

Academic Skills Survey Report.

## **BASIC RESULTS**

The survey was administered between the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017. There were 46 respondents who completed all 6 questions.

Question 1 was regarding where the respondents came from. 36 respondents were from the UK, 5 from the EU or Europe, and 5 from elsewhere in the world. This corresponds to university data that suggests that x number of students are from the EU and y number of students are international.

39, or 85% of respondents told me that their first language was English.

43 students, or 93%, said that they completely understood the university's statement defining plagiarism. 3 students, or 7%, said they mostly understood it. This means that nobody said they understood some, little or none of the statement – which is great!

When students were asked to evaluate the statement "I have received enough support with my academic skills at university," the following statistics were found:

13% said they strongly agreed

67% said they agreed

11% said they neither agreed nor disagreed

4% disagreed

0% strongly disagreed

4% said they didn't think they needed support.

## **WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT VS WHAT IS USED?**

Questions 4 and 5 were about the services the university offers to assist with academic skills and their usage. 89.1% of the respondents knew about the Study Skills Plus workshops, though only 67.4% knew of the one-to-one sessions, and only 56.5% knew of the online services. 84.7% of respondents knew about the library's referencing guide, but only 58.7% were aware that each course or subject area had an associated librarian. 10.8% of people listed knowing of academic support from another source, and 1 person (2.1%) said they were unaware of any of the aforementioned services.

These numbers differ from what students were actually using, as shown in the table below:

Service	Percentage of students who know about service (no of students)	Percentage of students using service (no of students)
STUDY SKILLS+ WORKSHOP	89.10% (41)	21.71% (10)
STUDY SKILLS+ ONE-TO-ONE	67.39% (31)	8.69% (4)
STUDY SKILLS+ ONLINE	56.52% (26)	23.91% (11)
LIBRARY REFERENCING GUIDE	84.78% (39)	73.91% (34)
COURSE LIBRARIAN	58.70% (27)	28.26% (13)
OTHER	10.87% (5)	6.52% (3)
NONE	2.17% (1)	19.57% (9)

As the table lays out, it is clear that there are significant differences between what students know about and what they actually use. No one resource is used as often as it is known about (obviously we exclude the 'none' option from this).

It's pleasing to see that most students who know of the library referencing guide have made use of it in their essays. It may be the case that the students who know of it but haven't used it had not needed to write an essay at the point of taking the survey, however cannot say this for sure.

#### **WHY ARE SO MANY NOT USING ANYTHING?**

What is perhaps most alarming is the number of students saying they hadn't used *any* resources. Almost 1/5 of the participants said they used none of the resources listed. This would be understandable if the same number said they'd heard of none of the resources. However, 8 out of the 9 students had heard of at least one of the resources. This begs the question: why are they not using them?

Interestingly, when we look at the other characteristics of the students who haven't used any of the services, we find the following info:

- Only 3 (33%) of the students knew about the library referencing guide, compared to 85% of students overall
- The best known service amongst these students was the Study Skills+ workshops, with 55% (5) recognition of the service. However it is worth noting that this is well below the 89% of students overall who recognised this service.
- None of these students strongly agreed that the university had supported their academic skills (7 agree – 77%, better than the average – 1 neither agree nor disagree - 11%, average – and 1 disagree – 11%, worse than average)
- No students recognised all of the services compared to 30.4% of all respondents who recognised all 5 of the main services listed (we discounted 'other' for these purposes).
- 7 of these students were both from the UK and had English as a first language; one of them was not from the UK and another did not have English as a first language.
- They all claimed to completely understand the university's definition of plagiarism.

Based on the above data, I think it is fair to say that there is a not-insignificant minority of students who have not been reached by the university advertising its services.

I see a number of possibilities to explain the unusual results found surrounding the referencing guide and the plagiarism statement.

1. The students are all extremely competent, and don't need to be aware of or use the referencing guide as they believe they know how to do it already.

2. The students are on a course where they don't ever write essays or need to reference for other reasons, and therefore have no need for a referencing guide or need to know that it exists.
3. The students were wrong about understanding plagiarism, and have not been referencing correctly through not using the guide.

There may be other options that I have not considered, and I make no attempt to suggest which of the above may be the most correct.

### WHAT ABOUT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?

22%, or 10, of the respondents were from places other than the UK.

- 9/10 of the respondents said they understood the plagiarism definition entirely. The remaining respondent mostly understood.
- 7/10 of the respondents agreed that the university had supported their academic skills. 1 person strongly agreed, 1 neither agreed nor disagreed, and the final person didn't believe they needed support.
- Study Skills+ workshops were known about by 9/10 of these participants
- The referencing guide was known about by **all** of the participants
- The least known named resource was the Study Skills+ Online resources, with 50% of the respondents saying they were aware of that resource. However given the sample size of this group, this would be an expected percentage.
- 8/10 of the students have used the library referencing guide.
- The group had a higher incidence of using the Study Skills+ One to One sessions – 3/10 of the respondents have used this resource.

It's really positive to see that the library guide is so well known about in this demographic, and equally positive to see that Study Skills+ One to One sessions are being used.

### PEOPLE WHO DON'T AGREE THEY'VE HAD HELP

Seven respondents said either that they neither agreed nor disagreed, or disagreed with the statement that the university had supported their academic skills.

- Most (6/7) of the people who were not positive that the university had supported their academic skills (ie people who chose disagree or neither agree nor disagree) were from the UK.
- 2 of the respondents (including the non-UK respondent) had a language other than English as a first language.
- 3 of the students had used only one of the resources offered to them (2 incidences of the library guide, one instance of 'other')
- 2 students had used **none** of the services offered to them. One of these students claimed not to know about any of the 5 named resources.
- 1 student identified and has used all 5 resources. The remaining student used two resources.
- All respondents except one said they knew about at least 2 of the resources on offer.

It is fair (perhaps even obvious) to say that there is a link between using the resources offered and feeling supported. There is no real way to examine why people don't use the resources on offer

(especially when they do know about the help available) using this data, however further investigation could focus on the following:

1. Are there barriers to accessing resources (eg mental health issues such as anxiety, or fear that it might get back to module leaders or personal tutors)?
2. Do students think they are okay without it?
3. Do students want help to be brought to them rather than accessing it themselves?

#### **OTHER INTERESTING RELATIONS:**

- Of students who had a first language other than English, 71% agreed that the university had supported their academic skills. The remainder neither agreed nor disagreed.
- Of the 6 people who said their academic skills were strongly supported, 5 of them were from the UK with English as a first language, and the other person was from outside the EU with English as a first language.
- 50% of people who said they were strongly supported knew about all 5 named services. One person said they knew of 4 services and the others knew of 3.
- Of the 43 people who said they understood the plagiarism statement entirely, 31 of them (or 72%) had used the library guide to referencing

#### **Recommendations/Final Thoughts**

- Further research is necessary, particularly to see if there are differences emerging from different demographics of students
- There is a not-insignificant number of students claiming to understand the plagiarism statement entirely who have not made use of the library referencing guide (28% of the 43 respondents). This is potentially contradictory given that our referencing styles are slightly altered from most, and the importance of using the guide should be reiterated to all students, lest they accidentally plagiarise/commit poor academic practice.
- There is a small pocket of students who don't know about and don't use any of the services offered to them. This is a particularly alarming subset however it will be very difficult to reach these students.
- Encourage students who use one service to use others – for example if a student speaks to a subject librarian, perhaps encourage librarians to talk about the referencing guide etc.