32% in 2016, 31% in 2015). This suggests that in previous years, participants were considering academic facilities and resources when giving their answer to this question, and that scores for this metric have remained stable since 2015. 9% said that extracurricular facilities and resources were important to them,

with those in purpose-built accommodation being significantly more likely to say this was important (11% vs. 6% outside of purpose-built).

This could be because those outside of purpose-built accommodation feel that they will not use extracurricular facilities and resources as much.

The quality and availability of accommodation was rated as important by 14% of applicants with no significant changes to previous years.

## How do first year students/applicants' and parents' opinions differ when it comes to choosing a university?

While course and reputation are very important to both, parents have practical concerns, while first year students/applicants are more likely to think about their day-to-day life at university. Parents also see themselves as being more involved in the decision about which university to attend than first year students/applicants do.

### **How are first year students/applicants and parents *similar*?**

- First year students/applicants and parents both agree that course is the most important consideration overall
- Both groups saw attending a university with a good reputation as equally important (41% of parents vs. 40% of first year students/applicants)

### **How are first year students/applicants and parents *different*?**

- First year students/applicants care about what they will be doing day-to-day (the course) and are more likely to value things like location and social life compared to parents
- Parents care more about practical concerns such as academic facilities/resources, fees, and student accommodation - where they live, how much debt they will be in, and that they well provided for
- Parents perceive themselves as having more involvement in choice of university than young people do

The university course is fundamental to both first year students/applicants' and parents' decision about which university to choose. Over two-thirds (68%) of first year students/applicants stated that course was important to them when choosing a university, as did 57% of parents.

The location of the university was of greater importance to first year students/applicants; 43% of first year students/applicants compared to 33% of parents identified this as a factor informing their choice. By contrast, parents placed greater importance on academic facilities/resources than their children (48% parents vs. 32% first year students/applicants).

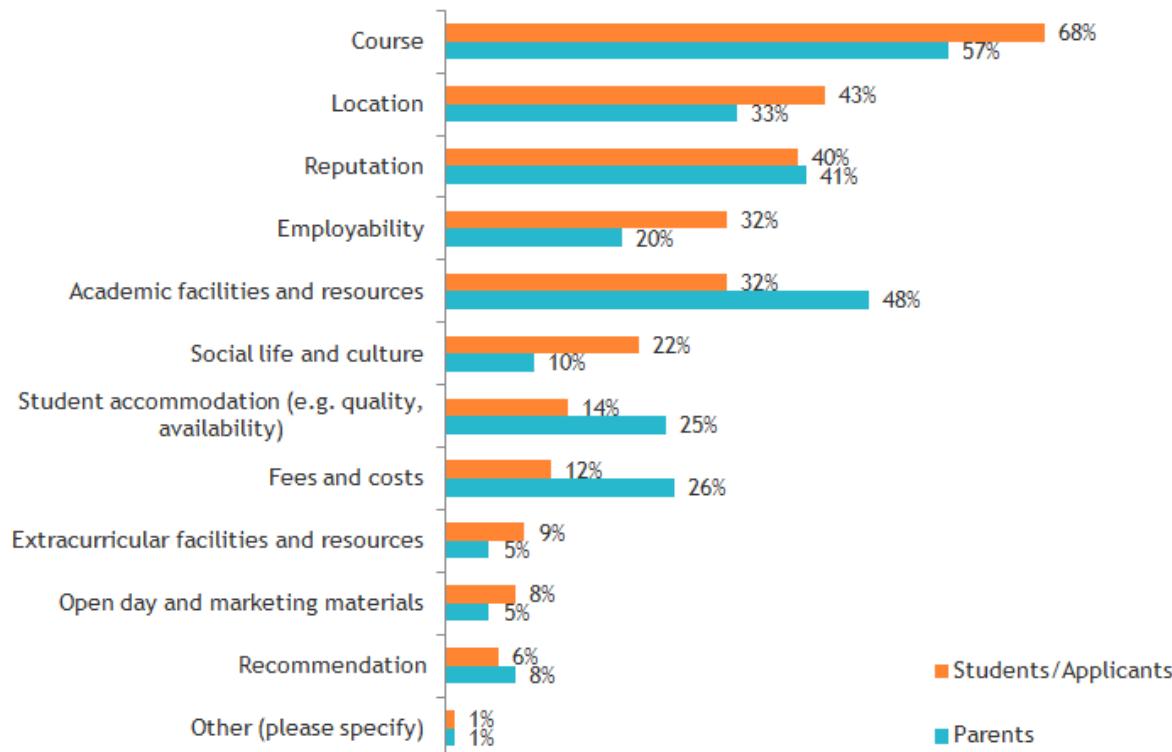
Reputation of university is the one metric that first year students/applicants and parents found equally important - 41% of parents found this important, as did 40% of first year students/applicants.

Employability was of greater importance for first year students/applicants when choosing a university than for parents. Although parents also rated employability as being important, it was to a much lesser degree (32% first year students/applicants vs. 20% parents). This suggests that first year students/applicants were perhaps thinking more about their long-term career prospects when choosing a university, than parents. That considered, whether a parent has gone to university themselves impacts their view of

improved employability as an outcome of university. Parents from households where one or more parents had graduated university were much more likely to be focused on employability - 24% said it was important, compared to 16% of parents who had not graduated university.

**Q6S/A. Which of these factors are the most important to you, personally, when it comes to advising your son/daughter on their choice of university?**

**QPU4. Which of these factors were most important in your decision about which university to apply to? (1117 first year students and applicants, 506 parents of first year students and applicants)**



Parents were much more concerned about the fees and costs associated with their child's choice of university. Around 1 in 4 parents identified fees and costs as being important in their decision-making. By contrast, just over 1 in 10 first year students/applicants felt that this was important in their decision-making. This is unsurprising as parents will most likely play a role in financially supporting their child through university. Similarly, student accommodation was a greater consideration for parents than first year students/applicants. Whereas a quarter of parents (25%) reported that considerations around student accommodation (e.g. quality, availability) would inform their decision-making, this figure is just 14% amongst first year students/applicants.

First year students/applicants placed much greater importance on social aspects of university life with over a fifth (22%) identifying social life and culture as being important. In contrast, just 10% of parents reported that this was important in decision-making.

First year students/applicants and parents differ in their perceptions about how involved parents were in their decision-making when choosing a university. We asked both first year students/applicants and parents to rank parental involvement in their accommodation

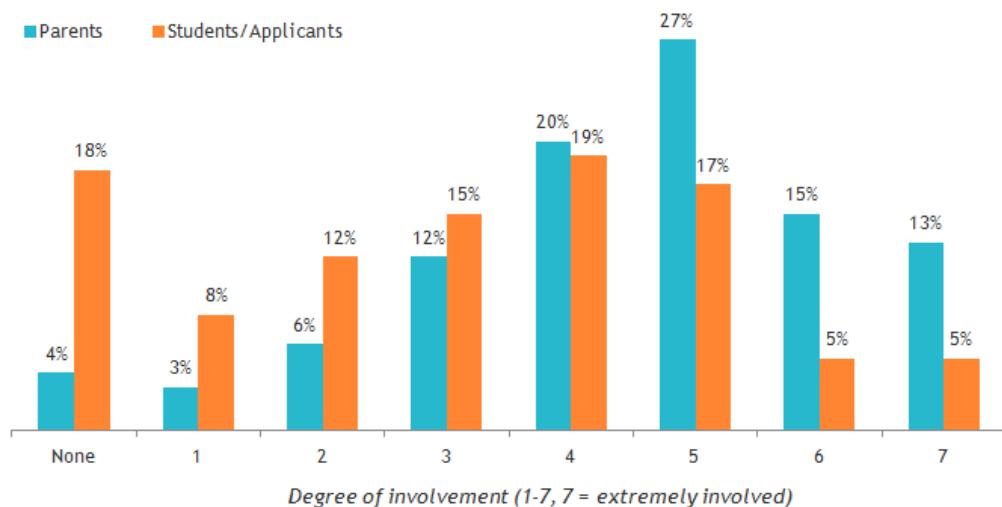
decision on a scale from 0 indicating no involvement to 7 indicating extremely high levels of involvement).

Over a quarter of parents (28%) said that they had a very high level of involvement in their child's decision to go to university, but only 1 in 10 first year students/applicants said the same (slightly higher amongst females). Parents who have graduated from university themselves are much more likely to report high involvement with their child's decision (35%), compared to those parents who did not have a university education (20%).

When it comes to parental involvement in actually making the decision to go to university, 1 in 5 first year students/applicants said that their parents had no involvement at all in their choice of where to live at university, but only 4% of parents said the same.

It could be that first year students/applicants don't perceive their parents to have had much involvement, or that these two groups consider involvement in different ways. Either way, 46% of first year students/applicants agreed that their parent/s had a mid-high level of involvement (4+) in their decision-making. Therefore, universities should consider the need to communicate and inform parents about their offering, especially when it comes to the things that parents think are important (academic facilities and resources, fees and accommodation).

**Q7. Think about your decision-making process when choosing which university to apply to as a firm choice. How involved were your parents or parent in making the decision? (1117 first year students/applicants). Q7. How involved were you in the decision-making? (Parents of first year students/applicants, n=506)**



## Section 3: Choice of accommodation

### Where do applicants expect to live in their first year at university?

Applicants are most likely to think they'll be living in halls of residence during their first year

#### What's stayed the same?

- All metrics stayed the same - applicants' intentions about where to live remain unchanged from last year and previous years
- As seen previously, those planning to attend Russell Group universities were more likely to expect to live in university halls of residences than those planning to attend other universities

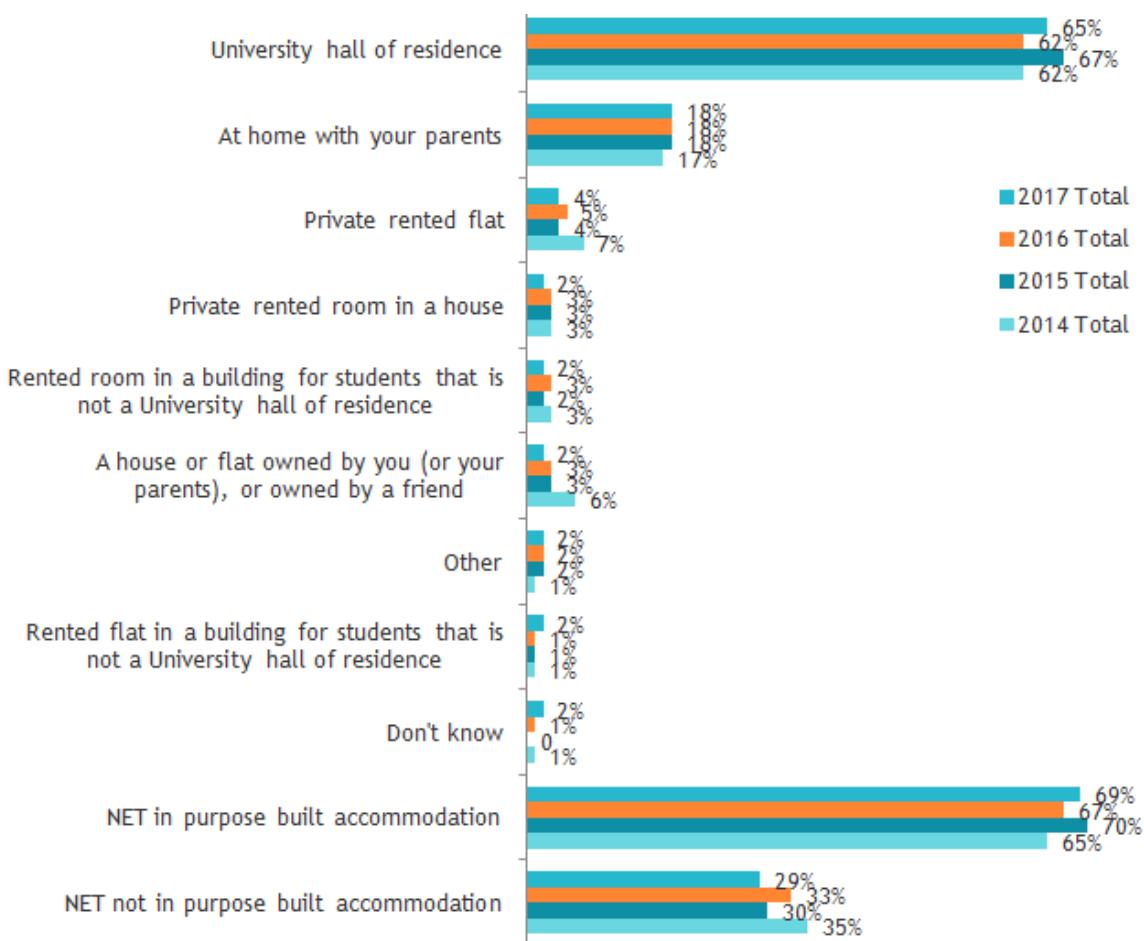
#### What's changed?

- Nothing. There were no significant changes in accommodation preference this year

As seen in previous years', the majority (69%) of applicants expect to live in some kind of purpose-built accommodation. 65% overall plan to live in halls of residence.

Almost 1 in 5 applicants (18%) expect to live at home with their parents, dropping to 13% of those planning to attend Russell Group universities and rising to 21% of those planning to attend other universities.

QN2. Which of these best describes where you will live during term time in your FIRST year at university? Base: 562 applicants (550 in 2016, 553 in 2015, 730 in 2014)



## Where do first year students live in their first year at university?

First year students predominantly live in halls of residence, with 64% living in halls of residence and 71% living in any kind of purpose built student accommodation

### What's stayed the same?

- There were no significant changes in the most commonly-used types of accommodation over the past few years, with metrics for those living in halls of residence, living at home, living in privately rented rooms in homes or flats, and rented rooms in a building for first year students that are not halls of residence staying constant

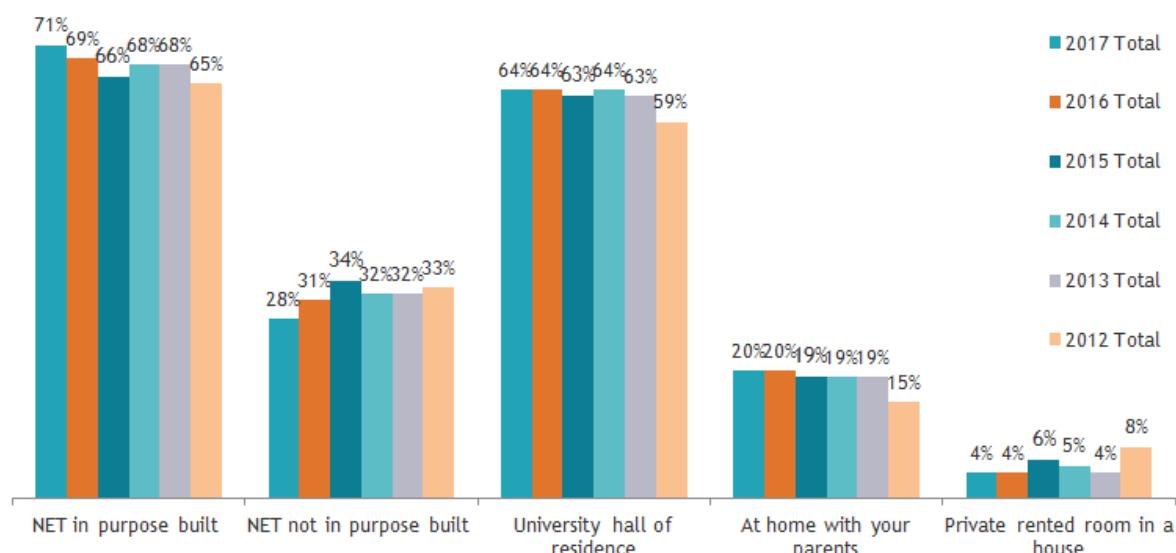
### What's changed?

- Though there were no significant changes from 2016, at an aggregate level (net) significantly fewer first year students live outside of purpose-built accommodation this year than in 2015 (28% vs. 34% in 2015)
- There was a significant decrease in the amount of first year students living in properties owned by either themselves or a friend from 3% last year to 1% this year

QD1. Which of these best describes where you lived during term time in your FIRST year at university?

Base: 555 first year students (558 in 2016, 553 in 2015, 730 in 2014, 180 in 2013 and 288 in 2012)

Top 3 responses and Nets visualised



Figures have been consistently stable since 2016 it comes to the most-used types of accommodation for first year students. This year 71% lived in purpose-built accommodation and 28% lived outside of purpose-built accommodation.

In fact, 2017 is the year with the lowest reported usage of non-purpose-built accommodation. This year only 28% of first year students live outside of purpose-built accommodation, compared to a high of 34% in 2015.

As seen in previous years, first year students at Russell Group universities are significantly more likely to live in halls of residence (79% vs. 57%).

There were no meaningful differences between where applicants plan to live and first year students are currently living.

## Section 4: Views on campus facilities

### How important are the quality of campus facilities to first year students and applicants?

Very important. With the exception of campus shops and sports facilities (which are still valued by the majority of those surveyed) over three quarters of first year students/applicants surveyed felt that all other aspects of campus facilities were important. The quality of outside spaces and spaces for socialising are particularly important to first year students/applicants

#### What's stayed the same?

- Scores for quality of outside spaces, quality of spaces for socialising, quality of eating/food venues, quality of shops on campus, quality of sports facilities, quality of Student Union and quality of entertainment venues, bars, clubs, theatres showed no significant changes from last year

#### What's changed?

- The quality of accommodation is now the campus facility rated as most important, significantly increasing from 79% to 83% this year. It is now consistent with 2014/13 levels
- Though scores for the quality of Student Union (78%) and quality of entertainment venues, bars, clubs, theatres (77%) did not change from last year, they are still significantly lower than the figures seen in 2012-2014

Significantly more participants said that they felt the quality of the campus accommodation was important this year compared to 2016/15, bringing figures back in line with those seen in 2014 and earlier. Understandably the quality of accommodation was much more important to those living/planning to live in purpose-built accommodation, as the majority of others plan to live or currently live at home.

International first year students (those paying overseas fees) placed more value on the quality of accommodation than any other group (90% said this was important vs. 82% of those paying home fees), so universities should highlight the quality of the accommodation they offer to attract first year students from outside the EU.

Additionally, those planning to attend or attending a Russell Group university also felt the quality of accommodation was more important (89% vs. 81% others). This could be because they expect more from their accommodation, or it could be because Russell Group first year students were less likely to be living at home when at university (hence, accommodation matters more to them). Applicants are significantly more likely to say that the quality of accommodation is *not* important (11% vs. 5% of first year students),

suggesting a possible naivety as to the effect that surroundings will have on their day-to-day life as a student.

Those planning to live or living in purpose-built accommodation are significantly more likely to say that quality is important when it comes to several campus facilities: the quality of accommodation (95% vs. 53%), quality of sports facilities (62% vs 55%), the quality of spaces for socialising (89% vs. 82%), the quality of outside spaces (86% vs. 80%).

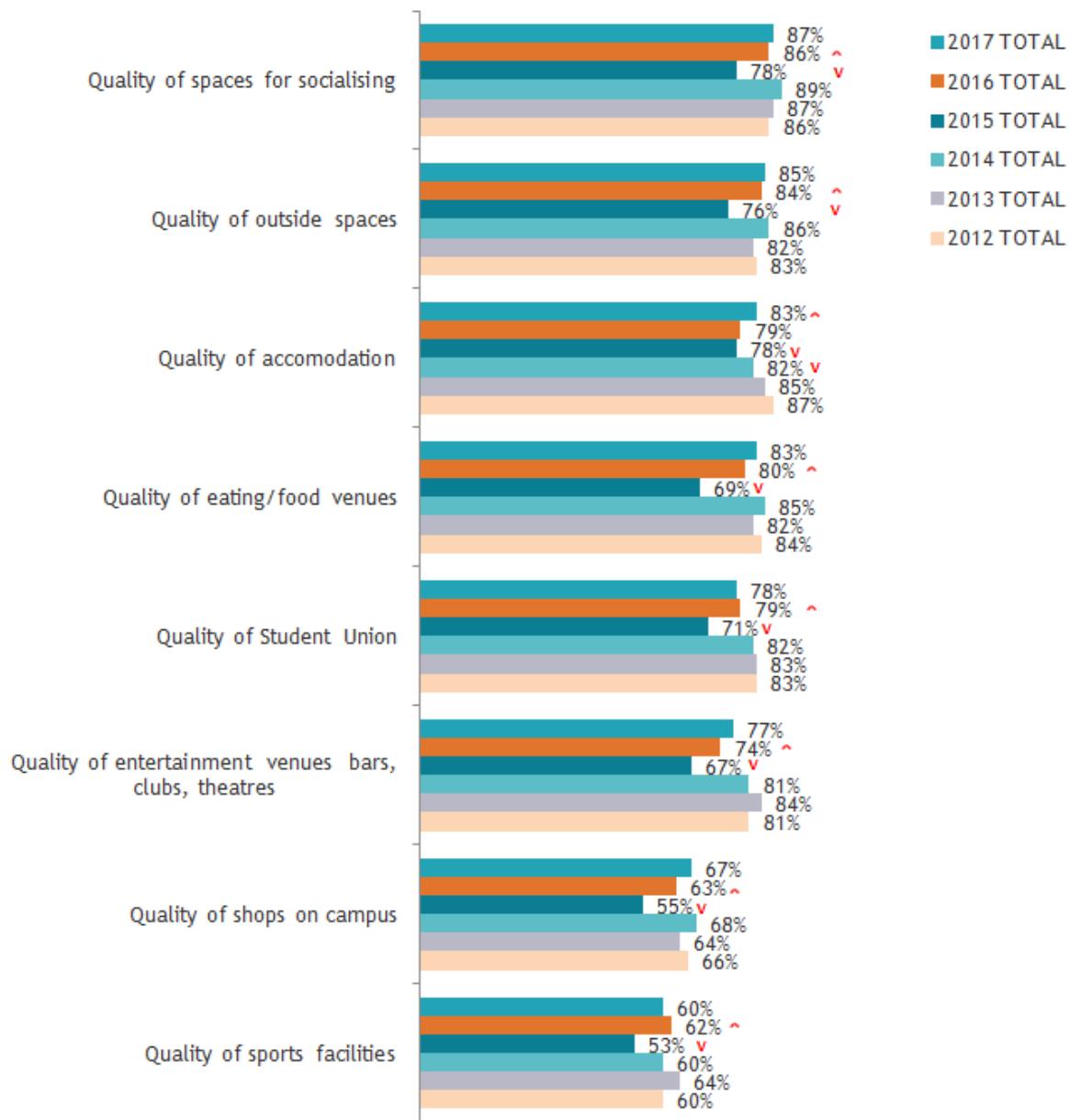
Based on this, it seems that those living in purpose-built accommodation are getting more from their university experience in the sense that they place more value on facilities that emphasise socialising, and are possibly more likely to be using other things the university has to offer like sports facilities. (The quality of accommodation is also naturally significantly more important to this group!)

Females are more likely to look for quality in actual services from the university on campus. They are significantly more likely to say that the quality of the Student Union is important (81% vs. 73% males), that the quality of shops on campus is important (72% vs. 60% males), and that the quality of food venues is important (86% vs. 79% males).

Males were significantly more likely to rate the quality of the sports facilities as important (64% vs. 57% of females).

Though scores for the quality of Student Union (78%) and quality of entertainment venues bars, clubs, theatres (77%) did not change from last year, they are still significantly lower than the figures seen in 2012-2014, suggesting that first year students/applicants are placing less importance on these services, or at least expect less from them.

QC5. Thinking about your non-academic experience, how important do you think the **QUALITY OF THE CAMPUS FACILITIES** is/will be? Chart shows very important/quite important. Base: 1117 participants (1108 in 2016, 1105 in 2015, 1459 in 2014, 680 in 2013 and 1039 in 2012)



## What facilities are most important for having a good time on-campus?

The top 3 facilities most important to having a good time on-campus haven't changed since the survey started. WIFI continues to be by far the most important factor to having a good time on-campus, followed by chill out areas with no obligation to buy anything and campus bars.

### **What's stayed the same?**

- Wireless internet access, chill-out areas with no obligation to buy anything and campus bars/clubs/nightclubs continue to be the top three most crucial factors needed on campus for first year students to have a good time
- The amount of first year students/applicants who view facilities related to accommodation as important is stable on previous years (with the exception of campus bars/clubs/nightclubs were no significant changes from 2016 in any of the metrics we asked about)

### **What's changed?**

- Last year's dip in importance for campus bars/clubs/nightclubs was reversed, bringing figures back in line with 2014/15
- Good quality cafes/coffee shops and gyms were rated more important than the Student Union this year

Wireless internet access, chill-out areas with no obligation to buy anything and campus bars/nightclubs have consistently been rated as the top 3 most important factors of all those tested since this survey began. 70% of first year students/applicants said wireless internet access was important, consistent with last year's figures and significantly up from 2012/13.

Chill-out areas with no obligation to buy anything are the next most important feature, with almost half (52%) first year students/applicants stating that these are important to having a good time at university.

Two fifths of first year students/applicants (43%) said that campus bars/clubs/nightclubs are important, up from 37% last year and bringing figures back in line with those seen in 2015 and 2014. Only 1 in 10 (11%) first year students/applicants view alcohol-free venues as important - this figure has not changed since the beginning of the Student Experience Survey. Although young people are drinking less on a national level compared to previous years, it seems campus drinking venues are not being abandoned just yet.

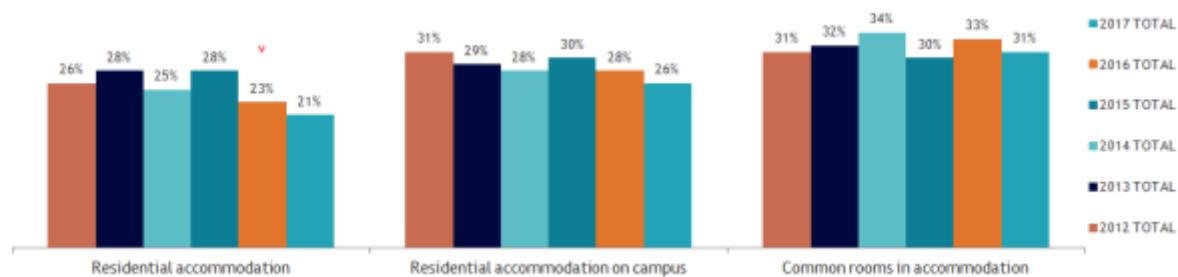
Generally speaking, those living/planning to live in purpose-built accommodation were more likely to place importance on venues for drinking (47% said campus bars/pubs/nightclubs were important vs. 33% outside of purpose-built), and were less likely to value alcohol-free venues (9% vs. 15% outside of purpose-built). This data point

suggests that those in/planning to live in purpose-built accommodation tend to participate more in social activities such as drinking.

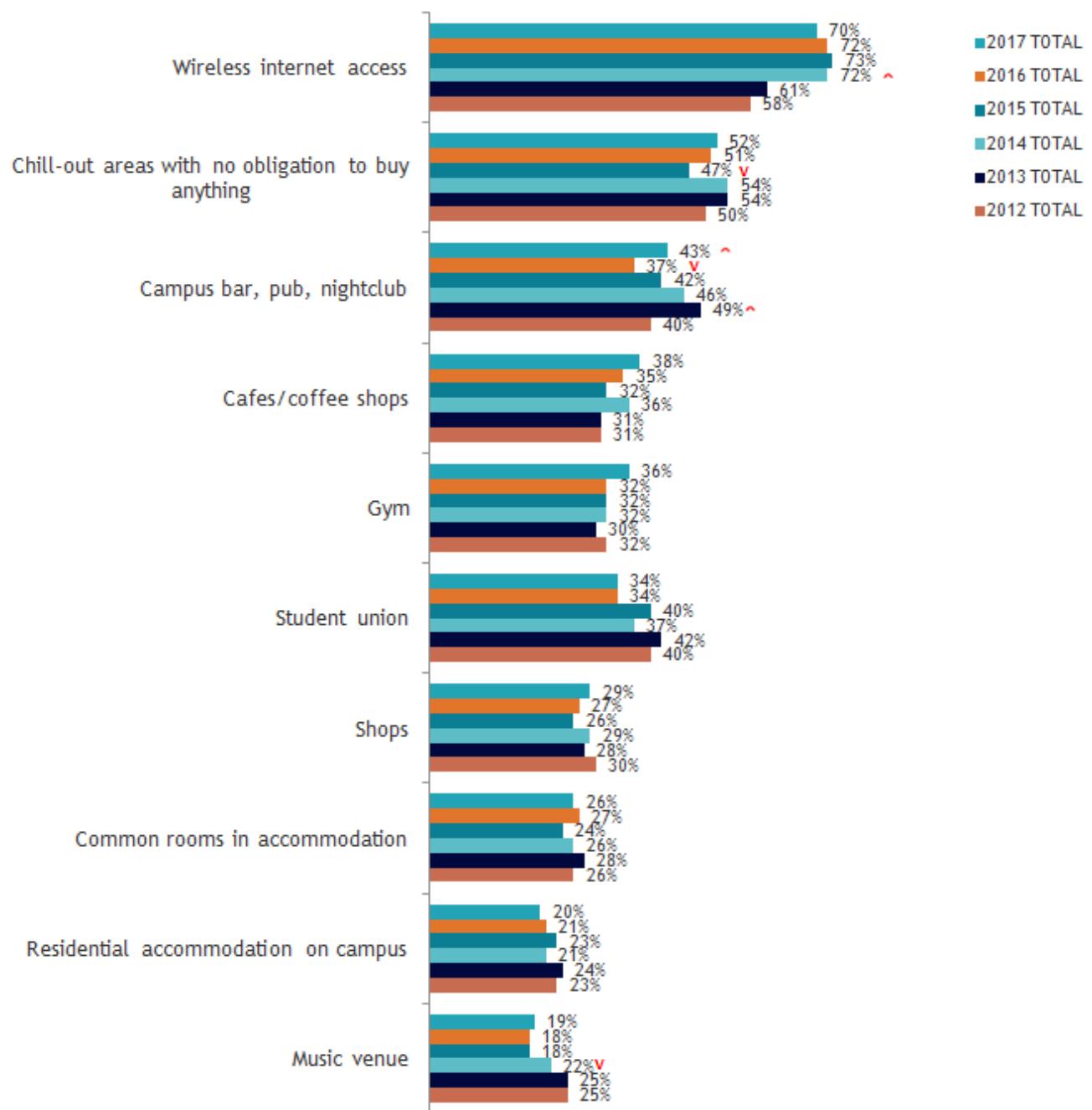
There has been a slight (but not significant) increase in the amount of first year students/applicants who valued gyms as important to having a great time at university. Last year just under a third said this was important (32%), now over a third say the same (36%) - a significant lift on the amount who stated this was important in 2014 or earlier. Gyms are significantly more important to males than females (41% vs. 32%). This year 14% said that specialist sports facilities were important, significantly down from 19% last year. This figure has not been consistent in previous years, having been as high as 20% in 2012 and 19% in 2016, however a drop to 14% was also observed in 2014.

Just under 1 in 3 (31%) of those who live/plan to live in purpose-built accommodation said that having common rooms in accommodation are important to having a great time at university, consistent with previous years. This has not fluctuated in importance since the survey began in 2016. Other accommodation-related metrics look stable for this group too; 26% said the provision of residential accommodation on-campus was important, and has not shown any significant fluctuation since the survey began. A fifth (21%) said that residential accommodation was important this year, stable on 2016 and with no significant changes to 2014/12/13. The stability of this metric over the past 2 years suggests that the increase to 28% seen in 2015 was an anomaly.

**QC7. Thinking about the KINDS OF FACILITIES available at university, which are most important to having a great time at university? Chart shows top accommodation-related metrics. Base: Those who live in, or want to live in, purpose-built accommodation, 783 in 2017 (753 in 2016, 748 in 2015, 972 in 2014, 122 in 2013, 187 in 2012)**



QC7. Thinking about the KINDS OF FACILITIES available at university, which are most important to having a great time at university? Chart shows top 10. Base: 1117 first year students and applicants (1108 in 2016, 1105 in 2015, 1459 in 2014, 680 in 2013, 1039 in 2012)



## How satisfied are first year students with campus facilities?

Overall, the majority of first year students are satisfied with the campus facilities asked about, and are as satisfied as they were last year. However, when we look at the amount of first year students who are satisfied with facilities compared to those who think the quality of those facilities are important to having a good time, it seems that satisfaction metrics could be improved with accommodation, dining/food venues, and shops on campus.

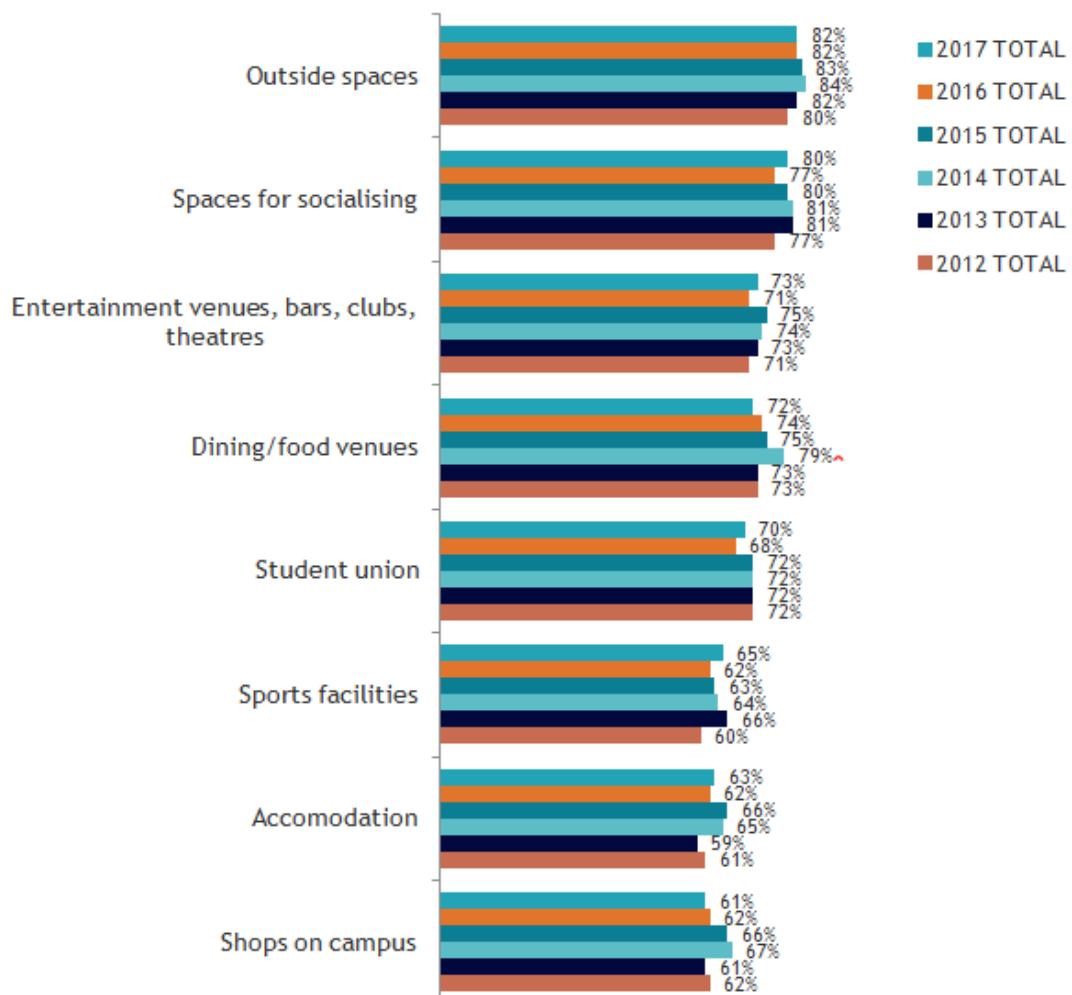
### What's stayed the same?

- All metrics are constant on last year

### What's changed?

- Nothing - overall campus satisfaction metrics have been stable for several years. There were no significant differences reported this year.

QC6. How SATISFIED are you with your campus facilities? Base: 555 first year students (558 in 2016, 553 in 2015, 730 in 2014, 180 in 2013, 228 in 2012)



This year all metrics remained stable and consistent with results seen in 2016 and earlier, with first year students/applicants most satisfied with outside spaces and spaces for socialising (82%, 80%). Similar proportions were satisfied with the entertainment venues (73%), dining/food venues (72%), and the student union (70%).

Similar to last year, three quarters of those who live in, or expect to live in purpose-built accommodation say that they are very or quite satisfied with the quality of accommodation on-campus (76% vs. 75% in 2016). This is lower than the levels reported in 2015/14 (83%, 82%) but consistent with 2014/13 findings.

## Section 5: Accommodation Satisfaction and Preferences

### What is most important for first year students/applicants when it comes to accommodation?

Affordable rent and a favourable location continue to be the top two most important considerations for first year students/applicants, being considerably more important than other aspects of accommodation. Then having accommodation that is clean and comes with an en-suite toilet are the next most important features for first year students and applicants who expect to live in purpose-built accommodation.

#### What's stayed the same?

- There have been no significant changes across almost all metrics across the past 3 years

#### What's changed?

- There has been a decline in the amount of first year students/applicants who say that good security is important compared to 2014/15

*For this question, we are analysing only the responses of those who live or intend to live in purpose-built accommodation.*

Consistent with previous years, having affordable rent is the most important factor for those who live or intend to live in purpose-built accommodation (67% agree), while 72% stated factors relating to location were important (location close to campus, location on campus, or location close to town centre). Looking at the aspects of location individually, having a location close to campus is considered more important than the location being on campus (43% vs. 25%), or close to a town centre (20%).

Aside from rent and location, having accommodation that is clean (53%) and comes with an en-suite (51%) are the next most important features for first year students and applicants who expect to live in purpose-built accommodation. Last year's finding that applicants were more likely to think en-suites were important was not repeated this year. 43% of first year students/applicants are looking for accommodation that is well-maintained, with cleanliness and maintenance the most important factors.

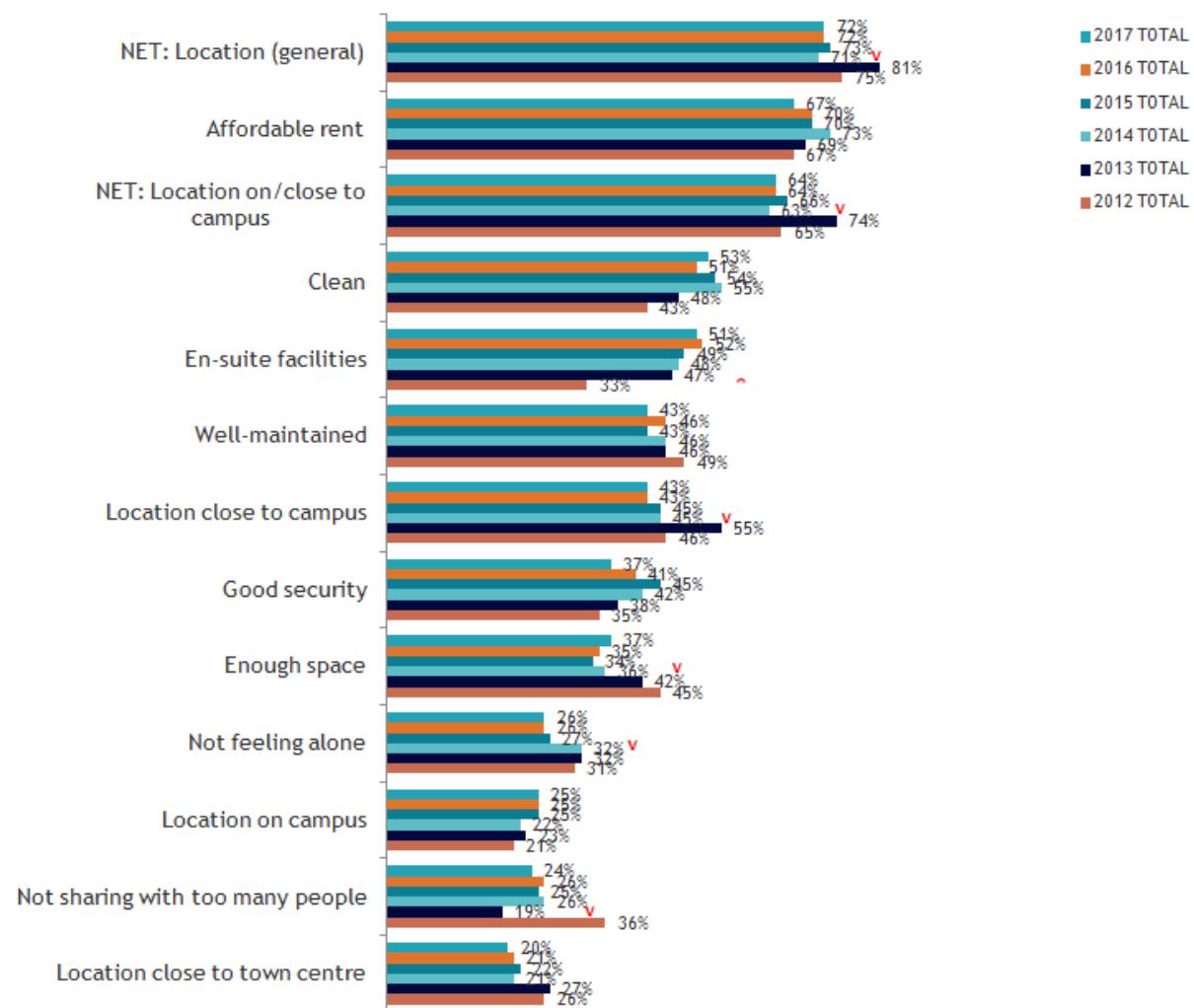
As seen in previous years, females are more likely to value security (44% vs. 28% males).

There were no significant differences by gender in the importance of cleanliness this year (men viewed this as more important in 2016), however we did note this year that more males were likely to say having enough space was important (46% vs. 30%).

QD13. Thinking about student accommodation overall, what is most important to you?

Base: Those who live in, or want to live in, purpose-built accommodation: 784 (753 in 2016, 748 in 2015, 972 in 2014, 122 in 2013, 187 in 2012)

Chart excludes modern decor (12%), friendly staff (8%), other (2%)



## Do first year students/applicants and parents view accommodation differently?

Though affordable rent, cleanliness and maintenance are (literal) hygiene factors for both groups, parents are much more concerned about campus security and less concerned about space and the amount of people shared with.

*The below figures look only at students/applicants who live or plan to live in purpose-built accommodation, and parents of first year students/applicants who live or plan to live in purpose-built accommodation*

### **How are first year students/applicants and parents similar?**

- Affordable rent was a top consideration for both first year students and parents
- Both first year students and parents look for properties that are well-maintained and clean, and close to campus

### **How are first year students/applicants and parents different?**

- Parents are much more likely to care about security (66% vs. 37% of first year students/applicants) and friendly staff (15% vs. 8% of first year students/applicants)
- First year students/applicants are much more likely to value en-suite facilities (51% vs. 25%), having enough space (37% vs. 19%) and not sharing with too many people (24% vs. 16%)
- Considering all those surveyed, parents perceive themselves to have a higher level of involvement in the decision about where to live than first year students/applicants

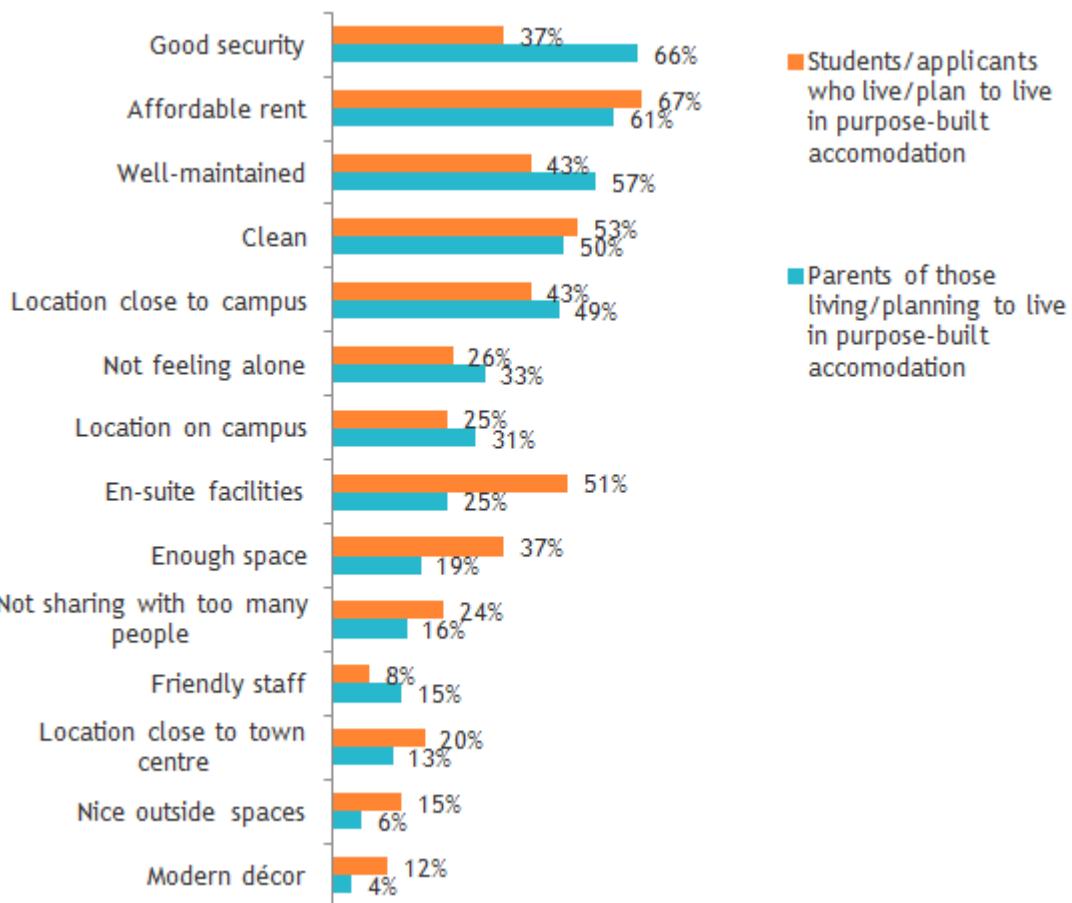
The affordability of purpose-built university accommodation was the most important consideration for first year students/applicants; 2 in 3 first year students/applicants and 3 in 5 parents considered the affordability of rent in their choice of accommodation. Two in 3 parents identified good security at university accommodation as being important; compared to just over a third (37%) of first year students/applicants.

Cleanliness and general maintenance of potential student accommodation was also important to both first year students/applicants and their parents. Around half of first year students/applicants (53%) and of parents (50%) identified cleanliness as being an important consideration. Further to this, 43% of first year students/applicants and 57% of parents identified that accommodation being well-maintained was important.

The available facilities at student accommodation were much more of a consideration for first year students/applicants. Around half (51%) of first year students/applicants, compared to just 1 in 4 parents identified en-suite facilities as being important. Having enough space was also much more of a consideration for first year students/applicants (37%), than their parents (19%).

## QD13 Thinking about student accommodation overall, what is most important to you?

Q8 Purpose Build. Which of the following do you feel are the most important when it comes to choosing student accommodation? Chart shows first year students/applicants and parents of student/applicants who plan to live/plan to live in purpose-built accommodation. Base: First year students/applicants: 786, Parents: 327



The below figures return to discuss all those surveyed.

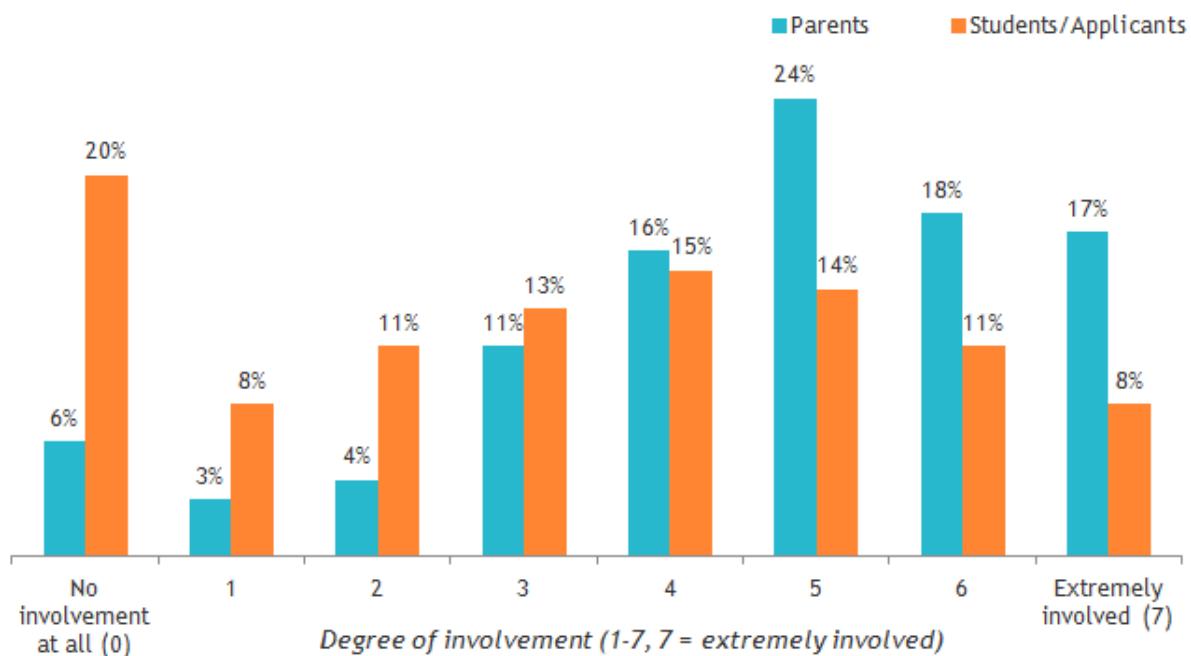
When it comes to parental involvement in the decision about where to live at university, parents and first year students/applicants have drastically different points of view about how involved parents were.

1 in 5 first year students/applicants say their parents had no involvement in their decision about where to live, compared to just 6% of parents. (This is similar in proportion to the amount of first year students/applicants who said that their parents had no involvement in their choice of which university to attend). Fewer than 1 in 5 first year students/applicants perceive their parents to have had a very *high* level of involvement in the decision (scoring 6-7, 7 being the highest level of involvement), whereas a third of parents think the same (35% of parents vs. 19% of first year students/applicants).

75% of parents and almost half (48%) of first year students/applicants reported a mid-high level of involvement (4 or higher on a 7-point scale).

Q10. Think about your decision-making process when choosing where to live during your first year at university. How involved were your parents or parent in making the decision? Base: 1117 first year students/applicants

Q10. How involved were you in making the decision? Base: 494 Parents of first year students/applicants



## Section 6: Investment in Education

### Would a good TEF rating influence applicants' choice of university?

*We presented applicants with a short explanation of the Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF), which did not make reference to any increase in tuition fees.*

The majority (70%) of applicants think a good TEF ranking would influence their choice of university; however, this is significantly down on the 85% who said the same last year.

#### What's stayed the same?

- The majority of applicants feel that a good TEF score would influence their choice of university

#### What's changed?

- Fewer applicants overall would be influenced by a good TEF score than last year (70% vs. 84% in 2016)
- Applicants are less certain about how much a good TEF score would influence them - 45% said it would definitely influence them last year compared to only 17% in 2017
- 20% of applicants say a good TEF score *wouldn't* influence their choice of university, compared to 6% last year

Overall scores for 2017 show that 70% of applicants believe a good TEF rating would influence their choice of university. 20% said it would not influence their choice, and 9% said they were uncertain. These figures look vastly different to last year's results, where 84% said that a good TEF rating would influence their choice, with a majority saying it would 'definitely' influence them (45% agreed). This year less than half as many said that the TEF would 'definitely' influence (17%) their decision, while the amount who said that it would definitely/probably *not* influence their choice soared from 6% last year to 20% this year.

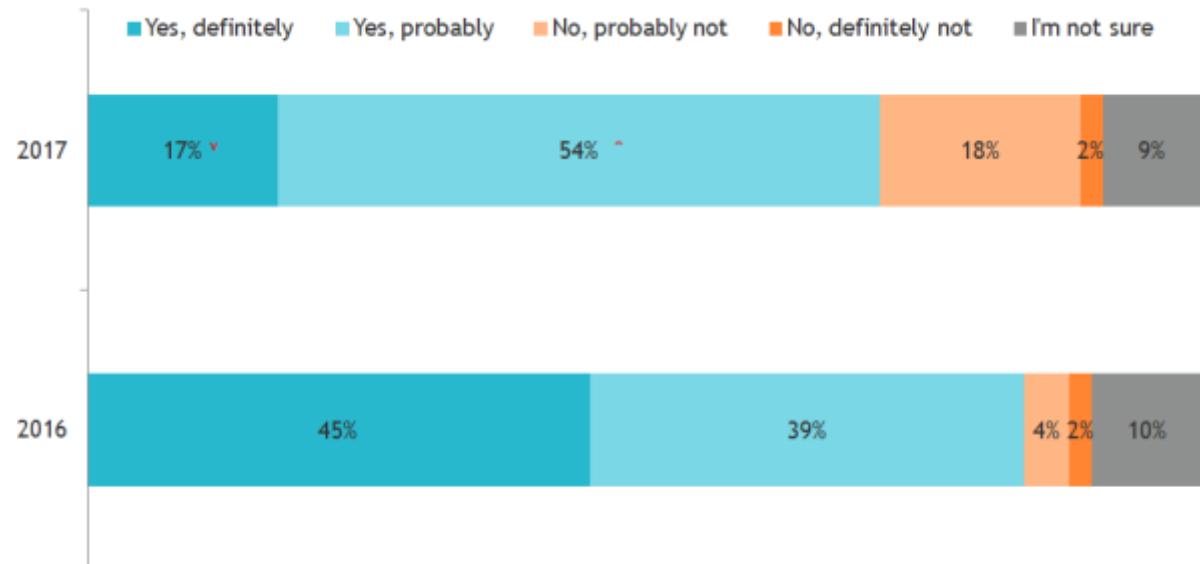
Last year, females were significantly more likely to say that they would definitely be influenced by a good TEF rating (50% vs. 39% of males), but this year males and females gave similar answers (14% of males would definitely be influenced vs. 18% of females, difference is not significant). 2017 results showed no significant differences between applicants of different genders or fee status when it came to the influence TEF scores would have on their decision-making.

However, it's important to remember that although there has been a decline in the amount of applicants who say that the TEF would influence their choice, the majority are still influenced.

Since last year's fieldwork was conducted (May to early June 2016) the TEF has been discussed more widely in the news and we think it's likely that applicants have a higher level of awareness of the TEF. With the initial TEF rankings relegating prestigious institutions and elevating less-well-regarded universities, it's possible that applicants find the TEF scores confusing rather than helpful. The NUS has been a vocal opponent of the TEF, even encouraging students to boycott the Student Satisfaction Survey (hence disrupting one of

the data points that TEF scores are calculated from), so these scores could reflect a growing discontent with the TEF spreading within student and applicant circles.

QR1. The government plans to introduce the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). You may not have heard about it before however it outlines the criteria that the government use to measure good quality teaching at university. The TEF rating of a university will be a makeup of a number of different measures, from student satisfaction, the progress of first year students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as other existing data. Do you think that a good TEF rating would influence your choice of university? Base: 562 applicants in 2017, 550 in 2016



## Will applicants pay more for a good TEF ranking?

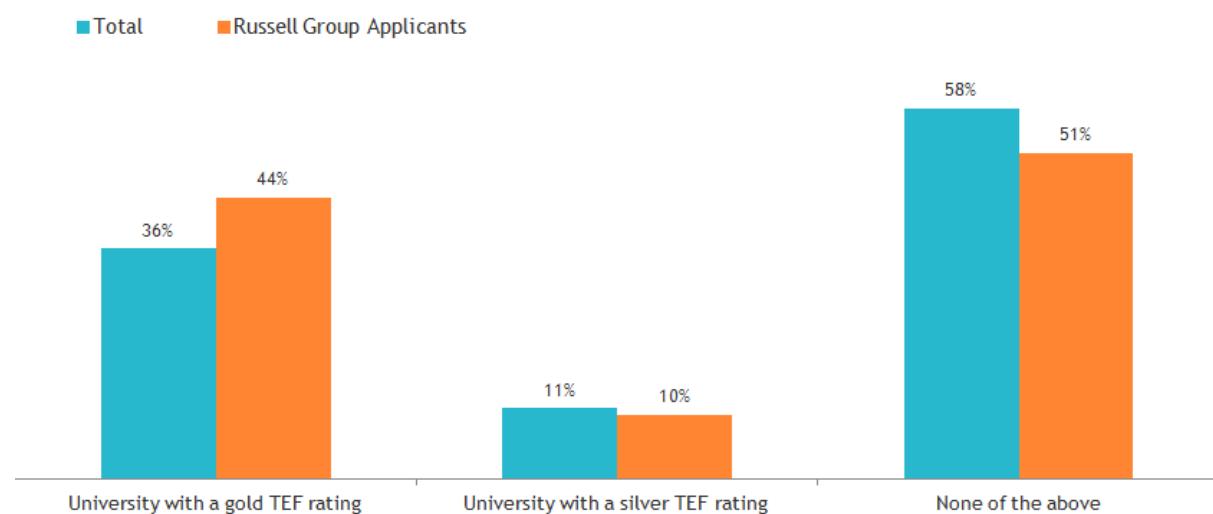
Only 1 in 3 applicants would pay more for a university with a gold TEF ranking currently, while more than half say they wouldn't pay more for either a gold or silver ranking

*This question was introduced new for 2017 - no trending data is available.*

### 2017 Summary:

- 58% of applicants wouldn't pay increased fees for universities with a gold or silver ranking
- Only 1 in 3 (36%) of applicants said they'd be willing to pay more for a university with a gold TEF ranking
- Applicants to Russell Group universities were significantly more likely than those attending other universities to say they'd pay for a gold ranking (44% agreed vs. 31% non-Russell Group) but not so for a silver (10% agreed vs. 11% non-Russell Group)

QR3. Would you be willing to pay increased tuition fees (in line with inflation) for universities with the following TEF rankings? % agree. Total Applicants: 562      Russell Group Applicants: 191



The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will allow universities achieving gold or silver scores to raise their costs in line with inflation, while bronze rated institutions will be allowed to raise their fees tracking only half of inflation, from 2018 onwards.

But, the majority of applicants are not willing to pay increased tuition fees at all - over half (58%) said they wouldn't pay more to attend a university with a gold or silver ranking.

Just over one in three said they'd be willing to pay more to attend a university with a gold ranking, while only 11% are willing to pay for a silver. Assuming that the majority of well-respected institutions are likely to be categorised as silver, it seems that the TEF costs

will be a further source of aggravation for students who are already facing huge debts compared to previous generations.

Applicants whose firm choice was a Russell Group university were significantly more likely to pay for a gold ranking, though it's difficult to say whether this is because of their confidence in the TEF system, their willingness to pay, or their ability to pay (e.g. parents' financial circumstances). With the TEF predicted to look favourably on traditionally less prestigious institutions, it remains to be seen if Russell Group applicants feel a gold Russell Group university is as worthwhile of additional spend as a gold Post-92 that performs well on the TEF.

## Would first year students and applicants pay more for a degree that offered a higher starting salary?

Yes. Although the amount they are willing to pay varies, the majority (72%) would pay more for a degree that guaranteed higher starting salary and the overall amount they are willing to pay is much higher than in previous years

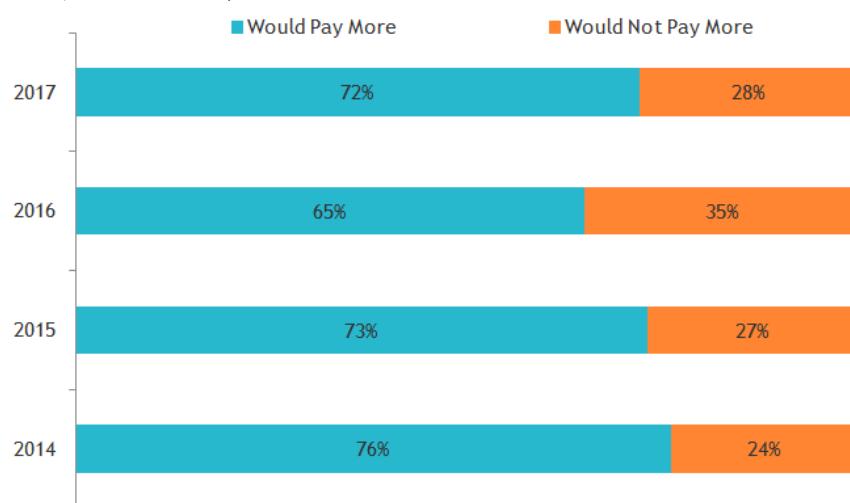
### What's stayed the same?

- As in previous years, most first year students/applicants would pay higher tuition for a degree that offered a higher starting salary

### What's changed?

- Significantly more first year students/applicants would pay more this year (72%) compared to last year (65%), returning to the levels seen in previous years
- 40% would pay an additional £2,000 or more for a £24,000 guaranteed starting salary, a large lift from the 23% that said the same last year and significantly higher than any previous year
- The average amount first year students/applicants are willing to pay increased by £612 to £2,064 this year

**QN1. How much MORE would you be prepared to pay for your degree if, on graduation, it guaranteed you a job at a graduate salary of over £24,000? Base: 562 applicants and 555 first year students (1108 in 2016, 1105 in 2015, 1459 in 2014)**



Reversing last year's downward trend, 72% of first year students/applicants say they would pay more for a degree if it guaranteed a starting salary of £24K. This brings figures back in line with those seen in 2015 where 73% agreed and 2014 where 76% agreed.

Not only are more first year students/applicants willing to pay, but they are also willing to pay more. 40% would pay an extra 2K or higher in fees for a degree that guaranteed this, which is a huge lift on the 23% that said the same last year and significantly higher than any other year the question was asked.

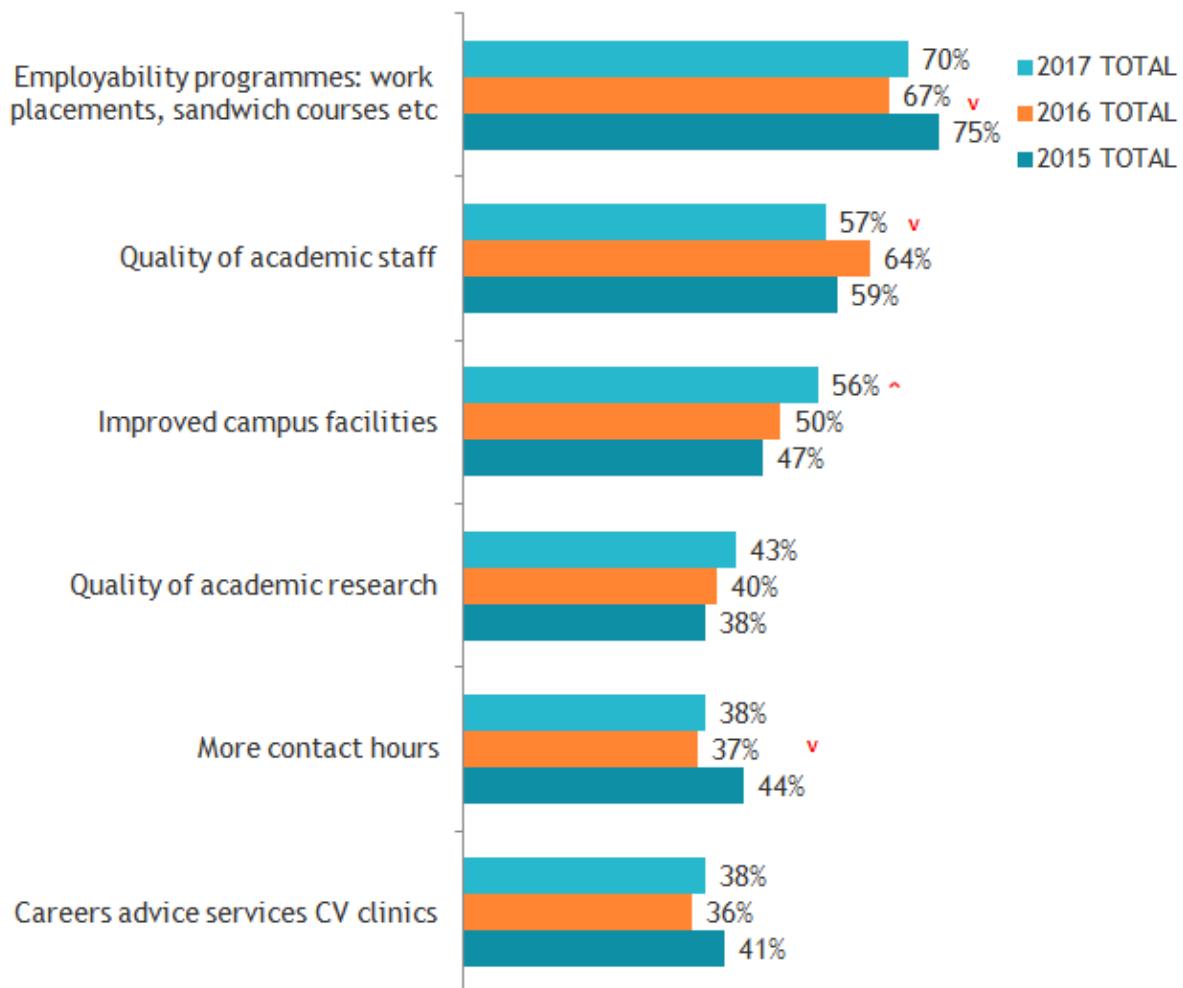
Focusing on applicants, 45% of applicants would pay 2K or higher compared to just 35% of first year students. This is surprising given that only a third of applicants are willing to pay for a gold TEF ranking, with a similar amount (31%) rating employability as an important factor when considering which university to apply to. This suggests that while employment probably isn't the foremost concern for applicants, they are anxious about their future and would be happy to pay more for the stability that a guaranteed starting salary offers.

On average, first year students/applicants are willing to pay £2,064 extra, which is £612 more than last year. As with last year's findings, males are willing to pay more than females (£2,537 vs. 2,167 females); however, both genders are willing to pay substantially more than last year. The overall increase doesn't appear to have been driven by one particular group - all sub-groups analysed would pay more. This year, first year students were willing to pay more than applicants, though the reverse was true last year. Interestingly those who do not live/plan to live in purpose-built accommodation are willing to pay more than those who will be living in purpose-built accommodation, possibly because for them university is less about the social experience and more a means to employment.

When those who were willing to pay more for a guaranteed job were asked what they thought their university should spend the additional money on, the majority (70%) felt that this should go on employability programmes such as sandwich courses or work experience placements. Initially this seems perplexing as in the scenario given the participant paying the extra money will already have a job. However, this shows is that first year students and applicants really want actual on-the-job experience - they want to develop the skills to be successful in their future job. The opportunity to develop this is valued much more than careers advice.

First year students and applicants also felt that the quality of the academic staff was worth investing in (57% agreed), although this figure declined significantly from 64% in 2016; they were also more likely than last year to say that the money should be spent on improved campus facilities (56% vs. 50% in 2016).

QM9. If you did pay this much more, what should your university spend this money on? Base: 724 participants who would be willing to pay more. Base: 432 applicants and 372 first year students, 742 in 2016, 806 in 2015)



## Section 7: Apprenticeships an alternative to university

### How viable are apprenticeships as an alternate route to university?

Apprenticeships are increasingly being considered as an alternative to university - almost 1 in 3 first year students/applicants say they considered an apprenticeship before applying to university this year, compared to 1 in 4 who said the same in 2016.

#### What's stayed the same?

- The main reasons why first year students/applicants choose university over apprenticeships remain unchanged from last year: first year students/applicants want the university student experience (58%), have an interest in the academic subject studied (55%) and feel university offers better long-term salary prospects (56%)
- Last year's decline in the amount of schools promoting degrees over apprenticeships was sustained

#### What's changed?

- Significantly more first year students/applicants considered an apprenticeship compared to last year (30% vs. 24% in 2016)
- 26% of females are considering an apprenticeship; a significant increase from 2016 (18%)
- More first year students/applicants said that they chose university over apprenticeships because apprenticeships don't offer flexibility in future career options (25% vs. 21% in 2016)
- Fewer first year students/applicants said that they chose university over apprenticeships because they were expecting higher grades (23% vs. 29% in 2016)

Interest in apprenticeships has grown significantly. 30% of first year students/applicants said that they were considering apprenticeships as an alternative, representing a significant increase from last year (24%) and 2015 (25%).

Importantly, although males continued to show a greater interest in apprenticeships than females, interest amongst young women is growing. Whereas last year, only 18% of females considered an apprenticeship, this rose to 26% in 2017. In contrast, young men saw a smaller (but still significant) increase from 31% in 2016 to 36% in 2017.

This narrowing gap in interest highlights the increasing interest in alternatives to university amongst both males and females.

Interest in apprenticeships is highest amongst those considering Business & Admin (47%) or STEM subjects (40%). Overall interest in apprenticeships amongst non-Russell Group first year students/ applicants remains higher than those amongst Russell Group first year students/ applicants (34% non-Russell Group vs 23% Russell Group) indicating that apprenticeships are likely to be considered less by higher-achievers.

One in four first year students/applicants (25%) in 2017 had not considered an apprenticeship because they did not feel it offered flexibility in their future career options. This is a significant increase from 2016, when one in five (21%) reported that their decision to choose university over apprenticeships was influenced by a lack of flexibility.

Fewer family and friends recommending university over apprenticeships remains a key trend. Around one in four first year students/applicants in 2017 (24%) and 2016 (25%) said friends/family recommended university rather than apprenticeships; compared to one in three first year students/applicants in 2015 (34%). This suggests friends/family may either think less of universities compared to apprenticeships, or are increasingly seeing the value of apprenticeships compared to universities.

Fewer schools appear to be actively promoting degrees over apprenticeships. Whereas over a third (37%) of first year students/applicants said that their school promoted a degree over an apprenticeship back in 2015, in 2017 this was only 29%; suggesting schools are becoming better at presenting alternative options to university through their careers guidance. However, first year students/applicants attending or planning to attend Russell Group universities were significantly more likely to have been encouraged to do a degree over an apprenticeship; almost 2 in 5 (38%) compared to a quarter (25%) of non-Russell Group first year students/applicants. This suggests that schools are still less likely to present apprenticeships as options to their higher-achieving students.

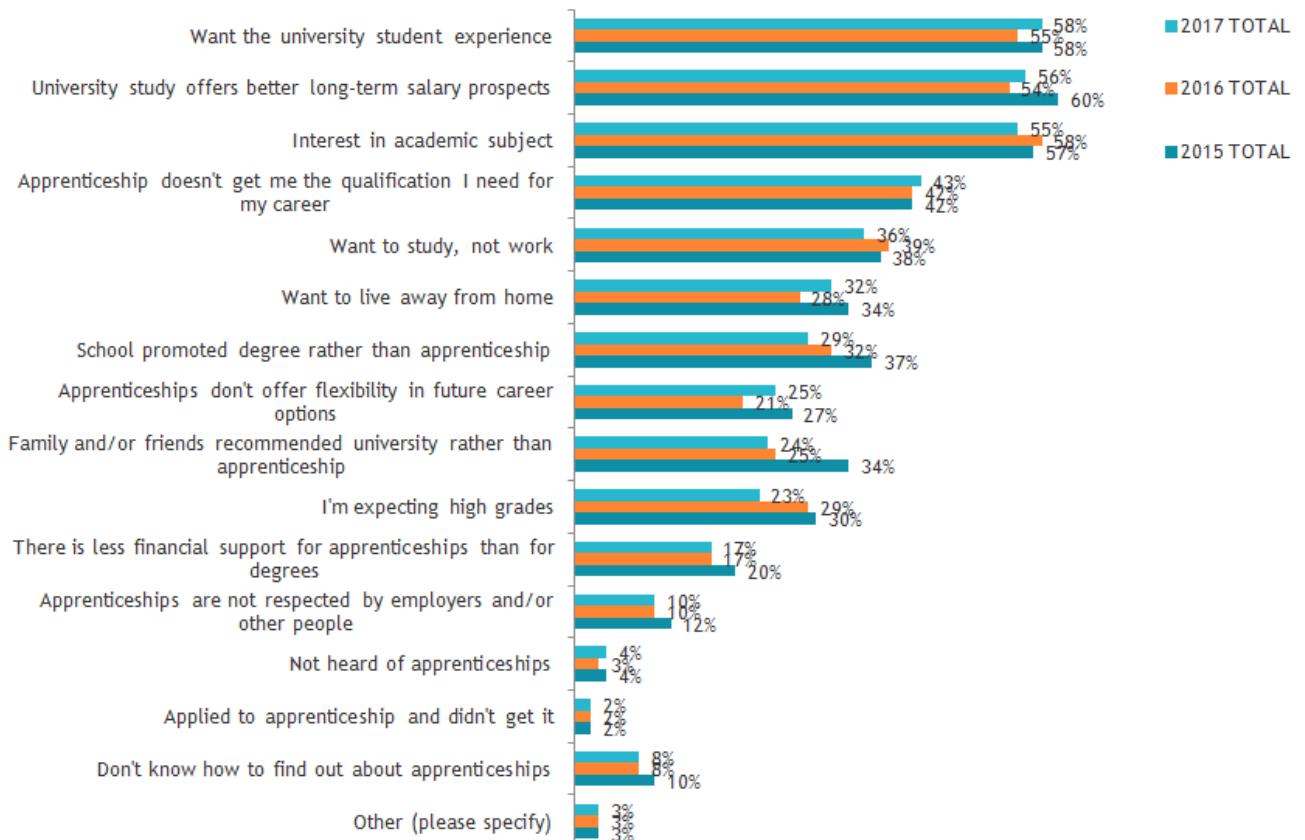
This year fewer first year students/applicants overall said they chose a degree over an apprenticeship because they were expecting higher grades compared to last year (23% vs. 29% in 2016), a significant decline. This could mean that a greater number of higher achievers are considering apprenticeships, even accounting for a lack of focus on this career route within school careers provision.

Wanting the university student experience (58%), university study offering better long-term salary prospects (56%) and an interest in an academic subject (55%) remain the key reasons first year students/applicants are choosing university over an apprenticeship. A lack of accessible information about apprenticeships (8%) and a general lack of awareness about them (4%) remain some of the barriers to take-up. 1 in 10 first year students/applicants did not feel that employers/others respected apprenticeships.

However, the upward trend in first year students/applicants considering apprenticeships this year, particularly amongst young women, indicates that overall interest in apprenticeships is widening to encompass a more diverse make-up of first year students/applicants. This supports the Government's focus on encouraging more girls to

take-up apprenticeships and also the introduction of degree apprenticeships, offering a balance of work and university.

QPU2. Below are reasons other people have told us why they chose to go to university rather than do an apprenticeship. Base: 562 applicants, 555 first year students (1108 in 2016, 1105 in 2015).



## Appendix

## Apprenticeships - Summary

### Interest in apprenticeships continues to grow, particularly amongst young women

Interest in apprenticeships has grown significantly. Three-tenths (30%) of first year students/applicants said that they were considering apprenticeships, as an alternative, representing a significant increase from last year (24%) and 2015 (25%).

Importantly, although males continued to show a greater interest in apprenticeships than females, interest amongst young women is growing. Whereas last year, 18% of females considered an apprenticeship, this rose to 26% in 2017. In contrast, young men saw a smaller increase from 31% in 2016 to 36% in 2017.

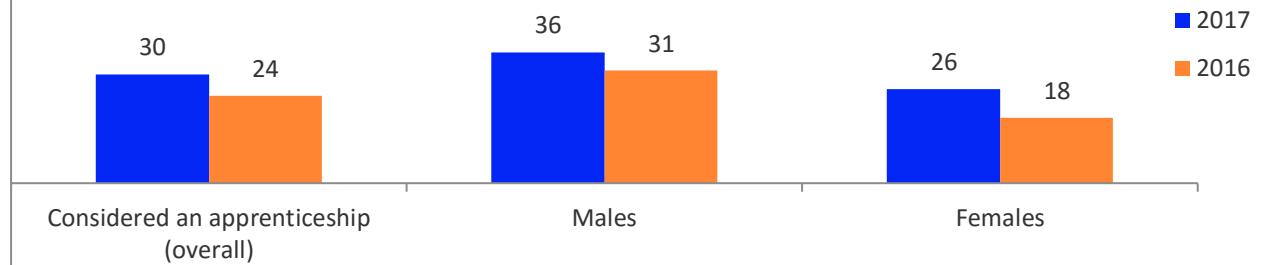
Interest in apprenticeships is highest amongst those considering studying Business & Admin (47%) or STEM subjects (40%). Overall interest in apprenticeships amongst non-Russell Group first year students/applicants remains higher, than those amongst Russell Group first year students/applicants (34% non-Russell Group vs 23% Russell Group) indicating that apprenticeships are likely to be considered less by higher-achievers.

This narrowing gap in interest highlights the increasing interest in alternatives to university amongst both males and females.

#### Key figures:

- 30% of first year students/applicants are considering apprenticeships as an option over university
- Males are the most likely to be considering an apprenticeship (36% male vs. 26% female)
- 26% of females are considering an apprenticeship; a significant increase from 2016 (18%)
- Nearly half of those studying Business & Admin (47%) and two-fifths of those studying STEM are considering an apprenticeship (40%)

**QPU1. Which of these did you consider before applying to university? Please tick all that apply**  
 Total first year students/ applicants 2017, 2016: 1108



## A lack of flexibility in future career options is deterring some from considering apprenticeships

One in four first year students/applicants (25%) in 2017 had not considered an apprenticeship because they did not feel it offered flexibility in their future career options. This is a significant increase from 2016, when one in five (21%) reported that their decision to choose university over apprenticeships was influenced by a lack of flexibility.

Fewer family and friends recommending university over apprenticeships remains a key trend. Around one in four first year students/applicants in 2017 (24%) and 2016 (25%) said friends/family recommended university rather than apprenticeships; compared to one in three first year students/applicants in 2015 (34%). This suggests friends/family may either think less of universities compared to apprenticeships, or are increasingly seeing the value of apprenticeships compared to universities.

Fewer schools appear to be actively promoting degrees over apprenticeships. Whereas over a third (37%) of first year students/applicants said that their school promoted a degree over an apprenticeship back in 2015, in 2017 this was only 29%; suggesting schools are becoming better at presenting alternative options to university through their careers guidance. However, Russell Group first year students/applicants were significantly more likely to have been encouraged to do a degree over an apprenticeship; around two-fifths (38%), compared to a quarter (25%) of non-Russell Group first year students/applicants. This suggests that schools are still less likely to present apprenticeships as options to their higher-achieving first year students.

This year fewer first year students/applicants overall said they chose a degree over an apprenticeship because they were expecting higher grades compared to last year (23% vs. 29% in 2016). This could mean that a greater number of higher achievers are considering apprenticeships, even accounting for a lack of focus on this career route within school careers provision.

Wanting the university student experience (58%), university study offering better long-term salary prospects (56%) and interest in academic subject (55%) remain the key reasons first

year students/applicants are choosing university over an apprenticeship. A lack of accessible information about apprenticeships (8%) awareness and a general lack of awareness about them (4%) remain some of the barriers to take-up. 1 in 10 first year students/applicants did not feel that employers/others respected apprenticeships.

However, the upward trend in first year students/applicants considering apprenticeships this year, particularly amongst young women, indicates that overall interest in apprenticeships is widening to encompass a more diverse make-up of young people. This supports the Government's focus on encouraging more girls to take-up apprenticeships and also the introduction of degree apprenticeships, offering a balance of work and university.

#### Key figures:

- 25% said that apprenticeships don't offer flexibility in future career options, up from 21% last year
- 24% said that friends/family recommended university rather than an apprenticeship, in line with last year (25%) and down from 2015 (34%)
- In 2016, 29% said that they had chosen university over an apprenticeship because they had high grades; in 2017 this had fallen to 23%

## Mental Health - Summary

### **First year students struggle to adjust to their new life at university, particularly young women**

*This year the question on mental health was changed to ask first year students if they personally had faced issues around coping with certain aspects of university. As such, no tracking data is included.*

Nearly nine-tenths (87%) of first year students find it difficult to cope with social or academic aspects of university life. Females find it particularly difficult to cope; 91% report difficulties coping with one or more of the issues asked about, compared to just over four-fifths of males (82%).

The stress of studying was the key area first year students find it difficult to cope with. Around three-fifths (59%) reported that the stress of studying had made it difficult for them to cope at university and this did not vary across the subject studied. Females in particular found the stress of studying difficult to cope with (67% females vs. 48% males). The institution first year students attended also appears to influence the level of this stress, with those from Russell Group universities being more likely to identify the stress of studying as an issue (64% Russell Group vs. 56% non-Russell Group).

Feeling isolated or lonely is a challenge for over 2 in 5 first year students. Female first year students specifically struggle more with isolation and loneliness with half (51%) reporting this an issue with university life, compared to just over one in three male first year students (35%). Further to this, over a third of first year students find it difficult to balance work with study (37%), with this also being more pertinent for female first year students (43% females vs. 31% males).

Over 1 in 3 first year students identified financial difficulties as an aspect of university life that is difficult to cope with. Although this is the same for both males and females, the type of institution attended by the first year students did impact on how prevalent an issue this was. Two-fifths (40%) of first year students who attend a non-Russell Group university reported financial difficulties as difficult to cope with, compared to just over a quarter (28%) of first year students who attended Russell-Group universities.

Coping with living independently is a challenge for around 1 in 5 first year students (22%). International first year students (from outside the EU) find this aspect of university life particularly challenging. Over 1 in 3 of international first year students identified this as being an area that was difficult to cope with, compared to a fifth of British or EU first year students.

A tenth of first year students reported difficulties with coping with alcohol or drug use.

The prevalence of academic and social issues faced by first year students transitioning to university life highlights the importance of universities providing adequate support and ensuring that those requiring help are signposted to appropriate support.

**Key figures:**

- 87% of first year students find it difficult to cope with some aspect of university life, with this being higher in females than males (91% vs. 82%)
- 59% of first year students find the stress of studying difficult to cope with, increasing to 67% of females (compared to 48% of males)
- 44% of first year students report feeling lonely or isolated, rising to 51% of females (compared to 35% of males)
- 37% of first year students find it difficult to balance work with study
- 36% identify financial difficulties as a stressor
- Living independently is a challenge for 22% of first year students
- 1 in 10 first year students report difficulties in coping with alcohol or drug use

## Diversity - Summary

### **First year students and applicants who think meeting a variety of different people is an important part of university want to meet people from other countries**

*Meeting a variety of people at university is important to 2 in 5 first year students/applicants (43%), matching the finding from last year when 42% identified this as being important to them. We went on to ask this 43% what they have in mind when thinking of the variety of people they met at university.*

According to these survey participants, ‘meeting a variety of different people’ means meeting those with different interests such as music and sport (72% agree), people who are culturally different (67%) or people from a different country (64%). They are least likely to be thinking about people with different political points of view (31%).

Around 2 in 5 are considering meeting people of a different race to them (43%) or a different social class (40%) when thinking about the variety of different people.

This suggests that participants who view meeting a variety of different people as important are thinking generally, looking to meet people that might broaden their horizons by introducing them to different interests and cultures, rather than of politics, race or class.

However, that almost 2 in 3 (64%) of those who viewed meeting a variety of different people as important *are* thinking about people from other countries suggests that a reduction in the amount of EU students attending university would impact their overall student experience.

Those attending/planning to attend Russell Group universities are significantly more likely to say they think of meeting people who are culturally different to them (79% vs. 61% all other universities) and people with different political points of view (42% vs. 25% other universities).

Those living/planning to live in purpose-built accommodation are significantly more likely to think about meeting people with different interests to themselves (76% vs. 65%), suggesting that they are more likely to be open to exploring new hobbies at university.

#### **Key figures:**

- Meeting a variety of people at university remains important for over two-fifths of first year students/applicants (43%)
- The top 3 things first year students/applicants consider when thinking of the variety of people they will meet at university are people of different interests (72%), cultures (67%) and countries (64%)

## Almost half of first year students/applicants would feel disappointed if there were fewer EU and international students at their university

The potential impact of Brexit on higher education, student numbers and the future of EU and international first year students in British universities is still at this stage very much an unknown. However, early figures released by UCAS in February 2017 indicate that EU applications were down by 7% for higher education courses starting in 2017, highlighting the possible influence of Brexit on EU and international first year students' decision to study at British universities.

Overall, first year students/applicants are very aware and concerned about the potential reduction in EU and international first year students at British universities. Nearly half (45%) stated that they would be disappointed if this reduction in EU and international first year students materialised. Those from/planning to attend Russell Group universities were more likely to report that they would be disappointed (50% Russell Group universities vs. 43% non-Russell Group universities).

1 in 5 would feel surprised if there were substantially fewer EU and international first year students at their university.

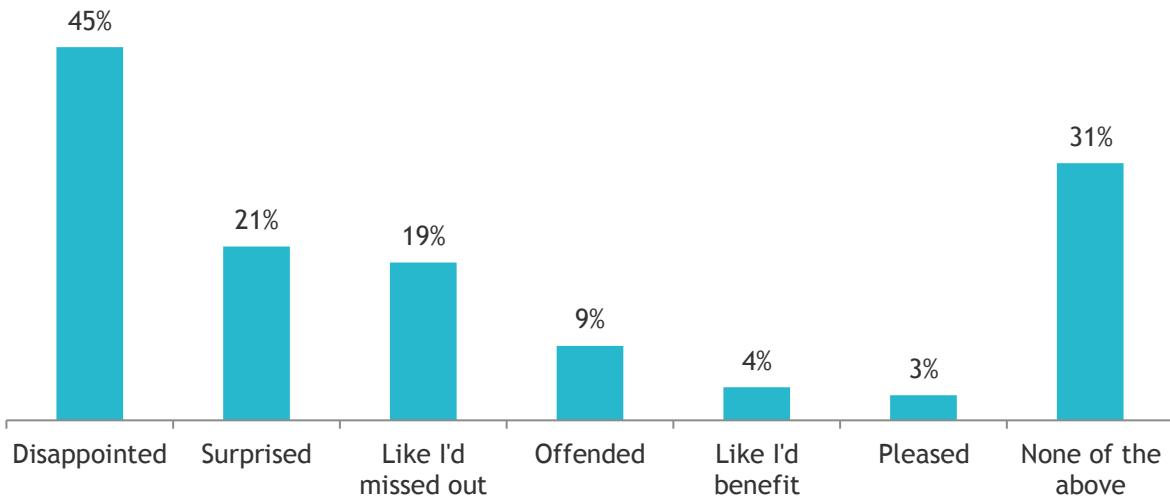
There was also a sense that first year students/applicants would feel like they would miss out if there were fewer EU and international first year students. This reinforces earlier findings showing that the majority of those who valued meeting a variety of people as part of their university experience want to meet people from different countries. Around 1 in 10 first year students/applicants would feel offended by a reduction in EU/international first year students.

Less than a tenth of applicants/first year students felt that there would be positive benefits to a reduction in EU and international first year students. 4% felt that they would benefit from such a change and a further 3% reported that they would be pleased.

### Key figures:

- 45% would be disappointed if there were less EU and international students at their university
- 1 in 5 would be surprised if there were less EU and international students at their university
- 19% felt they that they would be missing out if there was a reduction in EU and international students
- 9% would be offended by a reduction in EU and international students
- Less than a tenth felt there would be positive benefits - 4% felt they would benefit from such a change and 3% reported that they would be pleased

VAR2. Imagine you have found out next year there will be substantially fewer EU and international students at your university. We have listed some of the ways students may feel about this change below. Would any of the following apply to you? 1117 first



## TEF - Summary

### Over half of applicants wouldn't pay more for a gold or silver TEF ranking

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will allow universities achieving gold or silver scores to raise their costs in line with inflation, while bronze rated institutions will be allowed to raise their fees tracking only half of inflation, from 2018 onwards.

But, the majority of applicants are not willing to pay increased tuition fees at all - over half (58%) say they won't pay more to attend a university with a gold or silver ranking.

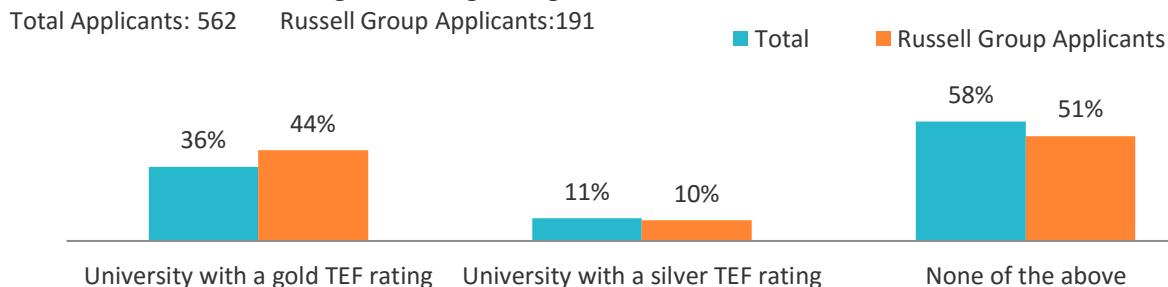
Just over one in three applicants are willing to pay more to attend a university with a gold ranking, while only 11% are willing to pay for a silver. Assuming that the majority of well-respected institutions are likely to be categorised as silver, it seems that the TEF costs will be a further source of aggravation for students who are already facing huge debts compared to previous generations.

Applicants whose firm choice was a Russell Group university are significantly more likely to pay for a gold ranking, though it's difficult to say whether this is because of their confidence in the TEF system, their willingness to pay, or their ability to pay (e.g. parents financial circumstances). With the TEF predicted to look favourably on traditionally less prestigious institutions, it remains to be seen if Russell Group applicants feel a gold Russell Group university is as worthwhile of additional spend as a gold Post-92 that performs well on the TEF.

#### Key figures:

- 58% of applicants won't pay increased fees for universities with a gold or silver ranking
- Only 1 in 3 (36%) of applicants say they'd be willing to pay more for a university with a gold TEF ranking
- Applicants to Russell Group universities are significantly more likely than those attending other universities to say they'll pay for a gold ranking (44% agreed vs. 31% non-Russell Group) but not so for a silver (10% agreed vs. 11% non-Russell Group)

**QR3. Would you be willing to pay increased tuition fees (in line with inflation) for universities with the following TEF rankings? % agree**



## Applicants are less likely to be influenced by a good TEF score than in 2016

A wider awareness of NUS discontent with the TEF is one possible reason for the decrease

*We presented applicants with a short explanation of the Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF), which did not make reference to any increase in tuition fees.*

Overall scores for 2017 show that 70% of applicants believe a good TEF rating would influence their choice of university. 20% said it would not influence their choice, and 9% said they were uncertain. These figures look vastly different to last year's results, where 84% said that a good TEF rating would influence their choice, with a majority saying it would 'definitely' influence them (45% agreed). This year less than half as many say that the TEF would 'definitely' influence (17%) their decision, while the amount who said that it would definitely/probably *not* influence their choice soared from 6% last year to 20% this year.

Last year, females were significantly more likely to say that they would definitely be influenced by a good TEF rating (50% vs. 39% of males), but this year males and females gave similar answers (14% of males would definitely be influenced vs. 18% of females, difference is not significant). 2017 results showed no significant differences between applicants of different genders, fee status and uni mission group when it came to the influence TEF scores would have on their decision-making.

However, it's important to remember that although there has been a decline in the amount of applicants who say that the TEF would influence their choice, the majority are still influenced.

Since last year's fieldwork was conducted (May to early June 2016) the TEF has been discussed more widely in the news and we think it's likely that applicants have a higher level of awareness of the TEF. With preliminary rankings suggesting that TEF scores will be damning of some more prestigious institutions and elevate less-well-regarded universities, it's possible that applicants find the TEF scores confusing because they don't reflect existing hierarchies. The NUS has been a vocal opponent of the TEF, even encouraging students to boycott the Student Satisfaction Survey (hence disrupting one of the data points that TEF scores are calculated from), so these scores could reflect a growing discontent with the TEF spreading within student and applicant circles.

### Key figures:

- 70% say a good TEF rating would influence their choice of university, down from 84% last year
- 20% say a good TEF rating would *not* influence their choice of university, up from 6% last year
- In 2016 45% of applicants said a good TEF rating would 'definitely' influence their choice of university - now the figure is just 17%

## Parents Poll - Summary

### **First year students/applicants place greater importance on location when choosing a university; for parents the fees/costs and student accommodation are important**

*The below figures refer to applicants and first year students, and to parents of applicants/ first year students.*

The university course was fundamental to both first year students/applicants and parents' decisions about which university to choose. Over two-thirds (68%) of first year students/applicants state that course is important to them when choosing a university, as do 57% of parents.

The location of the university is of greater importance to first year students/applicants; 43% of first year students/applicants compared to 33% of parents identified this as a factor informing their choice. By contrast, parents placed greater importance on academic facilities/resources than first year students/applicants (48% parents vs. 32% first year students/applicants)

Employability is of greater importance for first year students/applicants when choosing a university than for parents. Although parents also rate employability as being important, they do so to a much lesser degree (32% first year students/applicants vs. 20% parents). This suggests that first year students/applicants are perhaps thinking more about their long-term career prospects when choosing a university, than parents.

Parents are much more concerned about the fees and costs associated with their child's choice of university. Around 1 in 4 parents identified fees and costs as being important in their decision-making. By contrast, just over 1 in 10 first year students/applicants feel that this is important in their decision-making. This is unsurprising due to likelihood that parents will play a role in financially supporting their child through university. Similarly, student accommodation was a greater consideration for parents than first year students/applicants. Whereas a quarter of parents (25%) report that considerations around student accommodation (e.g. quality, availability) would inform their decision-making, this is just 14% amongst first year students/applicants.

First year students/applicants place much greater importance on social aspects of university life, in particularly the social life and culture - over a fifth (22%) identified this as being important. In contrast, just 10% of parents say that this is important in decision-making.

#### **Key figures:**

- 68% of first year students/applicants and 57% of parents report that the course was important in their decision making about which university to choose
- 43% of first year students/applicants and 33% of parents identified location as being important

- 32% of first year students/applicants and 20% of parents identified employability as being important
- Fees and costs are important to 12% of first year students/applicants and 26% of parents.
- Considerations around student accommodation are important to 14% of first year students/applicants and 25% of parents.
- 22% of first year students/applicants consider the university's social life and culture in their decision-making, compared to 12% of parents

## **Parents have less influence on their children's decisions about university than they think they do**

First year students/applicants and parents differ in their perceptions about how involved parents are in the decision to choose a university. Over a quarter of parents (28%) say that they had a very high (6-7 on a 7-point scale) level of involvement in their child's decision to go to university, but only 1 in 10 first year students/applicants say the same (slightly higher amongst females). Parents who have graduated from university themselves are much more likely to say that they had a high level of involvement with their child's decision (35%), compared to those parents who do not have a university education (20%).

1 in 5 first year students/applicants said that their parents had no involvement at all in their choice of where to live at university, but only 4% of parents said the same.

It could be that first year students/applicants don't perceive their parents to have had much involvement, or that these two groups consider involvement in different ways. Either way, with 46% of first year students/applicants saying that their parent/s had a mid-high level of involvement (4+) in their decision-making, universities should consider the need to communicate and inform parents about their offering, especially when it comes to the things that parents think are most important over first year students/applicants (academic facilities and resources, fees and accommodation).

## **Affordability is essential to first year students, applicants and parents' choices around university accommodation**

*The below figures refer only to those applicants and first year students who lived or planned to live purpose-built student accommodation, and parents of applicants/first year students who live/plan to live in purpose-built student accommodation.*

The affordability of purpose-built university accommodation is the most important consideration for first year students/applicants; 2 in 3 first year students/applicants and 3 in 5 parents consider or will consider the affordability of rent in their choice of accommodation. 2 in 3 parents identified good security at university accommodation as being important; compared to just over a third (37%) of first year students/applicants.

Cleanliness and general maintenance of potential student accommodation is also important to both first year students/applicants and their parents. Around half of first year students/applicants (53%) and of parents (50%) identified cleanliness as being an important consideration. Further to this, 43% of first year students/applicants and 57% of parents identified that accommodation being well-maintained was important.

The available facilities at student accommodation are much more of a consideration for applicants/first year students. Around half (51%) of applicants/first year students, compared to just 1 in 5 parents identified en-suite facilities as being important. Having enough space is also much more of a consideration for first year students/applicants (37%), than their parents (19%).

**Key figures:**

- 67% of first year students/applicants and 61% of parents say that affordable rent is important to consider when choosing student accommodation
- 66% of parents say that good security is important, compared to 37% of applicants/first year students
- 53% of first year students/applicants and 50% of parents say that student accommodation should be clean
- 43% of first year students/applicants and 57% of parents say that it is important for accommodation to be well-maintained

## Weighting

All weights are sourced from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) figures.

Weighting matrix			
	Achieved	Required	Factor
<b>2014 NatRep Student Male 17 or under</b>	5	7.295	1.459
	0.08%	0.11%	145.90%
<b>2014 NatRep Student Male 18</b>	116	141.037	1.216
	1.78%	2.17%	121.58%
<b>2014 NatRep Student Male 19</b>	74	82.677	1.117
	1.14%	1.27%	111.73%
<b>2014 NatRep Student Male 20 or over</b>	151	99.698	0.66
	2.32%	1.53%	66.03%
<b>2014 NatRep Student Female 17 or under</b>	7	9.727	1.39
	0.11%	0.15%	138.95%
<b>2014 NatRep Student Female 18</b>	150	172.648	1.151
	2.31%	2.65%	115.10%
<b>2014 NatRep Student Female 19</b>	89	93.619	1.052
	1.37%	1.44%	105.19%
<b>2014 NatRep Student Female 20 or over</b>	199	122.799	0.617
	3.06%	1.89%	61.71%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Male 17 or under</b>	7	7.295	1.042
	0.11%	0.11%	104.21%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Male 18</b>	92	141.037	1.533
	1.41%	2.17%	153.30%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Male 19</b>	50	82.677	1.654
	0.77%	1.27%	165.35%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Male 20 or over</b>	79	99.698	1.262
	1.21%	1.53%	126.20%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Female 17 or under</b>	16	9.727	0.608
	0.25%	0.15%	60.79%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Female 18</b>	148	172.648	1.167
	2.27%	2.65%	116.65%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Female 19</b>	76	93.619	1.232
	1.17%	1.44%	123.18%
<b>2014 NatRep Applicant Female 20 or over</b>	200	122.799	0.614
	3.07%	1.89%	61.40%
<b>2015 NatRep Student Male 17 or under</b>	3	5.525	1.842
	0.05%	0.09%	184.17%
<b>2015 NatRep Student Male 18</b>	109	106.817	0.98
	1.68%	1.64%	98.00%
<b>2015 NatRep Student Male 19</b>	65	62.617	0.963
	1.00%	0.96%	96.33%

<b>2015 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>20 or over</b>	76	75.508	0.994
			1.17%	1.16%	99.35%
<b>2015 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>17 or under</b>	7	7.367	1.052
			0.11%	0.11%	105.24%
<b>2015 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>18</b>	150	130.758	0.872
			2.31%	2.01%	87.17%
<b>2015 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>19</b>	74	70.904	0.958
			1.14%	1.09%	95.82%
<b>2015 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>20 or over</b>	92	93.004	1.011
			1.41%	1.43%	101.09%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>17 or under</b>	4	5.525	1.381
			0.06%	0.09%	138.13%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>18</b>	103	106.817	1.037
			1.58%	1.64%	103.71%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>19</b>	54	62.617	1.16
			0.83%	0.96%	115.96%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>20 or over</b>	70	75.508	1.079
			1.08%	1.16%	107.87%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>17 or under</b>	17	7.367	0.433
			0.26%	0.11%	43.33%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>18</b>	128	130.758	1.022
			1.97%	2.01%	102.16%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>19</b>	66	70.904	1.074
			1.01%	1.09%	107.43%
<b>2015 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>20 or over</b>	87	93.004	1.069
			1.34%	1.43%	106.90%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>17 or under</b>	5	5.692	1.138
			0.08%	0.09%	113.84%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>18</b>	104	106.471	1.024
			1.60%	1.64%	102.38%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>19</b>	64	64.457	1.007
			0.98%	0.99%	100.71%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>20 or over</b>	71	72.819	1.026
			1.09%	1.12%	102.56%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>17 or under</b>	8	7.623	0.953
			0.12%	0.12%	95.29%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>18</b>	137	131.868	0.963
			2.11%	2.03%	96.25%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>19</b>	73	73.004	1
			1.12%	1.12%	100.01%
<b>2016 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>20 or over</b>	96	96.066	1.001
			1.48%	1.48%	100.07%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>17 or under</b>	6	4.168	0.695

		0.09%	0.06%	69.46%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male 18</b>	117	112.641	0.963
		1.80%	1.73%	96.27%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male 19</b>	50	49.677	0.994
		0.77%	0.76%	99.35%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male 20 or over</b>	42	67.434	1.606
		0.65%	1.04%	160.56%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female 17 or under</b>	5	5.271	1.054
		0.08%	0.08%	105.42%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female 18</b>	153	146.424	0.957
		2.35%	2.25%	95.70%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female 19</b>	67	59.941	0.895
		1.03%	0.92%	89.46%
<b>2016 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female 20 or over</b>	110	104.445	0.949
		1.69%	1.61%	94.95%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male 17 or under</b>	6	5.661	0.944
		0.09%	0.09%	94.35%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male 18</b>	105	105.899	1.009
		1.61%	1.63%	100.86%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male 19</b>	64	64.11	1.002
		0.98%	0.99%	100.17%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Male 20 or over</b>	72	72.428	1.006
		1.11%	1.11%	100.59%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female 17 or under</b>	7	7.582	1.083
		0.11%	0.12%	108.32%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female 18</b>	132	131.159	0.994
		2.03%	2.02%	99.36%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female 19</b>	74	72.611	0.981
		1.14%	1.12%	98.12%
<b>2017 NatRep Student</b>	<b>Female 20 or over</b>	95	95.55	1.006
		1.46%	1.47%	100.58%
<b>2017 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male 17 or under</b>	4	4.259	1.065
		0.06%	0.07%	106.47%
<b>2017 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male 18</b>	118	115.099	0.975
		1.81%	1.77%	97.54%
<b>2017 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male 19</b>	50	50.761	1.015
		0.77%	0.78%	101.52%
<b>2017 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Male 20 or over</b>	65	68.906	1.06
		1.00%	1.06%	106.01%
<b>2017 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female 17 or under</b>	6	5.386	0.898
		0.09%	0.08%	89.76%
<b>2017 NatRep Applicant</b>	<b>Female 18</b>	151	149.618	0.991
		2.32%	2.30%	99.09%

<b>2017 NatRep Applicant Female 19</b>	64	61.249	0.957
	0.98%	0.94%	95.70%
<b>2017 NatRep Applicant Female 20 or over</b>	104	106.724	1.026
	1.60%	1.64%	102.62%