



STUDENTS' UNIONS' ADVICE SERVICE

Annual Report

1st JULY 2018 – 30th JUNE 2019

Students'
Unions'
Advice
Service

We'll help you **explore** your options.



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1. HIGHLIGHTS

"I cannot tell you how infinitely grateful I am to you for making this happen for me. I am proud of myself for taking the initiative to come to you for help, but your kindness, support and practical advice have been nothing less than life-changing for me." feedback from service-user, 2018-19 (shared with permission)

In 2018-19, the Students' Unions' Advice Service:

- was in its ninth year of service
- employed four staff members (3.2 full-time equivalent)
- was funded by a direct college levy

Service-users:

- 476 service-users (small increase as compared to 2017-18 when we supported 473 service-users)
- Of the 476 service-users, 354 were students (3% increase as compared to 344 students in 2017-18)
- Of the 354 students, there were 405 cases (4% increase as compared to 387 cases in 2017-18)
- As compared to 2014-15, this represents an increase of 113% in the number of students accessing the Service, and a 120% increase in the total number of service-users.

Service-user status for students:

- Current students (82%)
- Past students (8%)
- Intermitting students (7%)
- Off the register (2%)
- Visiting students (1%)

Busiest times of the year:

- July 2018
- June 2019

Colleges:

- We supported students from 31 colleges
- For the majority of colleges, we supported between 8 and 23 students
- 2 graduate/mature colleges featured in the top 3
- Top 10 colleges – mix of old and new colleges with varying levels of resource

How students found out about the Students' Unions' Advice Service:

- Signposted by University service-providers and staff e.g. DRC, UCS (23%)
- Signposted by College service-providers and staff e.g. Senior Tutors, Nurses (12%)
- Signposted by friends (11%)
- Signposted by CUSU/GU Officer (9%)
- Web search (9%)

Gender (of those who disclosed)

- Female (59%)
- Male (39%)
- Other (2%)

Disability:

- Students who disclosed a disability on the SUAS monitoring form (15% as compared to 17% in 2017-18)
- Students who did not disclose a disability on the form but mentioned a disability to the Advisor (15%)
- Potentially up to 30% of students who accessed the SUAS may have a disability

Student status:

- Undergraduate (41%)
- Postgraduate (59%)
- Of the postgraduate students (58% PhD, 28% MPhil, 13% other Masters, 2% PGCE)

Top 10 issues for all students:

1. Examination-related
2. Mental health
3. Intermission/return from intermission
4. Complaints
5. Supervisor issues
6. Physical health
7. College issues
8. Extensions/deadline concerns
9. Financial hardship
10. Changing College

Top 3 issues for undergraduate students:

1. Examination-related
2. Intermission/return from intermission
3. Reasonable Adjustments (Study/Exam/AMA)

Top 3 issues for postgraduate students:

1. Examination-related
2. Supervisor issues
3. Complaints

Feedback from student service-users:

- 100% strongly agreed or agreed that their concerns were listened to and taken seriously by the Advisor.
- 90% strongly agreed or agreed that the advice they received was relevant, appropriate and clear.
- 90% strongly agreed or agreed that overall they were satisfied with the support they received.
- 90% said they were very likely or likely to recommend the Students' Unions' Advice Service to friends.

SUAS initiatives:

1. Post-exam workshop for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Post-exam workshop for postgraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
3. Post-exam podcast for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
4. Information leaflets (examinations, supervisor issues, disability, changing college, finance, parental leave)

Training provided

1. Programme of welfare training for College and University student representatives e.g. JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation campaigns
2. Welfare training for sports club welfare officers
3. Welfare training for staff

2. ADVICE SERVICE TEAM

STAFF ADVISORS

In 2018-19, the Students' Unions' Advice Service was composed of four professional advisors (3.2 FTE) who provided individual support to students and other service-users.

- Lisa Déry (Head of Advice and Welfare)
- Rachel Wilson (Senior Advisor)
- Gemma Douglas (Senior Advisor)
- Simona Obeng (Advisor)



Photo: Gemma, Rachel, Lisa and Simona

"I know my situation could have turned out drastically different if it weren't for each of you and your role in guiding me through a difficult situation." feedback from service-user, 2018-19 (shared with permission)

ELECTED SABBATICAL OFFICERS

CUSU-GU elected sabbatical officers worked closely with staff on the development of the Service and social policy work. Sabbatical officers bring to the Service their experience as students of the Collegiate University, while staff members bring experience, knowledge and institutional memory. These different backgrounds ensure the Students' Unions' Advice Service is simultaneously student-led and professional.

- Christine Pungong (CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer and lead officer of the SUAS)
- Evie Aspinall (CUSU President)
- Sofia Ropek Hewson (GU President)
- Matt Kite (CUSU Education Officer)
- Claire Sosienski Smith (CUSU Women's Officer)
- Emrys Travis (CUSU Disabled Students' Officer)
- Shadab Ahmed (CUSU Access and Funding Officer)
- Nikita Hari (GU Vice-President 2018) / Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar (GU Vice-President 2019)

3. STUDENTS' UNIONS' ADVICE SERVICE DEFINED

The Students' Unions' Advice Service (SUAS) provides free, confidential, and independent advice, information and representation to all Cambridge University students, undergraduate and graduate, from all 31 Colleges. Students can come to the Service with any issues they might experience during their time at the University of Cambridge.

The Advice Service is provided by Cambridge University Students' Union and the Graduate Union and is open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, all year round. Students can make an appointment or attend a drop-in session on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12pm-2pm.

Advisors work by a Code of Practice which assures students that they will receive free, confidential, impartial, non-directive, and non-judgmental advice. Response times are also specified - currently one-two working days from initial contact.

As generalist advisers, the Students' Unions' Advice Service complements other more specialised University service providers such as the Counselling Service and the Disability Resource Centre which deal with more specific issues such as mental health and disabilities. Advisors can also work closely with tutors, other University or College service providers and departmental staff members if the student feels this would be useful.

4. ACTIVITIES

A. ADVICE WORK

INDIVIDUAL ADVICE WORK

All students at the University of Cambridge can come to the Service with any issues or problems that they might experience as a student - from making friends to working relationships, from exams to intermission, and from welfare concerns to finance. The issues experienced by students using the Service are often complex and regularly involve many inter-related concerns (for example a health issue and exam allowances, or intermission and finances). A student might approach the Service with one particular issue, but others may emerge during the course of subsequent communications.

The Service helps students with a broad range of issues, with a varying degree of involvement in each case. Some case studies are included as an appendix to this report to provide some examples of the role of the Service in different scenarios.

Following the advice sector's framework for defining the types of advice provided, the Service splits cases into three categories - Information, Advice, and Advice with Casework.

"I appreciate the advice you gave me when we met. It gave me the bigger picture on all the possible options." feedback from service-user, 2018-19 (shared with permission)

GROUP ADVICE WORK

In 2018-19, the Students' Unions' Advice Service developed and launched two workshops:

1. Post-exam workshop for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Post-exam workshop for postgraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams

As attendance was low, possibly due to the choice of dates and times, we will carefully select the dates and times of the workshops next year and advertise them more widely.

ADVICE RESOURCES

In addition to its existing resources such as the Advice Service website and 'Guide to Getting through Exams', in 2018-19, the Students' Unions' Advice Service developed a series of resources for students:

1. Post-exam podcast for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Information leaflets (e.g. examinations, supervisor issues, disability, changing college, finance, parental leave)

OTHER TYPES OF ADVICE WORK

While the Students' Unions' Advice Service is geared towards directly supporting students, we are often approached by users who are not current Cambridge students. For example, non-standard users might include past and prospective students, students on intermission, students who are off the register, and visiting students.

The Service also records information regarding non-student users - for example, parents, relatives or friends of students who ask for advice. Though non-student users approach the Service on a regular basis, the aim is always to work with the student directly. Therefore, the advice we provide to non-student users is often limited and is usually focused on helping the non-student user encourage the student to access the Service themselves.

A service is also provided for JCR/MCR and Sports Welfare Officers who specifically want advice that relates to their role or to discuss any concerns they may have about a student they are supporting. More detail is provided later in this report (see Links with other Organisations).

More informally, the Service continues to welcome contact from tutors, other service providers and staff across the Collegiate University who wish to discuss options that may be available to a student they are supporting.

MAINTAINING QUALITY STANDARDS

Maintaining a consistently high quality of service is vital to the continued success of the Students' Unions' Advice Service. The effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms is important in ensuring that every member of the team can provide students with an excellent standard of support. Advisors undergo **training** throughout the year in order to increase their knowledge in relevant areas. The Service also utilises a **peer observation** scheme throughout the year, where all Advisors are observed by another team member and offered constructive feedback on how they might improve their skills.

In addition, each week, all Advisors meet for **reflective practice** – this provides an opportunity to share best practice, discuss challenging cases and explore options together, and reflect on how Advisors might improve the level of support they offer to individual students. This is coupled with a session for “business-related” items which can contain anything from relevant committee updates to planning the activities of the Advice Service for the coming weeks, or **identification and discussion of upcoming issues** students might bring to the Service e.g. exam warnings and allowances, or first year reports. The Head of Advice and Welfare leads the team in maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of training and professional standards and may therefore use this time to discuss possible changes to current practice in line with this understanding.

B. TRAINING

ADVICE SERVICE STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING

In 2018-19, Advice Service staff took part in the following professional development opportunities:

- Office of the Independent Adjudicator Sessions (OIA)
 - o Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct
 - o Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures
 - o Research Supervision and Research Degrees
 - o Good Practice Framework - Supporting Disabled Students
 - o Fitness to Practise
 - o Procedural Fairness
 - o Rules and Eligibility Decisions
- Advice UK Workshops
 - o SU Advice Service Networking and Learning Event - Areas covered include: Student and Advisor Mental Health; systems thinking approach to quality service improvements
 - o SU Advice Service Networking and Learning Event – Areas covered include: Working more effectively with stakeholders across the University; developing work in the wider context of a students' union, exploring opportunities and challenges in areas such as campaigning and policy
- Bespoke intensive manager training and coaching (Different Ways of Thinking)
- Mental Health First Aid
- Supporting Postgraduate Students with Mental Health
- Working with Disabled Students (DRC)
- Examination Review Procedure (OSCCA)
- Annual visits to College and University service providers and key staff members (e.g. UCS, DRC, Nurses)
- Meetings with key bodies (OSCCA, EAMC etc)
- University Library Induction

In addition to this, we had meetings and were in regular contact with our equivalents at Anglia Ruskin University, University of East Anglia and Oxford University to discuss common areas of interest.

TRAINING DELIVERED TO CUSU-GU SABBATICAL OFFICERS

The Advice Service provides a welfare training programme to incoming elected sabbatical officers every year to allow them to offer initial support and signposting to students when approached. These sessions included:

- Introduction to the Students' Unions' Advice Service
- Essential Skills for Supporting Students (active listening, confidentiality, boundaries, non-directive advice, signposting)
- Working with Disabled Students (provided by DRC)
- Communication Skills
- Train the Trainer
- Meeting and visiting University and College service providers and key staff members

PRESENTATIONS DELIVERED TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STAFF

For the fifth year, the Advice Service participated in the tutor training programme by delivering a session on the Students' Unions' Advice Service. This session informs tutors about the existence of the Advice Service and the important role we have to play, and helps to build relationships with colleagues with whom we are likely to have contact in the future.

We continued to provide inductions to new staff members from the University Counselling Service, Disability Resource Centre and College nurses which includes an introduction to the Students' Unions' Advice Service and a general overview of the Collegiate University.

TRAINING DELIVERED TO STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

In 2018-19, the Advice Service provided eight three hour 'Essential Skills for Supporting Students' training sessions, half of which were to Sports Welfare Officers and the other half to student representatives (e.g. JCR/MCR Welfare Officers). The Advice Service also delivered 'Train the Trainer' sessions to Peer2Peer Volunteers. At the CUSU annual conference for student-representatives, we also co-delivered two sessions: 'Team Dynamics and Conflict Resolution' and 'Taking Care of Yourself'.

Feedback from Sports Clubs Welfare Officers, 2018-19

- *"It was useful to discuss with peers about situations and their experiences. Also, the small group setting was helpful in encouraging participation in wider discussions."*
- *"Really good training overall...gives good tools to be a good welfare officer."*
- *"I enjoyed talking about good and bad scenarios as it was helpful to see how good/bad practice can make someone feel."*
- *"I enjoyed talking through scenarios as it helped to think about some tricky situations in advance."*
- *"The facilitator was great. Session was well prepared and well run, and activities early on acted as a nice way to enjoy people"*
- *"I enjoyed discussing ways in which to be most approachable in our roles"*

C. OUTREACH

STUDENTS AND STAFF

This year, the Advice Service took part in the following student outreach activities:

- Disability Resource Centre Transitional Events
- Pop-Up Advice sessions on various academic sites
- Welcome Event for Student-parents
- International Students' Welcome Events

The Head of Advice and Welfare additionally took part in 'Let's talk Graduate Mental Health' event and the 'Academic Reasonable Adjustments' forum, and continued her visits with College Senior Tutors and their teams.

COMMITTEES AND ASSOCIATIONS

The Head of Advice and Welfare is a member of the following committees:

- Health and Wellbeing committee
- Joint Committee on Childcare for Student

The Head of the Advice and Welfare presented the Students' Unions' Advice Service Annual Report 2017-18 to the following committees:

- Student Finance and Welfare Committee
- Graduate Tutors' Committee
- College Nurses' Association

D. FEEDBACK

All students who access the Advice Service are invited to provide feedback on their experience through a confidential and anonymous on-line questionnaire. In 2018-19, 8% of our student service-users responded:

- 100% strongly agreed or agreed that their concerns were listened to and taken seriously by the Advisor.
- 90% strongly agreed or agreed that the advice they received was relevant, appropriate and clear.
- 90% strongly agreed or agreed that overall they were satisfied with the support they received.
- 90% said they were very likely or likely to recommend the Students' Unions' Advice Service to friends.

To the question “What I like about the Service is...”, the following comments are amongst the responses received during the year:

- *‘Patience and valuable advice on how I should go about my exam appeal situation.’*
- *‘Knowledgeable clear advice. Caring sympathetic attitude.’*
- *‘It’s objectivity and attention to detail, i.e. it does take into consideration what the students say, regardless of academic hierarchy and University’s reputation’*
- *‘My email was replied to quickly and an appointment made very easily in a short period of time. Most of all is my advisor is very considerate and knowledgeable and her email afterwards is amazing! Thanks’*

To the question “What I feel you could do to improve the service for students is...”, similarly to previous year, the majority of responses related to the promotion of the Service. Below are some of the comments:

- *‘Show a bit more clearly on the website what advice you can give to finalists about ‘real world’ stuff like taxes*
- *‘A minor suggestion would also the Advisors to visit departments/units (it’s like a gesture of good will/communication)’*

E. MEASURING IMPACT

The Students’ Unions’ Advice Service Impact Survey was designed and set up in January 2018 to capture the impact using the Advice Service has on how students feel about their situation. The survey is emailed to students around three months after their initial contact with the Service and runs in line with our reporting year which is from 1st July to 30th June.

In 2018-19, 109 students of the 354 students who accessed the Service gave us permission to invite them to complete the questionnaire. Of these, only 3 completed the survey which equates to a disappointing 3% response rate (as compared to 8.7% last year).

Increasing the response rate will be an area of discussion and improvement for the Advice Service team in 2019-20. We therefore hope to report on this next year.

6. PARTNERS AND LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

A. CUSU AND THE GRADUATE UNION

The Students' Unions' Advice Service is provided by Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU) and the Graduate Union (GU) and forms part of the "non-representational" student support services offered by the Unions. Presently, this includes the Advice Service and the training, support and guidance provided to student Welfare Officers of the Colleges.

The CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer serves as the lead officer in the Advice Service, and the team of elected sabbatical officers participate in the governance and development of the Service in a variety of ways.

A benefit of providing an advice service via the central students' union is that the suitably anonymised casework data provides a useful resource for informing the elected sabbatical officers' representational priorities. The existence of the Advice Service as part of the union ensures that the elected students are informed of recurrent or emergent student issues within the Collegiate University.

B. COLLEGIATE UNIVERSITY

Working effectively with other Collegiate University services is key to the way the Advice Service operates, and the team works closely with these services throughout the year, whether in making or receiving referrals, seeking advice and information, or working alongside various support services when supporting a student through a difficulty.

Cases often involve discussing multiple referral options with the student to help them identify what might be most appropriate for them. To support this aspect of the Service, every year, the Advice Service team meets other key service-providers in the Collegiate University such as:

- University Counselling Service
- Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor
- Disability Resource Centre
- Careers Service
- Childcare Office
- International Students Office
- Accommodation Service
- Language Centre
- Fees and Funding team
- Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals
- Student Registry
- Senior Tutors and their teams
- College Nurses

In addition to these annual visits, we also have regular meetings or are in regular contact with:

- Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals
- Exam Access and Mitigation Committee
- Board of Graduate Studies

C. STUDENT GROUPS

Strong peer support networks are a feature of the Collegiate University and something which the Advice Service plays a vital role in supporting. In turn, volunteers in these networks are a vital source of referrals and awareness-raising for the Service.

This year, we provided training and/or worked with:

- JCR/MCR committee members
- Sports Clubs Welfare Officers
- Peer2Peer Supporters
- Liberations Campaigns

The Service further supports these student networks by providing a confidential source of advice and support for volunteers who are concerned about a particular student or situation. The Service can support officers in providing information about what support and information is available, how to manage the situation, how to set clear boundaries and when to share information.

D. NATIONAL ADVICE COMMUNITY

The Students' Unions' Advice Service remains a member of Advice UK (the UK's largest support network for free, independent advice centres), AMOSSHE (Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education), RAWs (Research and Welfare Staff in Student Unions), and NASMA (National Association of Student Money Advisers) and has benefitted from the access to training, resources and advice that membership of these organisations afford.

The Service continues to foster strong relationships with other advice services locally and nationally, including Anglia Ruskin University, the University of East Anglia, and Oxford University. This year, the Advice Service also welcomed colleagues from the Normal University in Beijing.

7. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

A. MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLAN

As a result of various strategic planning days and activities, the Advice Service created an up to date strategic plan and mission statement.

The mission of the Students' Unions' Advice Service is to support students in any aspect of their journey through the University of Cambridge in overcoming obstacles that may prevent them from realising their educational aspirations.

As part of our vision, we are committed to improving the overall student experience at Cambridge by feeding back to the Collegiate University any challenges our student service-users have faced that can be improved by changes in processes.

Key strategic objectives include:

1. Increase students' awareness of the Service
2. Increase the Service's role as a force for positive change
3. Expand the range of services and resources on offer to students
4. Improve further the quality of the Service and ensure long term funding for sustainability
5. Increase the Service's profile within the Collegiate University as an integral part of student support in Cambridge
6. Ensure the future proofing of space and resource for the Service

B. KEY INITIATIVES IN 2018-19

1. Post-exam workshop for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
2. Post-exam workshop for postgraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
3. Post-exam podcast for undergraduate students who underperformed, failed or missed their exams
4. Information leaflets (examinations, supervisor issues, disability, changing college, finance, parental leave)
5. Programme of welfare training for College and University student representatives e.g. JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation campaigns
6. Welfare training for sports club welfare officers
7. Welfare training for staff

The Welfare training includes active listening, confidentiality, managing boundaries and expectations, providing information and signposting.

5. STATISTICS AND TRENDS

The Students' Unions' Advice Service obtains information about service-users by asking them to complete registration and monitoring forms when they access the Service – either via email, phone, in person or Skype. All service-users who have received advice in person will have completed these forms however those with whom we have corresponded mainly by email will not necessarily have completed these forms. This means that we do not have a complete set of personal data for every service-user. Also some service-users who do complete the forms may choose to not disclose certain details such as ethnicity, language, gender or whether they consider themselves to be disabled.

Data, such as the number of students, user demographics and issue areas act as indicators which form the Service's development in terms of the quality and comprehensiveness of the advice it can provide. This information also helps the Service to identify trends in student welfare needs, respond efficiently to enquiries and direct students to relevant resources. Through its monthly meetings with CUSU-GU elected sabbatical officers, the Service regularly updates the Cambridge University Students' Union and Graduate Union as to its activities and trends in student welfare issues, which, in turn, facilitates their wider political work in supporting students.

The following measures of data were taken from the time period 1st July 2018 to 30th June 2019. Noting trends in the types of issues students raised ensures the Service is well-equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to help the students who approach us. It allows the Service to adapt and evolve, and to develop its sources of support in line with student demand and need.

A. SERVICE-USERS

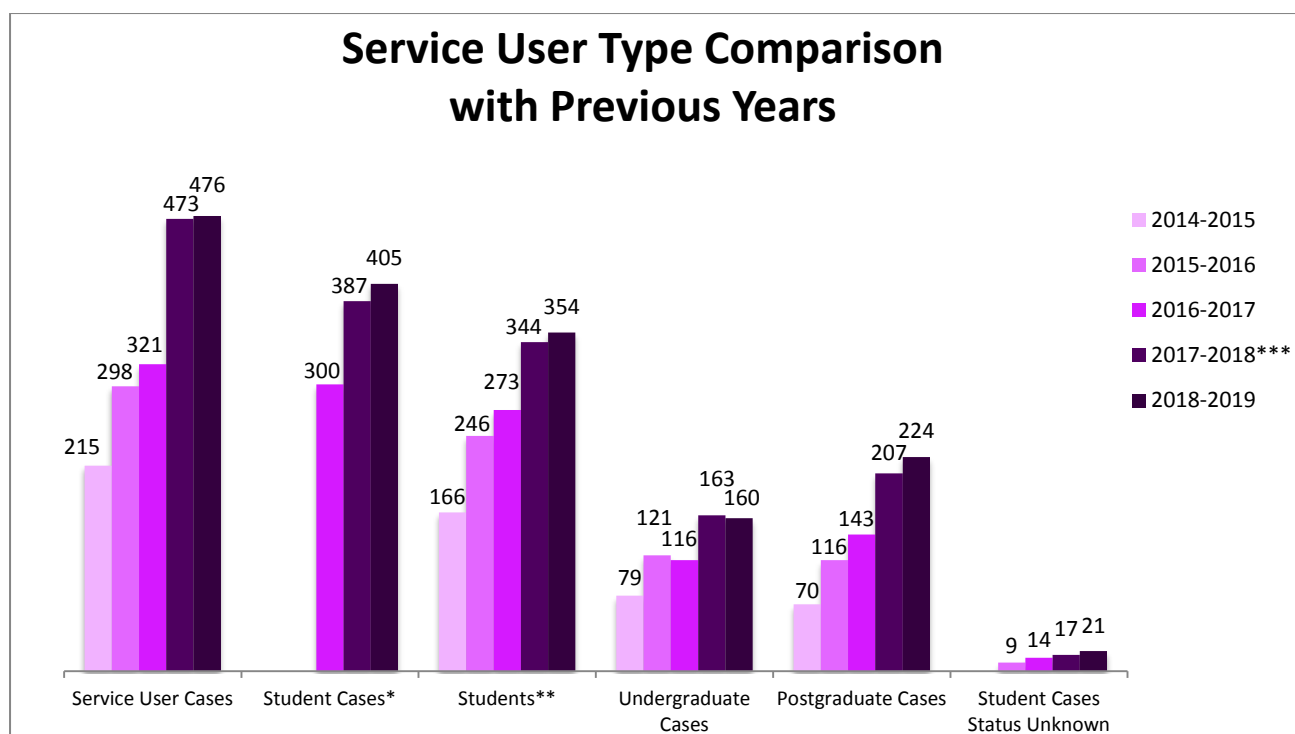
SERVICE USER NUMBERS

In 2018-19, the Service worked with a total of:

- 476 service-users
- Of these, 354 were students (students = current, intermitting, off the register, past, visiting, exchange, JBS and matriculated ICE students).

This is a small increase from 2017-18 when the Service worked with 473 service-users of which 344 were students (3% increase). Since 2014-15, this represents an increase of 120% in the number of service-users, and 113% in the number of students accessing the Service. Some students experience multiple issues throughout the year and return to the Service with different cases:

- 29 students received support on 2 different cases
- 1 student received support on 3 different cases
- 5 students received support on 4 different cases
- 1 student received support on 6 different cases



Graph 1 – Comparison of Service User Type from 2014-2015 to 2018-2019

* When students access the Service more than once, each time they use the service for a different issue, this is recorded as a new case.

**14 students continued to access support from the previous reporting period.

HOW SERVICE-USERS FOUND OUT ABOUT THE ADVICE SERVICE

Of the students who disclosed how they found out about the Advice Service:

- 23% were referred to the Service by a University service provider or staff member (as compared to 26% in 2017-18), such as the Disability Resource Centre, Counselling Service, OSCCA, or departmental administrator;
- 12% were referred by a College service provider such as a Tutor, Senior Tutor, Nurse or Chaplain (as compared to 14% in 2017-18).

	Number	Percentage
Friend/s	19	11%
Self-referred	19	11%
CUSU/GU Officer	15	9%
Web search	15	9%
College Tutor/Senior Tutor	14	8%
Returning student	12	7%
SUAS Publicity material	11	6%
University Disability Resource Centre	11	6%
University Counselling Service	9	5%
SUAS Publicity Event - Advice Pop-up /Freshers' Fair	7	4%
College JCR/MCR Officer	6	3%
College Chaplain/Nurse/Counsellor/Welfare Advisor	5	3%
Various Other	5	3%
CUSU/GU Bulletin	4	2%
Office for Student Complaints, Conduct & Appeals	4	2%
CUSU/GU Staff	3	2%
University Administrator	3	2%
College Tutorial Office	2	1%
Student Registry/Board of Graduate Studies	2	1%
GU Website	2	1%
University Website	1	1%
CUSU Electronic Display Boards	1	1%
College Website	1	1%
University International Student Office	1	1%
University Language Centre	1	1%
Total	173	100%

Table 1 – Breakdown of how students found out about the Advice Service where this information is known

SERVICE-USER STATUS

The Service works with users across a range of profiles (*Table 2*). Current students, non-standard student users (including past and prospective students, or intermitted students), and non-students (such as relatives or friends of students) may all access the Service. Advice was also provided to JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation Campaign Officers, Peer2Peer Supporters, and Sports Welfare Officers who may use the Service to discuss their specific role or any concerns they may have about a student in their community.

Relatives and friends of students made up 4% of service-users. As an independent service, the Advice Service is well placed to talk parents and friends through options available where the student themselves is hesitant to access support. College and University staff made up 3% of service-users. We also provided support to many individuals who were not eligible to access any of the other University service providers (these included intermitted students, students off the register, past students, and visiting students). Though we were glad to be able to support these individuals, this highlights a gap in the support available from the Collegiate University, and that the Advice Service may not always have the capacity to fill, thus potentially leaving these individuals isolated.

Client Status	Number	Percentage
Current student	332	70%
Past Student	31	7%
Intermitted student	29	6%
Off the register	7	1%
Visiting student	4	1%
Erasmus Student	2	-
Relative of a student	14	3%
Prospective Student	12	3%
College staff (Senior Tutor/Tutor/Nurse/ Tutorial Office)	10	2%
Other	10	2%
Unknown	7	1%
Offer holder	5	1%
University staff	5	1%
Friend of a student	4	1%
CUSU/GU Officer	2	-
Support Officer (JCR/MCR/Peer2Peer)	2	-
Total	476	100%

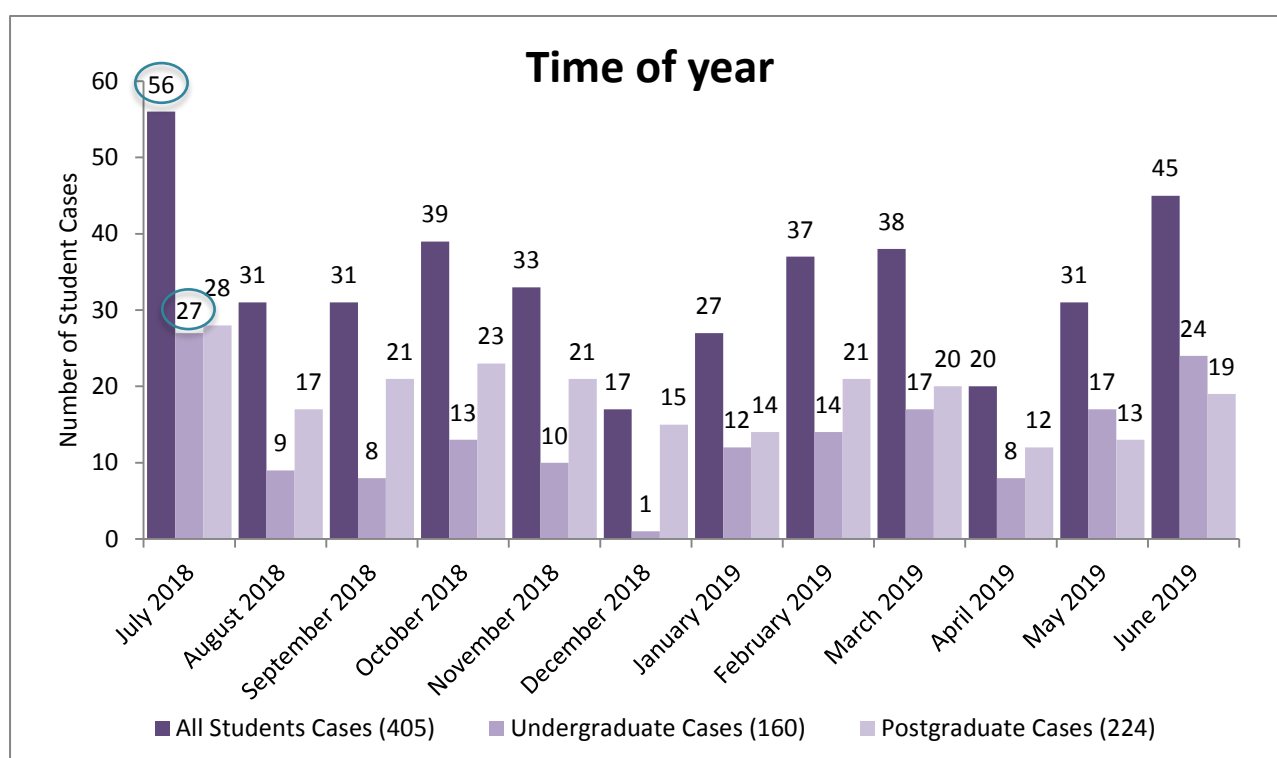
Table 2 – Service User Status

B. SERVICE-USER DEMOGRAPHICS

TIME OF YEAR

The Students' Unions' Advice Service is open throughout the year including outside of academic term time. *Graph 2* demonstrates what may be described as peaks and troughs throughout the year.

As in previous years, the Advice Service continued to be busy during the academic term-times but we have continued to see an increase in the number of students accessing the Service outside of term-time, the months of July 2018 and June 2019 were the busiest of the year. We supported an almost equal number of postgraduate and undergraduate students during the month of July 2018 enquiring about examination allowances, examination reviews, or advice on what options were available in light of their results. However, in every other month, a greater number of postgraduate students accessed the Service. Of these students, nearly 57% were PhD students with a variety of issues (as compared to 60% last year).



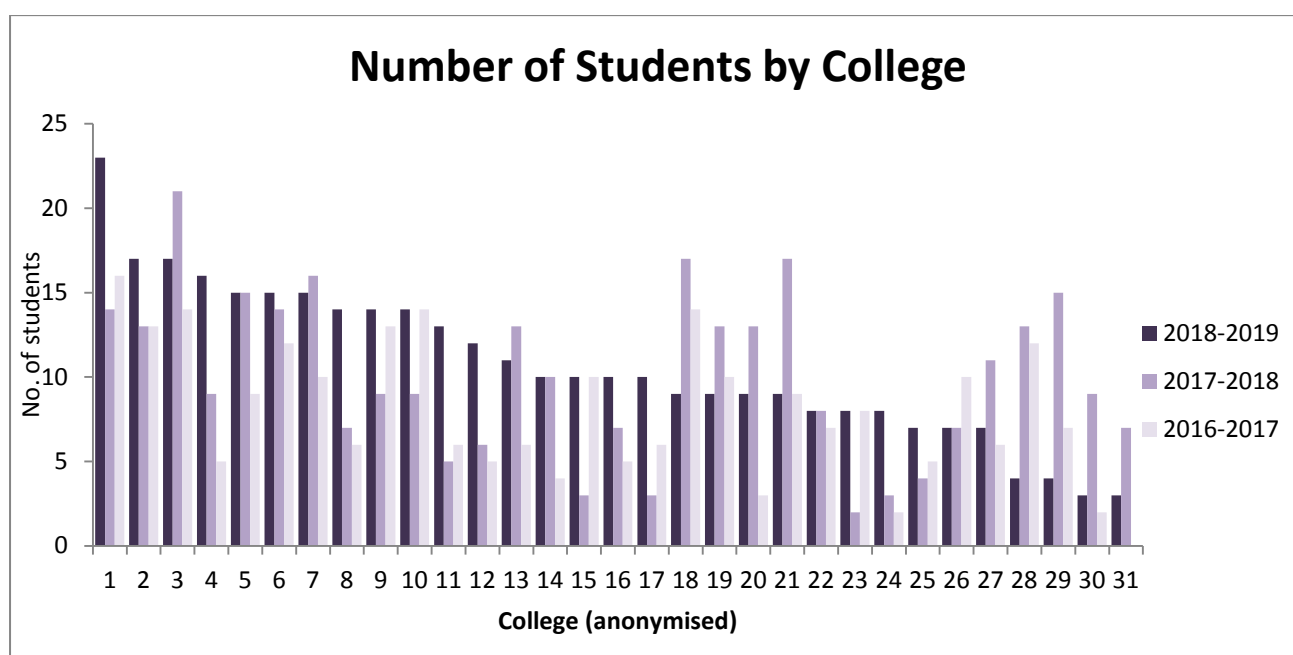
Graph 2 – Number of student cases by month of reporting year

COLLEGE

In the 2018-19, the Advice Service supported students from 31 Colleges (*Graph 3*). As with every year, the number of students accessing the Service from each College varies and does not necessarily seem to be linked to the size of the College or its proximity to the Advice Service.

Bearing in mind that 12% of service-users were signposted to the Advice Service by College staff such as tutors, senior tutors, nurses etc, there are clearly some colleges that are particularly strong at raising the awareness of their students of the services available to them. For the majority of colleges, we supported between 8 and 23 students. Two graduate/mature colleges featured in the top 3 colleges, and the top 10 colleges were a mix of old and new colleges with varying levels of resource.

The variability of students approaching the Service within a given year, as well as over several years, should not be taken as an indication of effectiveness or quality of support offered within different Colleges. It is important to note that CUSU and the Graduate Union consider it to be good practice for colleges to inform their students they can receive independent advice via the Advice Service.



Graph 3 – Number of students accessing SUAS by College (where college information is given)

GENDER

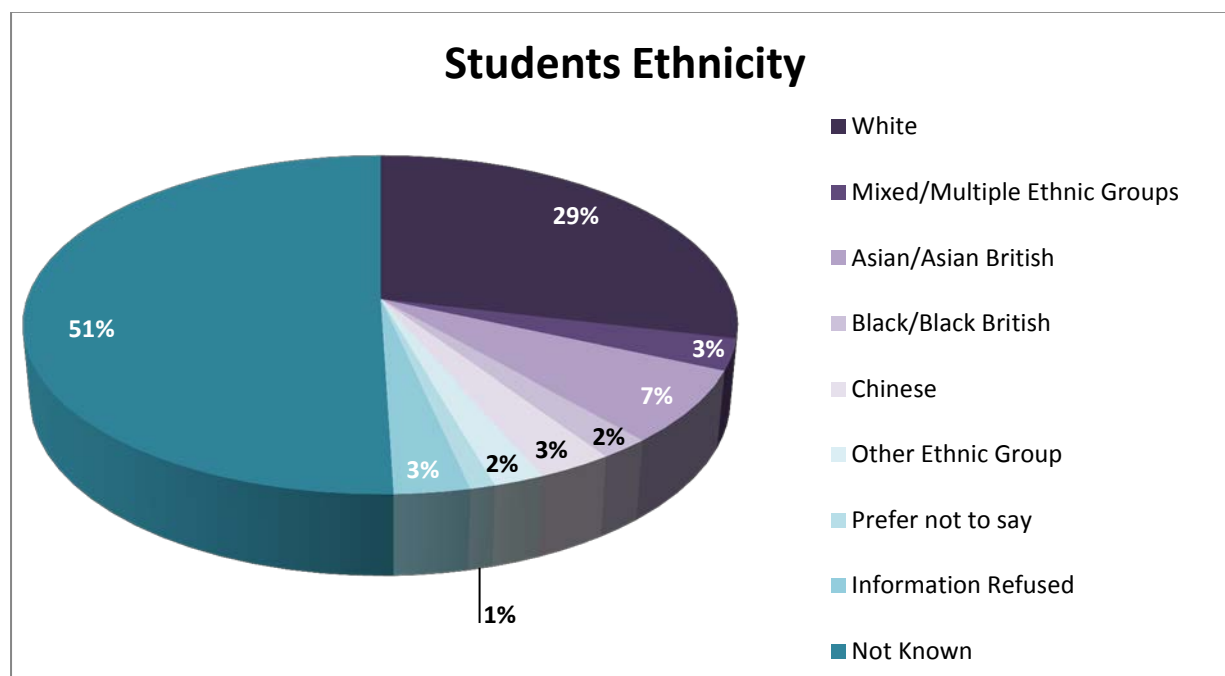
In 2018-19, we have gender data for just under half of the students who accessed the Service. The large number of students whose gender is undisclosed (187 for the 2018-19 cycle) arises from the fact that data is recorded based on how students declare their gender. If a monitoring form is not received, for example, or if the case is short-lived (such as some of those under the 'Information' category), or if communication with a service-user is entirely by e-mail, then a gender may not be registered. The Service does not assume a user's gender if it has not been explicitly declared.

Of the students who disclosed their gender, more of these were female students compared to male and other students. This is in-line with wider sector trends which signal lower engagement in pastoral and academic support services by male students, which in turn reflects social norms and expectations. 1% of our service-users identified their gender as "other".

All Students	Number	Percentage
Female	97	27%
Male	64	18%
Other	4	1%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
Undisclosed	187	53%
Total	354	100%

Table 3 – Students accessing the Service by gender

ETHNICITY



Graph 4 – Students by Ethnicity (n=354)

White students represented the largest group of students who accessed the Service (29%) followed by Chinese students (7%). Students from other ethnicities (including Chinese students) represented a combined 17% of service-users.

DISABILITY

Of the 354 students who accessed the Service this year, 54 disclosed a disability via the monitoring form (Table 4). This represents 15% of the students who accessed the Service. An additional 53 students (15%) who had not disclosed a disability on the form mentioned a condition and/or health issue to the Advisor that could be considered a disability under the Equality Act (Table 5). We can therefore conclude that as many as 107 students (30%) who accessed the Service may have had a disability. Bearing in mind that in 2018-19, 16% of Cambridge students disclosed a disability to the University (Disability Resource Centre, 2018), it is likely that the Advice Service has provided support to a disproportionately high number of disabled students, even if some of these students may not have official diagnoses.

All Students	Number	Percentage
Yes	54	15%
No	124	35%
Prefer not to say	12	3%
Unknown*	164	47%
Total	354	100%

Table 4 – Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

* For those where this information is unknown, it is because they did not complete a monitoring form either due to this form being optional or support was conducted via email or over the phone.

All Students	Number	Percentage
Students who disclosed a disability on monitoring form	54	15%
Students who did not disclose a disability on monitoring form but mentioned a disability to the Advisor during an appointment	53	15%
Students who did not disclose a disability or this information is unknown	247	70%
Total	354	100%

Table 5– Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

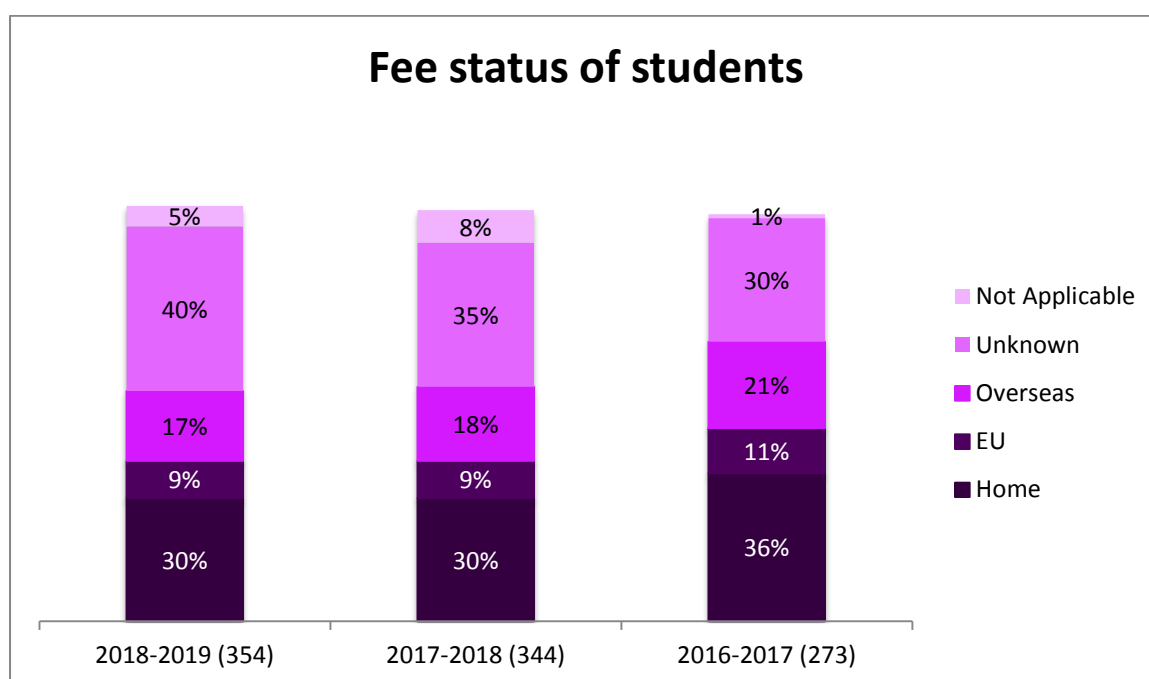
Despite there being a larger number of postgraduate students using the Service, more undergraduate students disclosed a disability (of the 15% of students who disclosed a disability, about 59% were undergraduate students and about 41% were postgraduate students). The percentage of students who disclosed a disability to the Advice Service decreased slightly as compared to 2017-18 when 17% of students disclosed a disability.

Of those students who disclosed a disability or health issue either on the form or to the Advisor, 50% indicated they had mental health issues, 16% indicated they had a specific learning difficulty, 12% indicated they had a long standing illness, and 4% indicated they had social/communication impairment such as AS/other autistic spectrum disorder. We cannot confirm whether all those who disclosed have been officially diagnosed.

FEE STATUS

In line with the increased number of students who accessed the Service in 2018-19, there was a corresponding increase in the number of Home, EU and Overseas students (*Graph 5*). The proportions have remained fairly stable as compared to previous years with Home students representing the largest proportion of students accessing the Service followed by Overseas and finally EU students.

In 2018-19, 13,095 Cambridge students were UK nationals (58%), and 9,598 were EU, EEA or overseas (42%). In the postgraduate student population, 62% of students were non-UK nationals (University of Cambridge, 2018). In the Advice Service, where this information is known, 32% of service-users were EU, EEA or overseas and the majority of these were postgraduate students who represent 59% of service-users.



Graph 5 – Fee status of students

STUDENT STATUS

The Service continues to support students across a wide range of degrees (*Table 6*). As with the last two years, for those students whose status is known, there was a greater number of postgraduate students who accessed the Service (197 postgraduates as compared to 136 undergraduates) which equates to a 59%/41% split (as compared to 56%/44% split last year) (*Table 7*). The category of 'postgraduate' encapsulates PhD students, MPhil, MFin, MBA, MRes, MSt, MEd, LLM and PGCE students. Within these sub-categories, usage of the Service varies. The proportions are similar to last year with the largest number of students coming from Tripos courses, followed by PhD students, followed by MPhil students and other postgraduate students. It is the combined figure for postgraduate students that exceeds the number of undergraduate students. With the increase in the number of students accessing the Service, most categories of students have grown proportionally except for undergraduate students where the proportion of students this year dropped slightly as compared to last year (from 41% to 38%).

Student Status	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	136	38%
PhD	113	32%
MPhil	55	16%
Other Masters Degrees	25	7%
PGCE	4	1%
Other	2	1%
Unknown	19	5%
Total	354	100%

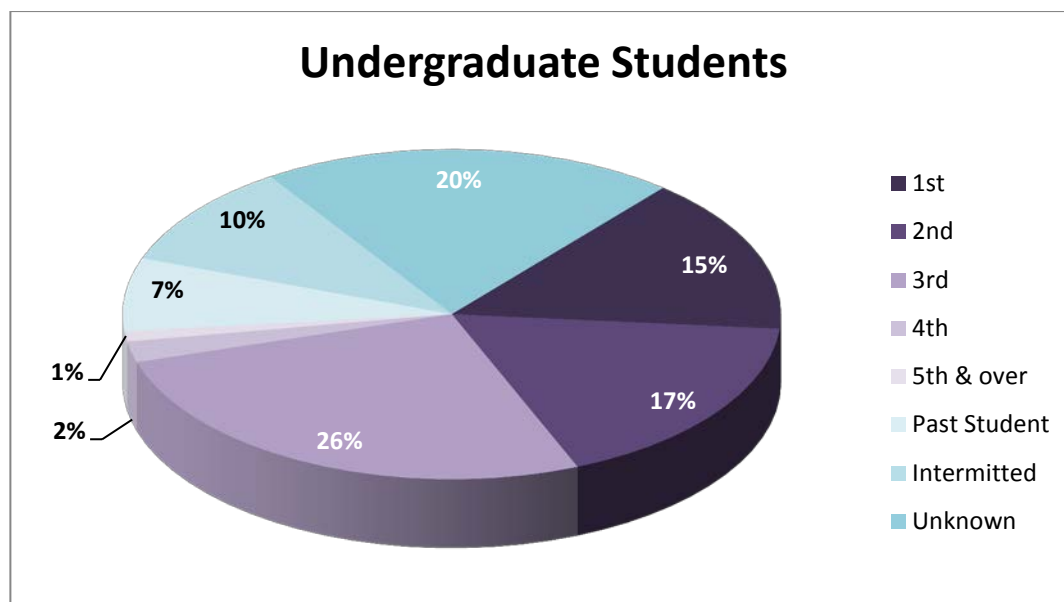
Table 6 – Student users by their student status

Student Status	Number	Percentage
Undergraduate	136	41%
Postgraduate (PhD, MPhil, Other Masters Degrees & PGCE)	197	59%
Total	333	100%

Table 7 – Student users by their student status where this information is known

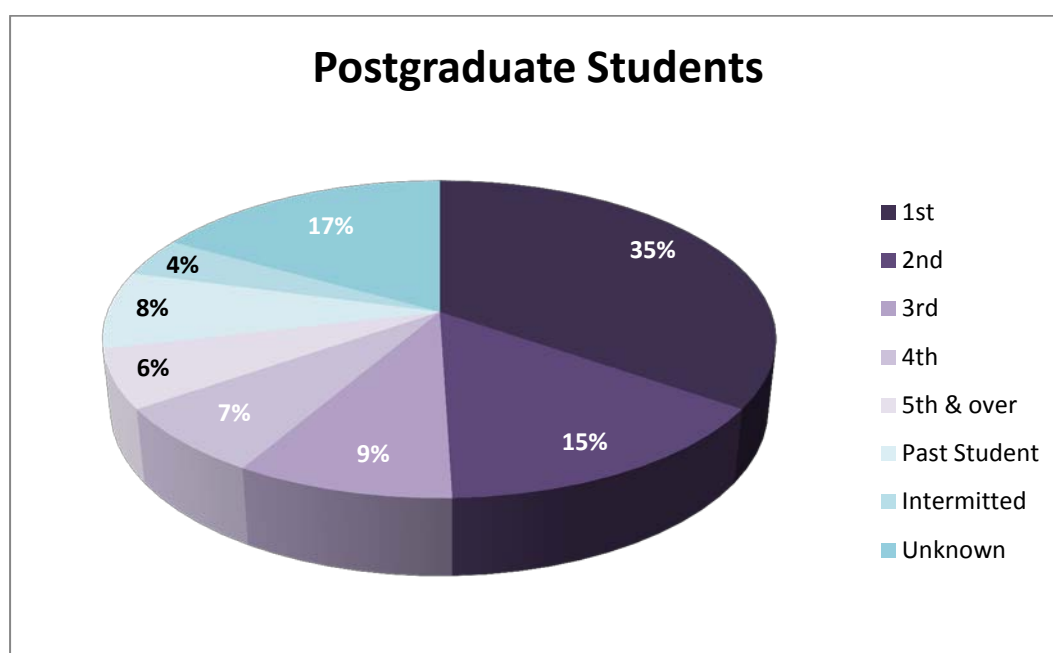
YEAR OF STUDY

This year the majority of undergraduate service-users were in their 3rd year of study (26%) as compared to last year when the majority were in their second year.



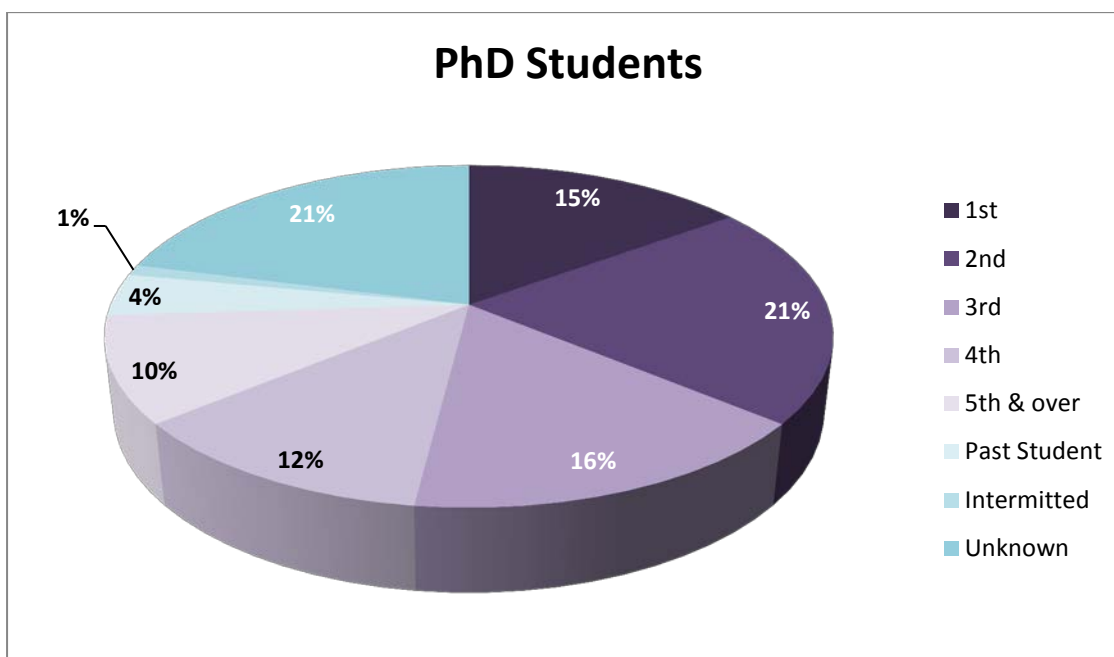
*Graph 6 – Undergraduate student users by year of study (n=136)
4 undergraduate student users were on an Extended Study Programme*

MPhil students accessed the Service during their first and only year of study and mainly sought advice on examination-related issues, financial issues, health and wellbeing, and intermission. Students on other Masters courses also sought advice mainly on these same issues.



Graph 7 – Postgraduate student users by year of study (n=197)

Among PhD students, those in their second year of study were most likely to approach the Service (21%), followed by an almost equal numbers of students from 1st year (15%) and 3rd year (16%). The main issues of concern for 2nd year PhD students were difficulties with their relationship with their supervisor, passing their PhD registration, and health and wellbeing issues, including mental health.



Graph 8 – PhD student users by year of study (n=113)

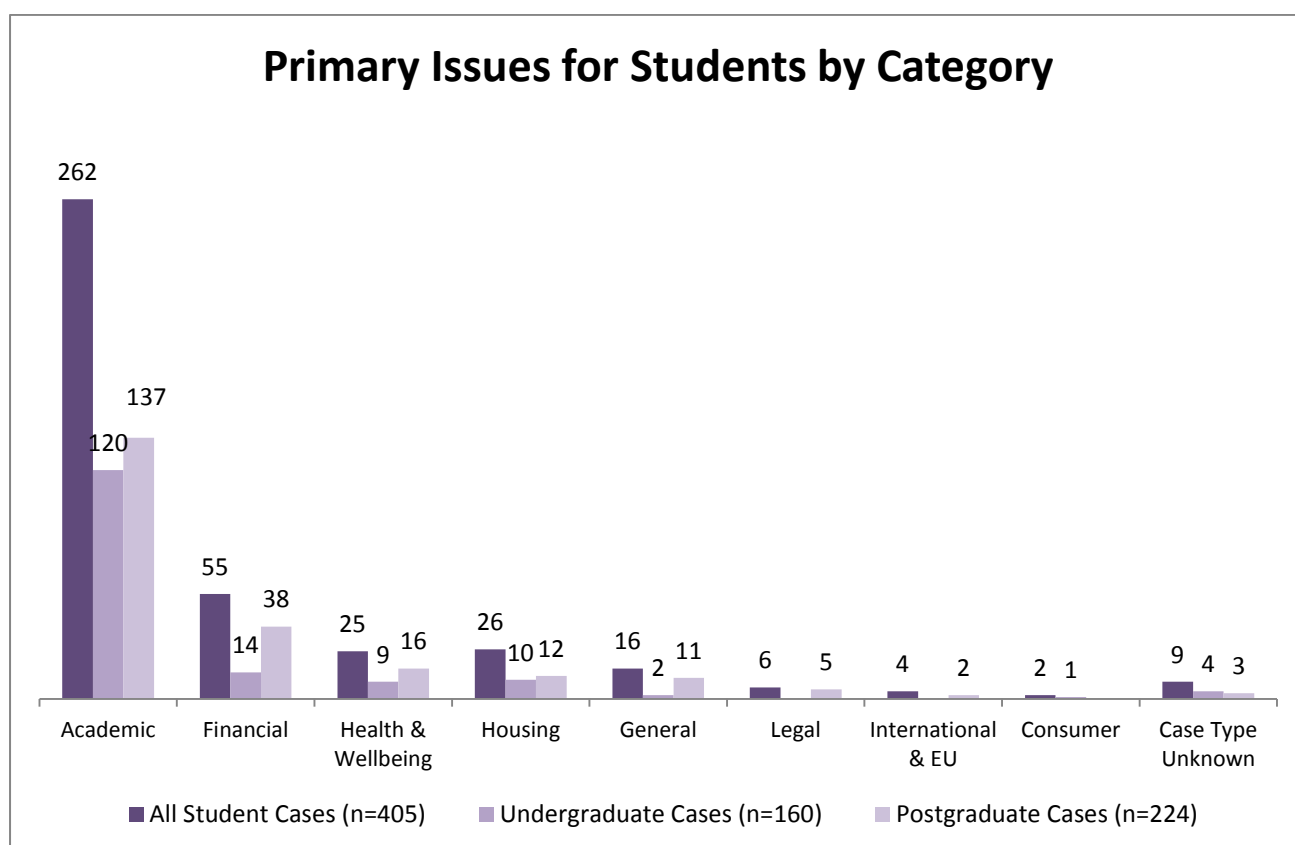
C. TYPES OF ISSUES

The Service has assisted students on a number of issues this year, ranging from exam concerns to financial difficulties to issues regarding student-supervisor relations. Students will often come to the Service for advice on a specific issue (e.g. exam failure); it may then transpire during the discussion with the Advisor that other issues are linked to the primary issue raised. For example, though few students access the Service specifically for advice on mental health, many students raise mental health as a factor contributing to the issue for which they require support.

PRIMARY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS BY CATEGORY

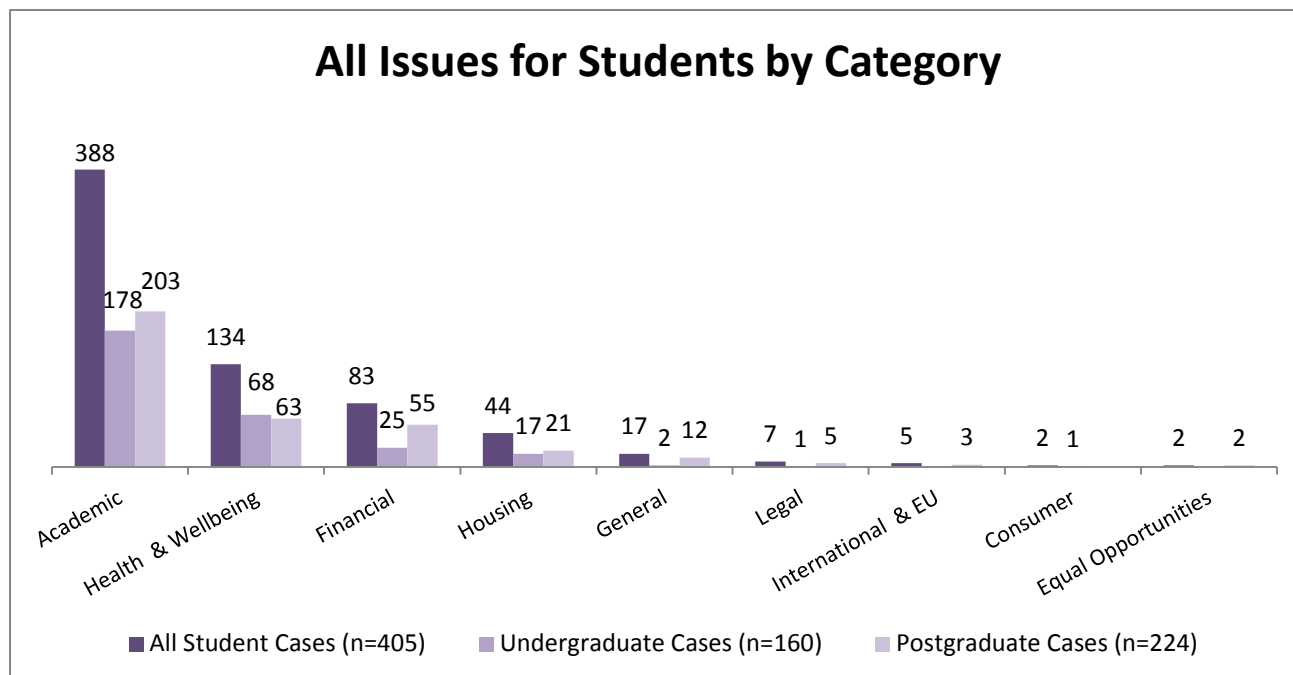
As such, when recording information about issues students have discussed with us, we record a primary issue followed by secondary issues. Issues are divided into categories. Below are the primary issues by issue category in order of importance (measured as the percentage of cases where students who accessed the Service experienced an issue in that particular area):

1. Academic (64%)
2. Financial (14%)
3. Health and Wellbeing (6%)
4. Housing (6%)
5. General (3%)
6. Legal (1%)
7. International & EU (1%)
8. Consumer (0.2%)
9. Case Type Unknown (2%)



Graph 9 - Primary issues for students during the 2018-2019 cycle

ALL ISSUES FOR STUDENTS BY CATEGORY



Graph 10 - All issues for students during the 2018-2019 cycle

1. Academic (96%)
2. Financial (33%)
3. Health and Wellbeing (20%)
4. Housing (11%)
5. General (5%)
6. Legal (2%)
7. International & EU (1%)
8. Consumer (0.4%)
9. Equal Opportunities (0.4%)

As compared to 'Primary Issues', these figures demonstrate that regardless of what students perceive to be the main issue for which they are seeking advice, there are almost always academic implications.

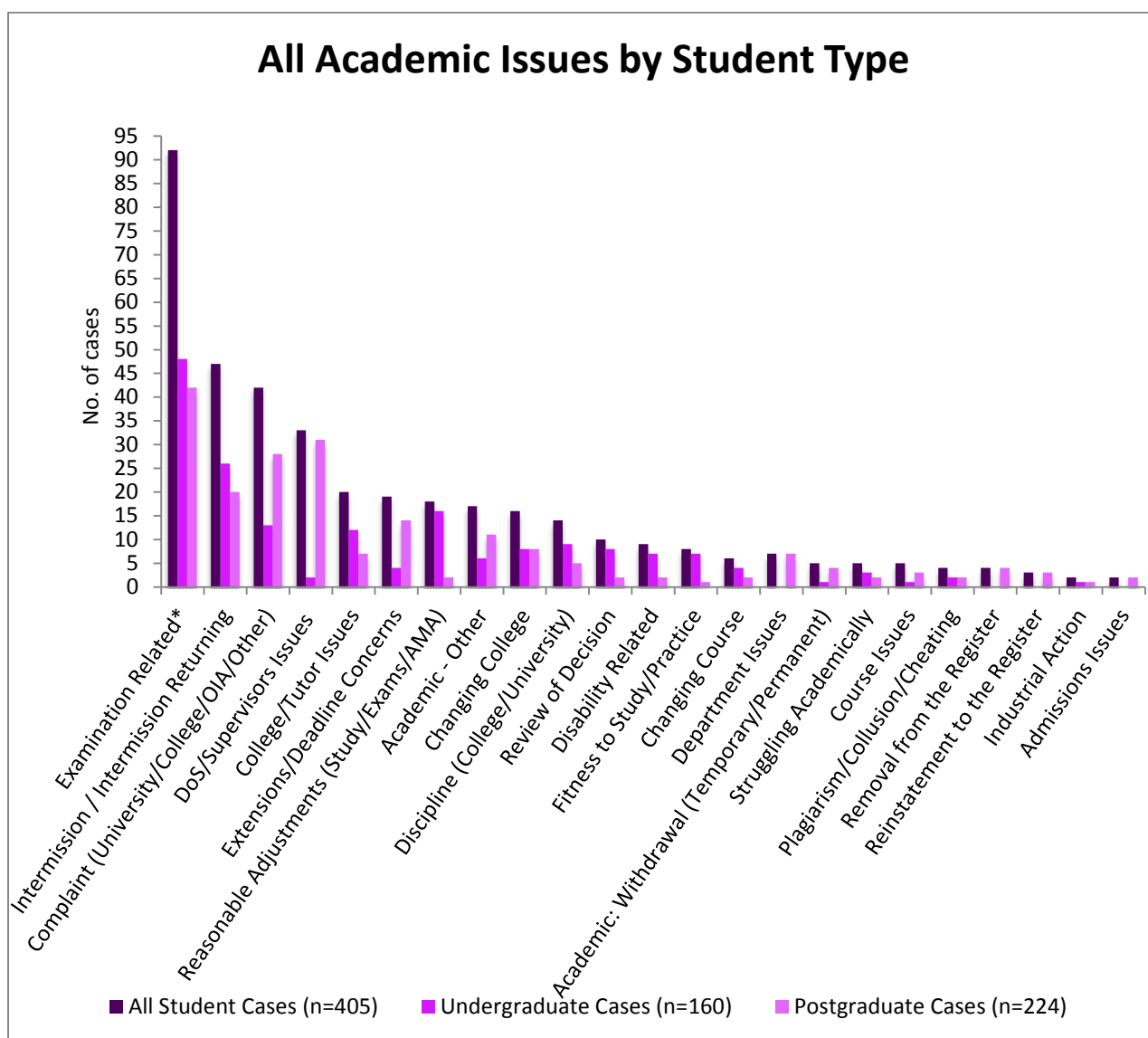
Mental Health Issues for both Undergraduates (n=30) and Postgraduates (n=26) were the biggest concerns within the Health & Wellbeing Category. Financial Hardship was the area of concern for both undergraduate students (n=5) and postgraduate students (n=14) who came to the service with Financial Issues.

ALL ACADEMIC ISSUES BY STUDENT TYPE

As 'Academic' is the main category of advice students requested support with, we have broken this category down into the most common issues recorded in this area during this period (measured as the percentage of cases where students who accessed the Service experienced that particular issue):

1. Examination-related (23% as compared to 28% last year)
2. Intermission/Intermission Returning (12% as compared to 13% last year)
3. Complaint University/College (10% as compared to 8% last year)
4. DoS/Supervisor Issues (8% as compared to 9% last year)
5. College/Tutor Issues (5% as compared to 6% last year)
6. Extensions/Deadline Concerns (5% as compared to 4%)
7. Reasonable Adjustments new entry (Study/Exams/AMA) (4%)
8. Academic – Other (4% as compared to 3% last year)
9. Changing College (4% as compared to 5%)
10. Discipline (College/University) new entry (3%)

As last year, 'Examination-related' issues were the biggest academic concerns across both undergraduate (n=48) and postgraduate students (n=42). The second biggest concern for undergraduate students was 'Intermission/Intermission Returning' (n=26), whilst for postgraduate students it was 'Supervisor Issues' (n=31). The third main area of advice for undergraduate students was 'Reasonable Adjustments' which is a new entry into the top 10 issues (n=16) followed closely by 'Complaint' (n= 13), and for postgraduate students, the third main issue was 'Complaint' (n=28) followed by 'Intermission' (n=20).



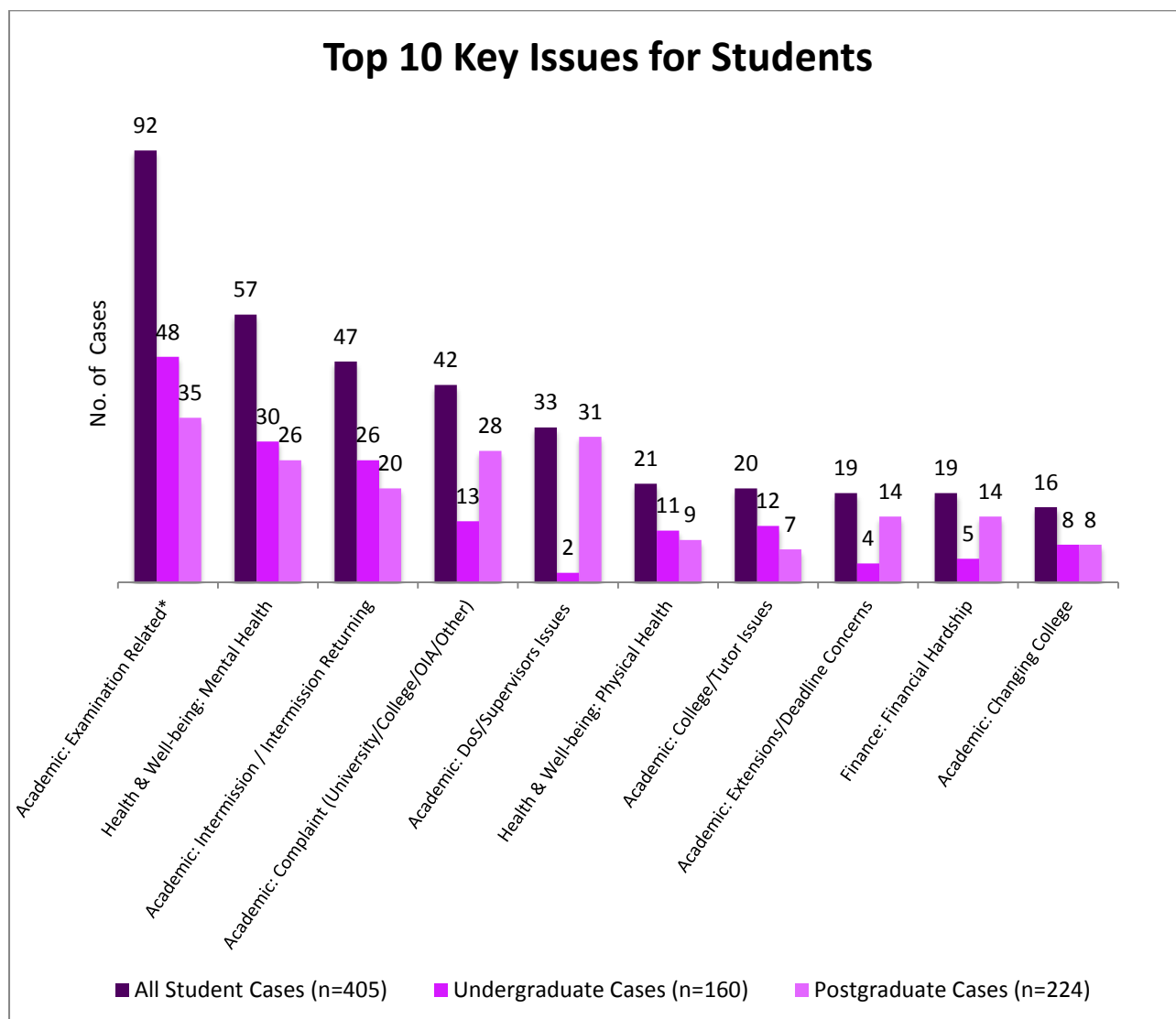
Graph 11 – All Academic Issues by Student Type

**Examination Related includes PhD Registration and Progression to Part III*

The number of issues will be more than the number of students, as the majority of students bring more than one issue to the service.

TOP 10 KEY ISSUES FOR STUDENTS

The number of issues raised will be higher than the number of students who accessed the Service as the majority of students raised more than one issue with the Service. For example, a student approaching the Service to discuss exam concerns may also seek advice on issues such as intermission or disability or academic support.



Graph 12 – Top 10 Key Issues by Student Type

**Examination Related includes PhD Registration and Progression to Part III*

The most frequently occurring issues this year are broadly similar to those encountered every year since 2013-14 with the exception of 'Finance-related' issues where there has been a drop of 11%, and 'Physical Health' which is a new entry in the top 10, replacing 'Course Issues':

1. Examination-related (23% of cases as compared 28% last year)
2. Mental Health (14% of cases as compared to 13% last year)
3. Intermision/Intermission Returning (12% of cases as compared to 13% last year)
4. Student Complaint (10% of cases as compared to 8% last year)
5. DoS/Supervisor Relations (8% of cases as compared to 9% of last year)
6. Physical Health (5% of cases)
7. College/Tutor Issues (5% of cases as compared to 6% last year)
8. Extensions/Deadline Concerns (5% of cases as compared to 4% last year)
9. Finance-related (5% of cases as compared to 16% last year)
10. Changing College (4% of cases as compared to 5% last year)

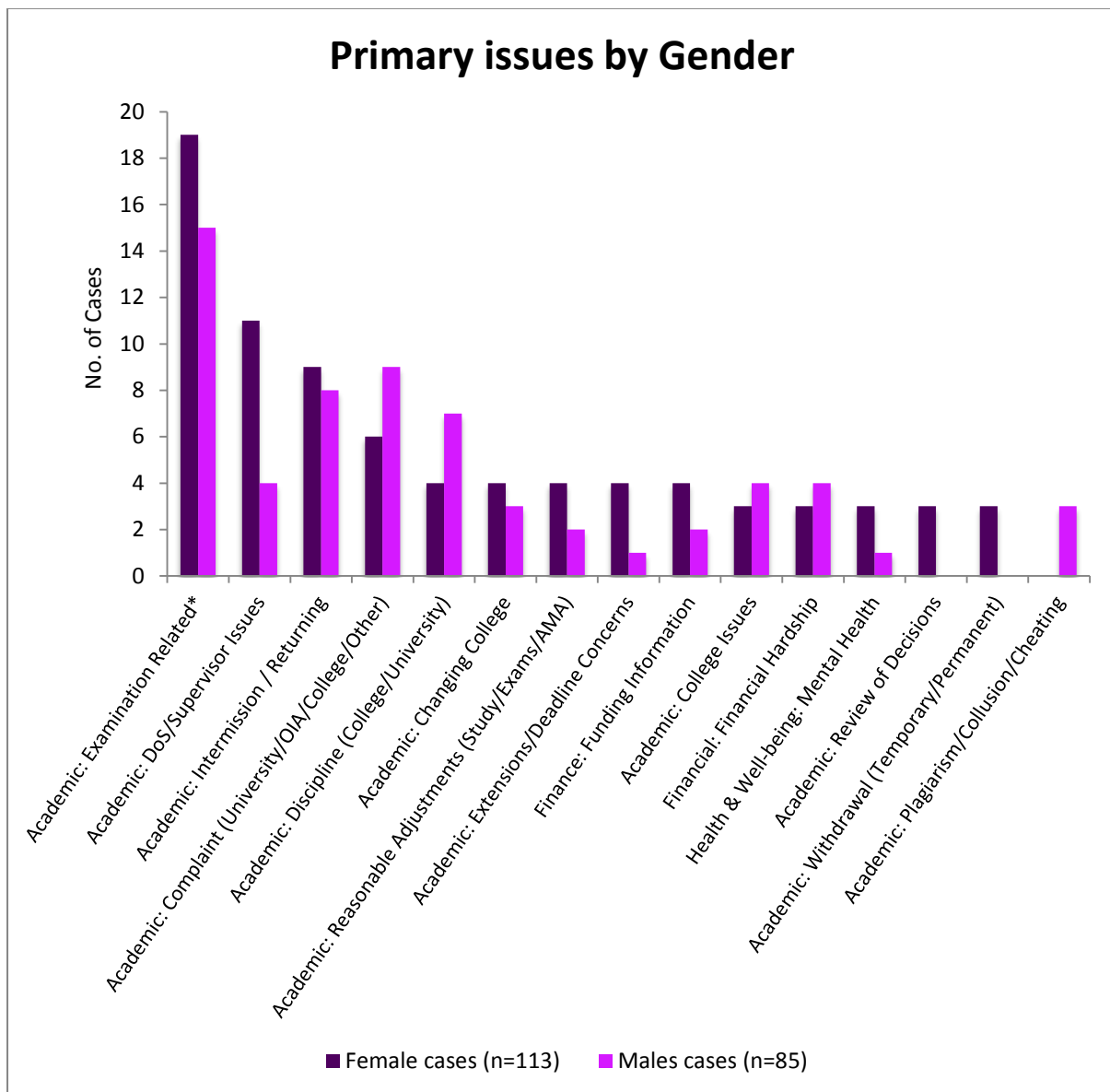
‘Mental Health Issues’ for both undergraduate students (n=30) and postgraduate students (n=26) was the largest area of advice within the ‘Health & Wellbeing’ category. It should be noted that though some students may be experiencing stress and anxiety, they may not declare these as mental health issues. For many students, resolving the matter they are experiencing such as difficult supervisor relations or financial issues can sometimes result in a considerable reduction in their stress and anxiety levels.

‘Financial Hardship’ was the main area of advice for postgraduate students (n=14) and undergraduate students (n=5) who came to the Service with financial issues.

PRIMARY ISSUES BY GENDER

As more female students accessed the Service than male and other students, we see a higher number of female students across several categories. However, there are areas where despite their smaller numbers, more male students have sought advice; areas of note are 'Discipline' where 64% of the cases related to male students and 'Complaint' where 60% of the cases related to men despite male students only making up 39% of service-users. Male students also seem to be disproportionately represented in the 'Examination-related', 'Intermission', 'College Issues', 'Financial Hardship', and 'Plagiarism/Collusion/Cheating' categories.

Female students appear to be disproportionately represented in the 'Supervisor Issues', 'Extensions', 'Mental Health', 'Review of Decisions', and 'Withdrawal' categories of advice.



Graph 13 –Primary Issues by Student Gender

*Examination Related includes PhD Registration and Progression to Part III

APPENDIX I – CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

A final year undergraduate student has an appointment with the Students' Unions' Advice Service. The student had intermitted the same year of their course twice and they were concerned that they might not be able to access any more financial support from the government to cover the tuition fee for their final year. They were told by the Student Loans Company (SLC) that they are no longer eligible for a student loan as the funds available to them have been exhausted. The student wanted to explore their options in terms of financial support available to them in order to be able to finish their degree. The student mentioned that they intermitted for medical reasons.

Role of the Advisor:

- Listen
- Ask additional questions to find out from the student what information they might have already gathered so far, for example any communication they might have had with their College, the Student Loans Company or any other University Offices
- With the student, look at the SLC policies which apply to the student's circumstances
- Where clarification on some of the policies is required, with the student's permission, contact SLC
- Communicate to the student the information provided by SLC and explore what options might be available and discuss possible new steps to take
- Discuss with the student whether the College is aware of their situation and how they might have supported the student so far. Explore potential options for funding from the College and how the student might approach College
- Ask the student if they need support in communicating with the College. Explain ways in which we can support the student (e.g. review draft emails to College, helping the to arrange a meeting with the College, helping to prepare ahead of a meeting or attending a meeting with the student)
- Explore with student other possible financial resources from the University
- Explain other ways in which the Students' Unions' Advice Service can help (e.g. reviewing documents, providing feedback, making enquiries to third parties with the student's express consent; carrying out further research if necessary)
- Discuss with student if they are receiving any support with their health issues and discuss potential sources of support e.g. GP, College Counsellor, University Counselling Service, College nurse, Psychological Wellbeing Service for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough etc.

CASE STUDY 2

A first-year PhD student made an appointment with the Students' Unions' Advice Service to discuss the impact of their supervisor relationship on their mental health and studies. The student described some experiences they have had which are causing them concern: the student was excluded by their supervisor from taking part in group activities involving other supervisees; in group supervisions, their supervisor has been vocal in belittling their work without providing constructive feedback, and most recently the student noticed their supervisor has stopped responding to their emails. The student is feeling isolated, depressed, bullied and unsupported by their supervisor. This is particularly concerning for them as they are due to take their first-year assessment in one month's time. The student is concerned the behaviours they have been experiencing are somehow their fault and they have no evidence to support what they have experienced. The student wants to know what their options are:

Role of the Advisor:

- Listen
- Discuss with the student if they have raised their concerns with anyone else within the department or their College. If not, suggest individuals the student could speak to e.g. Graduate Tutor or Director of Graduate Studies
- The student indicated feelings of isolation and depression, discuss with the student if they have sought support for these feelings. If relevant, signpost the student to sources of support e.g. University Counselling Service, GP or College Nurse
- Discuss with the student what outcome they would ideally want to achieve e.g. change of supervisor, re-engagement with current supervisor, raise a complaint, mediation, complete their studies
- Depending on the outcome the student is hoping for, discuss with the student the relevant procedures for their situation
- Assist the student in preparing their application form and statement for whichever procedure(s) they choose to pursue
- Discuss with the student options they could consider if they were to fail their first-year assessment

APPENDIX II – ISSUE SPOTLIGHTS BY ELECTED OFFICERS

One of the advantages of having elected sabbatical officers strongly engaged with the Advice Service is that, by meeting regularly with Advisors, the officers gain knowledge of the issues that affect students who seek support from the Advice Service.

Though the Advice Service is an impartial service that does not make value judgements, CUSU and the Graduate Union Officers can use the knowledge they've gained working with the Advice Service to inform their campaigns, activities and committee work.

The following spotlights represent some of the issues where officers have been able to use the knowledge they've gained working with the Advice Service to inform the work they have undertaken in their capacity as elected student representatives.

A. SPOTLIGHT ON... REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS BY EMRYS TRAVIS (DISABLED STUDENTS' OFFICER 2018-19)

CUSU's research this year, especially the 'Substantial Disadvantage' report into academic reasonable adjustments, showed that disabled students too often fail to get the academic support they are entitled to. The University has a statutory duty to make adjustments to enable disabled students to engage in study on an equal footing with non-disabled students, but we have heard anecdotally for many years that students often have to fight an uphill battle to get these adjustments implemented. This year we have built a base of data that will be able to inform improvements in academic provision for disabled students for years to come, and which has already resulted in multiple successes, including the institution of an Academic Reasonable Adjustments Working Group at University level, as well as the initiation of a project to overhaul the Student Support Document system.

SUAS is invaluable in supporting disabled students, demonstrated by an estimated 30% of service users being disabled, in contrast to around 16% of the student population as a whole. I have signposted a large number of students to SUAS this year, many of these on academic issues, and in turn the work SUAS has done with disabled students this year has helped to inform how CUSU and the DSC (Disabled Students' Campaign) work on issues like reasonable adjustments, as well as on AMAs ('alternative modes of assessment'), in particular Extension to Period of Study. These are issues that the incoming DSO and DSC committee will be continuing to campaign on into the next academic year, and collaboration with SUAS will continue to be invaluable in this work!

B. SPOTLIGHT ON...HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION BY MATT KITE (CUSU EDUCATION OFFICER 2018-19)

One of the top areas students come to the Advice Service looking for support with is housing. The students' unions have had a joint focus on student housing over the last year, looking at the different ways in which the variability of quality, availability and affordability of college accommodation affect all students, in addition the many difficulties surrounding private housing in Cambridge, which primarily affects postgraduate students. CUSU and the GU have worked to support housing campaigns in colleges for both undergraduates and postgraduates by providing data about accommodations rates and terms in addition to student opinion through the Big Cambridge Survey, an annual survey open to all students. In addition to this, CUSU collects data from college Common Rooms via the College Review, which is made available to students campaigning for change.

We have also worked on accommodation at an intercollegiate level, working with college representatives to ensure that funding from the Student Support Initiative both takes variation in living costs into account when supporting students and helps to level the inequality of provision and facilities via the Harding Collegiate Cambridge Challenge Fund.

CUSU and the GU have collaborated on new work this year supporting campaigns on housing for postgraduates, in particularly working with the GU Vice-President on the Graduate Housing Toolkit. We look forward in future years to further expanding the groups we work with on housing, including support for private renters, and further work with the University Accommodation Service, in addition to beginning work on specific issues faced by international students around remaining in Cambridge over the vacation and storage.