

Students' Union Student Feedback Report

This monthly report shares the most prominent concerns from students received within that month. This report, however, showcases insights from August, September, and October 2022, including statistics from our [Advice Centre](#), Helpdesk, and results from the Students' Union's [Cost of Living Survey](#) (open 7th July 2022, closing on the 5th August 2022 and promoted only to postgraduate taught (PGT), postgraduate research (PGR), and apprentice students).

*Table 1: The source of data used throughout this report, as well as the number of queries or responses. *NB: The number of queries for Advice Centre and Helpdesk were collated based on those received between 1st August 2022 and 26th October 2022. ^NB: The number of new pieces of feedback were based on those received between 18th August 2022 and 15th October 2022.*

Source	Number of queries / respondents
Advice Centre*	455
Helpdesk*	1413
Union Voice^	61
Cost of Living	258

Summary of this report

- The Students' Union's Advice Centre received 455 queries between 1st August and 26th October 2022. August was a much busier month than expected, receiving almost 2.5 times more new enquiries than in August 2021 (when we received 77 new enquiries).
- The Students' Union Helpdesk 1413 enquiries between 1st August and 25th October 2022, the majority of these queries during September 2022 coinciding with Welcome Week(s). Across all months, 105 of these queries were regarding academic / course concerns. These queries were either signposted to the Advice Centre, the students' Course Leader / Academic Adviser, or the Students' Union's [self-help resources](#).
- The Students' Union's feedback platform, Union Voice, received 61 new pieces of feedback from students across the university. Feedback was received from across many departments, but 12 students from Engineering & Maths and 10 from Nursing & Midwifery provided comments about their experiences.
- The Cost of Living Survey received 258 responses and was open from 7th July to 5th August 2022. The survey was sent only to PGT, PGR, and apprentices. At the time, respondents felt the most negative financial impact from the cost of energy/bills and food. Although less respondents indicated that they had to cut back on housing (8-19%) and bills (34-40%), for these students this was an area that had the most pressure on them. Moving forward, respondents would like: a decrease in travel and commuting costs; a discount on cost of food on campus; or a decrease in energy bills.

Monthly Statistics from the Students' Union

The Students' Union's [Advice Centre](#) received 455 enquiries between 1st August and 25th October 2022. August was a much busier month than expected, receiving almost 2.5 times more new enquiries than in August 2021 (when we received 77 new enquiries). During August, we received 191 new enquiries to the Advice Centre and the main topics were:

- Academic: Academic Misconduct (32), Appeals (24), Progression problems (15), Complaints (13), Withdrawal (3), Placement Issues (3)
- Finance / Funding: Applying for repeat funding due to Compelling Personal Reasons (11), Funding check (9), Tuition fee debt (4), Benefits (3), Rent or mortgage arrears (3)
- Housing: Leaving contract (7), Landlord complaint (7), Council Tax (5), Finding Accommodation (4), Disrepair (3)
- 56 enquiries involved signposting to another service (either as the main response or sometimes as part of the advice provided)

During September, we received 167 new enquiries to the Advice Centre and the main topics were:

- Academic: Appeals (48), Academic Misconduct (21), Progression problems (10), Complaints (9), Placement Issues (4)
- Housing: Leaving contract (4), Council Tax (3)
- Finance / Funding: Tuition fee debt (11), Funding check (8), SFE loan issues (6), Applying for repeat funding due to Compelling Personal Reasons (3), Benefits (3)
- 39 enquiries involved signposting to another service (either as the main response or sometimes as part of the advice provided)

During October, we received 97 new enquiries to the Advice Centre and the main topics were:

- Academic: Appeal (16), Academic Misconduct (12), Complaint (11), Progression problems (10), withdrawal (2)
- Funding / Finance: Funding check (7), SFE loan issues (3), Compelling Personal Reasons application, tuition fee debt, rent / mortgage arrears (all 2),
- Housing: inter-tenant dispute (3), Landlord complaint, disrepair, deposit / refund of money (all 2)
- 17 involved signposting to other service within the Students' Union, the University or externally.

The **Students' Union's Helpdesk** received 1413 enquiries between 1st August and 25th October 2022. During **August**, 148 enquiries were received and the most common were about: merchandise (20); course concerns (19); welcome weeks (19); the Students' Union's Advice Centre (16); and accommodation (12). During **September**, 598 enquiries were received and the most common were about: welcome week (90); merchandise (68); academic / course concerns (66); societies (62); and facilities / way finding (56). During **October**, 667 enquiries were received and the most common were about: facilities / way finding (83); merchandise (77); academic issues (65); lab coat collection (63); and societies (62).

Academic / course concerns were all in relation to issues with appeals, academic staff, general course issues and exam / assignments. Where appropriate students were referred to the Students' Union Advice Service, University Course/Academic Staff, or [self-help resources](#). Accommodation enquiries were signposted to the Advice Centre, [self-help resources](#) or to a SHU service.

Union Voice

The Students' Union's feedback platform, [Union Voice](#), received 61 new pieces of feedback from students across the university. By Department, 12 students commented from the Department of Engineering & Mathematics and the majority of these mentioned their wish for exams to be online. Ten students from the Department of Nursing & Midwifery commented on their experience and mentioned communication within their Department, course and teaching concerns, and placements. The [Trending Topics](#) from Union Voice queries are updated regularly and students are shared this

information if their query fits into one of these topic areas. The appendix of this report includes details of each theme, count of comments, and a summary of what students said.

Cost of Living Survey

The Students' Union's *Cost of Living Survey* was open for postgraduate students (including PGR and PGT) and student apprentices on 7th July 2022, closing on the 5th August 2022. The survey received a total of 258 responses. To read the full report, [please go here](#).

For context, respondent demographics were: 61% of respondents worked part-time (less than 35 hours per week); 67% of respondents commuted to university; 57% of respondents identified as female; Ages were split into thirds: between 22-25, 26-30, and over 30; Just over half of respondents (53%) were from the College of BTE; and 61% paid for their living expenses through personal savings or money earned from a job(s).

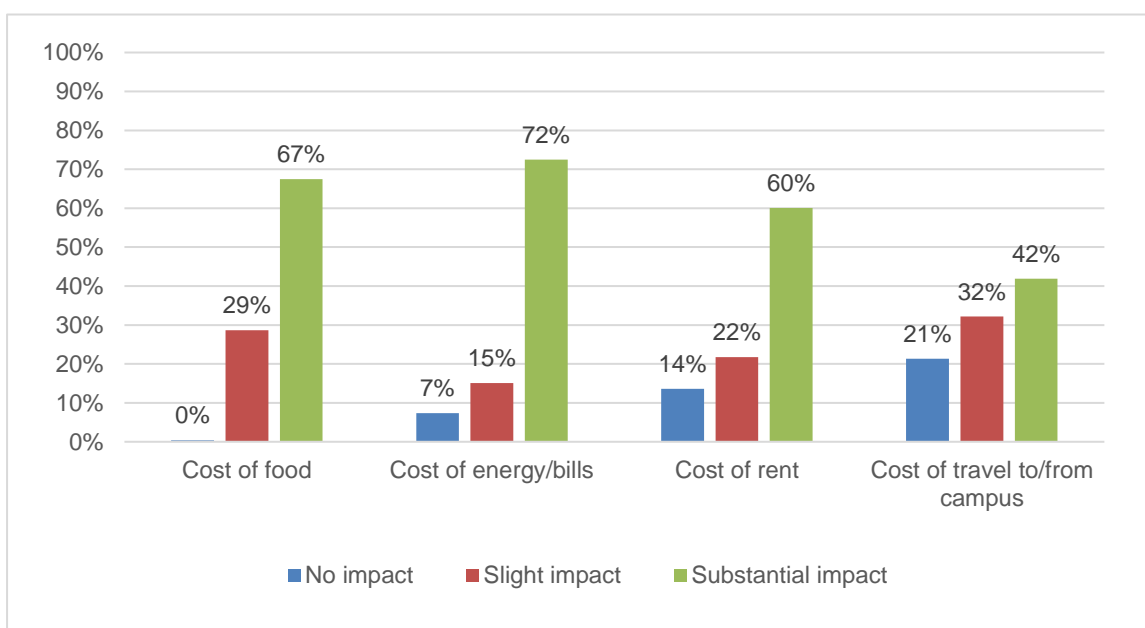


Figure 1: Extent to which respondents have been negatively financially affected by the increase of food, bills, rent and travel, of all respondents (n=258).

As the above figure indicates, 72% of respondents shared that the cost of energy / bills had substantial negative financial impact and 67% indicated the cost of food had. Respondents were then asked why they answered the above question (Figure 1) the way they did. This question was not obligatory and had 215 respondents.

- 26 respondents mentioned the impact that cost of living crisis is having on their mental health and overall well-being.
- 25 respondents mentioned struggling with rent.
- 18 respondents shared that they are struggling to afford the cost of travel.
- 17 respondents commented on the impact that stagnant wages is having on their finances.
- Other areas of impact: childcare costs, impact on university work, and international students' concerns with restricted Tier 4 visa hours.

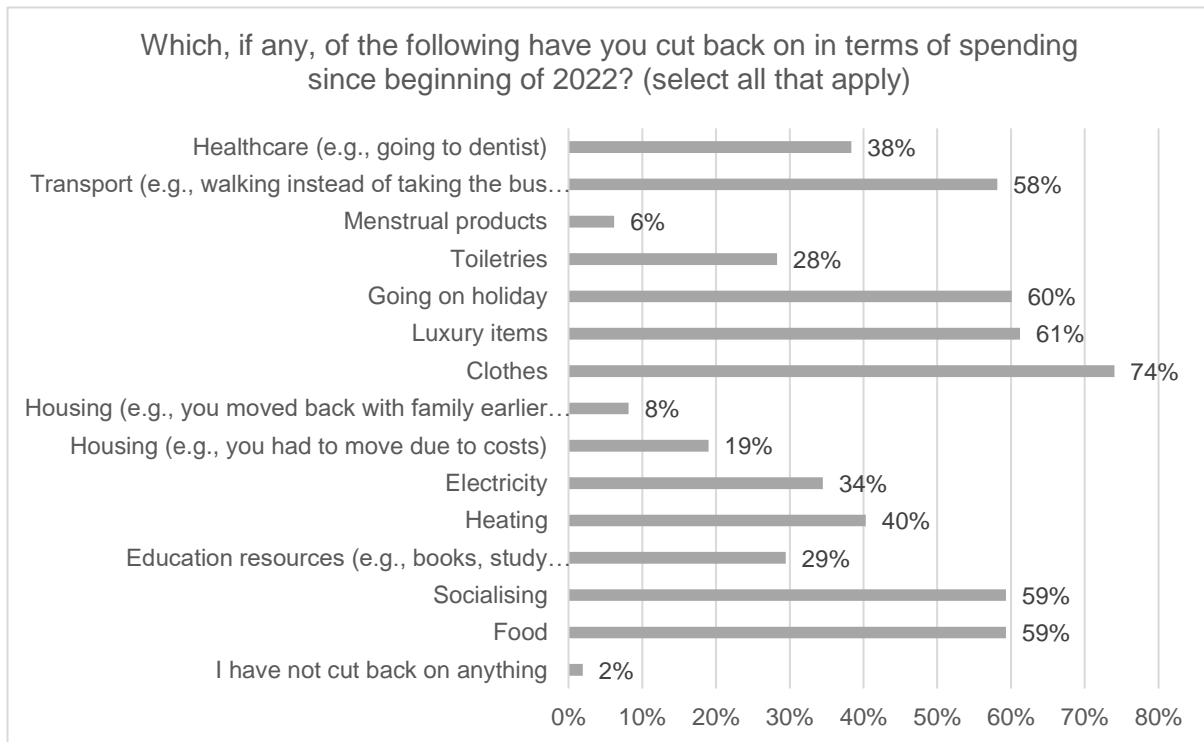


Figure 2: % of respondents indicating cutbacks on items, of all respondents (n=258).

As Figure 2 displays, the areas that respondents indicated they were most likely to cut back on were: clothes (74%); luxury items (61%); going on holiday (60%); food (59%); socialising (59%); and transport (58%). However, when respondents were then asked to share the extent to which they felt the most pressure, although many more respondents had shared that they cut back on certain items (see Figure 2) respondents that indicate electricity bills, heating bills, housing, and food were areas they cut back on felt the most pressure (see Figure 3).

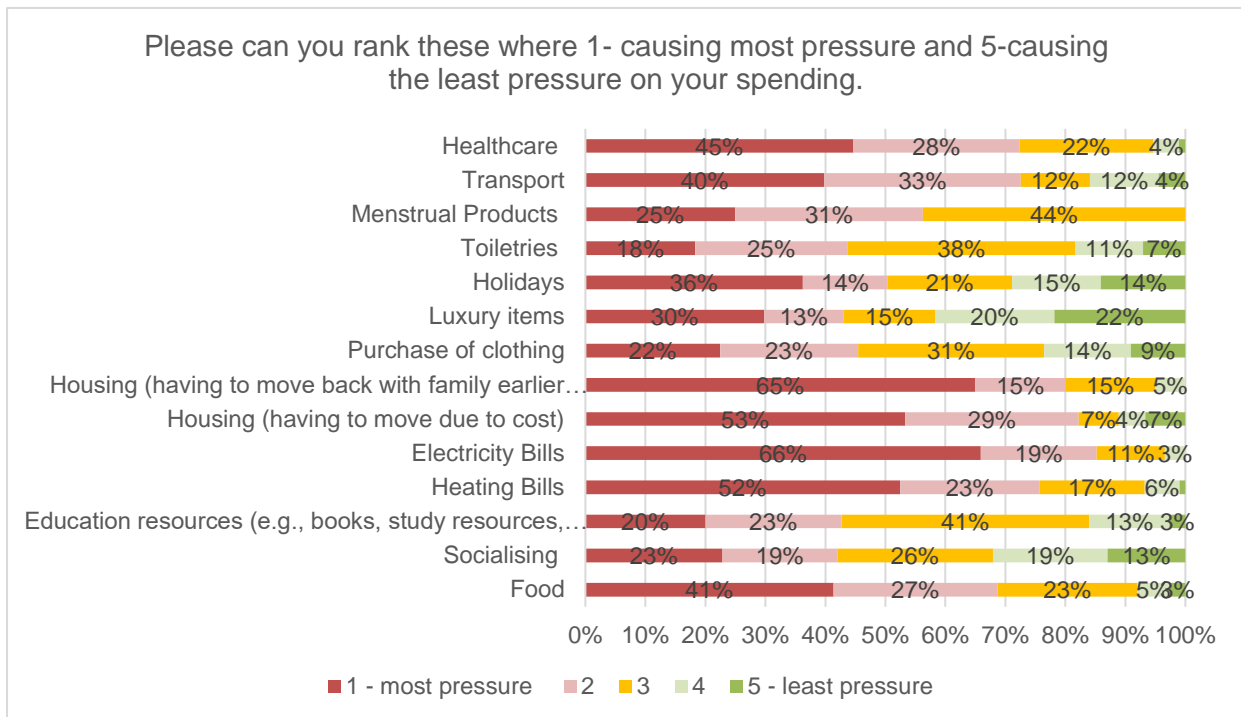


Figure 3: Areas which are causing pressures, ranked, all respondents (n=258).

Finally, respondents were asked to comment the top three things they would like the Students' Union to focus on changing moving forward to mitigate the impact that the cost of living is having on students:

- 1st (26%) – a decrease in travel and commuting costs
- 2nd (21%) – a discount on cost of food on campus
- 3rd (13%) – a decrease in energy bills

Appendix A: Union Voice Comment Summary

The Students' Union's feedback platform, **Union Voice**, received 61 new pieces of feedback from students across the university. Below is a summary of these comments in alphabetical order.

- **Accommodation (3):** all three students commented that finding accommodation is difficult and/or costly.
- **Assessment and exams (13):** students shared either dissatisfaction with assessment or exam marks (to which they are signposted to the Advice Centre) or their wish (as stated above) to have exams online.
- **Belonging and community (2):** one comment from a student apprentice regarding the timing of welcome week events and the need for more evening times so these students can also take part. Another comment from a student that has struggled to integrate in their course.
- **Campus facilities (3):** one comment from a student that shared the canteens are too expensive; one comment from a student that has not yet explored campus at all, even though they are a third year; one comment from a student about parking on collegiate campus being difficult.
- **Communication (7):** 5 comments regarding inconsistent communication from the university; 2 comments regarding specific ways they have been communicated with.
- **Contact hours (1):** this comment was about traveling around campus late at night and feeling unsafe.
- **Course related concerns (7):** these comments were about the organisation and management, generally, of each student's specific course.
- **Degree apprenticeships (2):** one comment was about the difficulty of collecting evidence needed for government funding; one comment was about the number of assignments third year students are expected to undertake, whilst working.
- **Engagement with university staff (2):** one comment was about the way this student was communicated to; one comment was about difficulty getting an appointment with their adviser.
- **Equipment (1):** one comment from a student with a disability not receiving proper training to use their equipment.
- **Feedback on assessments (4):** one positive comment; three comments from students dissatisfied with feedback received for their specific assignment / circumstance.
- **Finances (2):** one comment about placements and finances; one comment about student fees being too high.
- **Induction to the university (1):** one positive comment about welcome week.
- **International student concerns (2):** one positive comment; one comment about biases towards international students.
- **Mental wellbeing (2):** one comment about a general lack of support; one comment about the impact that reassessment has had on a students' wellbeing.
- **Placements (4):** one comment about dissatisfaction with paying fees whilst on placement; three comments about placement difficulties and lack of support from the university with this generally.
- **Teaching (1):** one comment about wanting more on-campus, in-person lectures.
- **Timetabling (4):** all comments were from students unhappy with their timetable.