

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

'Pound in Your Pocket'

9/5/2015



Executive Summary

The University of Lincoln Students' Union has conducted its own Pound in Your Pocket (£IYP) survey, following the NUS Pound in Your pocket survey which highlighted a significant number of issues in the sector in terms of a students' financial well-being. The University of Lincoln Students' Union's Pound in Your Pocket research was undertaken in November 2014, with a total of 1260 participants responding to the survey.

The University of Lincoln £IYP report found:

Expenditure

- 44% of students budget on a weekly/monthly basis
- 51% of students spend between £20-39 on their groceries per week
- 62% of students spend £0-19 on social activities per week
- 83% of students spend between £0-19 on travel
- 32 % of students who are part of a sports club often spend less than £10 on their sport after their membership costs, but 30% are spending more than £100
- 39% of students who are part of a society often spend less than £10 on their sport after their membership costs, but 6% are spending more than £100
- For students with children, there was a variance in childcare costs but 14% were spending more than £100
- Accommodation is costing students around £404-600 per month

Hidden costs

- Students felt that there were hidden course costs which were not communicated to them in advance. These costs were on a variety of items, and students were spending varying amounts, however 35% of students spend more than £100 on additional course costs in 2013/2014

Financial Support

- Some students (22%) have considered leaving their course as a result of financial concerns
- Students use various services for financial support, but the majority of students have not used the financial support services on campus

This report includes a number of recommendations to support students to budget effectively, as well as recommendations to support the reduction in costs for students. It also highlights the need for increased financial support for students on campus.

Summary of recommendations:

For the University:

For the University: To make financial information for PG students more accessible prior to starting University (page 12)

For the University: To provide more information on Hardship Funds for PG Students & more support in accessing these funds, possibly using students' peers as a form of support (page 13)

For the University: To make course costs more visible to all students prior to enrolment to ensure that students are able to budget more effectively by sending information on course costs to students in enrolment packs (page 12)

For the University: To ensure the availability of affordable accommodation, thus ensuring that there is fair access and that students from lower income backgrounds are not excluded from a residential experience of higher education (page 26)

For the University: To increase the levels of online resources for studying/assignments (page 29)

For the University: To consider personalising reminders for book returns to increase the likelihood of on-time book returns (page 29)

For the University: To improve their promotion of their support services and how to access these services (page 37)

For the Students' Union:

For the Students' Union: To provide information/advice on the SU website around budgeting & ways to help students to save money (page 12)

For the Students' Union: To provide guidance to students on budgeting prior to them starting University (page 12)

For the Students' Union: To promote to students that buying food in bulk rather than buying small amounts of food every day is more cost effective (page 15)

For the Students Union: To promote the cost effectiveness of cooking as a group rather than individually (page 15)

For the Students' Union: To provide cookery workshops for students (page 15)

For the Students' Union: To provide cheap food on campus (page 15)

For the Students' Union: To investigate current social provision for Post-Graduate students to ensure that it is appropriate both financially and socially appropriate (page 18)

For the Students' Union: To identify which groups post-graduate students' socialise with (page 18)

For the Students' Union: To identify what activities/events should be put on for post-graduate students (page 18)

For the Students' Union: To research whether the University of Lincoln covers the costs of travelling to placements for students (page 20)

For the Students' Union: To provide further support with fundraising events for societies to help them improve their self-raised funds (page 16)

For the Students' Union: To help societies set targets for fundraising and plans to reach their financial goals (page 16)

For the Students' Union: To support societies with the development fund application process (page 16)

For the Students' Union: To support the process in negotiating deals/loans for expensive specialist equipment (page 16)

For the Students' Union: To remove the minimum membership fee (page 16)

For the Students' Union: To work with university to consider ways to lower child care costs (page 24)

For the Students' Union Advice Centre: To support students with applications for national child care grants or University hardship funds (page 24)

For the Students' Union: To work with private housing companies to encourage publicity of clear and transparent costs of student accommodation in advance of them making decisions about what to rent (page 26)

For the Students' Union: To promote and offer support to students around the time of letting (page 26)

For the Students' Union: To conduct further research into which courses have high levels of additional hidden costs (page 29)

For the Students Union: To consider a cheaper SU dissertation binding service (page 29)

For the Students' Union: To research the reasons for the number of book fines and to work with the library to consider extended loan times over holidays (page 29)

For the Students' Union: To research the accessibility of hardship funds for field trips (page 29)

For the Students' Union: To research what Art & design materials the University could provide (page 29)

For the Students' Union Advice Centre: To provide information on where students can get financial support (page 34)

For the Students' Union Advice Centre: To provide advice on the interest levels on an overdraft facility and warn students against getting deeply into their overdraft (page 34)

For the Students' Union: To warn students against using pay day lenders (page 34)

For the Students' Union: To provide advice to students on their work-life balance and staying healthy (page 34)

For the Students' Union: To promote all the services of the new SU Advice centre (page 34)

For the Partnership between the University and Students' Union

For the Students' Union and University: To provide workshops on budgeting for all students (page 12)

For the University Sustainability department & the Students Union: To consider the creation of a car share forum (page 20)

For the University and Students' Union: To improve the publicity of the child care vouchers (page 24)

For the Students' Union and University: To increase promotion of the student finance maintenance grant for living costs if students need additional funds for housing, as well as bursaries for Masters courses (page 26)

For the University and Students' Union: To consider ways of providing free or cheap stationary for students (page 29)

For the University and Students' Union: To better promote hardship funds which could help students to not reach a point where they feel they need to leave their studies (page 34)

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Introduction

Between December 2011 and February 2013, the National Union of Students' (NUS) undertook an online survey of English Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) students to better understand students' experience of financial support and the extent to which financial considerations affect their well-being. This survey was entitled the 'Pound in Your Pocket' survey and has highlighted a significant number of issues for the sector in terms of the financial well-being of students, including the complexity of navigating support structures for this purpose.

The results of the NUS 'Pound in Your Pocket' survey concluded that many students are struggling to make ends meet, concentrate on their studies and stay the course, because financial support is systemically inadequate across both further and higher education. This was illustrated by a number of leading findings from the research, including:

1. Many students are struggling to make ends meet, concentrate on their studies and stay the course, because financial support is systemically inadequate across both further and higher education
2. There are clear associations between financial support policy and practice, student wellbeing, socio-economic background and retention.
3. Course related costs are prevalent, expensive, and often concealed; there is a clear association between high course costs and low wellbeing.
4. High levels of accommodation and transport costs are associated with reduced wellbeing

In November 2014, the University of Lincoln Students' Union undertook its own version of the Pound in Your Pocket Survey, with the aim of identifying whether students in Lincoln face the same issues which have been identified by the national research, and to identify whether there are local solutions to the issues that are identified.

The research was undertaken by the Students' Union undertook 'Hidden Course Costs' research, so the findings from the Hidden Course Costs research has helped to inform some of the recommendations proposed in this report.

This report aims to assess how students budget the maintenance loans they receive from Student Finance; examine which are the high areas of expenditure for students; identify the extent of hidden course costs; and research students' awareness of financial support mechanisms provided by the University. The report makes a number of recommendations for the University and Students' Union, to help them provide improved financial support for students at the University of Lincoln as well as methods of reducing unnecessary costs for students.

Methodology

The University of Lincoln Students' Union 'Pound in Your Pocket' Survey was requested by the Students' Union President in October 2014. The survey covered a range of themes, which broadly reflected the themes in the NUS 'Pound in Your Pocket' questionnaire. The overall themes centred on budgeting, spending, course costs and financial support.

The survey questionnaire consisted of a core set of 15 questions, with additional questions dependent on responses given to preceding question(s). The questionnaire was comprised of 14 multiple choice questions, with closed and multiple response options; and one free text question in which respondents were asked to state the cost of their accommodation. On five of the multiple choice questions, if respondents felt their answer did not align with any of the categories provided, they were offered the option of selecting 'other', and given the opportunity to state their preferred answer in a free text box. Where questions asked participants to respond to a statement with their strength of agreement (such as *'I work out my spending by setting a weekly/monthly budget'*), responses were given on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

A total of 1260 participants completed the survey online, which they accessed by logging into the Students' Union website using their university student ID. This process enabled us to reduce the question set, as the Students' Union website holds data sets for each student, including their gender, age, course, level and year of study, and whether they take part in sports or society activities. The online method also provided a level of perceived anonymity that would encourage participation in the survey, as it examines some sensitive financial issues.

The campaign was promoted by way of posters around the campus and along busy thoroughfares, as well as business cards which were distributed to students when Sabbatical Officers and part-time student Operational Support Staff (OSS) engaged with students to prompt them to complete the survey. As well as physical promotional materials, graphics were designed for use on the Students' Union website and Social Media channels, and a newsletter, which on three separate occasions promoted the survey, was emailed to all students.

Paper versions of the survey were used by Officers and OSS, alongside the use of tablets whilst engaging with members out and about on campus. The data from the paper versions of the survey was inputted into the database by OSS staff. Officers also spent time in the evenings door-knocking within the on-campus Student Village to boost the number of respondents, whilst ensuring that first-year students were engaging with their elected representatives within the Students' Union.

The raw data was analysed by Students' Union Staff who totalled the number of participants who responded in a particular way, and then converted this into a percentage of the total number of participants who had responded to that question. In additional questions which depended on responses to preceding questions, the percentages were calculated as a percentage of the participants who responded affirmatively to the previous question rather than the overall number of participants.

This campaign followed an academic investigation, led by the Vice-President Academic Affairs, into "Hidden Course Costs", specifically within the College of Arts.

The resulting responses were analysed and present in graphs for dissemination. This analysis can be found in Appendix 1.

Budgeting

How a student budgets and their levels of expenditure in various areas were two important factors to consider when undertaking the research for this report, as opposed to just considering the amount of student loan an individual student receives, as this has an influence on both understanding where the main costs for students lie, and thus how we can make things better for students.

To research how students manage their finances and budget, we asked students how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement 'I work out my spending by setting a weekly or monthly budget'.

Results showed that out of the 1260 respondents who completed the online survey, 67% of all students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement whereas 25% disagreed and only 8% strongly disagreed.

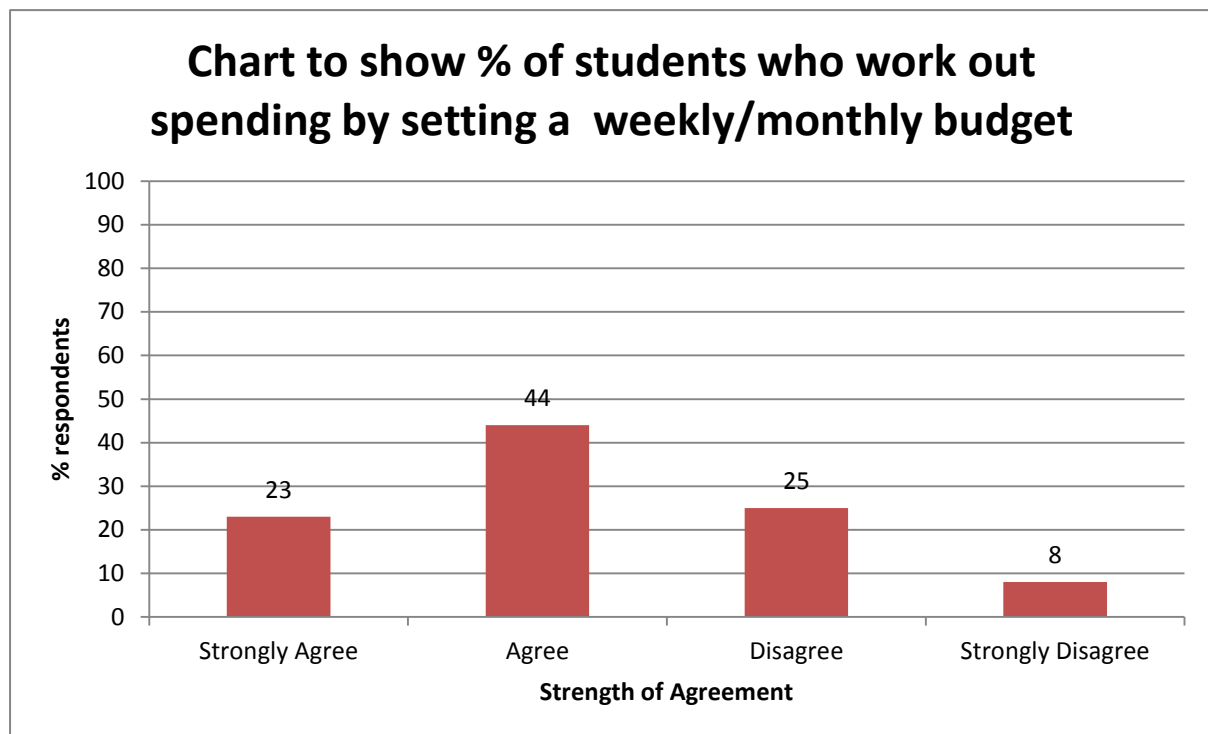


Figure 1: Chart to show % of students who work out spending by setting a weekly/monthly budget.

Undergraduate students only receive maintenance loans from student finance at three points during the year. This means that unless they subsidise this money in some way e.g. through a part-time job alongside their studies, from family etc., this loan has to last students a whole term. To avoid the potential problem of running out of money as the term progresses, students are forced to split their money throughout the term and budget accordingly. The results showing that 32% of students do not budget in this way is concerning as this may lead to students ending up falling into debt as the term progresses.

When this was broken down further by year of study, results showed that first year students are more likely to work out spending by setting a weekly or monthly budget than a 2nd or 3rd year student, with 72% of 1st year respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing in comparison to 61% of 3rd year respondents.

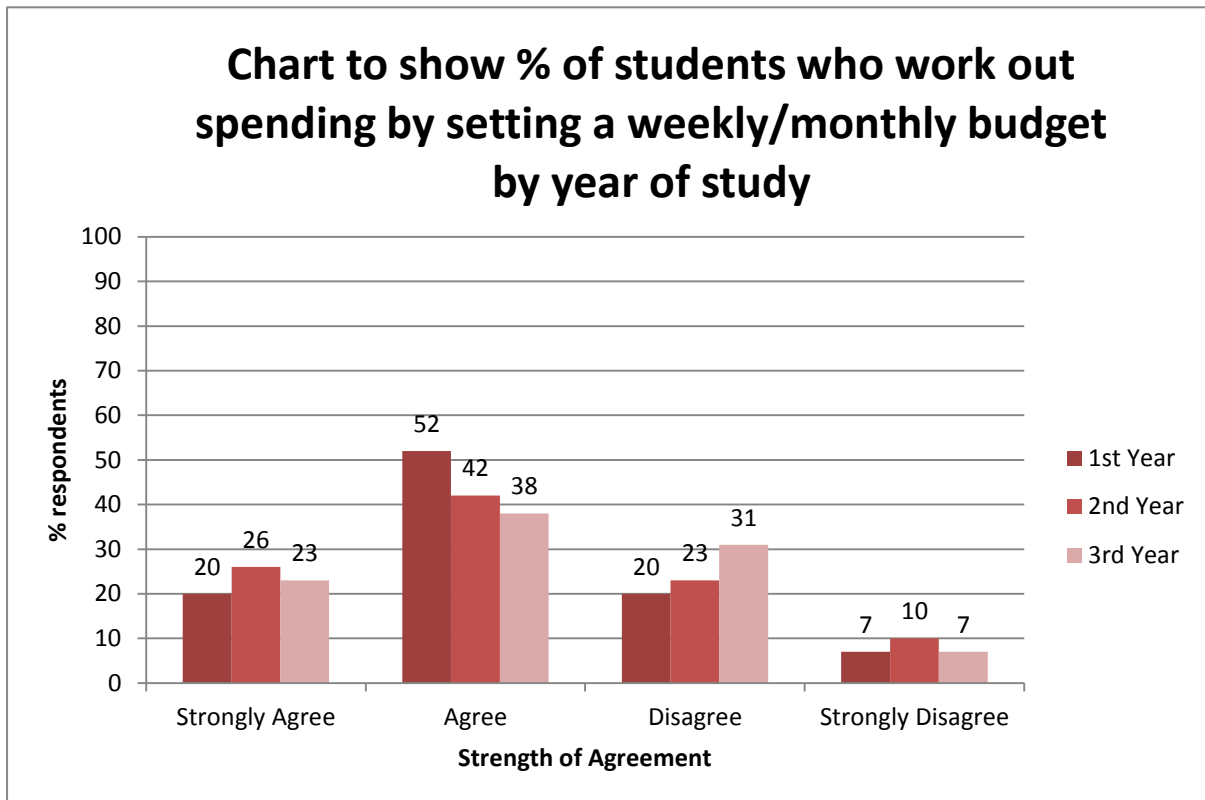


Figure 2: Chart to show % of students who work out spending by setting a weekly/monthly budget by year of study.

This may be because first year students have not yet amassed large amounts of debt therefore are more inclined to attempt to stay within their designated budget. Third year students on the other hand may have already amassed large amounts of debt, which may have all rolled into one. Third year students are also more likely to have a part-time job alongside their studies, meaning that their disposable income may be greater leading to less need to budget so tightly. The results from this survey back this up, by indicating that 58% of the third years who responded have jobs, in comparison with 26% of first years, and 39% of second years.

Again, when broken down by level of study, results showed that Post-Graduate students are more likely to work out spending by setting a weekly/monthly budget than Undergraduate students, with 77% of Post Graduate Respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing in comparison to 68% of Undergraduate students.

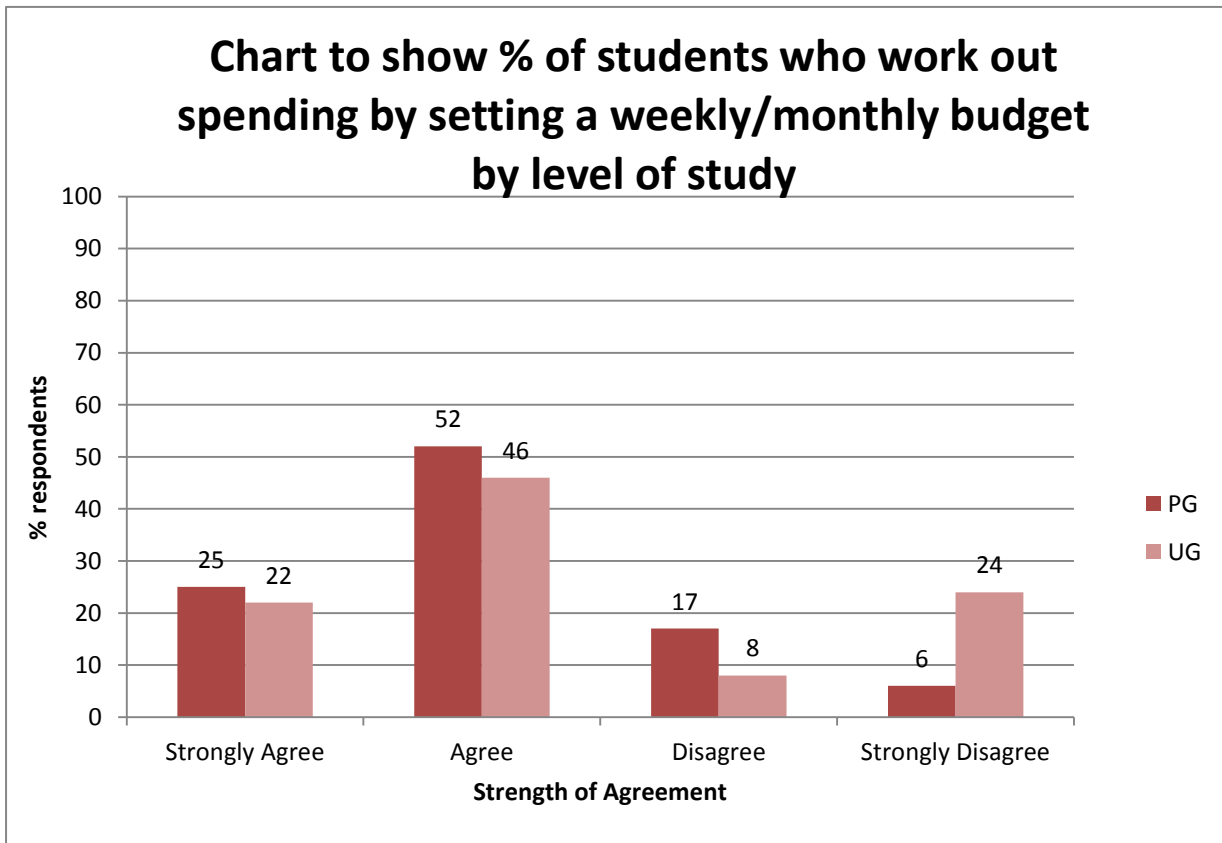


Figure 3: Chart to show % of students who work out spending by setting a weekly/monthly budget by level of study.

Funding for Post-Graduate students is scarce, and often information about accessing finance before joining the course is inaccessible. Research from the NUS Broke and Broken survey on taught postgraduate students on funding and finance identified that across the sector, postgraduate fees are unregulated, course costs are not made visible, and for those who want to undertake postgraduate study, finding the cash to pay for the course can be more important than finding the right course. This is in comparison to undergraduate students who are able to easily access support from student finance. The significant additional financial burden for Post-Graduate students may be a noteworthy reason for the additional need to budget so tightly. Furthermore, the ‘Negotiating the System’ report by NUS which examines students experiences of financial support, has shown that the accessibility is complex and promotion of hardship funds for postgraduate students is not sufficient. The report identified that accurate and reliable information is perceived as rare and constantly subject to change. It additionally identified that one of the best forms of support favoured by mature students was peer advice, or advice from students already on the programme.

Recommendations

For the University: To make financial information for PG students more accessible prior to starting University

For the University: To provide more information on Hardship Funds for PG Students & more support in accessing these funds, possibly using students’ peers as a form of support.

For the University: To make course costs more visible to all students prior to enrolment to ensure that students are able to budget more effectively by sending information on course costs to students in enrolment packs.

For the Students' Union and University: To provide workshops on managing their finances for all students through launching a 'money matters' campaign.

For the Students' Union: To provide information/advice on the SU website around budgeting & ways to help students to save money

For the Students' Union: to provide guidance to students on budgeting prior to them starting University.

Spending

To work out which areas students are spending the most of their money on, we looked at how much students believed they spend on different things including groceries, transport, social activities, sports and societies and childcare.

Spending on Groceries

When we researched how much students spend on groceries, results showed that 51% of respondents spend between £20-39 on groceries per week, closely followed by £0-19, which 33% respondents reported they spend. A further 13% reported that they spend between £40-£99, and 2 respondents reported that they spend £100+.

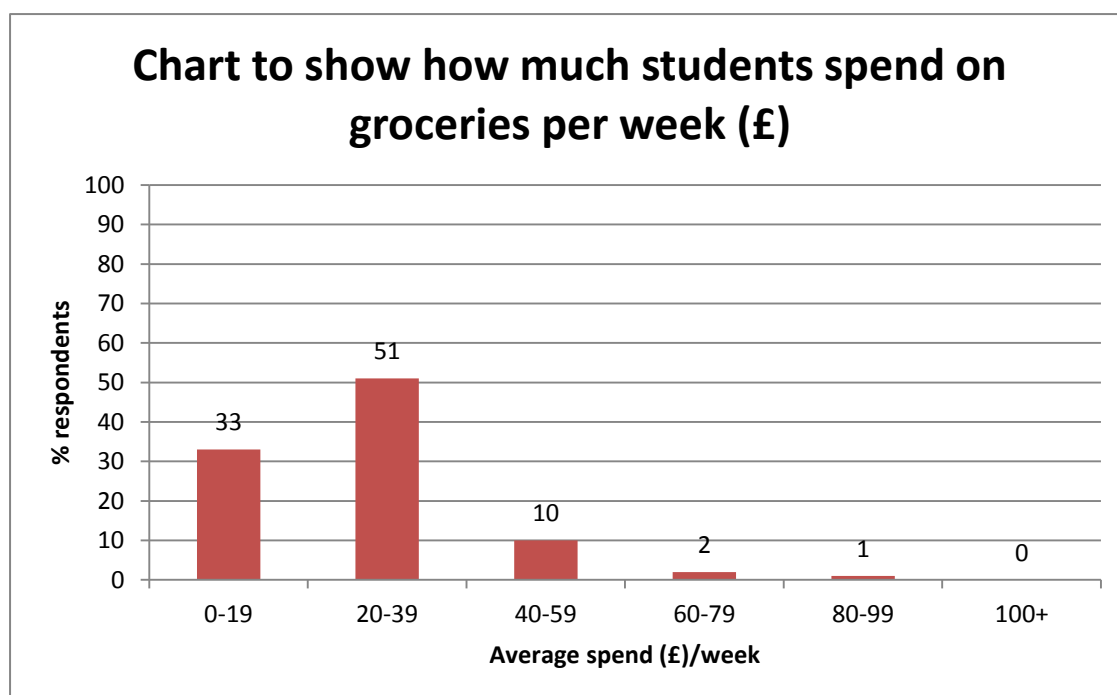


Figure 4: Chart to show how much students spend on groceries per week (£)

Students who live away from home and outside of London only receive up to £5,555 per year from student finance. When worked out weekly this only equates to £106.80 per week. With so many other expenditures including travel, social activities, sports and society activities, childcare, accommodation, bills and additional course costs, students perceive that they are only able to spend up to around £40 per week on food, despite this being one of the most important commodities.

When broken down by level of study and year of study, there was very little difference between the amounts spent by the different groups. This indicates that there appears to be a limit to the amount all students feel that they can spend on groceries per week.

Recommendations:

For the Students' Union: To promote to students that buying food in bulk rather than buying small amounts of food every day is more cost effective

For the Students Union: To promote the cost effectiveness of cooking as a group rather than individually

For the Students' Union: To provide cookery workshops for Students'

For the Students' Union: To provide cheap food on campus

Spending on social activities

When we looked at how much students spend on social activities per week, results showed that most students (62%) spend between £0-19 on social activities. The next highest category was £20-39 per week with 29% of students stating that they spend this amount. Only 11% of students spend between £40-100+ per week.

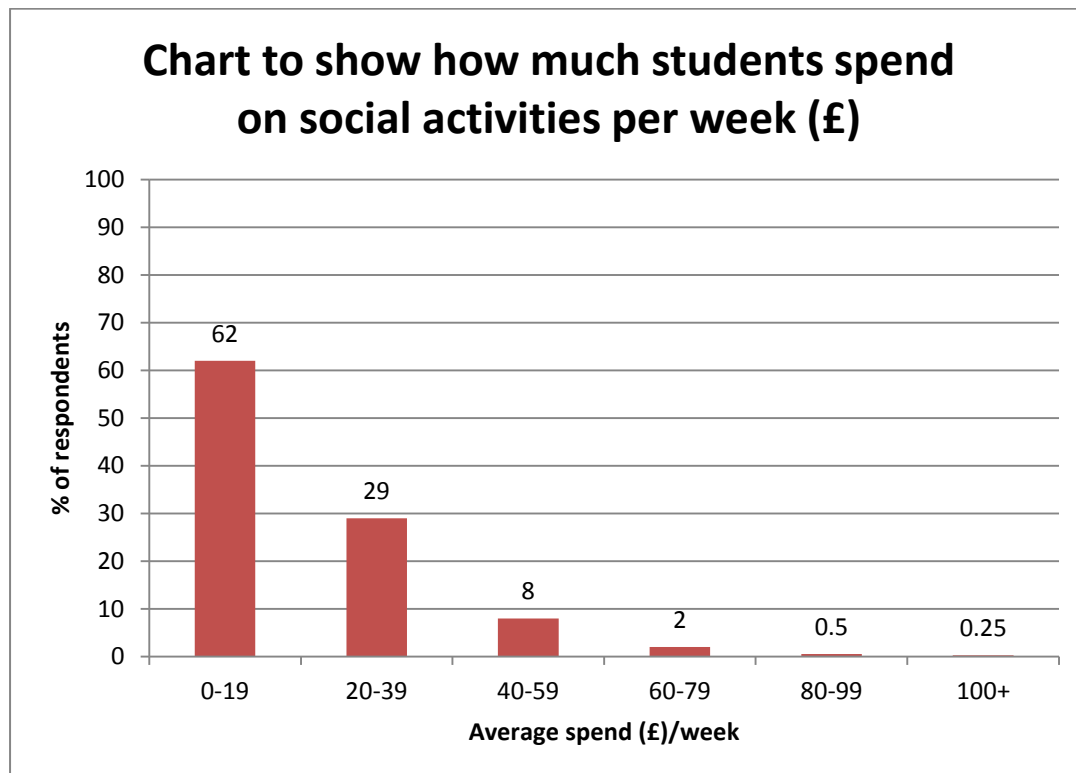


Figure 5: Chart to show how much students spend on social activities per week (£)

Despite popular criticisms from the public around students and their social life, this research would indicate that in fact social activity is not the main expenditure for students. It may in fact be a lack of money that prevents students' from socialising rather than unwillingness to do so. This has further implications for retention rates, as research has indicated that students who are involved in social activities and feel part of a group are less likely to drop out of University. Students who cannot afford to socialise with others regularly therefore may be more likely to drop out of University when

they face difficulties. The Australian Universities Review identified both financial concerns and a lack of social integration as two key factors which could affect retention rates in Higher Education.

When broken down further, as to whether a student was part of an activity (i.e. sports & societies), results showed that there was very minimal difference between the amount spent on social activities depending on whether a student is part of an activity or not. This indicates that being part of an activity does not necessarily entail a huge cost in terms of social activity after the initial membership fees are paid.

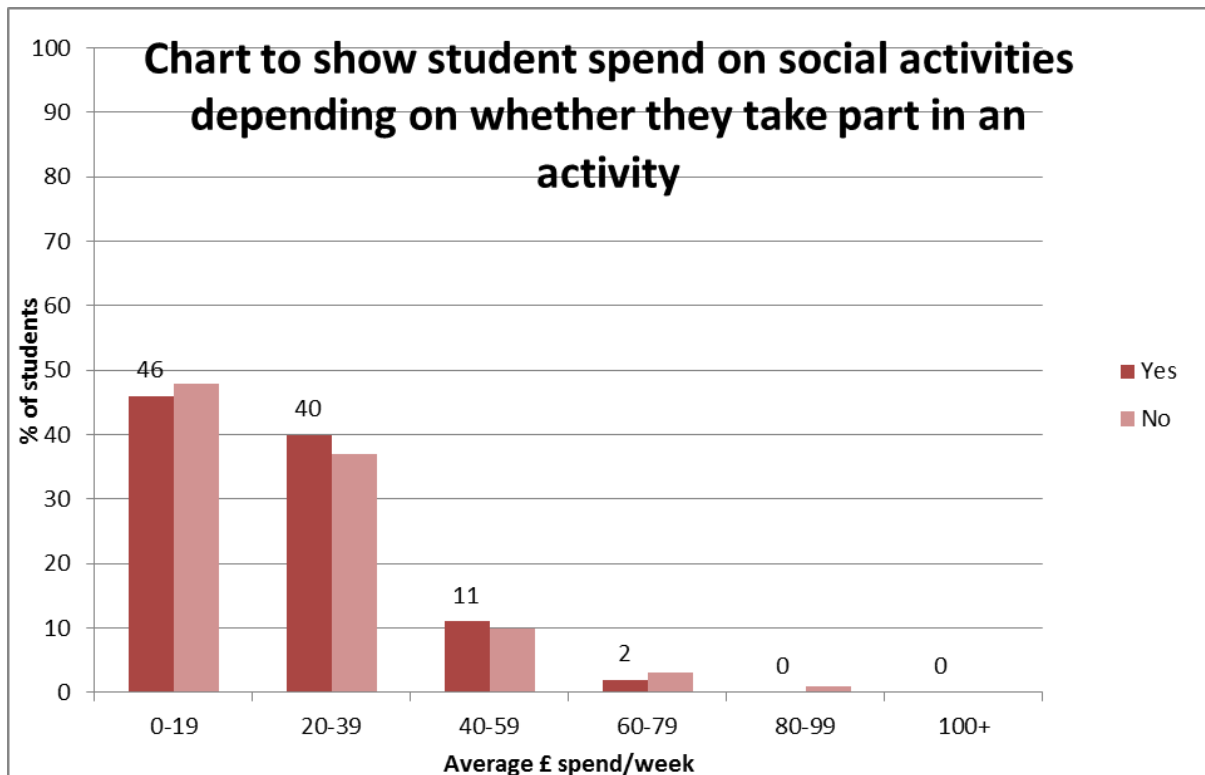


Figure 6: Chart to show student spend on social activities depending on whether they take part in an activity

When broken down by level of study, results showed that Undergraduate students spend fractionally more on social activities than Post graduate students, with 61% of PGs spending £0-19 on social activities in comparison to 48% of UGs. Undergraduate students are more likely to spend £20-39 on social activities (39%) than Post-Graduate students (30%).

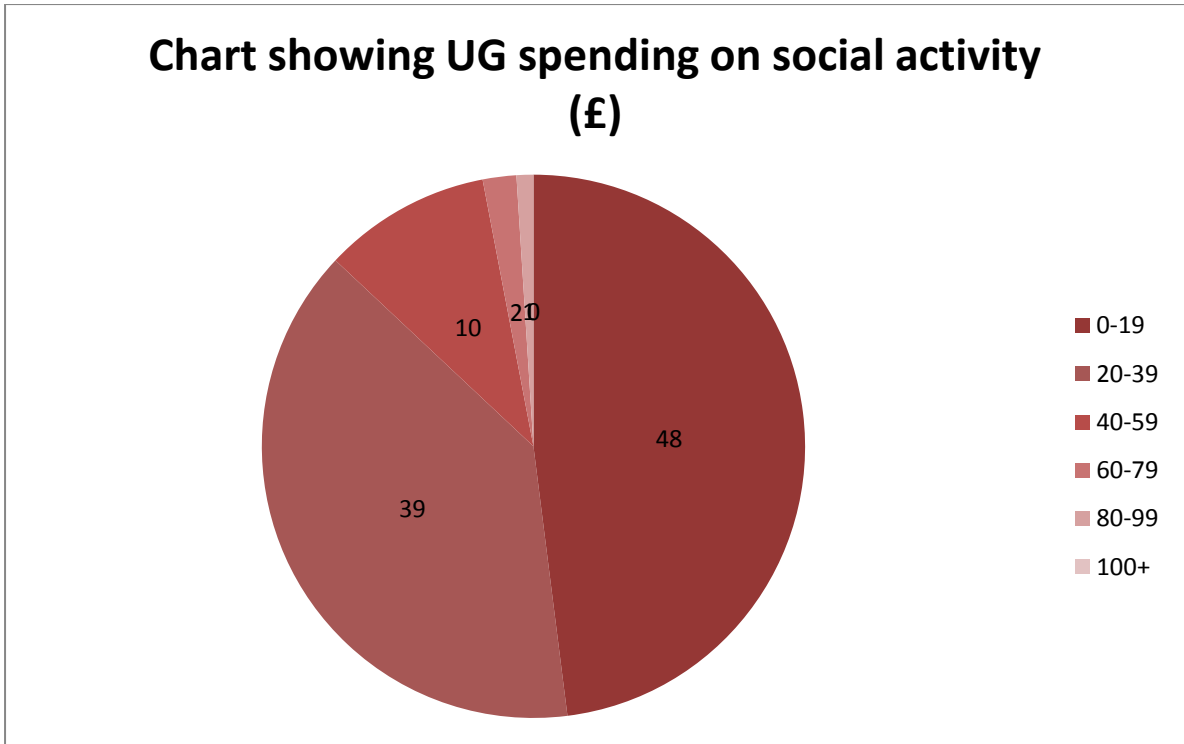


Figure 7: Chart to show Undergraduate spending on social activities (£)

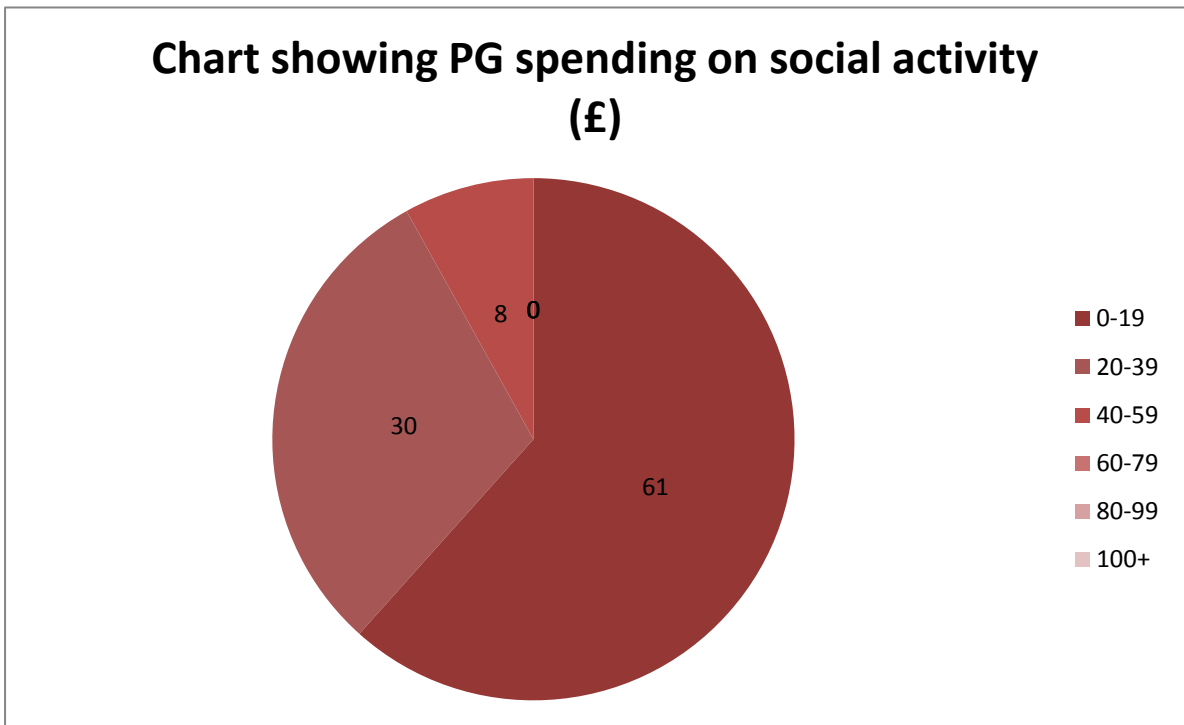


Figure 8: Chart to show Undergraduate spending on social activities (£)

This is likely to be a result of a number of factors including post-graduate students having more intensive studies and therefore less time to socialise; more post-graduate students having families and therefore being less likely to spend as much time socialising; but also due to the incredibly limited nature of post-graduate student finances, meaning their budgets for socialising are much

tighter than the typical undergraduate student. This is an area which needs further exploration, as it suggests the University community may not be supplying appropriate activity for this group. For example, NUS published a report on ‘Success in the Student Market’, which reported that postgraduates are also much more likely to state that they just don’t socialise during the day (29%), compared with undergraduates (20%). This could be due to an increased likelihood to work during term time (38% versus an average of 33%), as a result of the increased financial burden on this group of students.

Recommendations

For the Students’ Union: To investigate current social provision for Post-Graduate students to ensure that it is appropriate both financially and socially

For the Students’ Union: To identify which groups post-graduate students’ socialise with

For the Students’ Union: To identify what activities/events should be put on for post-graduate students

Spending on travel

When we looked at how much students spend on travel per week, the results showed that the majority of students (83%) spent between £0-19 on travel. This was followed by the next category of £20-39, which was spent by 10% of respondents. Only 6% of students spent £40 per week or more on travel.

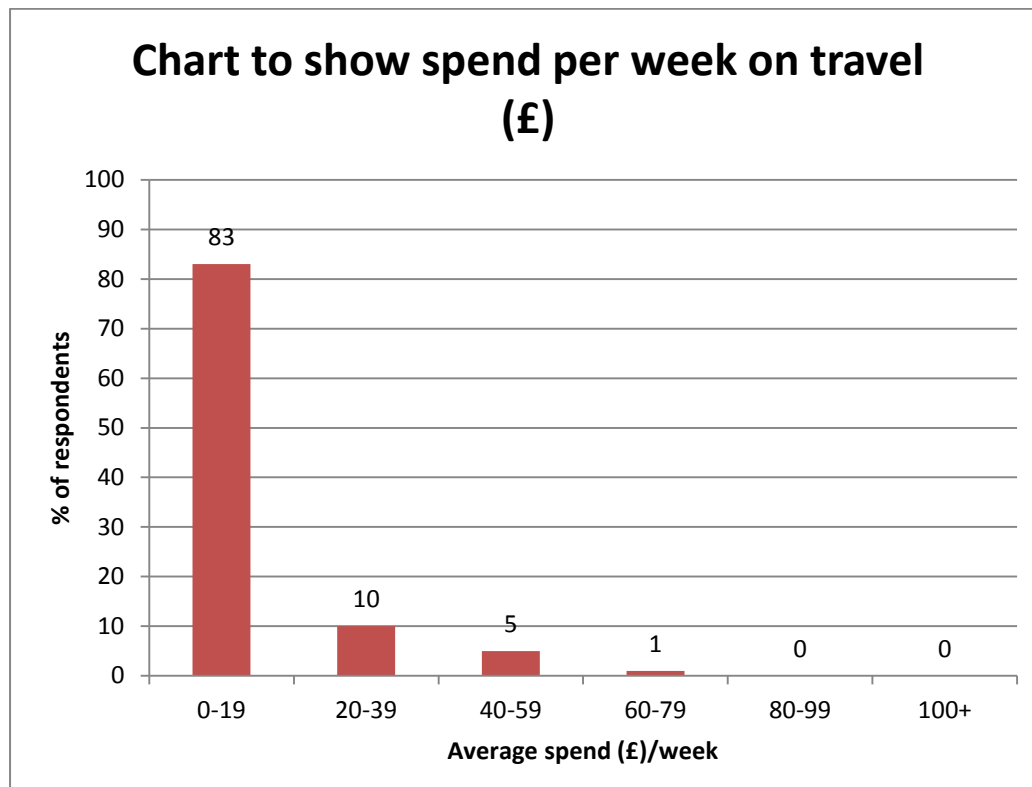


Figure 9: Chart to show spend per week on travel (£)

The lack of money students at the University of Lincoln spend on travel is likely to be due to the campus based nature of Lincoln University, as well as the relatively small size of Lincoln as a city,

meaning spending large amounts of money on public transport or personal vehicles to get to University is largely unnecessary. The students who spend the higher amounts on travel are likely to be students who live further afield and commute in, and those students who have placements outside of central Lincoln. This is show by the increase in travel costs by nursing students at the University of Lincoln. For this group, the percentage of participants who spend between £0-19 reduced from 83% to 65% and the percentages of participants who were spending the higher amounts of both £20-39 and between £40-59 doubled. NUS’s report on hidden course costs divulged that only 26% of institutions covered the travel to placement costs in their tuition fees.

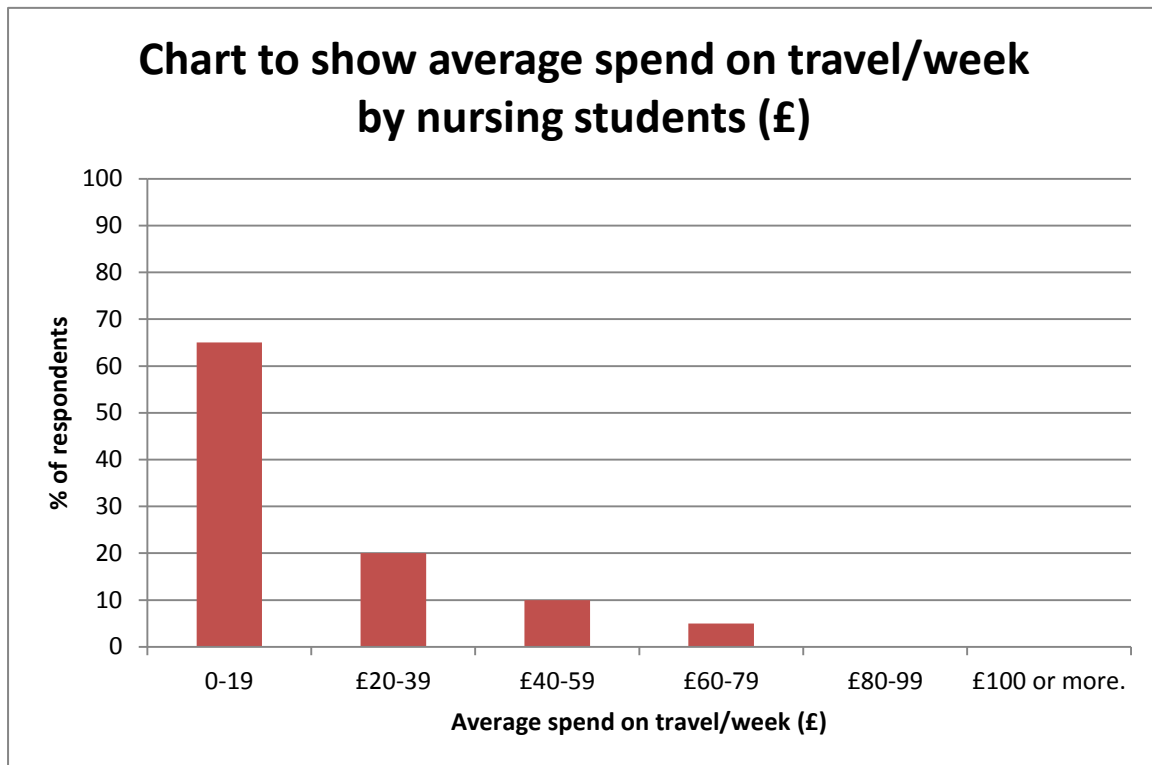


Figure 10: Chart to show spend per week on travel/week by nursing students (£)

When broken down by age of student, results showed that 18-22 year olds were most likely to spend between £0-19, with 88% of this category responding in this way. Conversely, only 25% of students aged 40+ spend between £0-19, and instead 38% of this age group stated that they spend between £40-59, in comparison with just 2% of 18-22 year olds.

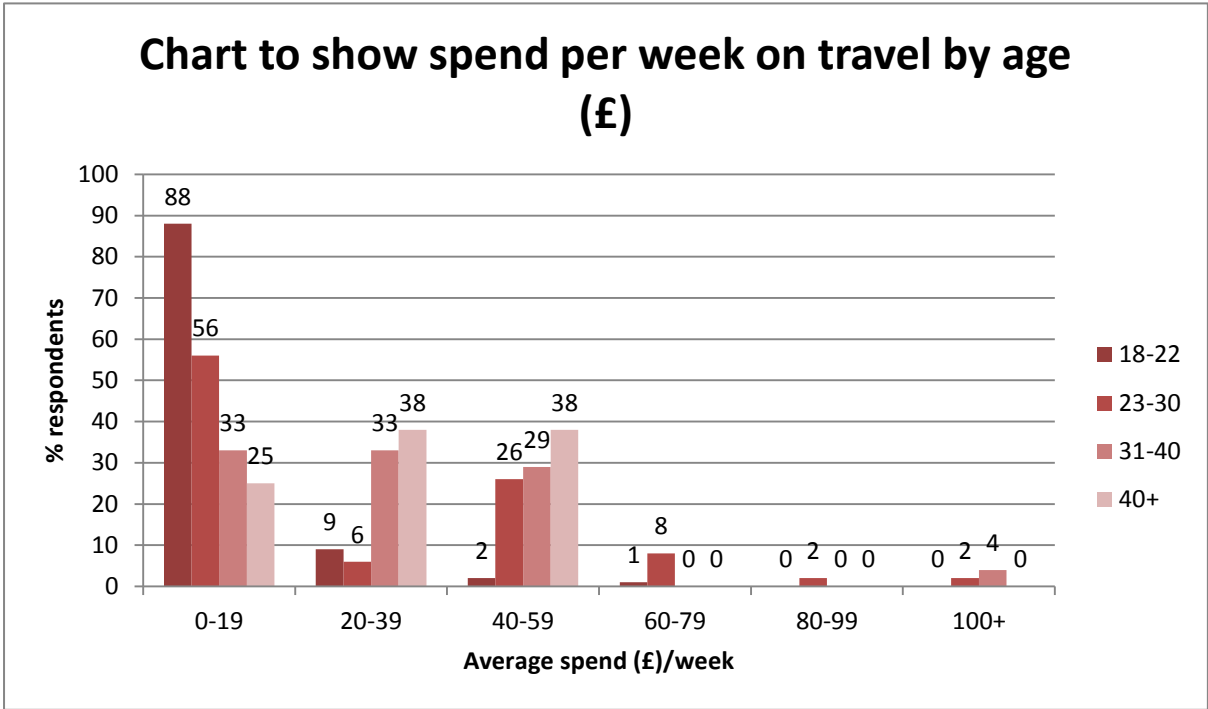


Figure 11: Chart to show spend per week on travel by age (£)

The reason for this may be because students who are in the 40+ age category are more likely to have families and therefore live further afield and travel into University by car, in comparison with the 18-22 year old category who are more likely to live on, or very near to campus and walk in.

Recommendations

For the University Sustainability department & the Students Union: To consider the creation of a car share forum

For the Students’ Union: To research whether the University of Lincoln covers the costs of travelling to placements for students

Spending on Sports and Societies

We asked students how much they spent on:

- Sports clubs in each academic year.
- Societies in each academic year.

When the results of the question on sports was analysed, results showed that the amounts spent on sports clubs varied. Some students (32%) reported that the amount spent on sports was under £10; however a further 30% reported that they were spending more than £100 on sports clubs.

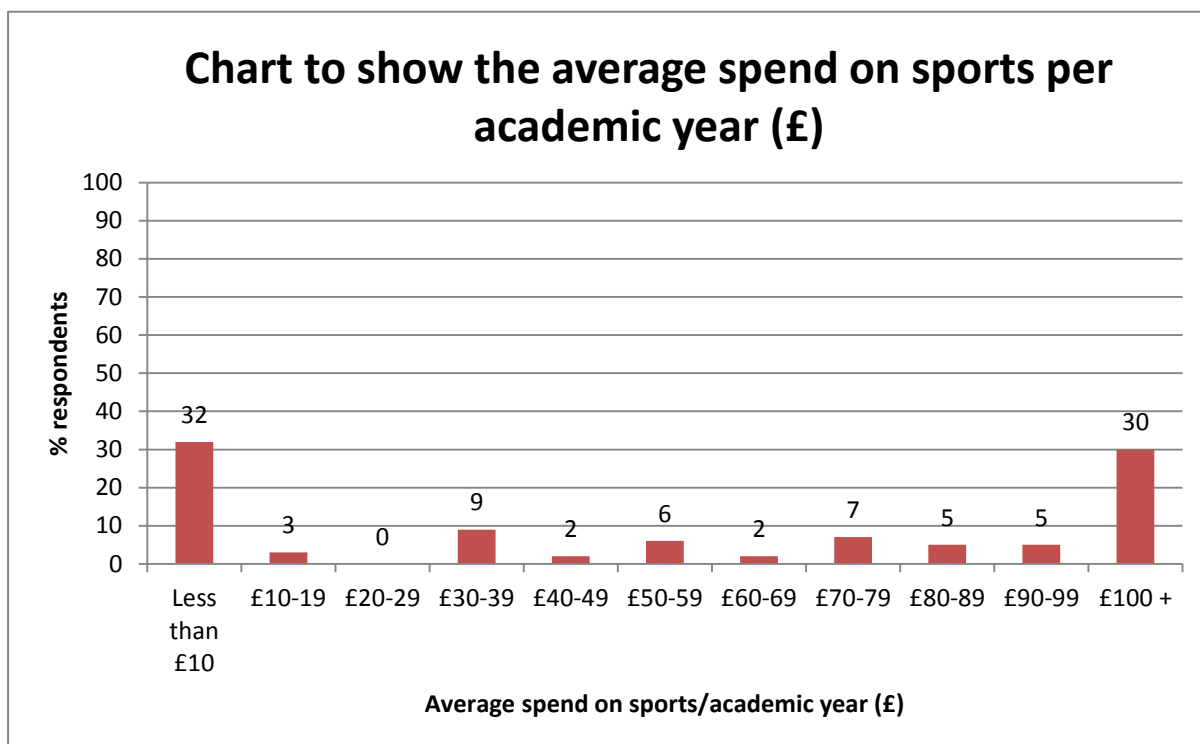


Figure 12: Chart to show student spend on sports clubs per academic year (£)

Lots of memberships for sports clubs at the University of Lincoln Students' Union are relatively high for example; American Football membership is £100, with additional insurance and costs on top. Additionally clubs which are part of BUCS had an additional £15 fee in 2014/2015, which is rising to £20 in 2015/2016.

Recommendations

For the Students' Union: To review why some clubs charge so much for membership fees

For the Students' Union: To provide more support for Sports Clubs for fundraising

For the Students Union: To provide sports clubs with support in applying for grants from National Governmental Bodies (e.g. Badminton England) for achieving targets such as participation targets.

When the results of the question on societies were analysed, analysis showed that the majority of respondents (39%) spend less than £10 on societies. This was followed by the category of £10-19 which was spent by 30% of respondents. Worryingly 6% of students claimed that they spend more than £100 per year on society activities.

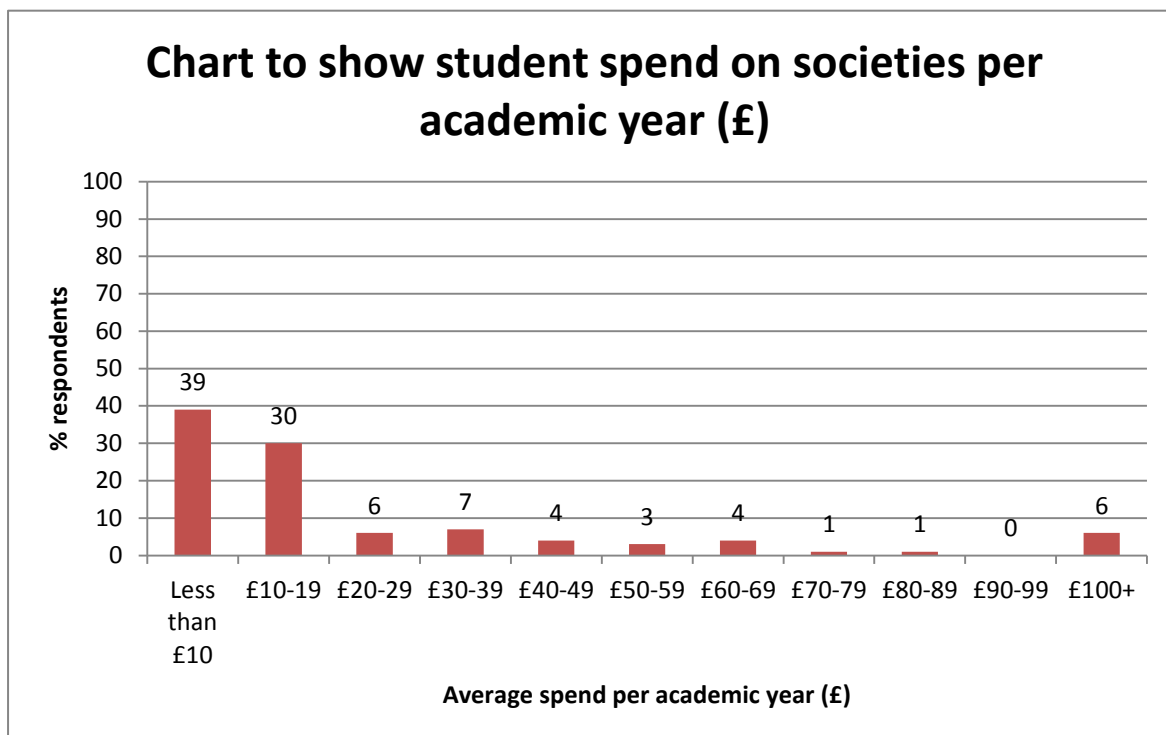


Figure 13: Chart to show student spend on societies per academic year (£)

The reason for this is largely because society membership is often around the minimum fee of £5 that societies are required to charge. They often do not need further income on top of this for activities as they fund their activities by fundraising. Any additional costs required by the society are largely to fund necessary equipment e.g. cameras for photography society.

Recommendations

For the Students' Union: To provide further support with fundraising events for societies to help them improve their self-raised funds

For the Students' Union: To help societies set targets for fundraising and plans to reach their financial goals

For the Students' Union: To support societies with the development fund application process

For the Students' Union: To support the process in negotiating deals/loans for expensive specialist equipment

For the Students' Union: To remove the minimum membership fee

Spending on Childcare

We asked the 14 respondents with children, who pay for childcare, which services they most predominantly use for their childcare. The results showed that the majority of respondents with children (50%) use after school clubs as their main child care service. Nursery places (38%), Friends and Family (29%) and Child minders (21%) were also regularly used by respondents.

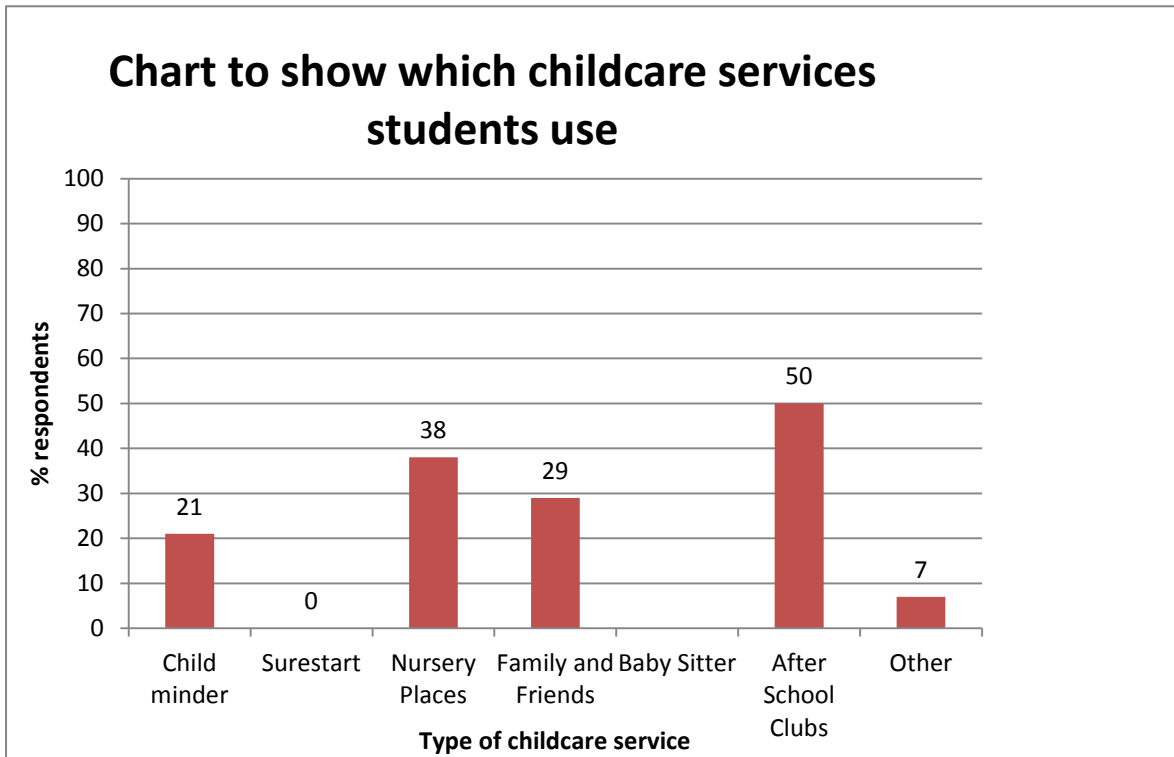


Figure 14: Chart to show which childcare services students use.

To assess student spending on childcare, we asked respondents how much they believed they spent on childcare per week. The results were incredibly varied with highest percentage of respondents (29%) believing they spend between £10-19. However many students believed they spend much more, with 14% of respondents believing that they spend more than £100.

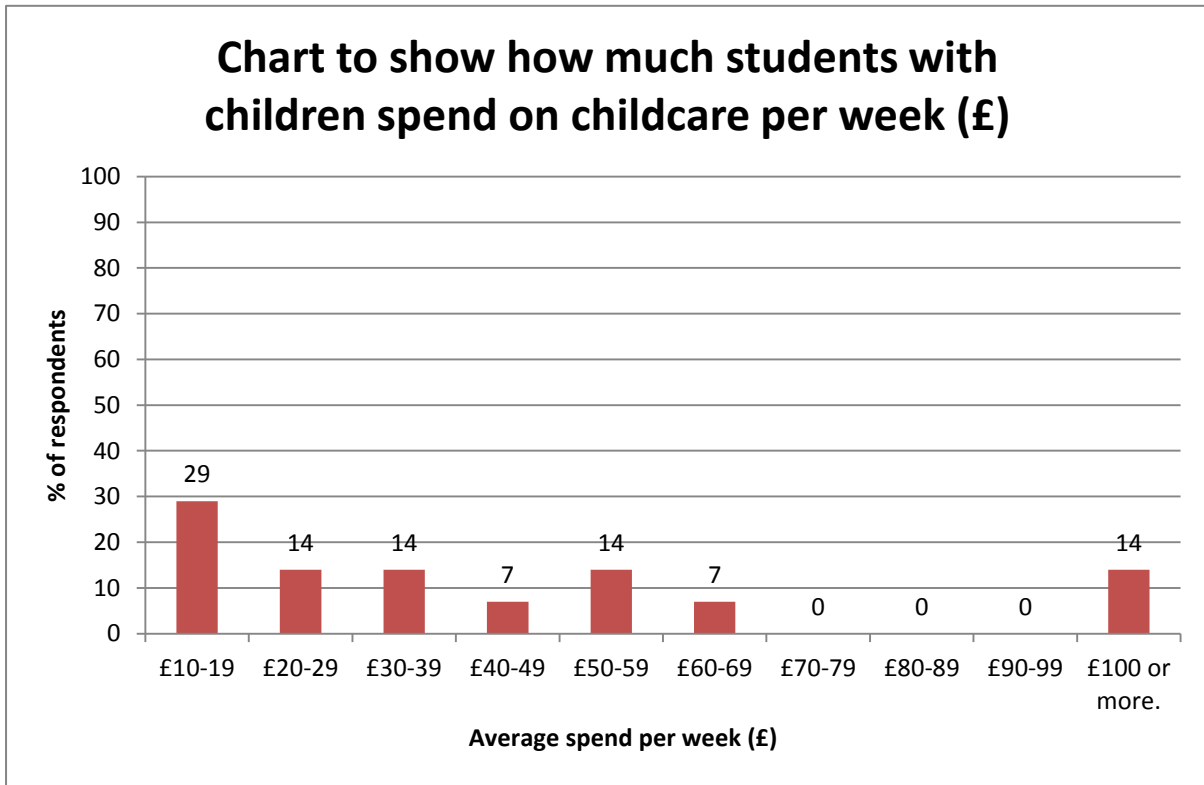


Figure 15: Chart to show how much students with children spend on childcare per week.

For students who are spending more than £100 or more a week on childcare this is a heavy financial burden, especially when considering the tight financial situation of the majority of students. The University of Lincoln provide a child care scheme. Unfortunately child care in this scheme can cost between £500-750 per month which is a significant figure; however when a child is over 3 years old they become eligible for 15 free hours of child care. This may be contributing to the 14% of students who are spending £100 or more on child care a week.

The University also run a child care voucher system which is free to sign up to. Participants are able to sacrifice up to £234 a month of their pay cheque for this purpose, which causes a saving of up to £1000 per year as they will not pay tax or national insurance on their sacrificed amount. Additionally students who have part-time jobs alongside their studies may be eligible for working tax credits to help support their child care costs.

Nationally, the NUS ‘Meet the Parents’ report, found that the provision of information about childcare options and financial entitlements were found to be seriously lacking for students with children, and only 14 per cent of their respondents felt that they had received sufficient information about childcare, and just 18 per cent felt they had received enough information about their financial entitlements to make an informed decision about becoming a student parent.

Recommendations:

For the University and Students’ Union: To improve the publicity of the child care vouchers

For the Students’ Union: To work with university to consider ways to lower child care costs

For the Students' Union Advice Centre: To support students with applications for national child care grants or University hardship funds

Spending on Accommodation

Accommodation is one of the biggest expenditures for students, with many students finding that their student loan does not even cover their accommodation. This was confirmed by NUS' Homes Fit for Study in which several respondents remarked that 'their student loan entitlements didn't cover their rental costs and that this had a significant impact on their finances'. Furthermore students' are required to pay large amounts of upfront costs to secure accommodation, which often send students into debt in order to meet these costs.

We asked students about the types of accommodation they lived in. Results showed that the majority of respondents (50%) live in halls. A further 41% stated that they live in private accommodation. Other types of accommodation that students reported they live in included the family home, lodging or owning their own property.

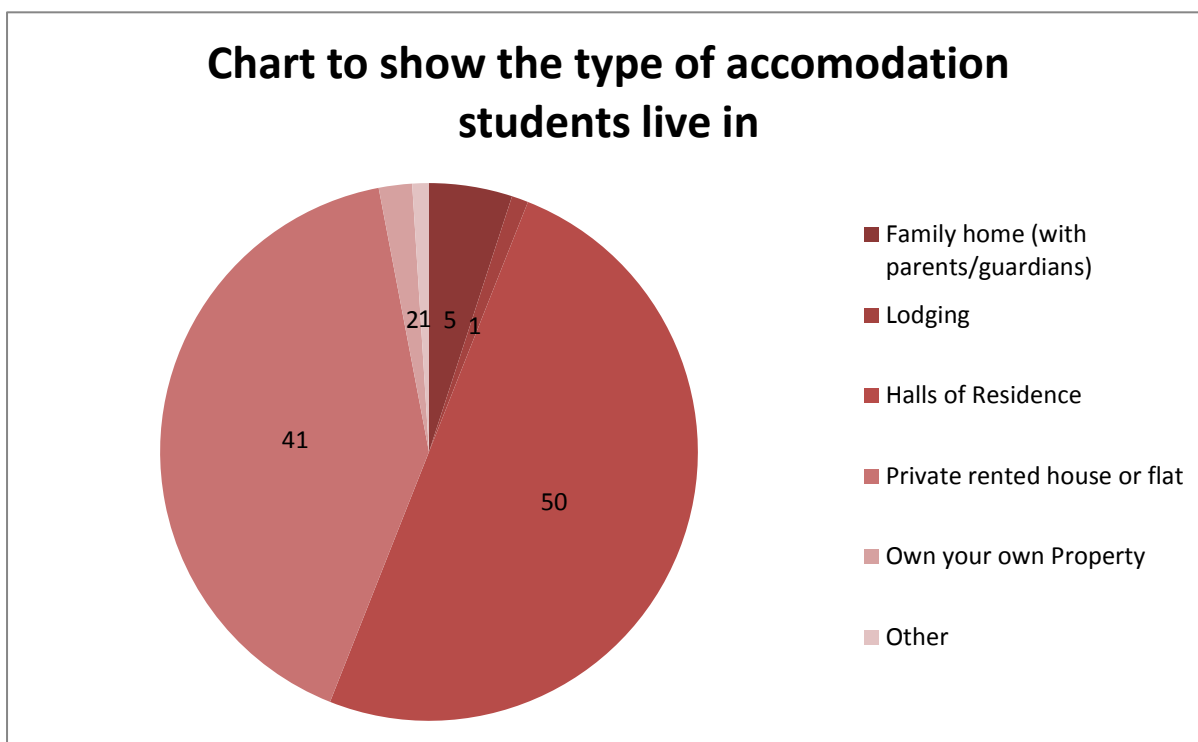


Figure 16: Chart to show how much students with children spend on childcare per week.

We also asked students how much they paid for their accommodation on average. Unfortunately some students provided us with the data for how much they paid per week, whereas others provided us with information for how much they paid per month, making it difficult to analyse how much students were likely to pay on average for their accommodation. Results were therefore analysed depending on whether respondents provided a weekly, monthly or annual figure for accommodation costs.

Results showed that the majority of students who paid for accommodation on a weekly basis were likely to pay between £101-150, with 50% responding in this way. This was very closely followed by

the likelihood of paying between £51-100, with 47% of respondents stating that they paid this amount.

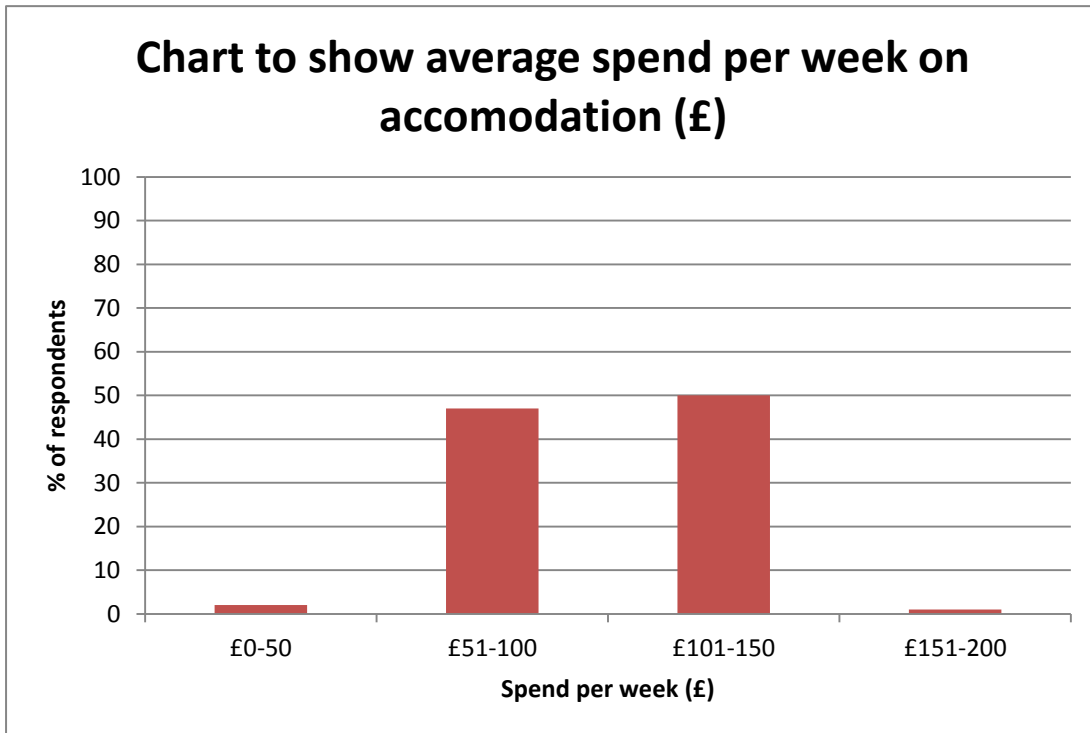


Figure 17: Chart to show average amount students pay for accommodation when they pay on a weekly basis

When paying for accommodation by month, students were most likely to pay between £301-400, which was paid by 47% of respondents who pay for accommodation by month. Unfortunately only 11% of respondents paid less than this amount, and worryingly 9% of respondents were paying more than £501 per month.

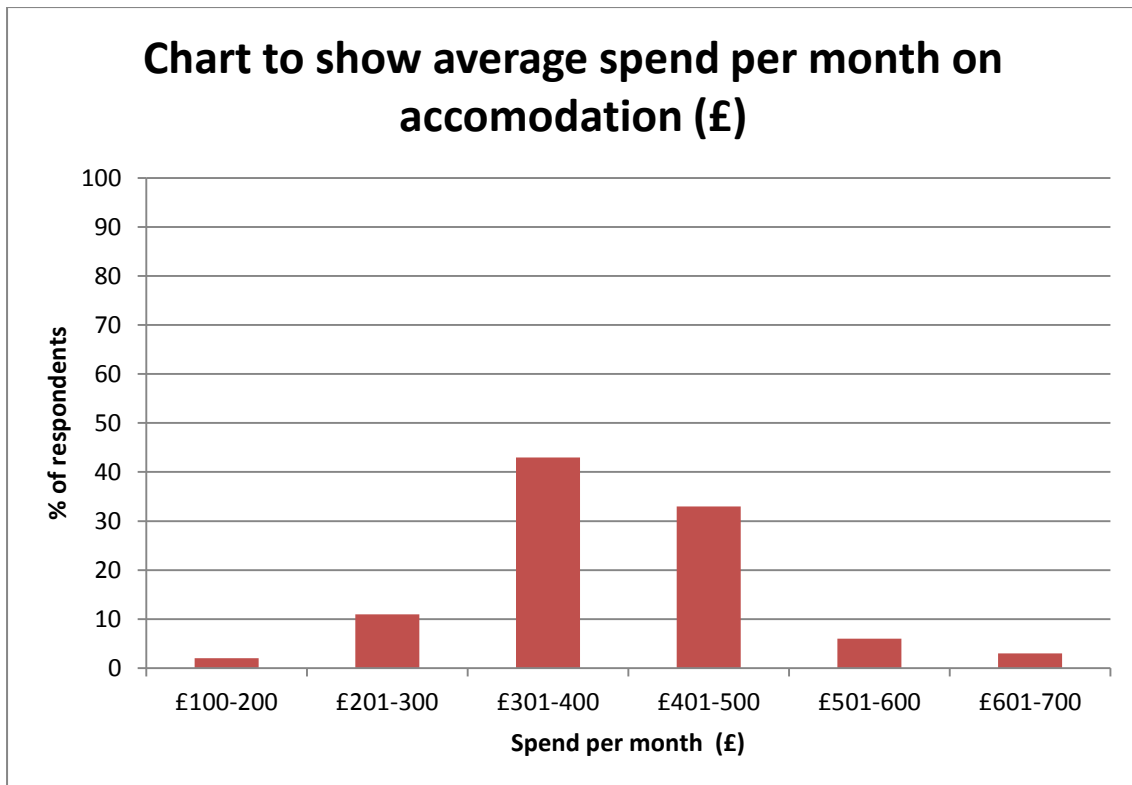


Figure 18: Chart to show average amount students pay for accommodation when they pay on a monthly basis

When paying for accommodation on a yearly basis, students were most likely to pay between £4501-5000, with 50% of respondents who pay for accommodation responding in this way.

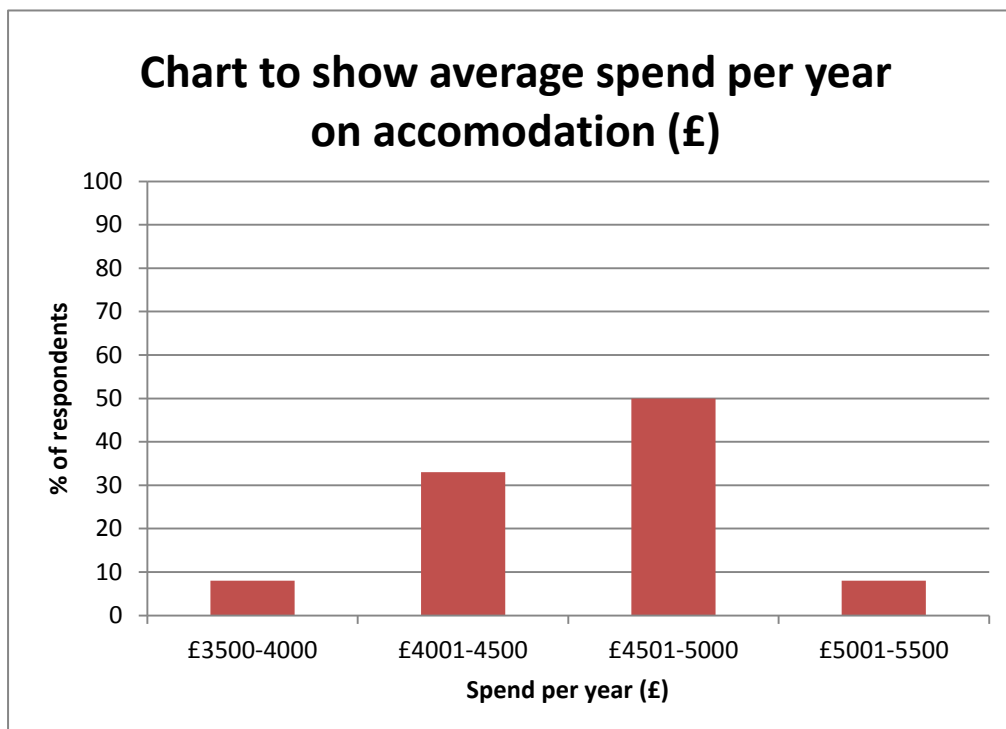


Figure 19: Chart to show average amount students pay for accommodation when they pay on a year basis

The results indicate that accommodation is one of the highest expenditures for students. The average maintenance loan from student finance for students, who live away from home and outside London, is up to £5,555 for courses which started in 2014. For students who pay on average £400 per month, this is a yearly total of £4800, leaving students with just over £700 for basic living costs per year. When additional costs including bills are factored in, this does not leave students with adequate funds to cover basic living costs. This further explains why in the 'NUS Ready to Rent' it was found that students are forced to get into high levels of debt to secure and put deposits on houses.

Fortunately in Lincoln, there is now a surplus of student housing. This may mean that accommodation costs for students may decrease, as housing agencies and landlords are pushed into providing more competitive house prices for students.

Recommendations:

For the Students' Union and University: To increase promotion of the student finance maintenance grant for living costs if students need additional funds for housing, as well as bursaries for Masters courses.

For the Students' Union: To work with private housing companies to encourage publicity of clear and transparent costs of student accommodation in advance of them making decisions about what to rent

For the University: To ensure the availability of affordable accommodation, thus ensuring that there is fair access and that students from lower income backgrounds are not excluded from a residential experience of higher education.

For the Students' Union: To promote and offer support to students around the time of letting.

Additional Course Costs

Most students across all courses at all universities are likely to face paying additional costs to complete their course. The levels of additional costs varies dramatically across courses, with arts courses paying high levels of additional costs to cover materials and social sciences courses paying a large amount in costs for books. This was further confirmed by the Hidden Course Costs research conducted by the Students' Union in 2014, which demonstrated that the college of Arts had significant levels of additional costs associated with its courses.

We asked students whether they felt there were costs associated with their course that were not included in their tuition fees. Results showed that 73% of all respondents felt that they did have additional costs associated with their course.

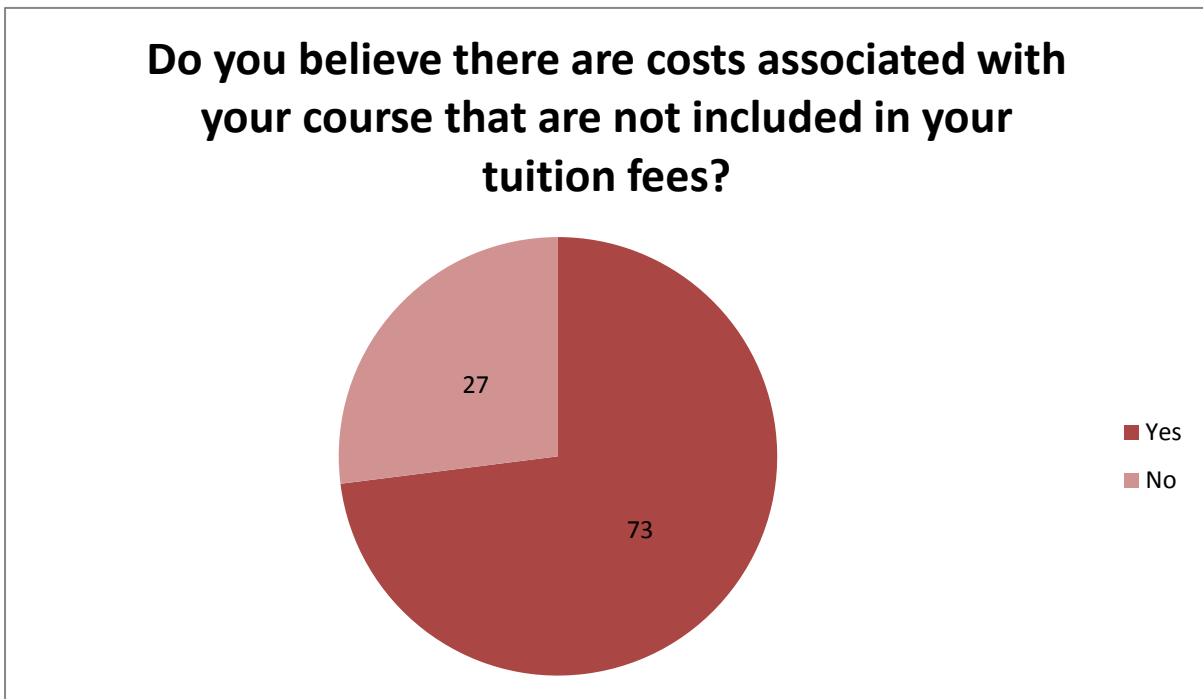


Figure 20: Chart to show whether students' believe that there are costs associated with their course that are not included in their tuition fees.

Students were also asked whether they felt that these additional costs were communicated to them well in advance, thus providing them with enough information to budget appropriately. Unfortunately 60% of students who felt there were additional costs associated with their course did not feel that these costs were communicated to them well in advance.

Were the additional course costs communicated to you well in advance?

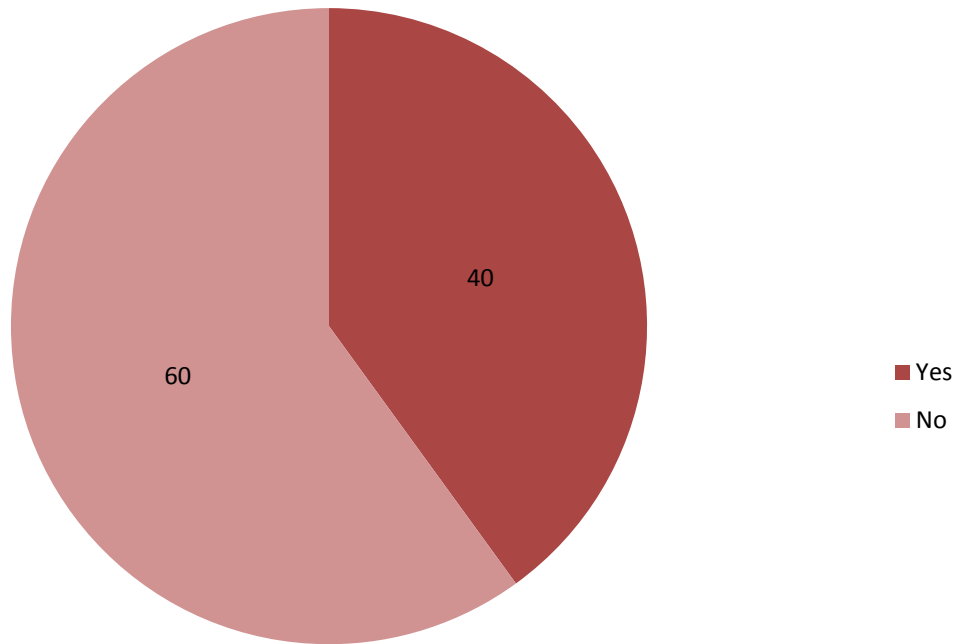


Figure 21: Chart to show whether students' believe that additional course costs were communicated to them well in advance.

These results show that the University should continue to work hard to accurately inform students' expectations of the additional costs they may face on their course in order to allow them to budget effectively as well work to reduce these costs in a similar way as in the Hidden Course Costs work in the College of Arts. This work has begun conversations into gaining extra credit for printing, as well as influenced research into which courses have the most additional costs. The hope is that this work will inform the work of the other colleges. Unfortunately difficulties in accessing information around these areas are ongoing.

Students were also asked what additional course costs they were mainly faced with. The results showed that the highest areas where students were likely to face additional costs were in both books and printing, with 53 and 52% of respondents stating that they spent additional money on these items. Many respondents also felt that they spend additional money on stationary, essay binding, software, art& design materials and tools.

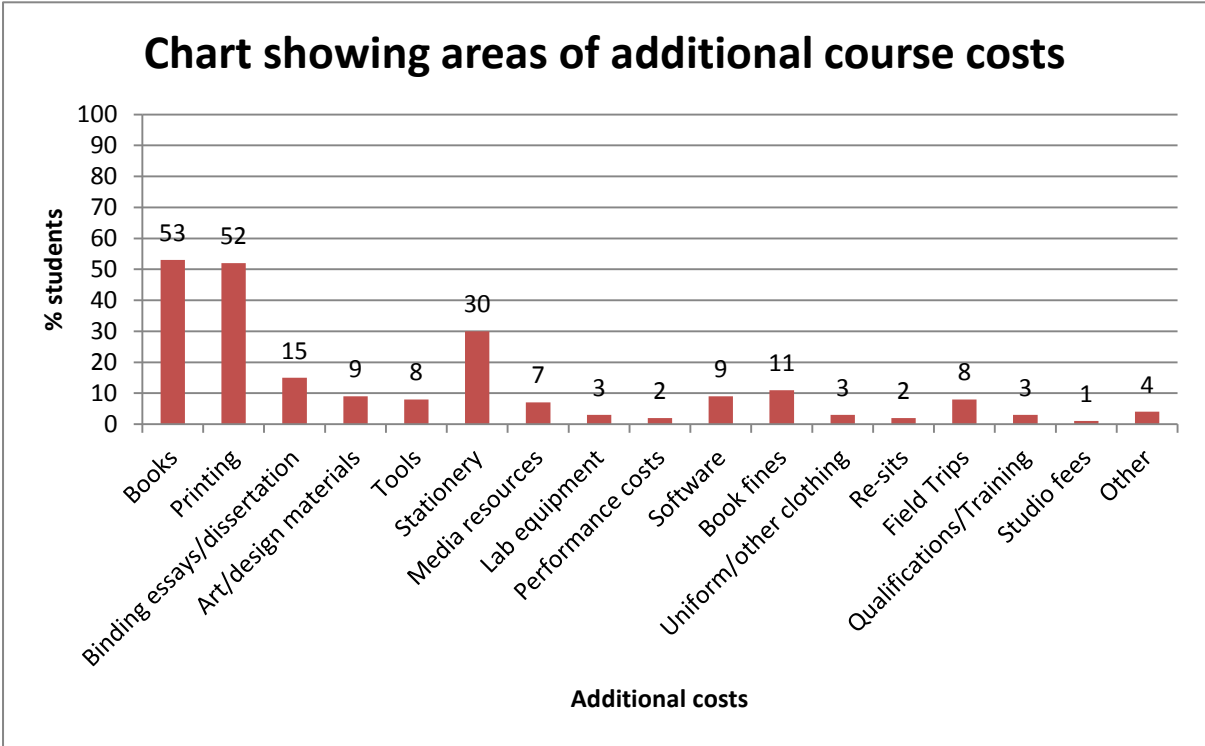


Figure 22: Chart to show areas of additional course costs

Students were asked how much they had spent on these additional course costs in the last academic year (£) (2013/2015). Results showed that only 4% of respondents had spent under £20, whereas 24% were spending between £20-100 and 5% of all respondents were spending over £400. Worryingly 2% of students were spending over £600.

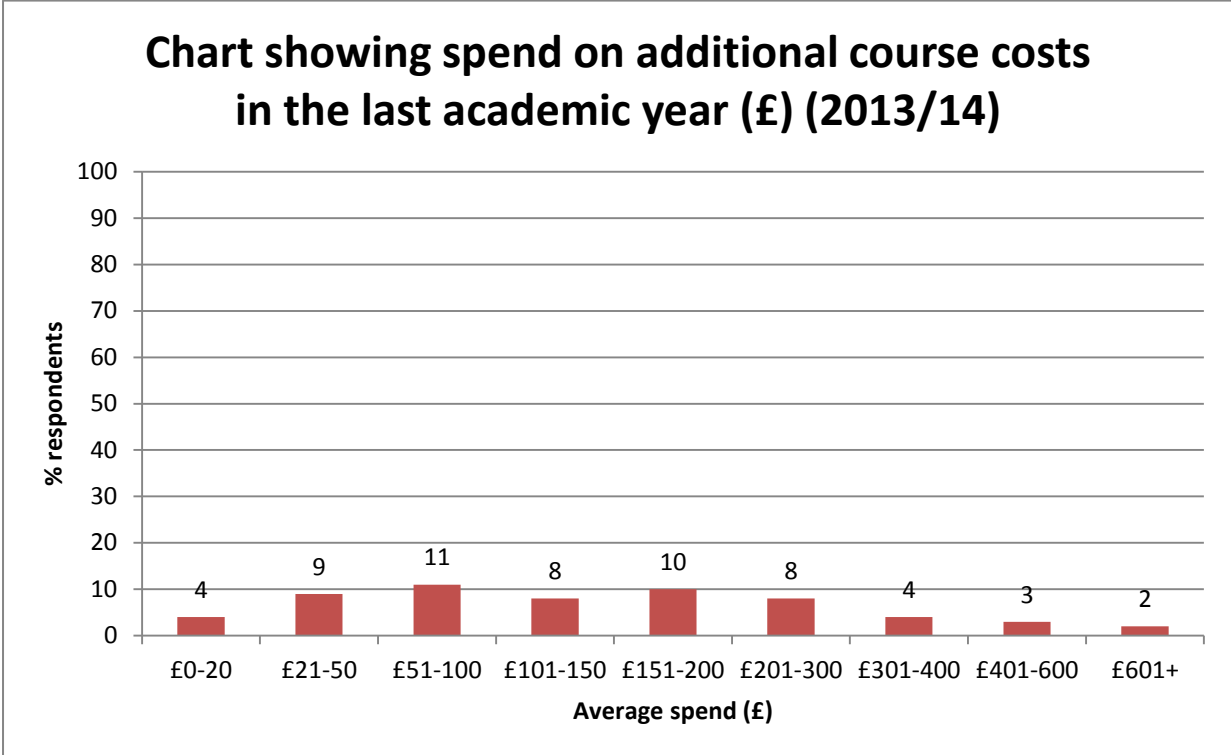


Figure 23: Chart to show spend on additional course costs in the last academic year (£) (2013/2014)

When broken down by College, the results showed that in 2013/2014, the colleges of art and science had relatively similar percentages of students who were spending under £100- 48% and 49% respectively. The College of Social Science however had significantly lower numbers of students spending under £100, at 38%. The college of Social Science also had significantly higher percentages of respondents (50%) spending between £100-£300 in comparison to 38% and 43% for the Colleges of Arts and Science respectively.

We asked students how much they believed they had spent on additional course costs in the current academic year 2104/2015. By January when the research was conducted, 8% of respondents had already spent over £300 and 29% of respondents had spent between £100-300.

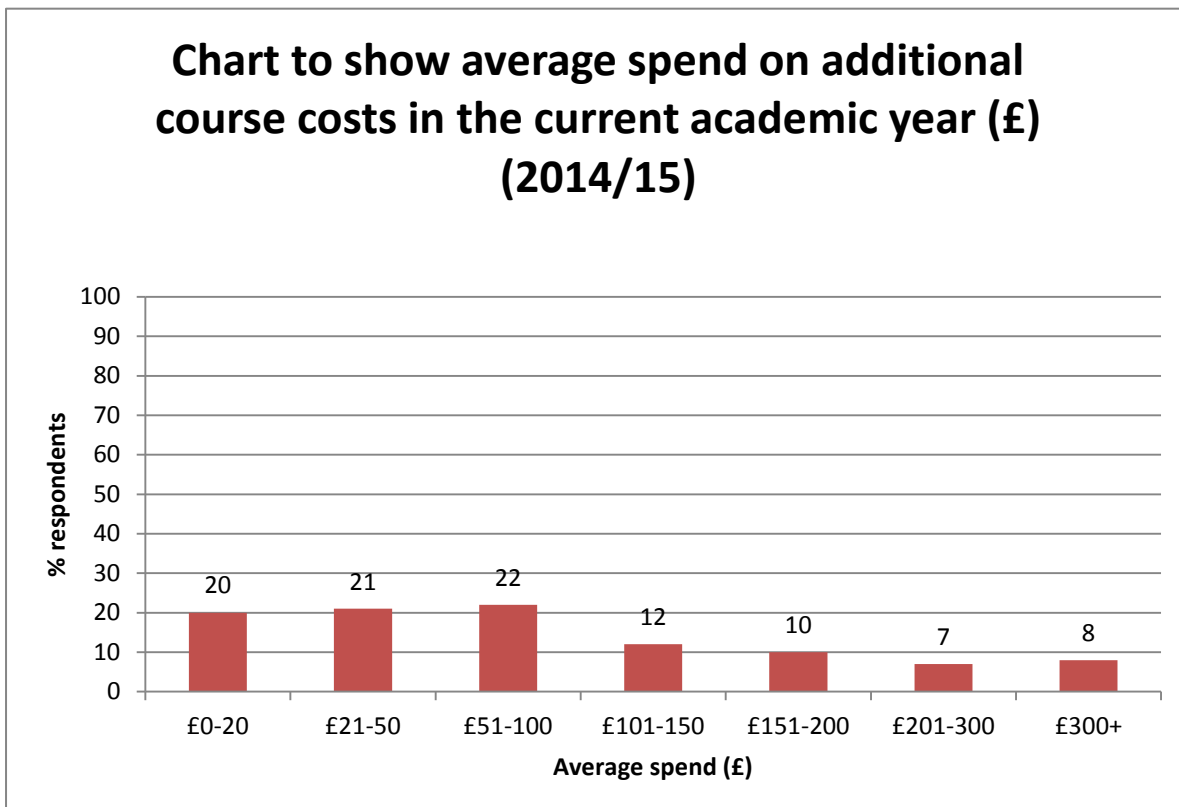


Figure 24: Chart to show average spend on additional course costs in the current academic year (£) (2014/2015)

This research shows that students are spending significant amounts of money on additional course costs each year and that there are specific areas where these costs are more prominent. The Students' Union and University need to work in partnership to consider methods of reducing additional course costs and supporting students with the financial burden of additional course costs.

Recommendations

For the Students' Union: To conduct further research into which courses have high levels of additional hidden costs

For the University and Students' Union: To consider ways of providing free or cheap stationary for

students.

For the Students Union: To consider a cheaper SU dissertation binding service.

For the University: To increase the levels of online resources for studying/assignments

For the Students' Union: To research the reasons for the number of book fines and to work with the library to consider extended loan times over holidays.

For the University: To consider personalising reminders for book returns to increase the likelihood of on-time book returns.

For the Students' Union: To research the accessibility of hardship funds for field trips

For the Students' Union: To research what Art & design materials the University could provide

Financial Support for Students

The research and findings above demonstrate the significant financial burden that is placed on students during the course of their academic career. We researched what support services were in place and were utilised by students when facing financial concerns at the University of Lincoln.

In order to investigate the degree to which student's finances can impact on their studies, we asked students whether they had ever considered leaving their course as a result of financial issues. The results showed that 22% of respondents had considered leaving their course as a result of financial issues.

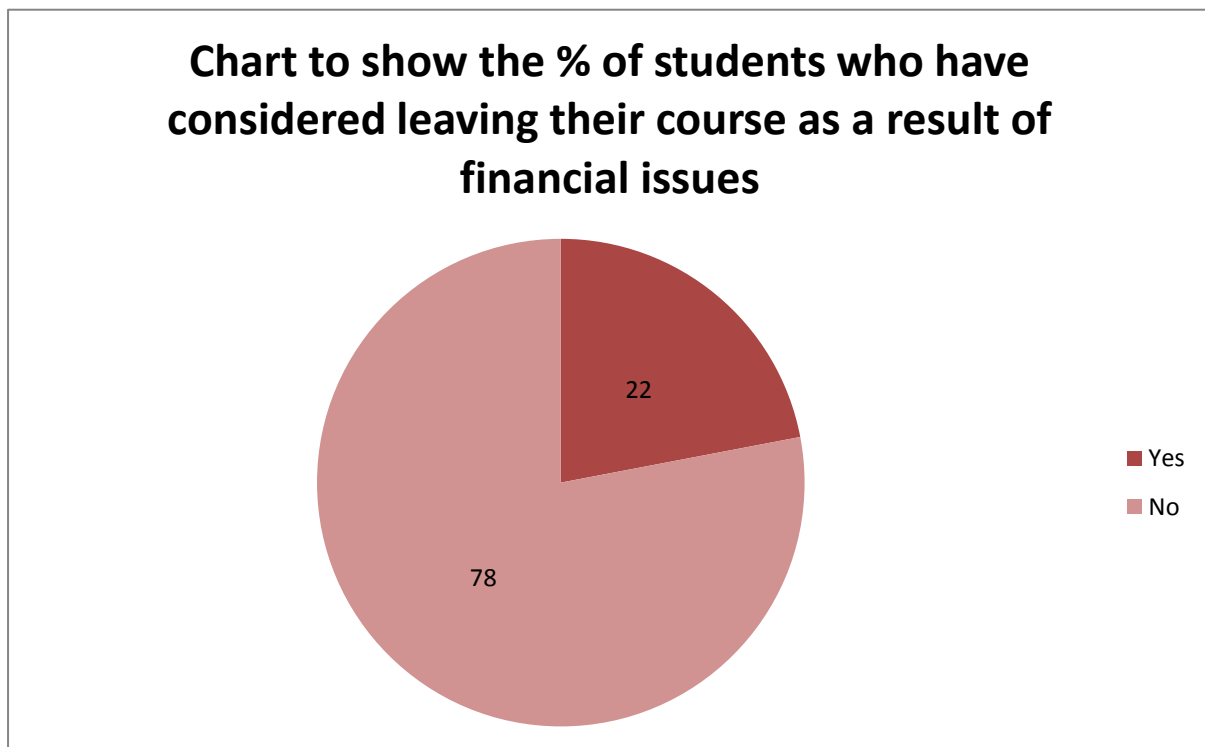


Figure 25: Chart to show the % of students who have considered leaving their course as a result of financial issues.

This has a significant impact on retention rates for the University, as if we are unable to support students through their financial concerns effectively, this may lead to higher drop-out levels.

Recommendations

For the Students’ Union: To publicise the SU Advice Centre to students as a financial support mechanism

For the University and Students’ Union: To better promote hardship funds which could help students to not reach a point where they feel they need to leave their studies

To investigate which avenues of support students use in terms of their finances, we asked students which support services they were most likely to use. The majority of respondents (85%) stated that they use student finance, which is consistent across the UK. The next highest financial support service that was used by students however was support from family and friends, which 50% of respondents utilised. Additionally 27% of students stated that they actually borrowed money from family and friends.

Results also showed that 40% of students utilised a student grant and 33% of students were in possession of a scholarship or bursary. This indicates that students are aware of these facilities as a support service.

Other financial support services that students used included the overdraft facility on a bank account which was used by 40% of respondents. Worrying 8 students also claimed that they had made use of pay day lenders.

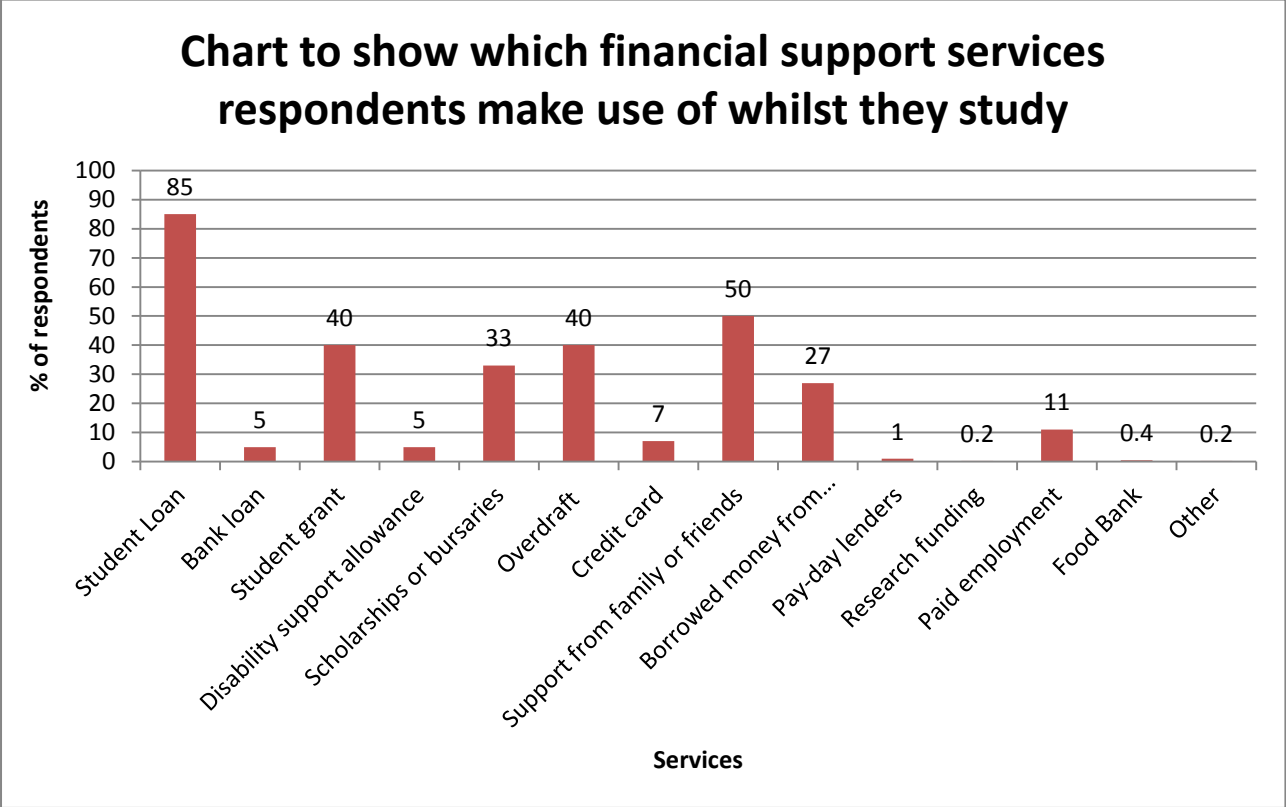


Figure 26: Chart to show which financial support services respondents make use of whilst they study.

The fact that such a high proportion of students look to their family and friends for financial support not only reflects the poor financial situation that many students are in, but it also has implications for the Widening Participation Agenda as students who do not have parents who can financially support them through their studies may therefore be significantly more likely to drop out of university early.

The high proportion of students who utilise their overdraft facility of their bank account is also concerning as it is a further indication that the financial support offered to students via student finance does not cover the basic living costs of students. Students should be given further guidance on the dangers of getting deep into their overdrafts and the difficulties of getting out of their overdraft once they are in it as well as information on the high interest levels of many overdraft facilities.

Recommendations

For the Students' Union Advice Centre: To provide information on where students can get financial support

For the Students' Union Advice Centre: To provide advice on the interest levels on an overdraft facility and warn students against getting deeply into their overdraft

For the Students' Union: To warn students against using pay day lenders

There are further financial implications for International students, who in accordance with UKCISA regulations cannot work more than 20 hours a week, and in some cases this may only be 10 hours. This may lead to International students having financial difficulties as they are unable to subsidise their studies as much as UK students.

These results also have implications for student welfare as students who work high numbers of hours not only may fall behind in their studies but may also have a poor work-life balance. The AMS did research into the effect of part time work on academic achievement and discovered that 46% of respondents were moderately concerned or very concerned about the effect of part time work on academic achievement.

Recommendations

For the Students' Union: To provide advice to students on their work-life balance and staying healthy

Students indicated above that they access a wide range of financial support services. To investigate how students feel about the financial support and advise that the University or Students' Union offer students, we asked students whether they knew how to access financial support or advice on campus.

The results showed that 51% of respondents were not aware how to access financial support or advice services on campus. This indicates that these services need to be promoted much more widely to the student body.

Chart showing % of respondents who know how to access financial support or advice on campus

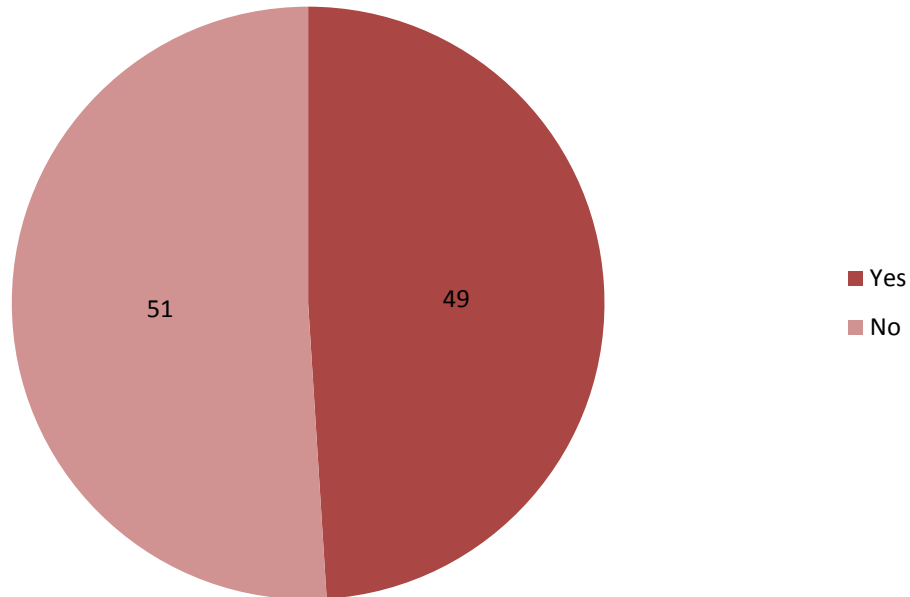


Figure 27: Chart to show % of respondents who know how to access financial support or advice on campus.

Respondents who knew how to access financial support or advice on campus were then asked if they had made use of it since they started university.

The results show that 25% of respondents who knew how to access financial support or advice on campus had used it.

Chart showing % of respondents who have used financial support or advice services since starting University

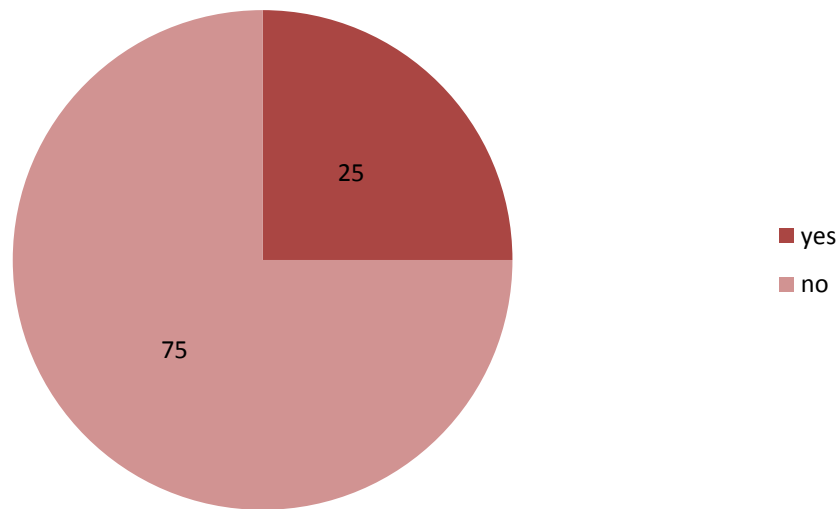


Figure 28: Chart to show % of respondents who have used financial support or advice services since starting University.

These results may either indicate that not many students have felt the need to access the financial support or advice services on campus, or may indicate that the advice services did not promote the specific financial services and support that they can offer students enough.

To investigate how satisfied students were with the provisions of financial support and advice on campus, we asked the 25% of respondents who had used the University advice service the strength to which they agreed with the statement 'I am satisfied with the provision of financial support or advice for students on campus'.

Results showed that the majority of those who had used the university advice service strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (78%).

Chart showing the strength to which respondents agree with the statement "I am satisfied by the provision of financial support or advice for students on campus"

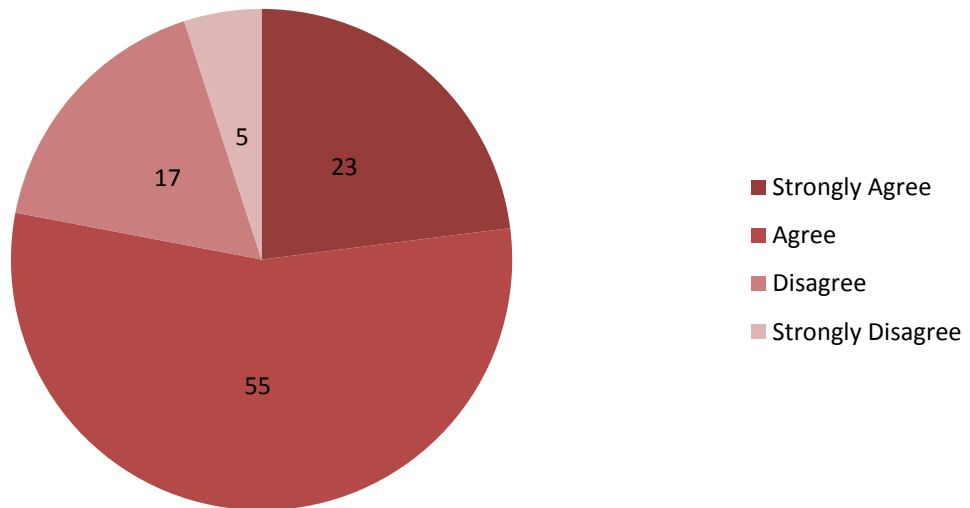


Figure 29: Chart to show the strength to which respondents agree with the statement 'I am satisfied by the provision of financial support or advice for students on campus'.

This indicates that students are mostly satisfied with the provision of financial support or advice for students on campus, therefore the lack of use of the services is likely to be due to the lack of promotion of the current services rather than a poor provision. This figure may improve with the opening of the new SU advice centre.

To investigate the services that students would use if they found themselves in financial difficulty we asked students which services they are most likely to use from a range of services.

Results showed that the majority of respondents (84%) agreed that they would look to friends or family for financial support. However 74 % of respondents stated that they would try to deal with the situation themselves. Only 37% of students said that they would seek help from the University.

Chart to show the services respondents would use if they found themselves in financial difficulty

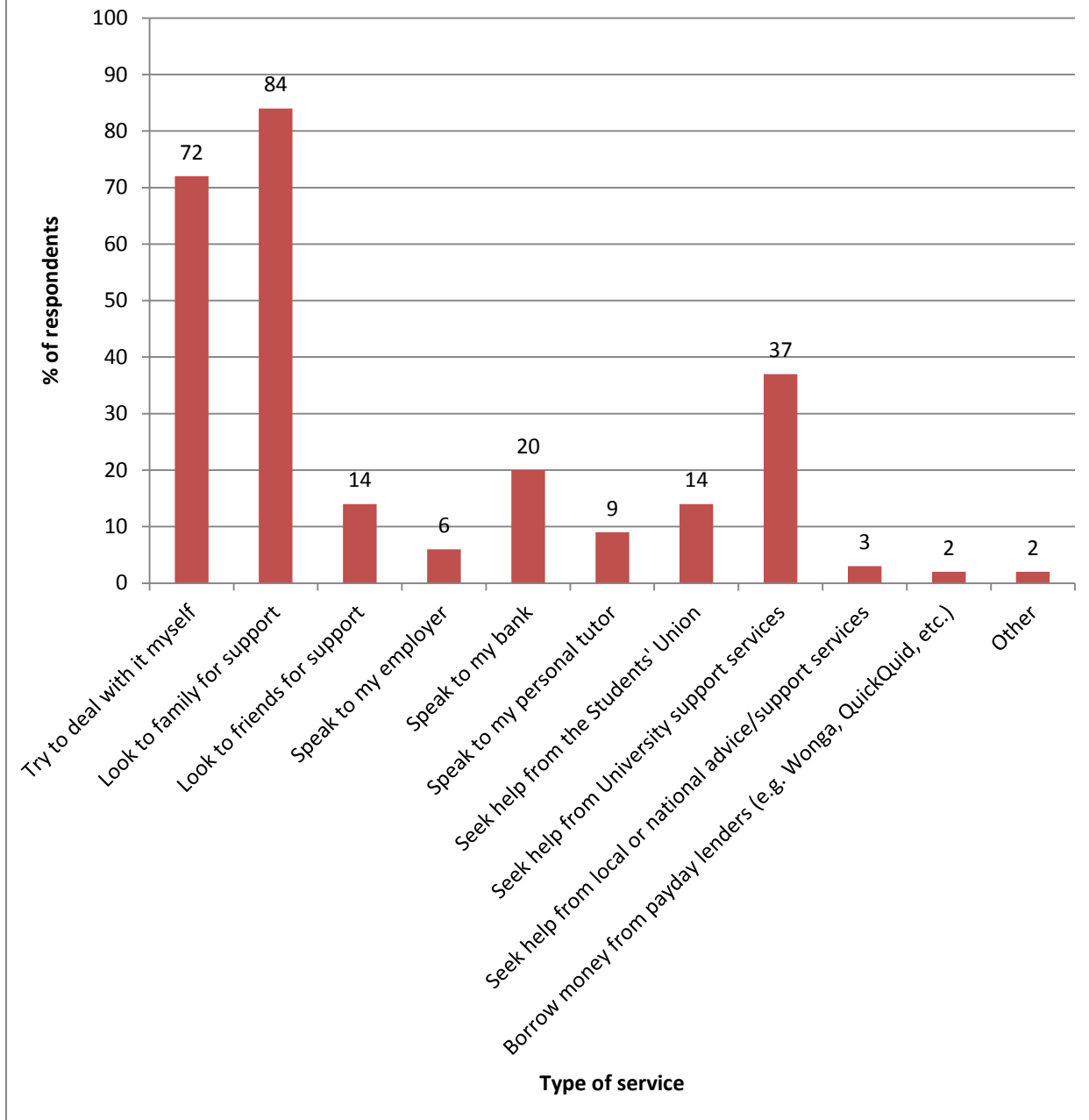


Figure 30: Chart to show the services respondents would use if they found themselves in financial difficulty.

These results indicate we need to provide more support to those students who claim that they would try to deal with the situation themselves. The opening of the new SU advice centre may aid this situation and also increase the amount of students who state that they would utilise on campus financial support or advice.

Recommendations

For the Students' Union: To promote all the services of the new SU Advice centre

For the University: To improve their promotion of their support services and how to access these services

Conclusion

This report concludes that the amount of student loan that most students receive is not sufficient to cover their accommodation costs and basic living costs, particularly when considering certain groups such as postgraduate students and students with children who have additional financial burdens.

Additionally, the report has shown that financial support provided by the University of Lincoln is not considered the first port of call for students, who would prefer to deal with the problem themselves or turn to friends and family instead. This is something that needs consideration, as there should be accessible advice on campus for students who are having financial difficulties.

The report has also shown that the majority of students have a large number and variety of hidden course costs which are all adding up to significant amounts of money. It is important that the University and Students' Union work in partnership to consider ways of reducing these costs for students.