

Investigating Cosmetic Science students' awareness of UAL Counselling, Health Advice and Chaplaincy Services

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Contents

- Background & Rationale
- Aims & Methodology
- Findings
- Next Steps

Background & Rationale

- iMSc Cosmetic Science has >90% overall satisfaction score, on all Course Student Surveys (CSS) and National Student Survey (NSS), for 5+ years
- Q26/27 on CSS and NSS has always had marked negative score difference, from all other questions and total scores – *hidden impact on student experience?*
- **Q26/27:** ‘How well communicated was information about your university/college’s mental wellbeing support services?’



Aims & Methodology

- **Aim:** Investigate student's awareness and identify sources of information, for UAL services around mental health and wellbeing
- **Tools:** Survey – shared with 129 students across five cohorts (Y1-4 + Placement), via email
 - **Retain anonymity & avoid disclosure** – due to the nature of the topic, no information that could lead to identification could have been collected (Braun et al., 2021)
 - **Mixed-methods:**
 - Quantitative – e.g. Likert scales for satisfaction, use of specific terms for consistent demographics data
 - Qualitative – open ended questions to capture experiences and information sources
- **Early reflection points:**
 - Difficulty with cross-referencing of 'mental wellbeing support services' as stated on NSS/CSS, with UAL services – multiple services for overlapping needs, and with overlapping responsibilities → **could be a reason for NSS/CSS student responses** (Bennett and Kane, 2014)
 - Even though some questions asked for student opinions, still not an 'open' conversation – lack of phenomenological response, mono-dimensional data
 - A survey 'test run' was not done before dissemination to participants

Project Findings

- 20 participants from Cosmetic Science, Years 1-4 and on Placement

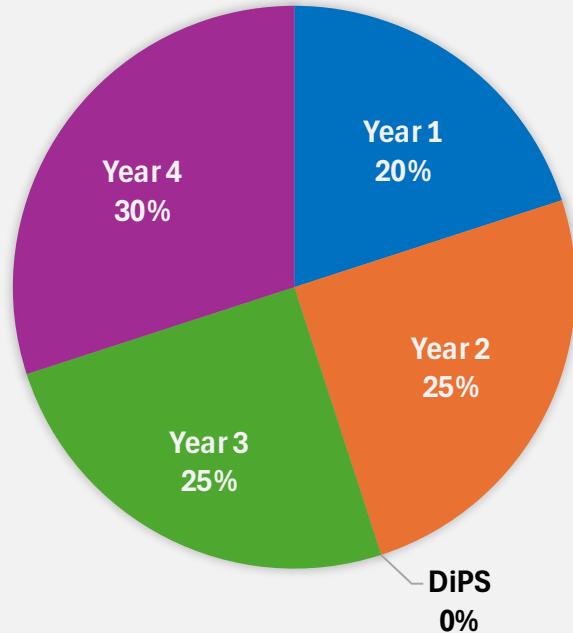


Figure 1: Participant's Year of Study

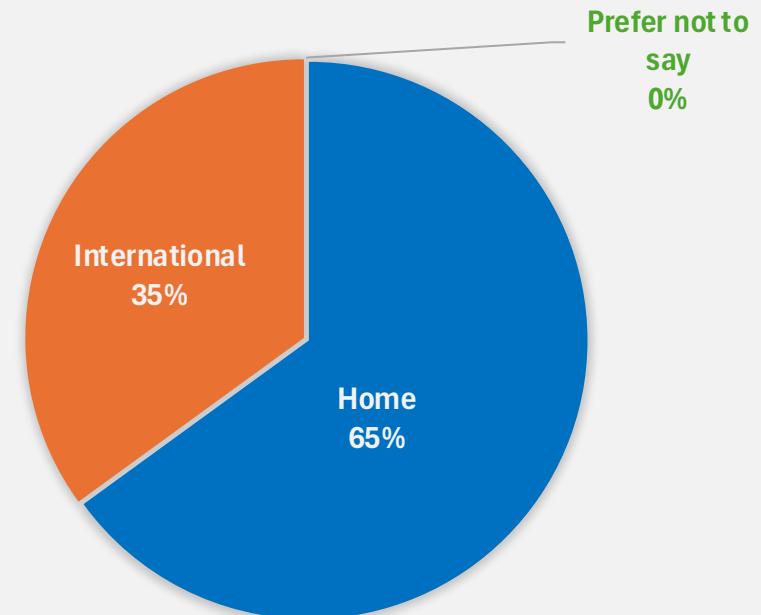


Figure 2: Participant's Fee Status

Project Findings

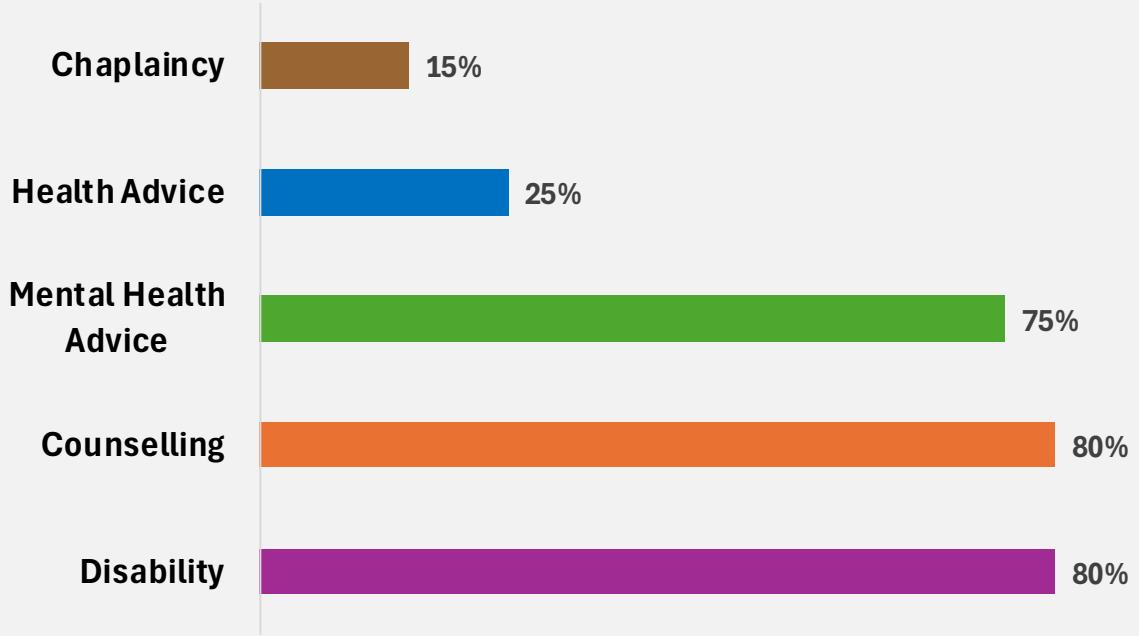


Figure 3: Percentage of participants who reported familiarity with each service (multiple responses were permitted)

- **75% of respondents** shared that they **were aware that these services were available to students**, before receiving this questionnaire
- From the respondents who were of the services, **40% tried and were able to access support**, whereas **60% of them had not tried to access support**, by the time of this survey
 - *superficial analysis of data revealed that students who claimed that they were unaware of the services before this survey, also reported familiarity with some of these services, contradicting their earlier responses – a sign of the survey's limitations*

Project Findings

- *Data from this point onwards reflect the experiences of respondents who were aware of these services, before receiving the questionnaire*

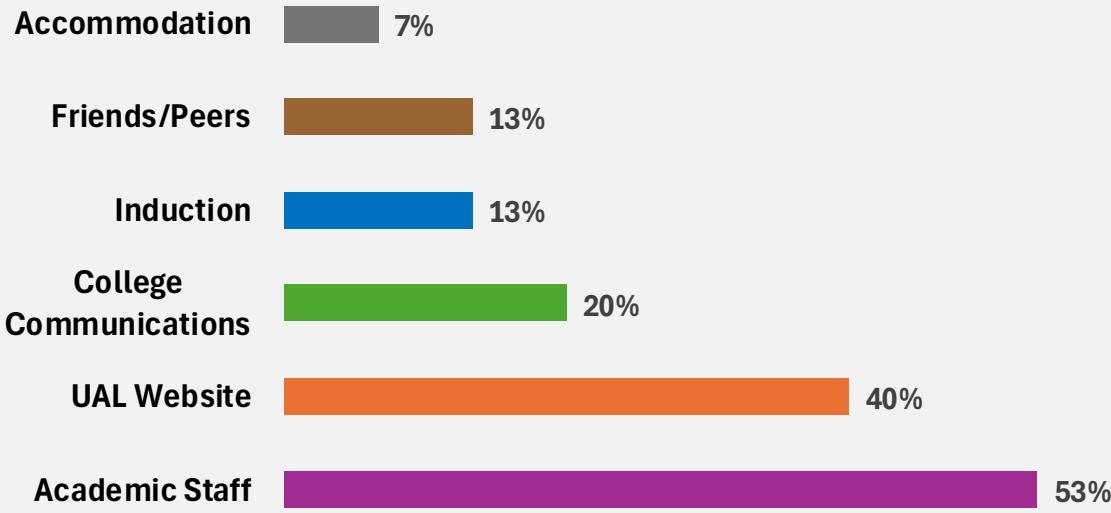


Figure 4: Source of Information about UAL services. Open-ended responses were thematically coded – the chart shows how frequently each theme was mentioned (some responses contributed to more than one theme)

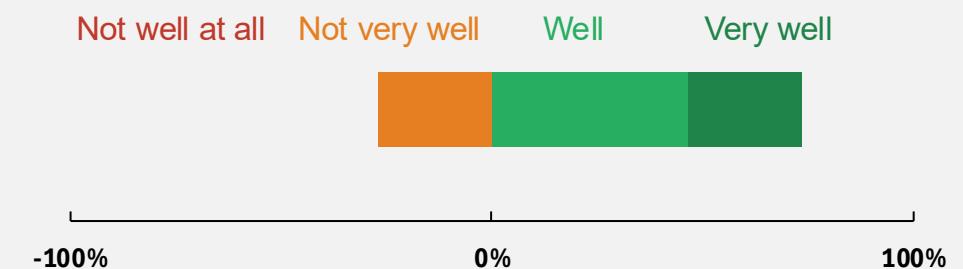


Figure 5: Participant ratings of how well information about UAL's Counselling, Health Advice and Chaplaincy services was communicated, measured on a four-point sentiment scale

Project Findings

Qualitative insights into how information about UAL's Counselling, Health Advice and Chaplaincy services was communicated, showed that:

- Information was easy to find, once students were directed to the correct resources
- While most students received information directly from academic staff, this was still 'patchy'
- The type and extent of support available is not well explained or interpreted

"The websites are detailed and emails from the team contain helpful information. The extent of help they're able to offer isn't the most well expounded upon." – **Participant 24, Year 4**

"It was encouraged by tutors to seek out help if students needed it for personal reasons such as mental health help and counselling." – **Participant 7, Year 2**

"When you have been guided to the appropriate place i.e. the relevant webpage, it is straightforward from the start point onwards, however it is the type of thing you only know about if someone has told you, rather than it being widely advertised." – **Participant 8, Year 3**

"I've seen it advertised around some uni spaces, but I haven't had much direct information about it." – **Participant 12, Year 3**

*Selected illustrative quotes from open-ended responses

Next Steps

- **Further analysis** is needed – can reveal reasons behind cohort-specific negative change in CSS/NSS Q26/27 score
 - *Do tutors stop mentioning these services over time? Do students access support and their negative experience affects 'communication' score due to bias?*
- **Project-informed actions:**
 - Encourage tutors to share **information** about services **at all levels** – avoid assumption of prior knowledge
 - Share handouts with students, **explaining** further different services, types of support and easiest way of access
 - Embed sessions from Services in course calendar – increase **visibility**
 - **Minimise ambiguity** in CSS and NSS – can only be implemented in survey briefings

References

- Bennett, R. and Kane, S. (2014) 'Students' interpretations of the meanings of questionnaire items in the National Student Survey', *Quality in Higher Education*, 20(2), pp. 129–164. doi: 10.1080/13538322.2014.924786.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L., and McEvoy, C. (2021) 'The online survey as a qualitative research tool', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24(6), pp. 641–654. doi: 10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550.
- Counselling, Health Advice and Chaplaincy | UAL (2026) *Counselling, Health Advice and Chaplaincy*. Available at: <https://www.arts.ac.uk/students/student-services/counselling-health-advice-and-chaplaincy>
- NSS (2026) *National Student Survey*. Available at: <https://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>

Thank you!

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