International Student Feedback

7th April 2020

Data from Falmouth and Exeter students who completed the survey:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Study Year** | **Falmouth** | **Exeter** |
| First Year (undergraduate) | 12 | 4 |
| Second Year (undergraduate) | 33 | 3 |
| Placement Year | 0 | 0 |
| Final Year (undergraduate) | 30 | 2 |
| Postgraduate Taught | 5 | 2 |
| Postgraduate Research | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | **80** | **13** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Ethnicity** |
| White English |  | 1 |
| Any Other white background | 40 |
| Multiple Ethnic Group  | 1 |
| White & Black Carribean | 1 |
| Chinese |  |  | 6 |
| Other Asian |  | 2 |
| Arab |  |  | 2 |
| Other  |  |  | 1 |

Falmouth University International Students

**Here are the top 3 things students said were on their minds:**

1. **My Health and wellbeing (19)**
2. **Access to resources (17)**
3. **Teaching on my course (16)**

Closely followed by: Communication from my university (15) and Employability (14)

Falmouth International Students were most **positive** about:

1. Teaching on my course (67%)
2. My accommodation (49%)
3. Communication from my university (47%)

Falmouth International Students were most **negative** about:

1. Employability (47%)
2. Assessment methods (42%)
3. Communication from my university (33%)

Concerns – specific to being an international student

Accommodation

Several students mentioned being stuck in Cornwall because ‘*borders are closed so [they] can’t leave*.’ and mention concerns about accommodation when their contracts finish. Another student said *‘there is a 2 week delay between my accommodation contracts and returning home is not feasible - I am concerned about where I will stay over those 2 weeks’.*

Visa concerns:

One Tier 4 student mentioned: “*The strict regulations of signing in every other week has been a little worrying since once a student forgets to swipe in for one session warning letters are immediately sent out.”*

Another said they were worrying about their visa status in terms of ‘*deferment of course’.*

“Will the Home Office extend Tier4 student visas another semester beyond the summer, so students in my programme can utilize the film equipment for their projects in the Fall - if the university remains closed through the summer.”

Isolation:

Isolation is even more paramount in the experience of international students: ‘*I'm isolated, with little to no close friends in a foreign country’.* One student said:

 “This situation is especially hard for international students without a maintenance loan and who live away from their loved ones.”

Time Difference:

Some students who have returned have said they are struggling with the time difference:

“I went back to Singapore so communication between my lectures and I have been hard due to the time difference.”

It can also pose unforeseen issues like the problems with ongoing counselling:

“The move onto online counselling has been devastating to me as an international student, simply because I have kept my international phone number. My counsellor has been unable to reach me twice, and now I am not scheduled for another one on Microsoft Teams until after the Easter Break.”

Delay in communication caused problems returning home:

Several students said the delay in communication from the University has caused them to be stuck in Cornwall as it’s ‘too late to go home’:

I can't believe how long it took for the university to come to this decision. I couldn't return home because of how slow it took. My country's borders closed in 5 days after the announcement - and I was told we were encouraged to go home in a lecture. But guess what? I missed that lecture because I was self-isolating due to one of my flatmates having to be quarantined! If the announcement was that easy to miss then something went very wrong! Yes, we were told we could go home, but the communication was so neutral and 'you can stay or go' without any reference to being an international student whose timezone would be 8 hours away that it made me feel like I'd be held liable if we found out that international students had to come back for any reason, whether it be timezone-attendance related or anything! So I stayed to find out more, and now I'm stuck in Penryn without close friends, family, or my culture during a really lonely and difficult time.

Lack of support with finances:

Those international students who are still in Cornwall are *‘stressed’* because they need to take jobs ‘*and risk [their] health’* in order to cope financially. One student said

“I'm stuck here, hopeless for my final grades, with no money for rent, no help and not even sure If I want to sign up for a master at this university anymore”

Another said

“I can't get any financial support as EU student and now that I am aware of all of the measures taken by the university, it's too late to go home.”

No graduation:

Some students mentioned how the quick departure home was a disappointing end for their time at the university. One student said:

“I am also concerned about the possibility of a graduation ceremony happening. As an international student, I have had to return back to my home country and I am not sure if and when I’ll be able to return to the UK for the ceremony when it happens.”

Need for understanding and extensions:

Some international students said they missed even more work than other students because they had to pack up and fly home:

“Getting back to our home country, there’s time zone difference, we will have jet lag, we had to take time to settle down to get mentally prepared for all the online class right away, and how do you expect students to adapt everything right away? Why is the uni not standing in the point of view of student to think about us?”

Another said they were concerned about meeting deadlines due to ‘*mandatory quarantine in [their] home countries’* and the stress caused by the upheaval of moving back home.

Positives:

Many international students were pleasantly ‘surprised by the amount of support and resources [they’ve] been offered [by staff] at such a rapid rate.’ Many praised the staff for the ‘quick change to online teaching’ and how the staff have adapted to the situation, keeping the students ‘in the loop.’ Many students felt supported.

Student were also positive about the SU: *“I like how The SU and Societies handled the situation in contacting and engaging with the people during this situation.”*

Recommendations

Student Recommendations for the University:

1. Students want reassuring communication they will accommodate those affected by
2. More access to online counselling
3. International students who are ‘stuck here’ want support with accommodation problems and access to financial support and isolation
4. Many students requested extensions to deadlines
5. Students have requested staff provide support in looking for work, internships and reassuring them of their employability
6. Staff to provide less emails with more concentrated information

Student Recommendations for the Student Union:

* The Student Union could provide more support students who are anxious at this time
* Additional support about financial wellbeing, including resources and help opportunities outside university's scope.
* Ways to engage with societies and clubs
* Improve ‘communication’ and make ‘more of an effort to try and help us change deadlines and needs academically’.
* Tips on studying from home