



**accommodation**  
for students.com  
*The home of student accommodation!*

# Student attitudes survey

**October 2015**

# Introduction

By giving students a voice, this survey hopes to ensure students current and future needs are met.

Accommodation for Students is the UK's leading student accommodation website. It was founded in 2000 by Simon Thompson and over the past 15 years, has become the UK's no 1 student accommodation search engine.

Understanding students, student life and their accommodation needs has been central to the way the business has operated since inception. As student specialists, the team work with students and the property owners that want to let property to them every day. At any one time AFS employs around fifty students, each of whom helps shape strategy, day to day direction and keeps the business close to the market.

The aim of this piece is to utilise our access to students in order to understand how they feel about some of the much-discussed issues affecting students today. This is the first survey of this nature conducted by AFS and will enable us to better understand our student users and what's important to them.

By giving students a voice in these debates, the survey also generates valuable insights which it hopes will help ensure that students' needs are met now and in the future.



# Demographics

The survey was sent out to the Accommodation for Students registered user database and responses were collected between 11th September and 15th September.

## Total respondents

915

## Nationality breakdown

19.91% international students  
80.1% UK students

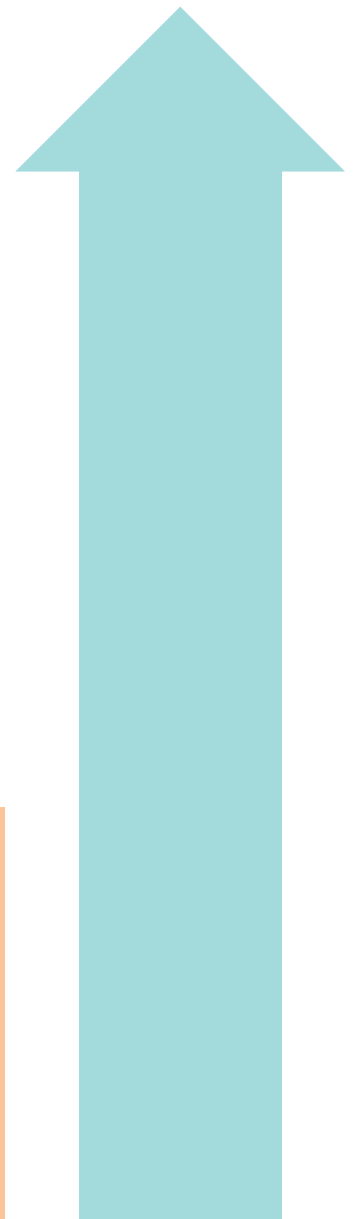
## Age breakdown

26.5% aged 18-19  
56.8% aged 20-22  
10.2% aged 23-25  
6.5% aged 25 +

## Study level breakdown

24% about to begin undergraduate degrees  
53.37% in the middle of an undergraduate degree  
17.8% have recently graduated  
4.9% have recently completed a postgraduate course

915  
total respondents



# Changes to the student finance system

## Support for the changes

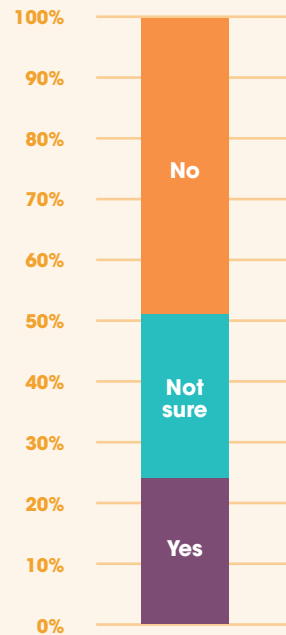
When asked whether they were concerned by the changes announced by Chancellor Osborne in the 2015 budget, including the abolition of the maintenance grant (to be replaced with maintenance loans), two-thirds (67.3%) of respondents said that they were concerned by the changes.

A third of students (33%) said that the changes in the new student finance system would have affected their decision to go to university if it had been in place when they made that

decision, and only 23.4% of respondents think that the new system is an improvement over the grant-based system currently in place, while 48.9% disagree.

Students who reported not having any student debt were slightly more in tune with the government's position, with 30.4% believing that the changes mark an improvement in the student finance system, while just 35.2% answered 'no' to this question.

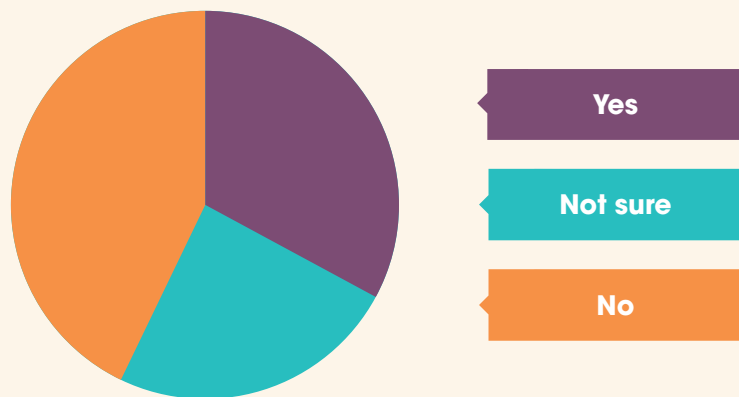
Do you think the changes are an improvement over the grant-based system that is currently in place?



Base: 881

“A third of students think that the new student finance system would have affected their decision to go to university”

Do you think new student finance system announced in the budget would have affected your decision to go to university if it had been in place when you made that decision?



Base: 887

## Fairness

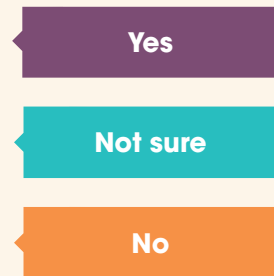
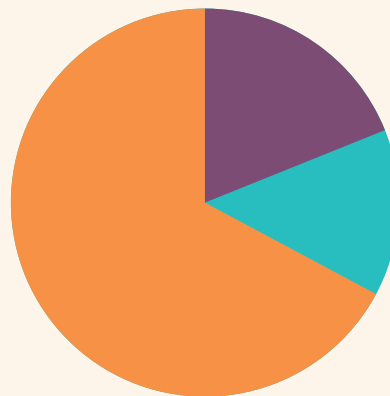
Two thirds (67%) of respondents do not think it is fair that the poorest students could accumulate loans totalling approximately £53,000 for a three-year course under the new system, as suggested by the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Only 19.1% thought that this was fair, while 79.2% of respondents think that the prospect of this amount of debt will deter poorer students from going to university.

Again, students with no student loan debt were less sympathetic to those who will be impacted by the changes, being nearly twice as likely (28%) to believe that this is fair than students with student loan debt (15%).

28.1% of students agree with Chancellor Osborne that there is a “basic unfairness in asking taxpayers to fund grants for people who are likely to earn a lot more than them”, while the majority (51.2%) do not agree.

“Only 19% think it is fair for the poorest students to accumulate around £50,000 in debt to go to university”

**Do you think it is fair that the poorest students could accumulate loans of £53,000 for a 3 year undergraduate degree under the new system?**



Base: 862

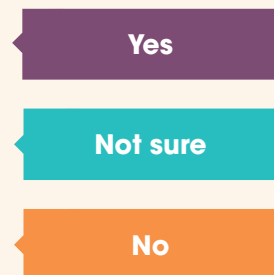
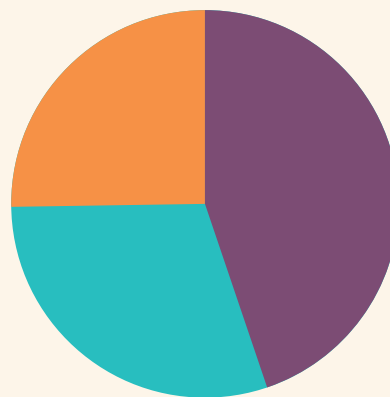
## Paying back the loans

Just 44.9% of respondents who currently have student loan debt expect to pay back their loan in full before it is written off after 30 years, while a quarter (25.4%) do not and 29.7% are unsure.

Only 31.9% would expect to pay back their loan in full if they were to receive the full amount of loan support (around £50,000) under the new student finance system, while 43.7% would not expect to pay it off in full.

55% of surveyed students who have yet to begin their undergraduate degree expect to pay off their student loan debt before it is written off after 30 years, while only 38.6% of these students would expect to pay off their student loan debt if they were to receive the full amount of loan support available under the new system.

**Do you expect to pay off your student loan in full before it is written off (after 30 years)?**



Base: 606

# Applications process

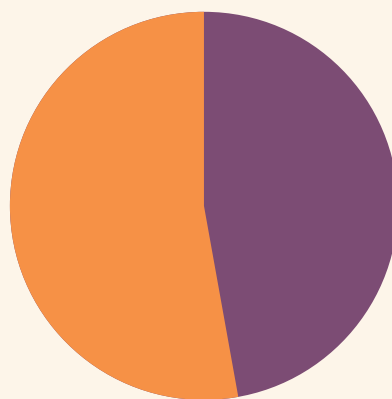
When applying for university, 71.8% of students based their choices of university on predicted grades, a significant number considering that almost a third (32%) of all respondents felt that they would have applied for different universities if they had applied based on the actual grades they received instead of their predicted grades.

75.9% of students said that they would find the process of applying for universities less stressful if they already had their exam results, and 79.67% think that applying for universities is distracting or stressful for students who have yet to take their exams.

47.2% of students reported choosing a degree course they thought would provide better job prospects over studying a subject they were more passionate about but was perceived to be less advantageous in the jobs market. 16.3% reported choosing their university based on the bursaries and financial support that were available at the university.

“Almost a third of students would have applied to different universities if basing choices on actual grades instead of predicted grades”

**When choosing your degree, did you favour a course which you thought would provide better job prospects over studying a subject that you were more passionate about?**



Yes

No

Base: 841



# International students



90.3% of all respondents (and 89.2% of UK students) think that, in general, it is good for the UK to attract international students to its universities. 28% say that in general they prefer tougher requirements for international students to stay in the UK, while 44.8% favour looser requirements which would allow more international students to stay in the UK after studying.

“28% say that they prefer tougher requirements for international students to stay in the UK”

55.7% think that stricter rules for international students will deter them from studying in the UK, though some 70% of international students themselves felt that other international students would be deterred.

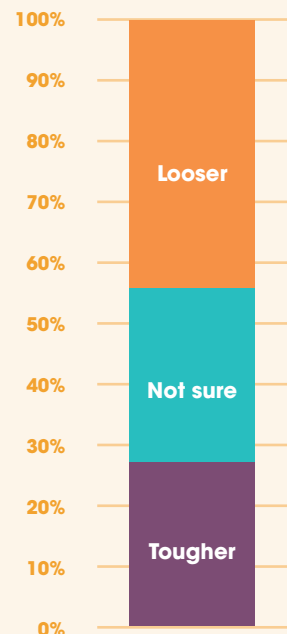
40% of respondents believe that international students should have to meet the current requirements of staying on a ‘Tier 2 (General)’ visa (namely, that they must provide an employer to sponsor them and earn a salary of at least £20,800 within 4 months of graduating), while 41.5% believe that international students should not have to meet this requirement.

Attitudes to international students seem to be more favourable as the respondent gets older, with general positivity towards UK

universities attracting international students and a preference for looser requirements for international students to stay in the UK both increasing slightly with each age interval – suggesting that students with the most direct experience of studying alongside international students are the most receptive to their place in the UK.

Among international students, 58.7% think that international students should not have to meet the current requirements of a Tier 2 (General) visa to stay in the UK after completing their studies, and 68% favour looser requirements for international students to stay in the UK.

**In general, do you favour tougher or looser requirements for international students to stay in the UK after studying?**



Base: 832

# Higher fees

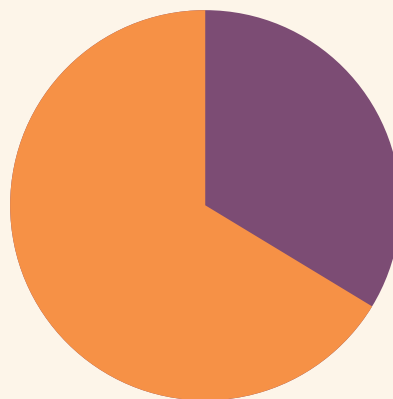
Just 33.8% of the 139 students in the survey who have completed a degree in which they were charged the higher fees introduced in 2012 feel that their experience was worth the higher fees they paid. Only 30.7% of UK students felt that their experience was worth the higher fees.

Of students who have completed a degree in which they were charged the higher tuition fees and have since been looking for a job, only 30.6% report having found a job. A third of these students report that their salary is lower than they expected it to be, while just one student reported their salary being higher than expected.

Almost 1 in 5 (19.6%) respondents who paid the higher fees say that they would no longer choose to get an undergraduate degree considering the higher fees paid, if they had the chance to go back in time and change their decision.

“Only a third of students charged higher fees felt that their experience was worth the money”

Do you feel that your experience at university was worth the higher fees you paid?



Yes

No

Base: 841





**accommodation  
for students.com**  
*The home of student accommodation!*

**Thank you**