

Student Financial Support Survey Initial Findings

Introduction

The University Widening Participation Research Cluster's role in the Review Group's work has been two-fold. First, the Director has previously briefed the group on the pertinent research evidence available from the HE sector nationally and from other on-going work within the University.

Second, in collaboration with a number of other University colleagues, a series of questionnaires of current Year 2 Bristol students has been proposed, designed and conducted using the Bristol Online Surveys platform for its delivery. This covers four different surveyed populations – three in receipt of University financial support in 2012/13 (low income students choosing the 'cash bursary' option, those opting instead for support solely as a fee waiver, and Access students, who receive both and make no choice) and one further control group of students from somewhat higher family income backgrounds, but still within the range supported financially by competitor universities (£25-£43k). These surveys have variously focussed on three questions, central to the Review Group's remit:

- students' evaluations of the current funding package,
- their views on how this might beneficially be changed in future years,
- and their Year 1 financially-relevant experiences and decisions.

The surveys were launched on 13th December and closed on 6th January, after two or three reminders had been sent to all potential respondents. The eventual responses and response rates received were:

Access students –

Other funded students (fee waiver + cash bursary) -

Unfunded students -

What follows is an interim report of the main findings of the surveys, as produced by Dr Yvette Hartfree (Personal Research Finance Centre) and Dr Giles Brown (formerly of the School of Geographical Sciences), including some commentary and final summary of my own. A more extended report would be possible subsequently, as would some wider dissemination of the results, within and beyond the University.

1 Receipt of Financial Support

1.1 University Funded Students

The majority of funded students (79%) opted to take part of their financial support as a partial cash bursary, with only 21 per cent taking it entirely as a fee waiver. There were no statistically significant differences in how students from different faculties took their financial support.

Table 1 Choice of financial support by Faculty

	Arts	Engineering	Medical & Veterinary Science	Medicine & Dentistry	Science	Social Sciences & Law	All
Partly as a cash bursary (%)	74	78	71	67	88	79	79
<i>N</i>	20	7	15	6	36	22	106
Entirely as a fee waiver (%)	26	22	29	33	12	21	21
<i>N</i>	7	2	6	3	5	6	29
<i>Base</i>	27	9	21	9	41	28	135

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

Whilst most students who received funding were satisfied with the option they took (94 per cent overall), more students who took their funding entirely as a fee waiver would *not* choose this option again (17 per cent), compared to an equivalent of only three per cent of those who took a cash bursary.

Table 2 Satisfaction with choice of financial support by funding status

	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Would take the same option again (%)	97	83	94
<i>N</i>	103	24	127
Would take the alternative option (%)	3	17	6
<i>N</i>	3	5	8
<i>Base</i>	106	29	135

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences between groups.

A more detailed analysis was also made of the free-text reasons given to support each of the two options on offer (FW and CB) by students who had chosen each of the two funding alternatives, further cross-examined by their satisfaction or otherwise with their choice (ie eight categories in total). As the levels of contentment with the choices made are large the results below first focus on the perceived advantages of the chosen options for those students taking and satisfied with their choice, who make up the lion's share of all respondents..

Cash Bursary students

Of the 106 students who took the CB 103 would take the same option again. Ninety three of these provided a textual response regarding the perceived benefits of CB. Forty six (51%) of these cited a single benefit, 31 (33%) two issues, 10 (11%) three issues, four (4.3%) four issues and one (1.1%) five issues. This produced a total of 17 issues raised by the 93 students who provided a textual response.

The vast majority (87 of 93 [94%]) cited *living costs* as the main general benefit of the CB, which breaks down more specifically as follows:

Living Costs (unspecified)	23 students (25%)
Living Costs (a) accommodation (within year)	29 students (31%)
Living Costs (b) accommodation (across years, e.g. Year 2)	15 students (16%)
Living Costs (c) bills	16 students (17%)
Living Costs (d) Study (e.g. books etc.)	4 students (4.3%)

Of the remainder, the next largest issues were *financial security* (12 students [13%]), *not having to get a paid job in term-time* (10 students [11%]), *more cash/less lenient budgeting* (8 students [8.9%]) and a perception of *reduced stress* (8 students [8.9%]). Five students (5.4%) raised the benefit of the CB *facilitating participation in extra-curricular activities/joining in with their peers* and six (6.5%) a *better quality of life*.

Fee waiver students

Twenty two of the 24 potential respondees content with their choice of the FW provided textual responses as to the advantages of the FW. Of these 18 cited a single benefit and four two benefits.

The vast majority of responded (19 of 22 [86%]) cited less debt/reduced financial burden after graduation as the main benefit of the FW, with two (9.1%) citing the FW as an incentive to go to university. Three cited non-standard (*other*) reasons, including reduced fear of debt if they dropped out and the choice not making much difference. Other benefits cited by individual students included the FW being advantageous for those who are less good at budgeting and it providing a better start to working life.

Overall comparisons of FW and CB options

Taking these results in conjunction with those for all the other categories (and the small sample of Access students, who were asked a similar question) the perceived advantages of the CB were more varied than the perceived advantages of FW in both the Access and Funded groups. Numerically, the *CB-funded* students identified 17 different issues (from the 22 issue classification of all responses in the survey -see Appendix A) the *FW-funded* students 12 different issues and the *Access* students eight. This contrasts with the perceived advantages of the FW by all three categories of students; the *CB-* and *FW-funded* students identified seven different issues (from the same classification), and the *Access* students three.

Further, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the distribution of issues differs between the perceived advantages of the CB and FW too. This is predominantly manifested in the dominance of the perceived advantage of *less debt/reduced financial burden after graduation* category under the perceived advantages of the FW by both CB- and FW-funded students. So, of the 52 textual responses from a population of 100 CB-funded students 39 identified *less debt/reduced financial burden after graduation* as a perceived benefit of the FW; the next largest category ('*other*') identified only received 9 counts. The same is true for the FW-funded students (21 identified *less debt/reduced financial burden after graduation* as a perceived benefit of the FW [where 26 of 29 students provide a textual response]; the next largest category ['*other*'] identified only received 3 counts).

1.2 Influence of the University finance package on students' decision making

For over half of all students (57 per cent) the University's finance package had no influence on their decision to apply to Bristol (Table 3). However, for those students whose decision to apply to Bristol was influenced by the finance package (17 per cent said either they were influenced *quite a lot* or *it was a major influence*) all but one was in receipt of funding¹.

Similarly, among students for whom the University's finance package also influenced their decision to accept a place at Bristol (27 per cent said either they were influenced *quite a lot* or it was a *major influence*), all of these students were in receipt of funding - representing 36 per cent of funded students. Interestingly, over half of students in receipt of funding (61 per cent) reported that the University's finance package had either no, or very little impact, on their decision to accept a place at Bristol.

There are a minority of students (in the unfunded group) for whom the University's finance package had an effect on their decision to apply to Bristol and to accept a place at Bristol, but who did not receive funding.

There were no statistically significant differences in the decision-making of funded students who took their University funding as a fee waiver and those who took some of it as a cash bursary.

Table 3 Influence of University finance package on decision making by funding status

	Funded	Unfunded	All	Funded	Unfunded	All
Affect on decision to apply to Bristol:				Affect on decision to accept a place at Bristol:		
Not at all (%)	54	67	57	44	70	50
<i>N</i>	75	31	106	61	32	93
Slightly %	21	26	23	18	28	20
<i>N</i>	30	12	42	25	13	38
Quite a lot (%)	8	2	6	19	0	14

¹ Please note that some derived percentages may not appear to tally with the figures in the tables due to rounding.

<i>N</i>	11	1	12	26	0	26
A major factor (%)	14	0	10	18	0	13
<i>N</i>	19	0	19	25	0	25
Cant remember (%)	4	4	4	2	2	2
<i>N</i>	5	2	7	3	1	4
<i>Base</i>	140	46	186	140	46	186

Base is all students.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences between groups.

% figures may not sum correctly due to rounding.

2 Changes to the University Financial Support Package

The change to the University financial support package that received most support was for greater choice in the amount of fee waiver that could be taken as a cash bursary, supported by half of all students (49 per cent; Table 4). However, support for this change was significantly higher among students who received funding (56 per cent) compared to unfunded students and even higher (60 per cent) among students who received part of their financial support as a cash bursary.

Table 4 Support for changes to the University finance package by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Greater choice in the amount of fee waiver that can be taken as a cash bursary	Yes (%)	56	28	49	60	34	55
	<i>N</i>	78	13	91	64	10	74
Improvements to the advice and information offered to undergraduates	Yes (%)	33	37	34	34	31	33
	<i>N</i>	46	17	63	36	9	45
Extension of financial support across a wider range of incomes above £25,000	Yes (%)	16	61	27	19	0	15
	<i>N</i>	23	28	51	20	0	20
Greater choice of ways to take some or all of the financial support	Yes (%)	32	30	32	32	28	31
	<i>N</i>	45	14	59	34	8	42
No change	Yes (%)	24	7	19	21	38	24
	<i>N</i>	33	3	36	22	11	33
<i>Base</i>		140	46	186	106	29	135

Base is all students.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences.

Base is all students in

receipt of University funding.

Between a quarter and a third of all students were in support of the other changes. Support for improving the advice and information offered to undergraduates and for offering a greater choice of ways that students can take their financial support did not significantly differ between funded and unfunded students, or between funded students

who took part of their financial support as a cash bursary and those who had a only a fee waiver.

A quarter of all students (27 per cent) were in favour of extending financial support to incomes above £25,000. As might be expected, students who did not receive funding were significantly more in favour of this change (61 per cent²) compared to students in receipt of funding (16 per cent). (It is worth noting that all respondents were assured that neither they personally, nor their cohort peers, would be affected either beneficially or otherwise by any changes the University might make based on its current survey.) Among funded students, those who took part of their financial support as a cash bursary were more supportive of this change (19 per cent) compared to those who received all of their financial support as a fee waiver (no students).

Overall, only one in five students (19 per cent) thought the financial support package did *not* need changing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, support for not changing the current package was significantly higher among students who received funding (24 per cent) than among those who did not.

Among students who wanted to see more choice in the ways that financial support could be taken, the most popular choice was payment of accommodation costs supported by half (52 per cent) of these students (Table 5). The other choices for different ways of receiving financial support were supported by one in five of these students. There were no statistically significant differences in the views of funded students compared to unfunded students, or between students who took their part of their financial support as a cash bursary, compared to those who chose the fee waiver.

Table 5 Support for other ways to take financial support by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Accommodation costs	Yes (%)	49	69	52	48	40	47
	<i>N</i>	38	9	47	31	4	35
A laptop, tablet or equivalent	Yes (%)	23	15	22	25	10	23
	<i>N</i>	18	2	20	16	1	17
Sports Centre pass	Yes (%)	19	31	21	19	10	18
	<i>N</i>	15	4	19	12	1	13
Other	Yes (%)	6	15	8	6	0	5
	<i>N</i>	5	2	7	4	0	4
<i>Base</i>		78	13	91	64	10	74

Base is all students in favour of offering other forms of financial support.

Among students who thought that University financial support should be extended to incomes above £25,000, the majority (four in five) agreed that lower income students should still get more support than higher income students.

² This percentage and others associated with the unfunded students, needs to be treated with caution due to the small sample size of this group.

3 Students' Financial Circumstances

3.1 Student Income and Borrowing

The most common source of income students had was financial support from their family that did not have to be repaid (Table 6). Unfunded students were significantly more likely to receive support from their family (61 per cent) compared to students who received funding (25 per cent). This may reflect that unfunded students come from relatively more affluent families who are more able to provide financial help, or that unfunded students are more in need of financial support and turn to their families for help.

Very few students had sponsorship (4 per cent), received a disability allowance or grant (4 per cent), or received a grant from an educational charity (7 per cent). Within the 'others' the only significant item was for both funded and unfunded students was income from having a job (20 students overall).

Table 6 Students' income sources by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Sponsorship (e.g. from industry, school, armed forces)	Yes (%)	4	2	4	5	3	4
	N	6	1	7	5	1	6
Disabled students allowance or other disability grants	Yes (%)	4	4	4	5	0	4
	N	5	2	7	5	0	5
Bursary or grant from educational charity	Yes (%)	6	9	7	6	10	7
	N	9	4	13	6	3	9
Financial support from family that doesn't have to be repaid	Yes (%)	25	61	34	23	31	24
	N	35	28	63	24	9	33
Other	Yes (%)	29	24	27	30	24	29
	N	40	11	51	32	7	39
<i>Base</i>		<i>140</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>135</i>

Base is all students.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences.

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

Turning to the issue of 'borrowings', most students (90 per cent) had taken out a student tuition fee or maintenance loan (Table 7). The second most common source of borrowing was an overdraft (39 per cent). Among students in receipt of funding, those who took part of their financial support as a cash bursary were much more likely to have an overdraft (50 per cent) compared to students who took their support entirely as a fee waiver (14 per cent).

Around one in five students received financial support from their family or friends that had to be paid back (22 per cent); however, unfunded students were significantly more likely to have this (46 per cent) than funded students (14 per cent).

Very few students had either a credit (or store) card that was not paid off in full each month (2 per cent) or a commercial loan (1 per cent)

Table 7 Students' sources of borrowing by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Overdraft	Yes (%)	42	28	39	50	14	42
	<i>N</i>	59	13	72	53	4	57
Financial support from family or friends that has to be paid back	Yes (%)	14	46	22	14	14	14
	<i>N</i>	19	21	40	15	4	19
Credit (or store) card debt which is not paid off fully each month	Yes (%)	2	2	2	1*	7*	2*
	<i>N</i>	3	1	4	1	2	3
Other loan from a commercial lender (e.g. bank, payday lender)	Yes (%)	1	2	1	1	0	1
	<i>N</i>	1	1	2	1	0	1
Student tuition fee and / or maintenance loan	Yes (%)	88	96	90	87	93	88
	<i>N</i>	123	44	167	92	27	119
Other	Yes (%)	1	0	1	1	0	1
	<i>N</i>	1	0	1	1	0	1
<i>Base</i>		140	46	186	106	29	135

Base is all students

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences.

*Results are borderline statistically significant.

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

3.2 Participation in term-time employment

Only a quarter of students (25 per cent) undertook part-time work during term time (Table 8). Perhaps surprisingly, funded students were no more or less likely to work than unfunded students and there were no significant differences between funded students who received part of their funding as a cash bursary and those who took only a fee waiver. Similarly there were no differences between students from different faculties in their likelihood of working.

Table 8 Participation in term-time work by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Undertook term-time work	Yes (%)	24	28	25	25	24	24
	<i>N</i>	33	13	46	26	7	33
	No (%)	76	72	75	75	76	76
	<i>N</i>	107	33	140	80	22	102
<i>Base</i>		140	46	186	106	29	135

Base is all students.

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

By age group, mature students appeared to be more likely to work during term-time, but due to the limited sample size the results were not statistically significant.

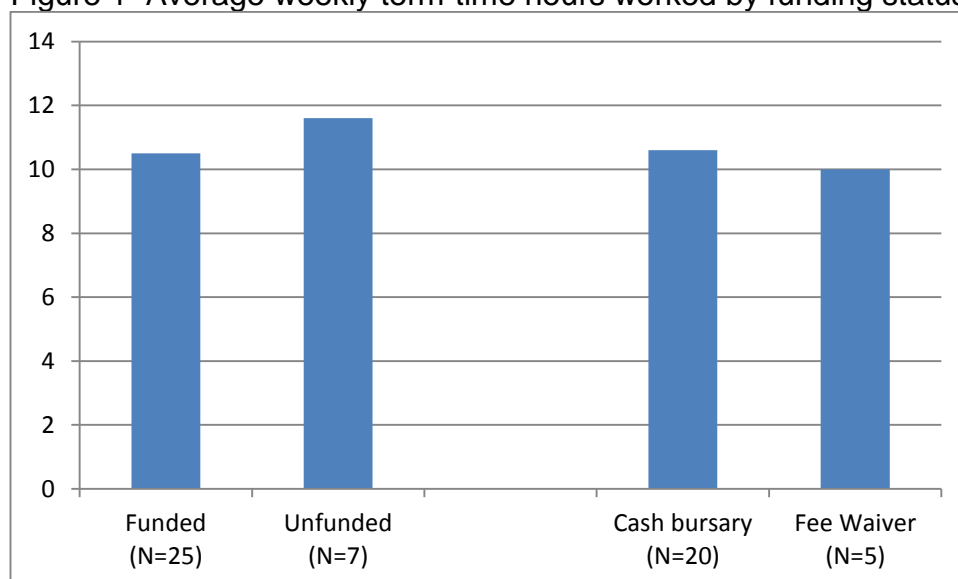
Table 9 Participation in term-time work by age group

		Under 21	Over 21	All
Undertook term-time work	Yes (%)	24	38	25
	<i>N</i>	41	5	46
	No (%)	76	62	75
	<i>N</i>	132	8	140
<i>Base</i>		173	13	186

Base is all students.

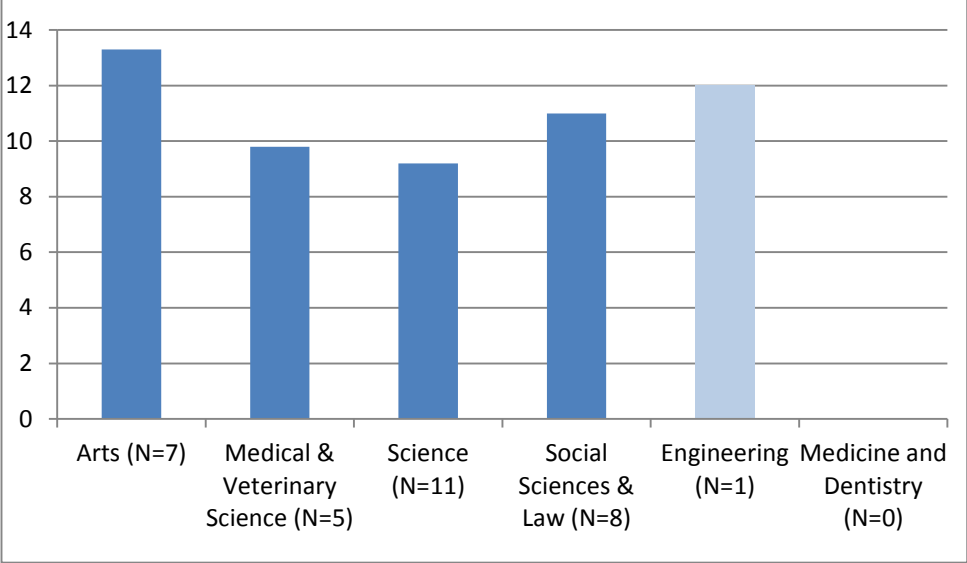
The average number of hours students worked per week was 10.7 (with a standard deviation of 5.9 hours). However, this figure needs to be treated with some caution as 14 of the 46 students who reported working did not state how many hours they worked. There were no statistically significant differences in the average number of hours students worked per week according to their funding status, faculty or age group (Figures 1-3). The only modest differences between reported hours worked FW and CB students is perhaps surprising; maybe the 'ready cash in hand' benefit of the latter is counterbalanced by the fact that those opting for it are more likely to feel the need for funding supplementation while a student in the first place.

Figure 1 Average weekly term-time hours worked by funding status



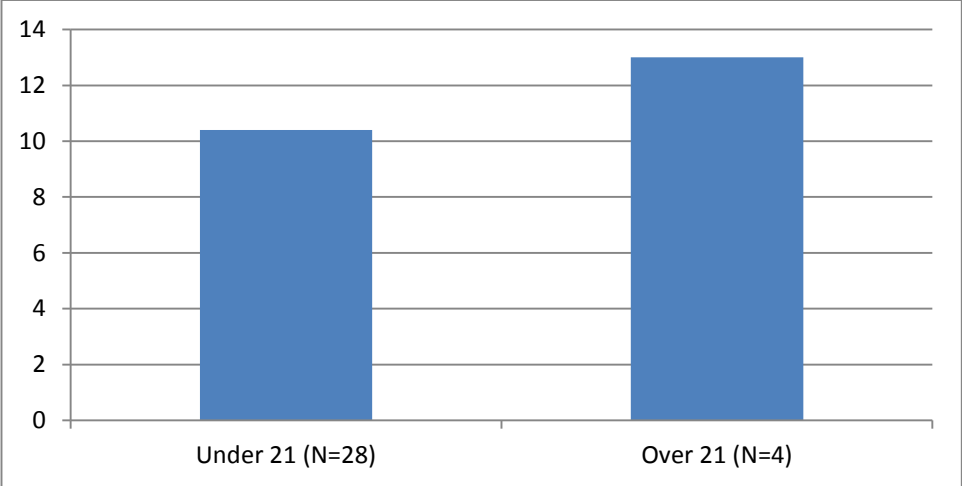
Base is all students who worked and stated the number of hours per week they worked (N=32).

Figure 2 Average weekly term-time hours worked by Faculty



Base is all students who worked and stated the number of hours per week they worked (N=32).

Figure 3 Average weekly term-time hours worked by age group



Base is all students who worked and stated the number of hours per week they worked (N=32).

Among those students who worked, the main reason for doing so was financial (cited by 83 per cent). One in five (20 per cent) chose to work for other reasons. There were no statistically significant differences as to the reasons why students worked according to their funding status, faculty, or age group.

4 Students' Wider Experiences of University

4.1 Ease of meeting financial costs and outgoings

Around half of all students (47 per cent) reported that they found it 'easy' to meet their financial costs and outgoings during the academic year, although few found it 'very easy' (5 per cent; Table 10). Around half of all students (53 per cent) reported that they found it 'difficult' to meet their financial costs and outgoings during the academic year, with one in ten students (11 per cent) finding it 'very difficult'.

Students who received funding were less likely to have difficulty meeting their expenses (45 per cent found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult') compared to students who did not receive funding. Three quarters of unfunded students (76 per cent) reported finding it difficult, with one in five (22 per cent) finding it 'very difficult'.

Among students who received university funding, a higher proportion of students who received part of their financial support as a cash bursary found it difficult (either 'quite' or 'very difficult') to meet their financial outgoings (47%) compared to students who took their financial support as a fee waiver (38%) (though the difference was not statistically significant). There were also no statistically significant differences found by age group or faculty.

Table 10 Ease of meeting financial costs and outgoings by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Ease of meeting financial costs and outgoings during the academic year	Very easy (%)	5	4	5	5	3	4
	<i>N</i>	7	2	9	5	1	6
	Quite easy (%)	50	20	42	48	59	50
	<i>N</i>	70	9	79	51	17	68
	Quite difficult (%)	38	54	42	40	31	38
	<i>N</i>	53	25	78	42	9	51
	Very difficult (%)	7	22	11	8	7	7
<i>N</i>	10	10	20	8	2	10	
<i>Base</i>		140	46	186	106	29	135

Base is all students.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences.

Figures may not sum correctly due to rounding.

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

4.2 Participation in extra-curricular activities

Over half of all students (58 per cent) reported that their finances significantly limited their ability to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as clubs and societies, sports, hobbies and volunteering. However, students who did not receive funding were much more likely to report this (74 per cent) compared to students who received funding (53 per cent). Among students who received university funding there were no

differences between those who took their support as a partial cash bursary and those who took it all as a fee waiver. Equally, there were no statistically significant differences in the proportions of students reporting that their finances limited their participation in extra-curricular activities according to their faculty or age group.

Table 11 Participation in extra-curricular activities by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Whether finances significantly limited participation in extra-curricular activities	Yes (%)	53	74	58	52	55	53
	<i>N</i>	74	34	108	55	16	71
	No (%)	47	26	42	48	45	47
	<i>N</i>	66	12	78	51	13	64
<i>Base</i>		140	46	186	106	29	135

Base is all students.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences.

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

4.3 Whether students considered withdrawing from the University

Overall, one in five students (21 per cent) reported that they seriously considered withdrawing from the University. However, this rose to over a third of students who did not receive funding (35 per cent). Whether university funded students received their financial support as a partial cash bursary or entirely as a fee waiver had no effect on whether they were more or less likely to consider withdrawing from the University.

Table 12 Whether students considered withdrawing from the University by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All	Cash bursary	Fee waiver	All
Whether seriously considered withdrawing from University	Yes (%)	16	35	21	17	17	17
	<i>N</i>	23	16	39	18	5	23
	No (%)	84	65	79	83	83	83
	<i>N</i>	117	30	147	88	24	112
<i>Base</i>		140	46	186	106	29	135

Base is all students.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences.

Base is all students in receipt of University funding.

While there were no differences between students from across each individual faculty, students from the Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Law, were more likely to have considered withdrawing from university (28 per cent) compared to students from all of the other faculties (16 per cent). There is no obvious explanation as to why this might be.

Table 13 Whether students considered withdrawing from the University by faculty group

		Arts, Social Sciences & Law	Other Faculties	All
Whether seriously considered withdrawing from University	Yes (%)	28	16	21
	<i>N</i>	22	17	39
	No (%)	72	84	79
	<i>N</i>	56	91	147
<i>Base</i>		78	108	186

Base is all students.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences between groups.

By age group, mature students appeared to be more likely to have considered withdrawing from the University. However, the results were not statistically significant. A larger sample of mature students would be required to verify any differences between these age groups.

Table 14 Whether students considered withdrawing from the University by age group

		Under 21	Over 21	All
Whether seriously considered withdrawing from University	Yes (%)	20	31	21
	<i>N</i>	35	4	39
	No (%)	80	69	79
	<i>N</i>	138	9	147
<i>Base</i>		173	13	186

Base is all students.

The reasons why some students considered withdrawing were fairly evenly split between students who cited financial reasons, either as a primary or partial reason (54 per cent), and students who considered withdrawing for other (non-financial) reasons (46 per cent; Table 15). Perhaps unsurprisingly, unfunded students were much more likely to cite financial reasons than funded students³. No differences were found between students of different age groups, or between students from different faculties.

³ Whilst the difference between funded and unfunded students is statistically significant, the percentage figures need to be treated with caution due to the very small sample size.

Table 15 Reasons for considering withdrawing by funding status

		Funded	Unfunded	All
Reasons for considering withdrawing from university	Financial reasons (%)	39	75	54
	<i>N</i>	9	12	21
	Non-financial reasons (%)	61	25	46
	<i>N</i>	14	4	18
<i>Base</i>		23	16	39

Base is all students who considered withdrawing.

Figures in bold indicate statistically significant differences between groups

5. Implications for the Review Group

5.1. *The value of cash bursaries for students and the University*

Of the two options offered to funded students in the survey population, the cash bursary is clearly the more popular, both in its take-up and its very high 'satisfaction-with-choice' level. The University can feel well justified in making this change to the originally-advertised package to its first cohort of students paying £9k tuition fees. Our respondents' major wish for change in the present system is to be allowed to take more of their support as a bursary than the current £2k allocation. Furthermore, the benefits students see from taking the cash bursary are more diverse than those from the fee waiver. One inference is that this provides effective financial support for a wide range of pre-University personal, financial and other circumstances of students from low-income, and presumably under-represented 'WP' groups, which the University is striving to recruit. Another is that it is also more responsive to within-year perturbations in financial circumstances. So after *living expenses* (categories 0 – 4 inclusive, which is the dominant perceived benefit, *financial security* (perceived 'insurance' / 'safety net' / 'stability') is the largest non-'other' category (12 responses).

5.2 *The value of choice*

Nevertheless, a substantial minority still opted for the fee waiver alternative and here too the satisfaction score is high, albeit not quite as high for the cash bursary respondents. For some students the FW route is clearly a much-valued option, and it would seem unwise for the University unilaterally to dispense with this simply on the grounds that it was the minority choice. Clearly, some students genuinely prefer the future security of a less post-graduation debt to cash in hand. For the University this offers an attractive 'USP' in the ever-more, now cap-less, competitive market for good students from widening participation, without any increase in the funding allocated to student support – few if any other universities offered such choice last year, and even if ours arose serendipitously that is no reason not to capitalise on it.

5.3. *The attraction of student finance*

Assuming respondents' memories can be relied upon, the financial package offered by the University does not, at first glance, seem a significant factor in choices of University applications and acceptance for most students, though this is not to deny its importance for a minority. Remember, though, that the finance package on offer to respondents at the time of these UCAS decisions was initially formulated simply in FW terms – the CB option coming about subsequently. It seems likely that an equivalent repeat survey of students presented with the current, two-choice' package might show less indifference to the Bristol financial offer against our competitor universities, especially as the CB addition has proven itself so popular. Furthermore, even assuming that most students still showed themselves indifferent to the now-enhanced Bristol package in the context of the alternatives available among competitors, it would be dangerous to infer that reducing the overall level of support offered would not affect Bristol's appeal to potential applicants, if, say, it transferred significant funds from bursaries to outreach. There would be bound to be reputational damage, and if Bristol

chose to position itself to below the normal spectrum of student funding support available amongst our peers this could also move us in students' perceptions from 'well, Bristol's neither better or nor worse than the rest' to 'anywhere but Bristol'.

5.4. *Enriching the student experience*

Whatever the funding option chosen, and whatever the impact on applicants, it does appear that the package currently offered to Year 1 students has a significant impact throughout their Year 1 experiences in other ways too. Although, perhaps surprisingly, there was comparatively little texturing of student responses by FW against the CB choice, or by Faculty (there was rather more so by age, perhaps predictably) it nevertheless appears that having some such funding support of whatever sort reduced the chances of recipients thinking of withdrawing, enhanced their opportunities for extra-curricular activities, and made for a more relaxed management of their personal funds. This last seems particularly important for WP students with no prior experience of this and little financial acumen without their families to call upon, and for whom the financial implications of a degree course might otherwise be daunting. Finally, it is tempting to see the Bristol funding package as contributing to students' sense of 'belonging', which other recent studies have pinpointed as significant in sustaining students from under-represented groups at university, so strengthening their sense of loyalty to, and identification with, their University.

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Appendix A

Free-text responses to survey questions of the benefits of Fee waivers and Cash Bursaries (combined classification)

0	Living costs (unspecified)
1	Living costs (a) accommodation (within year)
2	Living costs (b) accommodation (across years, e.g. Year 2)
3	Living costs (c) bills
4	Living costs (d) Study (books, field trips etc.)
5	Financial security (e.g. perceived 'insurance' / 'safety net' / stability throughout academic year if get into trouble financially, emergency expenses, rent etc.)
5a	Not having to get a paid job (unspecified)
6	Not having to get a paid job (a) more time to spend on study/coursework
7	Not having to get a paid job (b) more time to spend with family (independence factor)
8	Funds for travel
9	Not having to ask parents for money (where this is deemed a possibility)
10	Good for those who are inexperienced at saving/budgeting/prone to waste money
11	More cash to play with/more lenient budgeting
12	Perception of 'reducing stress'/worry (term-time)
13	Perception of 'reducing stress'/worry (later life)
14	Allows participation in extra-curricular activities (sport membership/societies & associated equipment etc.) / leisure / join in with peers
15	Quality of life / Enrichment of experience / Standard of living
16	Fee waiver can only be spent on education as intended
17	Less debt / Reduced financial burden after graduation
18	Useful for students with low-income career aspirations / Less pressure to work in the future to pay off loan
19	Better start to working life (equal playing field)
20	Use less savings
21	Incentive to go to university
22	Other

