

# Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2023: findings for the sector

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POSTGRADUATE

TAUGHT EXPERIENCE

SURVEY





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## Executive summary

- + The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2023 is the largest survey of the UK taught postgraduate student cohort in the last five years, with nearly 84,000 responses from across 101 higher education institutions.
- + The recovery from the pandemic has continued, with overall satisfaction at 83%. This increase was mainly due to the successful expansion of provision for overseas postgraduate taught students (PGTs), particularly those from India, Nigeria and Pakistan, with these cohorts indicating all aspects of their PGT experience were relatively positive.
- + Qualitative analysis of comments from these PGTs reflect positive practices such as: interactive classrooms guided by highly capable teaching staff; an inclusive and diverse experience; and connection to the real world and industry – in other words, teaching and learning that is widely advocated as best practice in UK higher education.
- + For UK domiciled PGTs, recovery from the pandemic has been patchier, with assessment showing strong increases, but engagement and organisation remaining below pre-pandemic levels.
- + Turning to where the PGT experience has not gone well for students, this report examines in depth the experiences of PGTs who have thought about leaving their course.
- + Domicile is again an important factor in understanding trends. For example, just 6.2% of PGTs domiciled in India thought about leaving their course in 2023, compared with 29.1% of PGTs domiciled in the UK.
- + There has been a relatively large increase in those citing financial difficulties as a main reason for thinking about leaving their course, with PGTs who received free school meals at age 16 twice as likely to cite this as the main reason.
- + The likelihood of thinking about leaving the course varies with both gender and disability. The occurrence of mental or emotional challenges as a main reason for thinking about leaving the course also interacts with gender and disability.
- + The survey evidenced how academic progress and student wellbeing could be harmed by a mismatch between what the PGT expected and what was delivered, including experiences of workload, course organisation and mode of teaching.
- + Comments from respondents to PTES 2023 indicate that pressures, and the impact of these pressures, could be reduced through a good teaching and learning experience and well-timed support, including for finances and around stress points such as assessments and placements.

# 1 Methodology

## 1.1 Approach

The Advance HE Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) was first piloted in 2009 and has since become well embedded within the UK as the major survey-based measure of the taught postgraduate experience. The survey was redesigned in 2014 after extensive research and consultation with the sector. While the core survey is stable, it continues to be developed with the aim of reflecting key sector concerns along with accommodating a diverse student cohort and institutional needs. Any student taking a course at master's level that is more than a single module is eligible to take part.

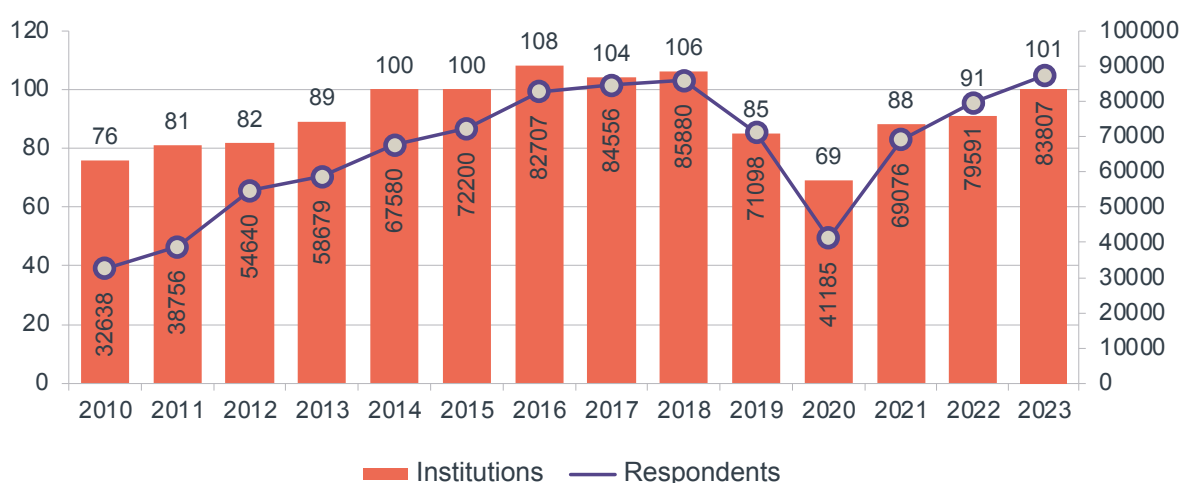
PTES has been designed to provide summarised information that can support strategic decisions, alongside detailed information and open comments that can be disseminated to course teams. Institutions administer the survey through the Jisc online surveys platform and have ownership of their data. A range of benchmarking is provided to support interpretation, enabling the use of the data in combination with other evidence to drive enhancement. Institutions may also publish their scores, benchmarked against relevant comparator groups, to inform prospective students.

The survey window for PTES 2023 was open from **1 February** to **17 June 2023**. Institutions were able to choose when to run the survey within this window, as long as the survey was open for a minimum of three weeks.

## 1.2 Participation

The participation of 101 institutions and response from 83,807 taught postgraduates in 2023 makes PTES the most extensive articulation of the taught postgraduate voice in the UK. Participation in the survey has largely recovered since the pandemic and other pressures impacted on the survey around 2020 (see Figure 1.1 below).

**Figure 1.1 Trends in participation and response**



The response to PTES 2023 represents around 12% of the total taught postgraduate population in the UK, and provides a good reflection of the UK taught postgraduate population (see Appendix 1). There are some differences between the profile of PGTs in PTES 2023 and the most recent data available for the sector PGT population. There was a relative underrepresentation of responses in PTES from part-time students (21% in PTES compared to 36% in the broader population) and of those studying for Other Postgraduate Taught qualifications (12% compared to 21%). These differences are expected given part-time PGTs and those studying for postgraduate diplomas and certificates would typically have competing pressures on their time from work or work placements (particularly evident for students taking qualifications in Education and Subjects Allied to Medicine).

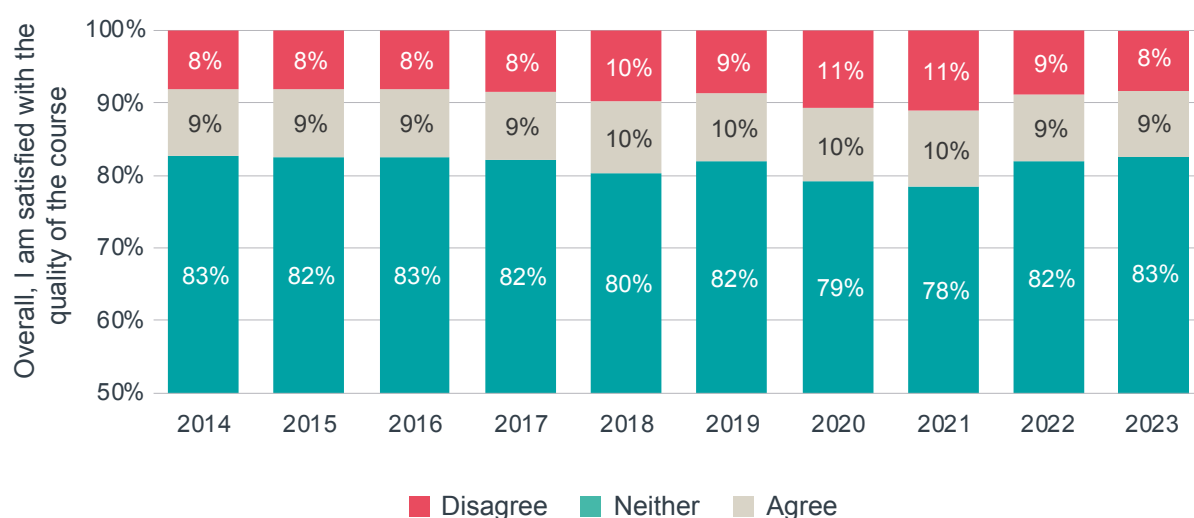
PGTs domiciled outside the UK and EU were overrepresented in PTES 2023 compared to the most recent HESA (2022) data, which relates to the previous academic year. The difference between PTES and the more comparable HESA return for 2023 should be narrower. However, the profiles of response indicate that, even accounting for this, there is an overrepresentation of PGTs domiciled outside the UK and EU. This overrepresentation also contributes to some other differences set out in Appendix 1, such as the subject area of Business and Management being overrepresented in PTES. As set out in the following section, with awareness of these differences this report will explore trends that broadly hold across different cohorts of PGT students, but will mainly focus on particular experiences within this shifting and diverse PGT population.

## 2 Trends in the PGT experience

This section sets out the broad trends in the postgraduate student experience. From the trends shown in Figures 2.1 to 2.3 it can be seen that:

- + 83% of PGTs agreed they were satisfied with their course in 2023, continuing the recovery out of the pandemic
- + areas of the student experience that witnessed a significant fall in agreement during the pandemic have largely recovered.

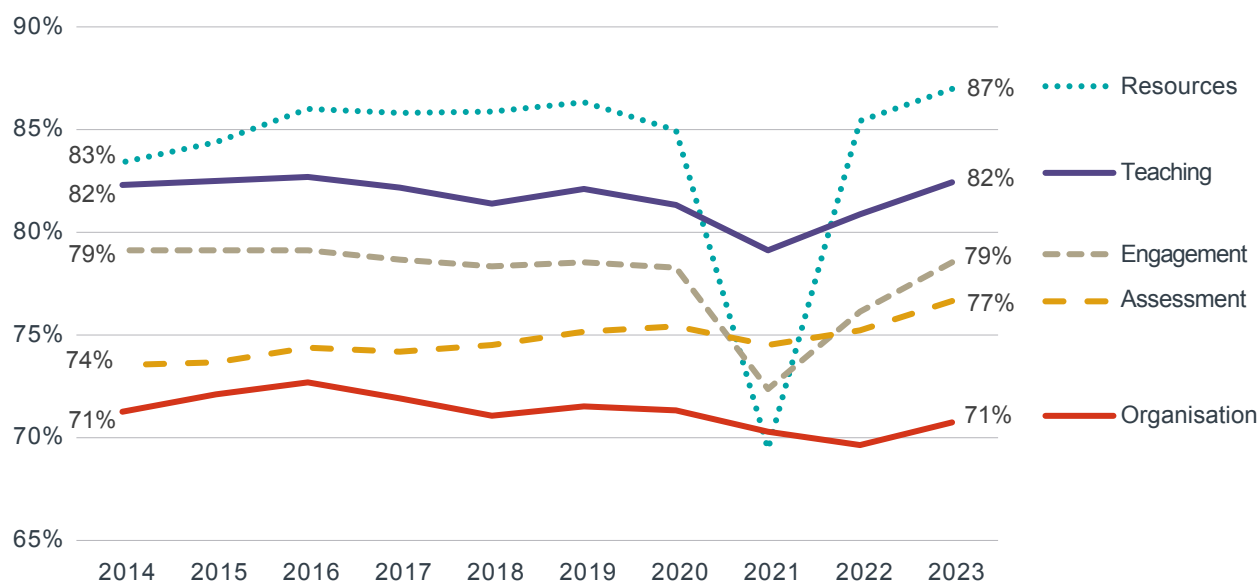
**Figure 2.1 Overall satisfaction with course quality, 2014 to 2023**



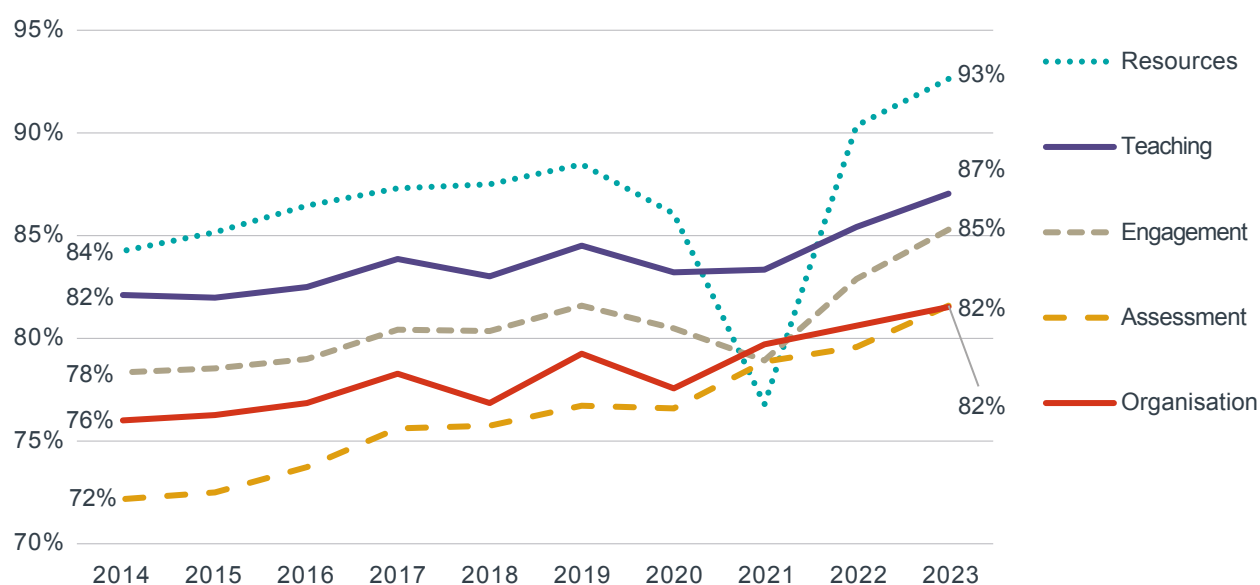
The broad trends in the PGT experience were, therefore, positive. There remained a substantial proportion of PGTs who did not report a positive experience, with 8% disagreeing that they were satisfied with the quality of their course (see Figure 2.1 above). This report will explore which cohorts were more likely to have a positive experience, and which less likely, beginning with a consideration of UK domiciled and non-EU domiciled PGTs.

For UK domiciled PGTs, the trends shown in Figure 2.2 below indicate a broadly static experience punctuated by the pandemic, with assessment being the only area of experience showing increasingly positive perceptions year-on-year. For non-EU domiciled PGTs, the trajectory shown in Figure 2.3 is markedly different, being one of increasing positivity barely interrupted by the pandemic. Two areas illustrate these trends well. For teaching, perceptions of UK PGTs and non-EU PGTs were similar in 2014, with both on 82%. For UK PGTs, this remained essentially unchanged, still being on 82% in 2023. In contrast, there has been a significant increase for non-EU PGTs over this period, moving from 82% in 2014 to 87% in 2023. In 2014, more non-EU PGTs were positive about organisation (76%) than UK domiciled PGTs (71%). Again, to 2023 there was no meaningful change for UK PGTs with regard to organisation. In this time period there was another positive trend for non-EU PGTs, up six percentage points to 82%.

**Figure 2.2. Trends in selected areas of the PGT experience, 2014 to 2023, UK domiciled PGTs**



**Figure 2.3. Trends in selected areas of the PGT experience, 2014 to 2023, non-EU domiciled PGTs**





While just a matter of a few percentage points, these results reflect thousands of PGTs perceiving and/or reporting their experience differently. The differences hold within institutions and subjects across the sector. This makes domicile the most important factor in understanding the PTES 2023 results. However, domicile is far from the only factor of importance. As will be expanded on below, PGTs within any domicile cohort cannot be considered as a homogenous group, with any cohort still containing considerable complexity and diversity. This report aims to explore differences through this diversity, though inevitably this huge dataset raises more questions than it can immediately provide answers.

PTES 2023 measures many aspects of the taught postgraduate experience. It is instructive to explore which of these aspects are most influential on the broad PGT experience. As shown in Figure 2.4 below, teaching is the most important area for taught postgraduates, in terms of its correlation with the question of whether the student is satisfied overall with the quality of their course. This is followed by skills, organisation and engagement, with a much lower correlation for resources. Broadly, this finding holds within different student cohorts.

This relationship may be understood as being both about how much a student views an aspect as important in itself, and about how much that aspect connects with the broad PGT experience. For example, the skills section asks a broad question about how skills have developed for any future career, which requires a much broader reflection of the course than reflecting purely on assessment, for example. Teaching is consistently the most important area of the PGT experience, and emphasises both the broad impact that staff have on the PGT experience and the importance of their teaching role.

**Figure 2.4 Correlation between areas of the student experience and overall satisfaction**



1 Bivariate Pearson Correlation,  $n = 63,039$  (resources) to  $78,115$  (community).

In PTES 2023, a community scale was introduced, exploring the extent to which PGTs felt a sense of belonging and part of a community. This scale was highly connected to the overall experience of study for research postgraduates (see Advance HE's PRES 2023 sector report ). However, for taught postgraduates this was not the case. A sense of belonging and connections with other PGTs was important for taught postgraduates, but to a lesser extent and possibly in a different way compared to research postgraduates. Open comments indicated that many PGTs placed importance on interactions with other taught postgraduates, both within and outside the course. The following sections include exploration of comments from taught postgraduates, beginning with a discussion of the differences by domicile that have become increasingly important and evident in PTES.

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2 The PRES 2023 report is available at: [www.advance-he.ac.uk/reports-publications-and-resources/postgraduate-research-experience-survey-pres-reports](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/reports-publications-and-resources/postgraduate-research-experience-survey-pres-reports)

## 3 Domicile in the PGT experience

### 3.1 A different experience?

This section begins by drawing on quantitative analysis of the open comments in PTES 2023 by domicile. PTES has two closing questions asking respondents to comment on ‘one thing that has been most enjoyable or interesting on your course’ and ‘one thing that would most improve your experience of your course’. An automated thematic and sentiment analysis of comments in response to these questions<sup>3</sup> illustrates how there was considerable similarity across the PGT cohorts with regard to positive and negative aspects of their course, but also differences that echo those found in the analysis of closed questions (see Table 2.1 below). This analysis focuses on the large cohorts of Asian and African domiciled PGTs, along with UK domiciled PGTs, with the following section breaking down these categories further.

Reinforcing the importance of teaching (see Figure 2.4 above), PGTs most frequently referred to ‘the teaching on my course’ in their comments, with 29% of the sentences analysed referring to teaching across these domicile groups (see Table 2.1). The balance of positive comments ranged from 50% for the UK domiciled PGTs to 53% for those domiciled in Asia, a relatively small difference of three percentage points.

**Table 2.1. Thematic sentiment analysis of general open comments (by sentence) in PTES by domicile**

	Proportion positive			Proportion negative			Total sentence %
	Africa	Asia	UK	Africa	Asia	UK	
The teaching on my course	51%	53%	50%	6%	8%	12%	29%
Learning opportunities	48%	54%	50%	7%	8%	11%	23%
Learning community	59%	59%	54%	4%	5%	8%	14%
Organisation and management	28%	28%	22%	17%	19%	27%	10%
Assessment and feedback	51%	50%	46%	8%	11%	17%	8%
Academic support	28%	31%	26%	15%	16%	22%	8%
Learning resources	44%	44%	35%	5%	9%	18%	5%
Other	34%	34%	22%	16%	19%	36%	3%
<b>Total sentence count</b>	10,210	21,440	43,535	10,210	21,440	43,535	75,185

<sup>3</sup> Thematic coding and sentiment analysis carried out by Student Voice ([www.studentvoice.ai](http://www.studentvoice.ai)) using a neural network on a per-sentence basis (a response from one PGT may have multiple sentences separately coded) with classifiers trained on previous PTES datasets. PGTs made positive and negative statements in response to both overall questions, with both used in this analysis.

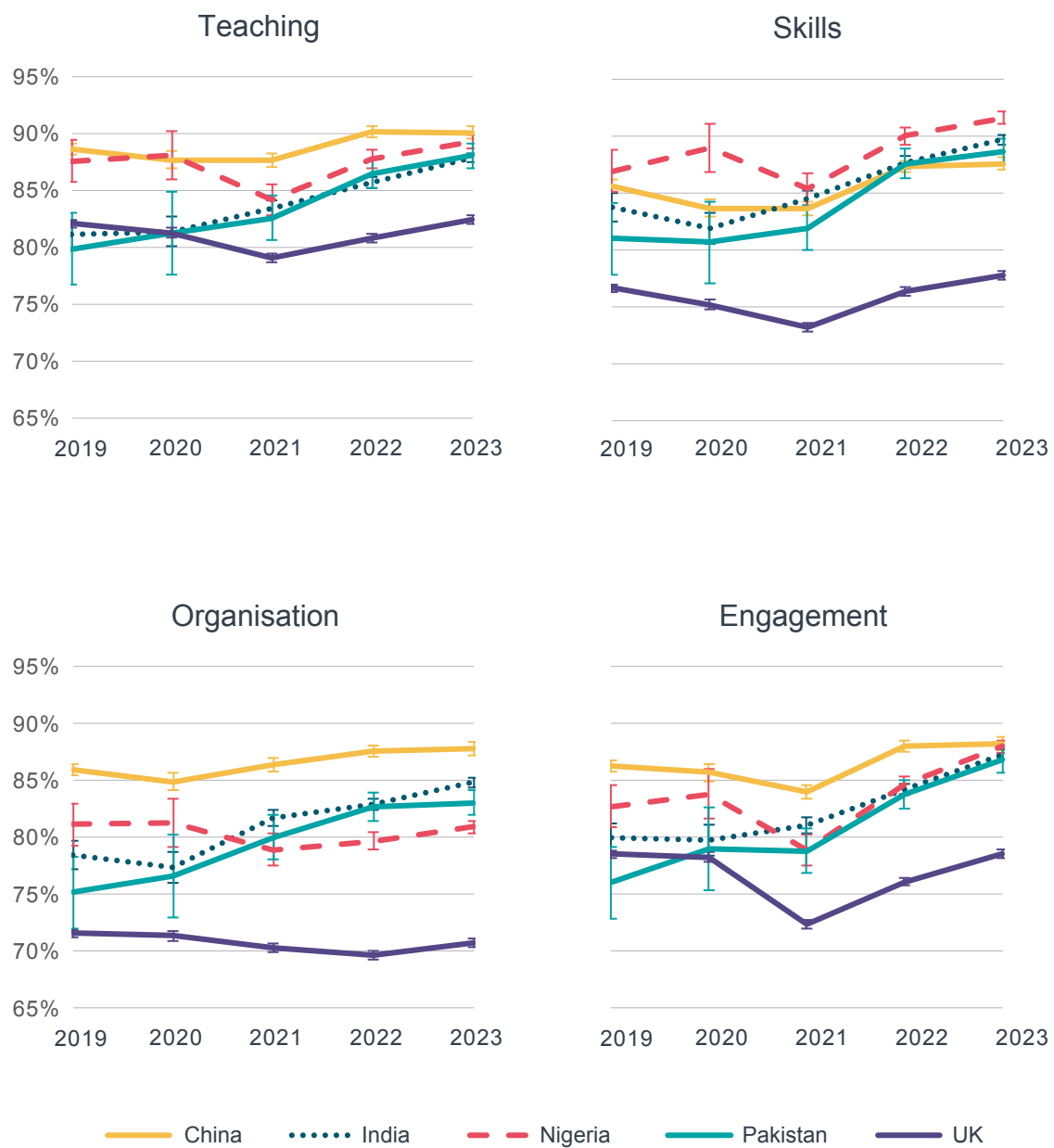
For negative comments about teaching, the 12% of comments about course teaching from UK domiciled PGTs was six percentage points more than for African domiciled PGTs (6%) and four percentage points more than Asian domiciled PGTs (8%). This difference aligns with that shown in the results for closed teaching questions (five percentage points between UK and non-EU PGTs, see above). There was a larger difference around the related area of academic support, which along with comments about central academic support, included communication with, and availability of, teaching staff. Here, UK PGTs were more likely than African and Asian PGTs to make negative comments about academic support (17% compared to 8% and 11% respectively, see Table 2.1 above). In the area of organisation and management, UK domiciled PGTs were notably more likely to make a negative comment about this area (27%) than those from Africa (17%) or Asia (19%). This difference, of around 10 percentage points, is of a similar order to the difference between UK and non-EU domiciled respondents for closed questions.

In summary, the differences between UK and non-EU domiciled PGTs indicated by responses to closed questions was also reflected in their own words. Broadly, across domicile there was similarity in the extent to which PGTs mentioned positive aspects of their course. There were notable differences in the likelihood of PGTs commenting on negative aspects of their course, with the latter mentioned more by UK-domiciled PGTs. Research has indicated that Chinese students, in particular, are typically reluctant to give negative feedback through relatively formal mechanisms, including student surveys (Hart and Coates, 2010). A reluctance to give negative feedback may account for some of the difference between domicile observed to both closed and open questions on PTES. To explore this in more detail, the next section will delve into country specific results for PTES.

### 3.2 Detailed domicile

This section considers several key cohorts of non-EU PGTs – from China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan – alongside UK-domiciled PGTs and the trends for these students through and out of the pandemic. These are the main domicile cohorts in PTES 2023 and the most recent HESA (2022) data, accounting for over 70% of overseas PGTs. Figure 3.1 below shows trend analysis for these cohorts from 2019 to 2023. What is striking is how overseas PGTs from India and Pakistan reported a much more positive experience from 2019 to 2023. As discussed in the report for PTES 2022 (Leman, 2022), the expansion of PGT provision for non-EU domiciled students has largely been a success story for the sector. This success rests largely on the expanding cohort of PGTs from India, Pakistan and Nigeria, who have also indicated an increasingly positive experience, while the cohort of PGTs from China has not expanded but has continued to indicate a very positive experience.

**Figure 3.1. Trends in positive experience across areas of the PGT experience by selected domicile**



The reported experience of postgraduate taught provision for the four non-EU cohorts from China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan has largely coalesced across the different scales. The position of UK domiciled students, where there has been little positive movement from 2019 to 2022, has become increasingly distinct. That non-EU domiciled PGTs are increasingly reporting a positive experience is welcome. Why the experience of PGTs from India and Pakistan in particular should have shifted through this period of expansion is not clear from the data in PTES. This trend has occurred across all areas of experience, and across a range of institutions. There is no strong relationship to the kinds of PGT student coming to study, nor to the kind of courses or institutions they study at. This trend suggests that PGTs domiciled in India or Pakistan do not necessarily avoid negative feedback, but that a change in experience for the cohort as a whole has made feedback more positive. The next section evidences these positive experience through exploring some of the voices of those PGTs who are part of this expansion.

### 3.3 Voices from the leading edge

This section concludes by highlighting the experience of just some of the many PGTs domiciled in China, India, Nigeria or Pakistan and who are studying Business and Management – the subject that has witnessed most expansion over the past four years. The comments below were drawn from institutions with relatively large cohorts of these students, particularly those that have recently expanded, and where there were high levels of positivity. These comments therefore illustrate where and how provision has gone right.

The topic referenced most in comments, and most strongly influencing the overall PGT experience, is that of teaching. Teaching touches on many aspects of the PGT learning experience and, while the fit of teaching to student expectations and needs varied, where it worked well it was greatly valued by PGTs.

“There are some good classes that are very enjoyable.... taught by high quality lecturers who provide well organised materials, have a good pace in teaching and are clear about the requirements of the assessments.”

“I definitely enjoyed and appreciated the passion exhibited by some of the tutors who went the extra mile to ensure a better understanding of the courses.”

“Students were allowed to air their opinions on topics while the lecturers guided the conversation and provided insight on the topics. This has helped to deepen my knowledge.”

“The teachers have been very helpful and they have always helped in nurturing my skills and abilities and bring out the best qualities in me.”

Some PGTs commented on the contrast between the teaching and assessment styles they were familiar with from their own education system and those at UK providers, which was regarded as both a challenge and a benefit by some students.

“Coming from India, my entire academic assessment was focused on exams. The [coursework] has been quite challenging and interesting at the same time. I enjoy doing the necessary research.”

“The coursework... has positively stretched me, and I am glad I have put myself through it.”

“The course has given me confidence to stand in front of different audiences to talk and contribute my thoughts... what I thought I could not do.”

Previous studies have indicated that international PGTs coming to the UK tend to expect more interactive teaching styles, with good induction processes facilitating the transfer to the UK context (see Lu, 2022). PGT comments emphasise that where this transfer has worked well, the shift in teaching and assessment styles is valued.

Another aspect particularly relevant to PGTs in more internationalised classrooms was inclusion and diversity. This was facilitated by lecturers in class teaching, in the construction of assessment activities, and the wider enabling of connections and contact between diverse PGTs. The diversity of the student cohort was valued by PGTs as increasing their understanding of content from broader perspectives, the development of skills and the forming of broader personal connections.

“Each and every student has different abilities, experiences and skills and when we are under one roof we can share our knowledge and experiences with each other which is more enjoyable and effective.”

“I was assigned to a group of British, Indian and Chinese people to explore problems and consider solutions together. I think this not only increased my understanding ... but also taught me how to better communicate.”

“The one thing that I found most interesting is how during my course there are both pros and cons on one particular matter and how important every point is.”

The interaction with other PGTs and lecturers was greatly valued, with seminar groups and group work often mentioned in relation to what had been most enjoyable or interesting in the course. As noted in previous studies, group work can be a challenging form of assessment, and particularly in the context of cultural and language diversity (Higher Education Academy, 2014; Francis, Thomas and Allen, 2022). However, the comments above highlight how this diversity could also be a strength, providing an internationalised experience that is a common motivation for PGTs who choose to study abroad (including UK domiciled PGTs who study abroad, see King and Sondhi, 2018). The experience of diversity in the classroom and through group work may therefore be particularly important to overseas PGTs studying in the UK.

As shown in Figure 2.4 above, the development of skills towards a career is very important to the experience of many taught postgraduates. Where PGTs had the opportunity to connect with real-world examples and industry, this was greatly valued.

“One of the most enjoyable and interesting aspects [was] the opportunity to work with real-world financial data and apply theoretical concepts to practical situations.”

“The use of real life scenarios to explain certain concepts. Learnt a great deal about things or details I would ordinarily not consider.”

“One of the most enjoyable aspects of my course has been the opportunity to work with a wide range of clients from different backgrounds and industries.”

“It’s exciting to be part of a curriculum that is relevant and up-to-date to the current scenario and copes up with the new normal post-pandemic.”

As noted above, skills are next only to teaching in their importance to PGTs, and in particular whether the course is felt to prepare the student for their career. Indeed, for non-EU domiciled PGTs, the highest correlation of any single item with overall satisfaction is for career preparation, while the extent to which course prepares for career is the third highest correlated for UK PGTs, after support for learning from teaching staff and smooth running of the course.

The aspects of the PGT experience that are particularly important to non-EU domiciled PGTs are different to the population of UK-domiciled PGTs as a whole. However, many of the practices that PGTs from China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan mentioned favourably align with good practice promoted for students across the sector. The challenge in the context of rapidly expanding programmes is maintaining this good practice, which the institutions represented in the quotes above have evidently done.



## 4 The expansion of taught postgraduate provision and declining satisfaction

There is evidently a large body of PGTs who are broadly or wholly happy with their experience of taught postgraduate study. However, there is a body of PGTs who are much less happy, whether with their course directly or another aspect, to the extent that they think about leaving. PTES asks PGTs whether they have thought about leaving their course, a question that effectively identifies a cohort of PGTs for whom their experience has been challenging. As a follow-up, taught postgraduates were asked what the main reason is for them considering leaving. In 2021, these reasons were changed to reflect the impact of the pandemic on the PGT experience, alongside some amendments based on previous data. Having now collected three years of data with this question, this section will consider factors both about the course and wider challenges PGTs face, over time and across a number of student cohorts.

Considering the trend from 2021, nearly a quarter (24%) of PGTs thought about leaving in 2021, falling to 18% in 2022, which has carried on to 2023 (see Table 4.1 below). The pandemic regulations on travel, lack of in-person contact, and access to on-campus learning resources, had an evident impact across all aspects of the PGT experience. The apparent lack of a difference between 2022 and 2023 might suggest a return to stability, but this result obscures a lot of movement within particular cohorts, which will be discussed in Section 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1 Thought about leaving and reasons why, 2021 to 2023**

	Year		
	2021	2022	2023
Thought about leaving	24%	18%	18%
<b>Total count</b>	<b>64763</b>	<b>75206</b>	<b>79077</b>

After being added in for the pandemic, where many PGTs who expected face-to-face delivery received online delivery, ‘the way the course is delivered is not what I expected’ has become less common as a selection. Nevertheless, perhaps surprisingly, it remains the reason given by one in ten (10%) of the PGTs who have thought about leaving (see Table 4.2 below). This is discussed further in Section 4.4 below. There was a slight decrease between 2021 and 2023 in the number of PGTs citing mental or emotional health as a reason for leaving (from 15% to 13%), and a decrease in those citing there not being enough interaction with teaching staff (5% to 3%), with both these likely to be connected to the move out of the pandemic.<sup>5</sup> The difficulty of balancing study with other commitments remained the most commonly selected option through this time, with 16% to 19% of PGTs giving this as an option.

5 See the 2021 PTES report: [www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/postgraduate-taught-experience-survey-ptes-2021](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/postgraduate-taught-experience-survey-ptes-2021)

Accompanying these decreases there has been a slight increase in the proportion citing that the content of the course was not as expected (6% to 8%) and a notable increase in the proportion citing financial difficulties as being the main reason prompting them to think about leaving PGT study (from 7% to 11%). This latter increase is the largest change in the reasons PGTs give for thinking about leaving their course from 2022 and reflects findings at undergraduate level, where the cost of living has been evidenced as a major issue (see Neves and Stephenson, 2023). The challenge of financial difficulties for particular cohorts will be discussed further in Section 4.3 below.

**Table 4.2 Main reason for thinking about leaving**

Main reasons for leaving	Year		
	2021	2022	2023
Difficulty balancing study and other commitments	16%	19%	17%
My mental/emotional health	15%	14%	13%
Financial difficulties	7%	8%	11%
The way the course is delivered is not what I expected	13%	10%	10%
The content of the course is not what I expected	6%	8%	8%
Family or personal problems	3%	4%	5%
There is not enough support for my learning	7%	5%	5%
I have found this level of study difficult	3%	4%	4%
I might have chosen the wrong institution	2%	3%	3%
There is too much work	4%	4%	3%
There is not enough interaction with teaching staff	5%	4%	3%
My physical health	2%	2%	2%
There is not enough support for personal issues	1%	2%	2%
The wider student experience is not what I was hoping for	3%	1%	1%
I don't feel connected with my fellow students	2%	1%	1%
Other	11%	10%	11%
<b>Total count</b>	<b>15,377</b>	<b>13,372</b>	<b>14,322</b>

Just over one in ten (11%) PGTs indicated another reason aside from those given as options in the question. Many of these were where a student could not pick any one specific reason, indicating that it was a combination of many factors. Specific issues were also raised, such as the need to commute; problems on placements; industrial action, the quality of the course; and the match with career. These issues were held in common with some of those who indicated a particular option for the main reasons question, such that there were no major themes arising that the question did not at least partly cover.

Before progressing to the detailed analysis, it should be noted that the relationship between whether PGTs think about leaving and their satisfaction with their course is not direct, and is different for different cohorts. In 2023, of PGTs who had thought about leaving, 55% were satisfied with their experience, compared to just over nine out of ten (90%) of PGTs who had not thought about leaving. There was a strong link, but over half of PGTs who considered leaving were satisfied with their course, either because the issue had been successfully addressed, or because the issue did not directly relate to the course. As shown in Appendix 3, some cohorts were relatively satisfied with their course but still had higher rates than average of PGTs who had thought about leaving, indicating that the challenge these PGTs faced was not directly about the course. For other cohorts, the relationship between course satisfaction and thinking about leaving was apparently much stronger. This section considers these wider reasons beyond course as they raise issues of broader support for PGTs, often within the ability of institutions and the sector to address or mitigate.

## 4.1 Domicile and leaving

One of the most impactful factors on whether PGTs have thought about leaving is domicile. The difference in the proportions of PGTs who thought about leaving is very significant, ranging from just 6% of PGTs from India, to 12% of Nigerian PGTs, to 29% of UK domiciled PGTs (see Table 4.3 below). The strength of this difference has several impacts, most notably that the expansion of overseas PGT provision has resulted in the overall rate of PGTs thinking about leaving remaining the same despite the rate of PGTs thinking about leaving increasing within domicile cohorts, as cohorts with low rates have expanded relative to the UK-domiciled cohort.

Across the four main overseas domiciles, the proportion of PGTs who thought about leaving dropped notably from 2021 to 2022, but then increased slightly into 2023. The reason for the large gap between UK and other domiciled PGTs with regard to thinking about leaving may partly reflect differences in expectations and aims (see Section 3.3; also Morgan, 2015), but it is an open question as to whether these or other factors explains the difference.

**Table 4.3. Thought about leaving and selected main reason, 2021 to 2023, by selected domicile**

	2021	Year 2022	2023	2023 counts
<b>Thought about leaving</b>				
China	12%	7%	9%	6602
India	9%	6%	6%	16392
Nigeria	18%	12%	12%	7912
Pakistan	13%	7%	9%	2254
UK	31%	28%	29%	28388
<b>Main reason: financial difficulties</b>				
China	4%	5%	6%	616
India	14%	8%	17%	1,074
Nigeria	20%	11%	17%	1,001
Pakistan	20%	22%	30%	216
UK	6%	8%	10%	8,381

As noted above, there has been an increase in PGTs facing financial difficulties as the cost of living crisis has impacted on students. For UK domiciled PGTs who considered leaving, 10% gave financial difficulties as the main reason they had considered leaving, a steady increase from the 6% who gave this as a reason in 2021. For many overseas PGTs, the pandemic year of 2021 was financially very challenging, with international students being unable to find work and sometimes facing severe difficulties (for example, Appleby et al, 2022). Going into 2022, there was a significant drop in the proportion of Indian and Nigerian PGTs giving financial difficulties as a main reason for thinking about leaving their course.<sup>6</sup> However, as the cost of living crisis has hit in 2023, there has once again been a significant increase in PGTs from these two cohorts facing financial difficulties, with it being the most common reason to think about leaving for India-domiciled PGTs. While only a few comments from these overseas PGTs referred to needing financial support, the issue of costs incurred because of the course, and the ability to work and earn while studying, were raised by these students from Nigeria and India.

“My practice placement allocations during my programme have not been favourable to me in terms of the distance, cost of travel, and financial burden that resulted from it.”

“I could not get a job while working. Had to face many financial challenges. Would be great if we can get more job opportunities during the course.”

<sup>6</sup> While PGTs from Pakistan had a consistently high proportion who cited financial difficulties as a main reason for thinking about leaving, the number of responses was not sufficient to be confident that this was a significant difference.

The proportion of international PGTs who have considered leaving remains significantly below pandemic levels, and very significantly below UK PGTs, such that relatively few indicate pressures. However, these results indicate that there will be a significant cohort of overseas PGTs vulnerable to the cost of living crisis.

## 4.2 Gender, disability and leaving

There were significant differences across gender,<sup>7</sup> with 19% of PGTs who were women having thought about leaving, five percentage points more likely than PGTs who were men. The proportion of PGTs who were non-binary or who described their gender in another way indicated they had also thought about leaving at significantly higher proportions (at 37% and 42% respectively) than men. The main reason that aligned with this difference across gender was around mental and emotional health. Women were three percentage points more likely to give mental or emotional health as a reason for thinking about leaving than men (see Table 4.4 below), a significant difference. PGTs who identified as non-binary were 12 percentage points more likely to give mental or emotional health as a reason for thinking about leaving than men, also a significant difference. The difference was not significant for those who described their gender in another way.

**Table 4.4. Thought about leaving and selected reason, 2021 to 2023, by gender**

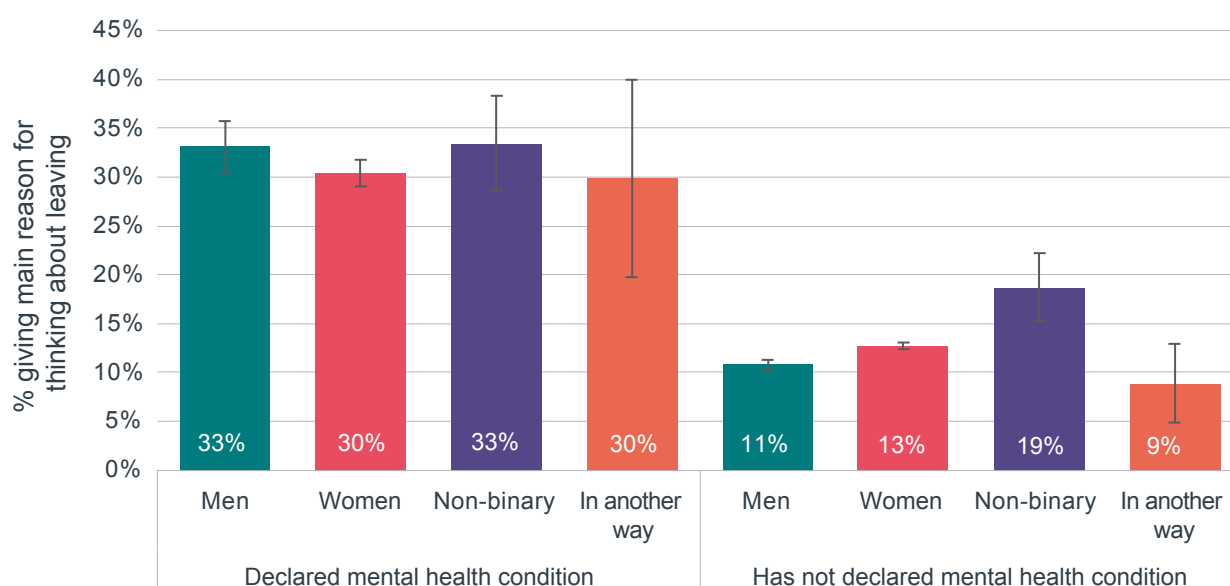
	2021	Year 2022	2023	2023 counts
<b>Thought about leaving</b>				
Men	21%	14%	14%	30,892
Women	26%	20%	19%	45,220
Non-binary	46%	37%	37%	676
In another way	47%	35%	42%	178
<b>Main reason: my mental/emotional health</b>				
Men	13%	13%	11%	4555
Women	16%	14%	14%	8918
Non-binary	26%	25%	23%	257
In another way	13%	13%	18%	76

<sup>7</sup> The differences in this analysis between PGTs who are men and women is also found for male and female PGTs by sex, due to the overlap between these categories. Gender is used for analysis here as it enables the discussion of the significant experience of non-binary PGTs.

As noted in other research and sector data, the rates of declared and broader mental conditions and challenges among students is higher among PGTs who are women and non-binary than PGTs who are men (Macaskill, 2013; Catling and Sutton, 2023; HESA, 2022). Of PGTs who declare a disability of any kind, 41% think about leaving their course, compared to 14% of PGTs who have not declared a disability (see Appendix 3). For PGTs who declared a mental health condition, challenge or disorder, nearly half (47%) had thought about leaving their course and around a third of these stated mental or emotional health as the main reason, with no significant difference by gender (see Figure 3.2 below).

Considering the cohort of PGTs who had not declared a mental health condition, challenge or disorder, just 11% of men thought about leaving due to their mental health, much less than those who had declared a condition (see Figure 4.2 below). There remained significant differences across gender here, with women two percentage points more likely than men to state mental health as a reason for thinking about leaving, and non-binary PGTs nine percentage points more likely than men to state mental health as a reason. This suggests that the levels of undeclared mental health challenges were higher for PGTs who were women and non-binary, which reflects the levels of declared mental health challenges across gender.

**Figure 4.1. Mental or emotional health as a main reason for thinking about leaving, by gender and declared mental health condition, 2021-2023 combined<sup>8</sup>**



<sup>8</sup> Using PTES 2021 to 2023 data combined, confidence Intervals at 95%, adjusted for comparing values to reduce false positives. No significant difference observed across gender in the cohort who had declared a mental health condition for: whether they had considered leaving; and, mental health as a reason for having considered leaving.

For those PGTs who had declared a mental health condition, it might be expected that they would seek to access support, something that has been discussed in previous PTES reports (see Leman, 2021). However, it is less clear how or whether those PGTs who face mental or emotional challenges but had not declared would access support. Comments from the cohort of PGTs who had not declared a mental health condition indicated a broad conception of mental or emotional health that was placed in relation to the particular context of the course. While some of these PGTs sought support, others did not, or were not aware of how to gain additional support for these challenges.

A selection of comments from women with no declared disability point to key issues for this cohort of PGTs. Themes emerging included: struggles with workload on high intensity courses; support on placements from staff or fellow students; choice and quality of contact (or lack of contact) with staff; and, pressures around assessments, including those involving group work.

“I am a mature student who has 20 years’ experience in the workplace. But I have never felt so stressed and overwhelmed as I did in that first term – I nearly quit several times.”

“Better support for health and wellbeing, especially around apprenticeships, there should be more check-in support given.”

“As a part time ... student who has a senior full-time role and two small children, I have found the volume of work and, in particular, the lack of coordination and thought between different modules, extremely difficult to juggle ... This had a significant effect on my mental health and I seriously considered dropping out of the course.”

“The campus mental health support is not accessible for people working in schools since the opening hours are too narrow.”

“Due to the various strikes, there were long periods of time where we had no contact with staff and this led to a rise in stress and anxiety levels.”

“I had an experience where pebblepad failed to submit my work on time, I felt I had done something wrong it was a very distressing time ... [need] more support, especially when things go wrong.”

“Working with my [group work] team has most certainly affected my mental health and I expect that my academic performance has suffered too.”

Comments often highlighted particular periods of stress or workload as points where support was particularly needed, although others referenced ongoing pressures. The references to placements and/or heavy workloads also reflects that a larger proportion of women than men study in subjects that have these profiles, such as subjects allied to medicine, psychology and education (see Section 4.5 below). However, analysis indicates that the difference across gender, at least with regard to thinking about leaving, holds within subject.



The reasons for the difference in the experience of mental health challenges across gender in students are complex (see Macaskill, 2013; Catling and Sutton, 2023). There were few incidences of mental and emotional challenges faced by PGTs who were men, and therefore fewer comments relating to these challenges, than for women. However, comments describe very similar challenges, with workload and contact with staff again prominent in comments from men who had not declared a disability.

“This course is barely compatible with life as a parent with a very young family and a very busy professional partner. I almost feel this should come with a ‘health warning’.”

“Despite a reduced workload compared to previous years, the workload still feels too much for a trainee student teacher to adequately manage while still maintaining a healthy mental state and work-life balance.”

While the qualitative evidence from PGTs who were non-binary was limited, the examples given by these PGTs reflected the themes here. In summary, where challenges to mental or emotional wellbeing were felt, they were qualitatively similar across gender, but their quantity varied across gender. To end on a more positive note, there were PGTs in the cohort of those who had struggled with mental and emotional issues, across genders, who articulated the difference staff had made to them:

“The staff at the university have gone above and beyond to ensure I succeed and have really motivated me to do the course and get the most out of my experience. I definitely believe if I didn’t have the support I was given I would have probably left as at time I did feel a lot of pressure.”

“Mental health and counselling was particularly important and useful – I would not have got to the end of my degree without it.”

“Couldn’t be more pleased with the support for my health and wellbeing, it’s been a very tough year but I have been supported enough to keep going.”

Where support from staff was available, this could make all the difference in enabling taught postgraduates to stay on the course.

### 4.3 Free school meals and leaving

In PTES 2023 two indicators of socioeconomic background were introduced, one of which asked taught postgraduates domiciled in England and Wales whether they had been in receipt of free school meals at year 11.<sup>9</sup> Socioeconomic class has been found to be an important determinant in the progression of students from undergraduate to postgraduate study, though taught postgraduate study has been evidenced as more accessible than research postgraduate degrees (see Wakeling, 2005;

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9 The take up of free school meals is variable and subject to an arbitrary cut-off, such that the use of free school meals as an indicator of socioeconomic status has been argued to be a crude measure (see Kounali et al, 2008). However, it is a relatively simple question and identifies a group of students who have been in some way disadvantaged with regard to socioeconomic status (see Hobbs and Vignoles, 2010). The main limitation for PTES is that this measure, and subsequent analysis, only includes PGTs from England and Wales.



Stuart et al, 2008). Of PGTs who received free school meals, 77% indicated they were satisfied overall with their experience, compared to 80% of PGTs who did not receive free school meals. This difference of three percentage points was significant, but given the relatively small population, only just significant, and arguably not very important (see Appendix 3).

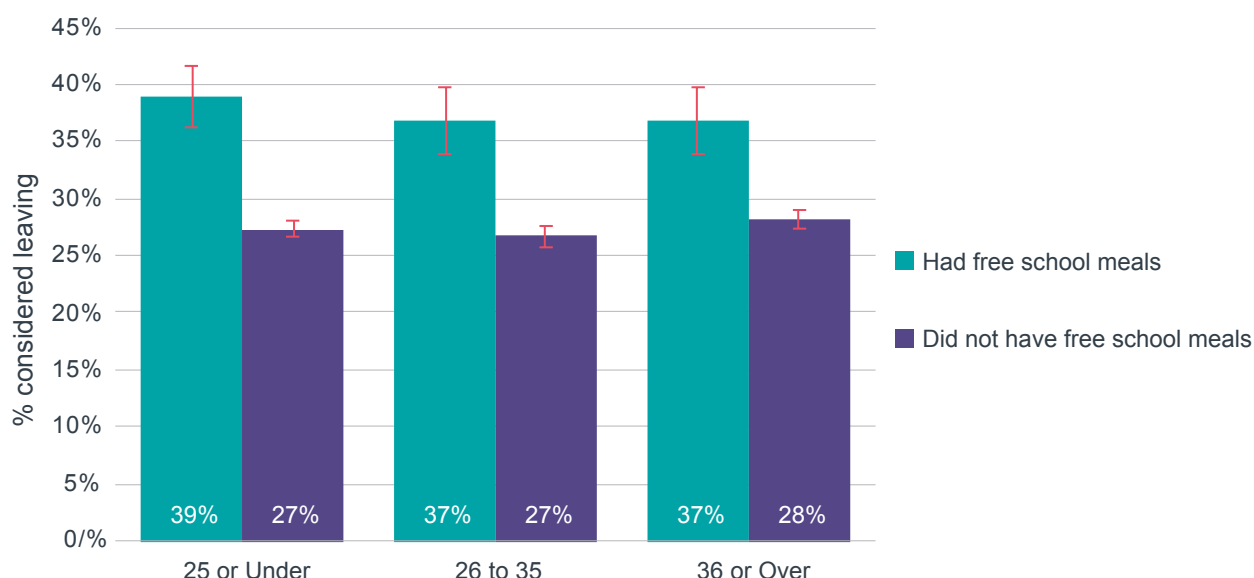
As set out in Table 4.5 below, there was a more notable difference across this factor with regard to whether PGTs thought about leaving. Of PGTs who had received free school meals, 38% had thought about leaving, 11 percentage points more than those who had not received free school meals. With regard to the reasons why these PGTs considered leaving, the most striking difference across these cohorts was around financial difficulties. Of PGTs who had received free school meals and thought about leaving, 16% had done so because of financial difficulties, nearly twice the rate for those who had not received free school meals, a difference of eight percentage points. By comparison, the most common reason for both cohorts, around the balancing of study and other commitments, had a difference of three percentage points.

**Table 4.5. Thought about leaving and main reasons, by whether had free school meals**

	Considered leaving		Reason: difficulty balancing study and other commitments		Reason: financial difficulties	
	%	count	%	count	%	count
Had free school meals	38%	2,471	19%	925	16%	925
Did not have free school meals	27%	24,029	22%	6716	8%	6716

That financial difficulties would impact PGTs who had been in receipt of free school meals more than those who had not is perhaps to be expected. However, it is important to note that these were students who had already done an undergraduate degree, many of whom were in their 20s and 30s. PGTs who had been in receipt of free school meals when they were 16 years old were, over 20 years later, still nine percentage points more likely to consider leaving their PGT course than those who had not received free school meals (see Figure 4.2 below). For these PGTs, the impact of financial difficulties was greatest for those younger PGTs who had received free school meals, with 21% citing this as a reason, compared to 9% of those who had not. This fell to 16% for those aged between 26 and 35 who had received free school meals (compared to 11% for those who had not), and to 12% for those aged 36 and over (compared to 6%). The socioeconomic background of PGTs therefore has a persistent impact on the pressures faces in sustaining taught postgraduate study.

**Figure 4.2. Thought about leaving course by whether had free school meals at 16 and current age**



These PGTs request more financial support, even just for relatively small items, advice and flexibility to allow them to work.

“This course is expensive, I feel as though there could be much more flexibility to allow students to work alongside commitments to course. I understand the course is intense and needs to be but sometimes people feel unsupported by the university and faculty members in this way.”

“More support with free studying resources like notepads, online question banks and more understanding and flexibility when it comes to students who have to work alongside the course to survive financially and to pay travel to and from university.”

“I don’t think weekends are the best time for taught sessions as I commute quite far and accommodation tends to be way more expensive on a weekend.”

“Course was so spread across the week that it made it difficult for me to continue with my part-time job.”

In light of the cost of living crisis, Neves and Stephenson’s (2023, 8) study of the experiences of undergraduates highlights that ‘financial concerns are felt across the board, and particularly by disadvantaged students’, with those who have received free school meals just one of many groups. The analysis of PTES underscores the applicability of these findings for the taught postgraduate sector, along with the ongoing impact of socioeconomic status, and the need for a range of kinds of support.

The need for support for PGTs from backgrounds where money is likely to be of concern has been highlighted by previous research (see Stuart et al, 2008). There are also broader concerns around how financially sustainable PGT study is for UK domiciled PGTs (see Morgan, 2023), with the impact of funding gaps felt most keenly by those without a financially secure background. Even relatively modest, but timely, financial or advisory support appears to make a difference, and the impact was made evident by PGTs who had received free school meals.

“The course has let me learn about myself and I have had every drop of support possible.”

“I have had the support I have needed and have never been told no when I have asked for help.”

“Opening my mind to careers I had never considered.”

## 4.4 Mode of learning, teaching and leaving

As discussed above, mode of learning is strongly related to domicile, with 72% of all part-time PGTs being UK domiciled, compared to just 26% of full-time PGTs. When analysing the whole PGT cohort by mode of learning, part-time PGTs appear to have much higher rates of thinking about leaving than full-time PGTs (see Appendix 3); however, this largely reflects differences in domicile, not necessarily differences in mode of learning. For this reason, this section will consider UK-domiciled PGTs only. In addition to the mode of learning, this section will also consider the mode of teaching – whether teaching is face-to-face, blended, or wholly online.

PGTs who were taught mainly or completely online were more likely to indicate difficulty in balancing study with other commitments – particularly those who were part-time. For part-time PGTs who were taught mostly or completely online, 35% had thought about leaving their course, nine percentage points more than part-time PGTs who were taught mostly or completely in-person (see Table 4.6 below). These PGTs voiced frustration: with the workload demanded by the pace of study; when they couldn't plan other commitments around study; and when they struggled to influence the organisation of their course.

“Time scale for the whole course, it's very pressured with life things, and hard to find the time in learning to putting that to your own knowledge and writing.”

“[It seemed] like a flexible and well-thought out programme with part-time students in mind. However, that is not the case. Faculty shrug their shoulders and do not work with you to accommodate your work/care commitment issues etc.”

“As a half-time student the timetables have consistently been communicated at the last minute, which has made it a nightmare to try and work alongside half-time study.”

“More understanding from staff around half-time students and what we need to make it work – timetables further in advance, more scope to be flexible, consideration around examinations and assignment hand ins.”

The difficulties these PGTs faced were not all related to the institution. Some part-time PGTs commented on pressures caused by their inability to reduce other commitments, for example through being able to get leave from work or childcare.

**Table 4.6. Thought about leaving, by mode of learning and mode of teaching, UK domiciled PGTs only**

	Mode of teaching		
	Mostly or completely online	A mixture of online and in-person	Mostly or completely in-person
<b>Thought about leaving</b>			
Full-time	33%	28%	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,912</b>	<b>8,078</b>	<b>6,339</b>
Part-time	35%	27%	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,534</b>	<b>4,064</b>	<b>2,379</b>
<b>Main reason: difficulty balancing study and other commitments</b>			
Full-time	13%	12%	10%
Part-time	33%	34%	31%
<b>Main reason: my mental/emotional health</b>			
Full-time	13%	17%	18%
Part-time	7%	6%	8%
<b>Main reason: the way the course is delivered is not what I expected</b>			
Full-time	11%	8%	9%
Part-time	8%	9%	7%
<b>Total UK domiciled PGTs who thought about leaving</b>			
Full-time	660	2,387	1,683
Part-time	1,993	1,151	652

For full-time PGTs, the main reason for thinking about leaving was mental or emotional health. Of full-time PGTs being taught mostly or completely in-person, 18% stated mental or emotional health being the main reason for thinking about leaving, compared with 13% of those being taught mostly or completely online (see Table 4.6 above). The reason for this difference across mode of teaching was not clear from the data, though may be related to the intensity of course demands.

This analysis concludes with a consideration of the option introduced in the pandemic, when a large proportion of PGTs who were expecting to be taught in-person were instead taught online. A number of comments from PGTs indicated that for some, the level of online delivery remained greater than they were expecting or wanted.

“I found it disappointing that all the modules I undertook this year were virtual as I feel that I gain much more when in a face to face environment.”

“The course is purely recorded content with no live delivery. The majority of the recorded sessions are not from the tutor who is marking the module. Other than email or Canvas contact there is very little engagement with tutors, as there are no live drop-in sessions.”

Comments indicated that where PGTs had indicated that the course was not delivered as expected, many were concerned with broad issues of delivery, touching on the structure of the course, continuity of staff and how content was taught.

“The lecture sessions are held in groups of nearly 80 students, and so discussions are unfeasible. Instead ... the sessions resemble a radio phone-in rather than a lecture and/or academic discussion.”

“One of my main reasons for coming ... was to meet my peers. This was achieved but with no facilitation from the college.”

“Unit delivery has been very wishy washy and uninspiring, using recycled material of just PowerPoints talking through learning outcomes.”

“Just the one thing? Sigh. Okay. Structure. There is no structure. No Canvas, no reading lists, no learning materials, no quizzes, no practical examples, no curriculum, no calendar of teaching.”

While the question on delivery was introduced in the pandemic to explore the mode of teaching, it has touched on wider mismatches between expectations and needs regarding teaching and what was delivered. The causes of issues cited were various, including: difficulties due to changes in staffing or loss of staff; PGTs not being aware of how the course was to be delivered until they started; and the institution or teaching staff having a model of course delivery that at least some PGTs strongly disagreed with. Ultimately, this led to some very dissatisfied PGTs, who often articulated how this mismatch impacted their academic progress and personal wellbeing.

## 4.5 Leaving subjects

The analysis of PGTs who have considered leaving their course concludes with an analysis by subject area. There are significant differences across subjects in the likelihood that PGTs will have thought about leaving. Bringing together the various strands of the above analysis, these differences may partly be understood as variations in the kinds of PGT student who attend these courses along with subject characteristics in terms of delivery.

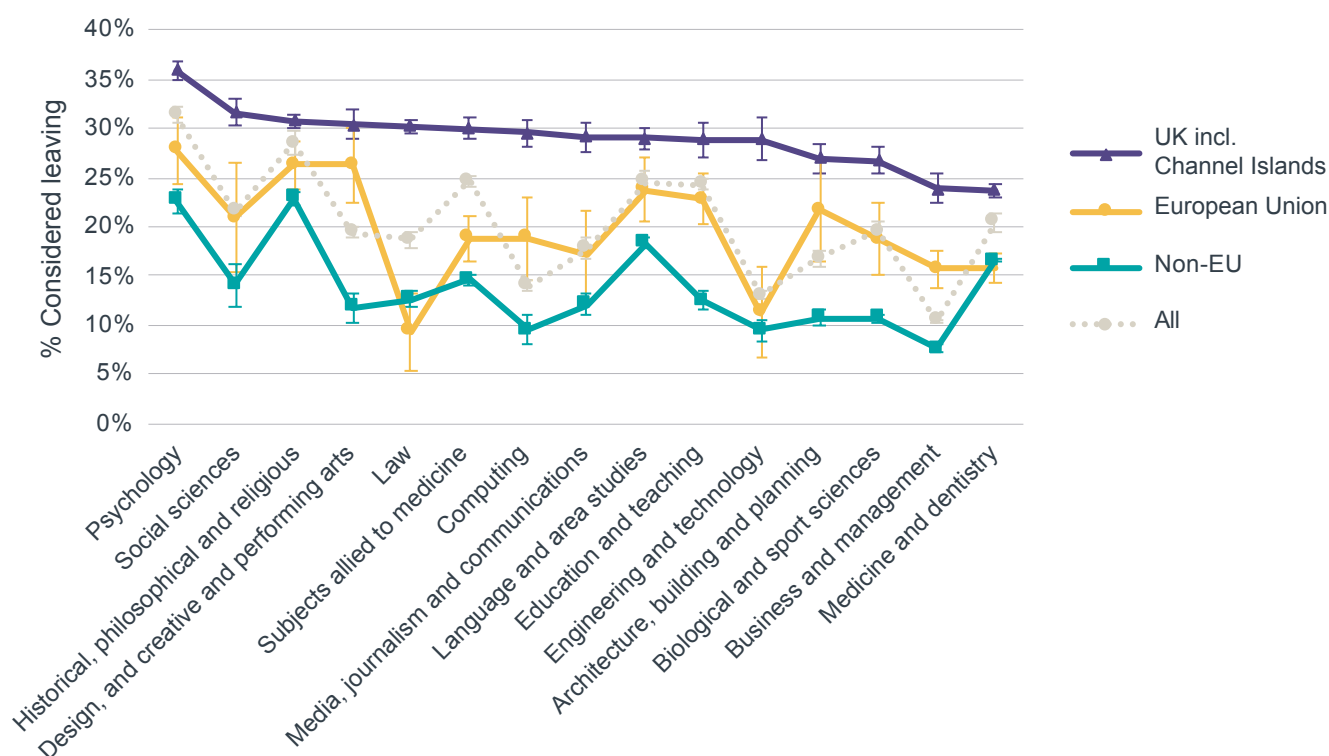
The two subjects with the lowest rate of PGTs thinking about leaving, Business and Management, and Engineering and Technology (see Appendix 3), are the two subjects with the highest proportion of non-EU PGTs (over three-quarters of the subject cohort, HESA 2022). From section 4.1, it is evident that non-EU PGTs are much less likely to indicate that they have thought about leaving, which affects all subjects, but these subjects in particular. The proportion of Business and Management, and Engineering and Technology PGTs who have thought about leaving is 11% and 13% respectively (see Appendix 3) and, as Figure 4.3 sets out, this figure essentially reflects the non-EU PGT population.

The influence of domicile is demonstrated in Figure 4.3 below, which gives the proportion of PGTs within each subject who have thought about leaving, broken down by broad domicile. Two main findings can be drawn from this analysis. First, domicile differences persist across subjects. In no subject does the proportion of UK-domiciled PGTs who state they have thought about leaving drop below either EU or non-EU domiciled PGTs. This gap persists across subject and is typically widest between UK and non-EU domiciled PGTs. Second, the graph in Figure 4.3 is ordered according to the proportion of UK-domiciled PGTs who state they have thought about leaving. However, the other domicile groups roughly follow the UK domiciled trend across subjects.<sup>10</sup> This reflects that other factors vary across subjects and influence the likelihood that PGTs have thought about leaving.

To illustrate how other factors vary across subject, it is useful to consider the subject with the highest proportion of PGTs who thought about leaving: Psychology. At first glance the explanation for this appears simple – Psychology has the lowest proportion of non-EU domiciled PGTs (HESA, 2023) for these subjects. However, when considering UK domiciled PGTs only, Psychology remains the subject with the highest proportion of PGTs who thought about leaving (see Figure 4.3 below), and has been in this position for the past three years. There are several candidate factors, discussed in the sections above, that may contribute to this situation. Psychology has a relatively high proportion of PGTs who are women, who declare a disability, who had received free school meals, and who study part-time mostly or completely online. These factors all tend towards PGTs who are more likely to face challenges in completing the course.

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10 For PTES 2023, the correlation between subject tendencies to think about leaving for non-EU domiciled PGTs and UK domiciled PGTs is moderate and significant,  $r(13)=0.532$ ;  $p=0.04$ ; for EU-domiciled PGTs and UK domiciled PGTs the relationship is moderate but marginally not significant, at  $r(13)=0.468$ ;  $p=0.08$ ). A slightly higher level of correlation (where both relationships are significant) is found for PTES 2022.

**Figure 4.3. Thought about leaving course, by subject and ternary domicile**

This analysis illuminates why particular subject areas, and cohorts defined by other factors, might persistently have different levels of students considering leaving. As discussed above, the quality of the course and support available has an important interaction with these factors. Good support and teaching will help PGTs most who are facing challenges, but will also benefit the academic outcomes and personal wellbeing of any PGT. The mitigation of the diverse challenges that PGTs face across subjects rests with course teams, departments, institutions and the sector.



## 5 Conclusions

To understand the trends in the taught postgraduate experience in the UK in 2023 is to look first at the changing profile of where these students are coming from. It is not just that there has been a great expansion in taught postgraduates from India, Nigeria and Pakistan. Their experience has been at least maintained and, for a proportion, improved over just a few years, impacting on the broad picture of PGT experience in the UK. Yet, exploring why this experience has been positive leads to evidence of good practice that is practiced widely in the sector and advocated by Advance HE. The diversity brought by these international cohorts is itself strengthening the quality of experience for many PGTs, making UK higher education a genuinely global experience. The continuing expansion of PGT provision therefore continues to be a success story for the sector, even with its rapid growth.

It should be borne in mind that this success story does not touch every PGT who comes to the UK. Where institutions have struggled to deliver good teaching and learning experiences to UK-domiciled PGTs, they have also struggled to deliver for overseas PGTs. Where courses lack diversity or fail to bring a taught postgraduate into an inclusive experience, this has negative impacts whichever country that student calls home. Where the student is facing financial difficulties, a lack of timely support or advice may result in the student leaving, regardless of whether that student is from India or England. The distinct experiences, expectations and aims of PGTs do need to be taken into account. However, many of the challenges they face, and the solutions that institutions can implement, appear very similar.

In exploring the experiences of taught postgraduates who have thought about leaving their course, the need for clarity and understanding about what the taught postgraduate experience will involve is evident. There are a number of studies showing the importance of the transition to taught postgraduate study. The findings of this report reinforce that message, in particular with regard to what is expected of students, and what the university commits to deliver.

Financial concerns are very much present for PGTs, and particularly for those PGTs who cannot fit work around their studies. The impacts of the cost of living crisis are visible across all domicile cohorts in the PTES data. Analysis of PTES 2023 has also evidenced that those students with the least resources will be impacted the most. Further, as has been evident from previous periods of economic uncertainty, the greatest loss will likely be those potential students who never enter study in the first place due to concerns over cost (see Morgan and Direito, 2015). The extent the sector and institutions can and will mitigate these broader challenges is unclear, but the positive impact of PGT study on students has shone through in many comments made by taught postgraduate students in PTES 2023. Taught postgraduate study is many different things to the diverse range of people who enter it, but when delivered well, it is valuable for everyone.



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## Appendix 1. PTES respondent and PGT population profile

	PTES profile			PGT profile (HESA, 2021)		
	2023	2022	2021	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
<i>All (total)</i>	83,807	79,591	69,076	674,175	615,095	523,525
<b>Sex<sup>11</sup></b>						
Female	59%	59%	.	58%	59%	60%
Male	41%	41%	.	42%	41%	40%
<i>Total</i>	81,857	76,951	.	672,195	613,570	522,395
<b>Age</b>						
25 or under	41%	43%	45%	43%	46%	48%
26 to 35	37%	36%	33%	33%	27%	26%
36 or over	22%	21%	22%	24%	27%	26%
<i>Total</i>	82,266	76,208	67,220	673,800	610,160	519,540
<b>Declared disability</b>						
Yes	10%	9%	11%	10%	11%	10%
No	90%	92%	89%	90%	89%	90%
<i>Total</i>	79,542	74,172	65,723	674,175	610,235	519,605
<b>Ethnicity (UK domicile only)</b>						
Asian	13%	12%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Black	10%	8%	7%	6%	7%	7%
Mixed	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
White	2%	2%	4%	1%	1%	1%
Other ethnicity	71%	74%	75%	79%	79%	79%
<i>Total</i>	28,540	31,998	35,368	297,245	309,945	260,060
<b>Domicile</b>						
UK incl Channel Islands	36%	43%	53%	47%	54%	53%
European Union	4%	5%	7%	7%	10%	11%
Non-European Union	61%	55%	40%	46%	37%	37%
<i>Total</i>	82,208	78,303	66,945	660,175	602,735	513,630

11 HESA figures for Sex exclude those that selected "Other" – an option that is not included in Advance HE's question.

	PTES profile			PGT profile (HESA, 2021)		
	2023	2022	2021	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
<b>Mode of study</b>						
Full-time	79%	77%	74%	64%	61%	60%
Part-time	21%	23%	26%	36%	40%	40%
<i>Total</i>	<i>83,719</i>	<i>79,098</i>	<i>68,665</i>	<i>674,175</i>	<i>615,020</i>	<i>523,455</i>
<b>Intended mode of teaching</b>						
Face-to-face	90%	88%	89%	.	.	.
Distance learner	11%	12%	12%	.	.	.
<i>Total</i>	<i>63,051</i>	<i>57,101</i>	<i>52,021</i>	.	.	.
<b>Qualification</b>						
Taught Masters	88%	87%	85%	79%	78%	78%
Other postgraduate taught	12%	13%	15%	21%	23%	22%
<i>Total</i>	<i>88%</i>	<i>87%</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>79%</i>	<i>78%</i>	<i>78%</i>

	PTES profile			PGT profile (HESA, 2021)		
	2023	2022	2021	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
<b>Subject (CAH1)</b>						
Medicine and dentistry	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Subjects allied to medicine	9%	8%	9%	14%	13%	13%
<i>Biological and sport sciences</i>	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Psychology	5%	5%	6%	4%	4%	4%
Veterinary sciences	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Agriculture, food and related studies	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Physical sciences	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Mathematical sciences	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Engineering and technology	7%	7%	7%	6%	5%	5%
Computing	7%	7%	6%	7%	6%	5%
Geography, earth and environmental studies	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Architecture, building and planning	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Social sciences	7%	8%	9%	9%	10%	10%
Law	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	5%
Business and management	31%	28%	22%	26%	23%	23%
Media, journalism and communications	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Language and area studies	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Historical, philosophical and religious studies	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Design, and creative and performing arts	6%	6%	6%	4%	4%	4%
Education and teaching	7%	8%	10%	10%	12%	12%
Combined and general studies	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>83,079</i>	<i>76,383</i>	<i>68,777</i>	<i>674,175</i>	<i>615,035</i>	<i>523,455</i>

## Appendix 2. Item level trends – 2021 to 2023

	2023		2022	2021
	Response	Agree %	Agree %	Agree %
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course	82,835	83%	82%	78%
There is appropriate access to online library resources	73,511	93%	92%	84%
There is appropriate access to physical library resources and facilities	70,658	91%	89%	61%
I am encouraged to ask questions or make contributions in taught sessions	81,528	91%	89%	87%
Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	80,335	90%	90%	89%
There is appropriate access to IT resources and facilities when I am on-campus	67,434	89%	87%	67%
I have been able to access subject specific resources necessary for my studies when I am learning remotely	71,942	89%	87%	80%
Staff are good at explaining things	82,028	89%	88%	87%
I have been able to access subject specific resources necessary for my studies when I am on-campus	66,864	88%	85%	66%
The course has enhanced my academic ability	80,301	87%	86%	85%
The support for using IT and accessing resources meets my needs	73,019	87%	84%	78%
My research skills have developed during my course	73,961	87%	85%	82%
The course is intellectually stimulating	79,889	87%	86%	86%
My supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support my dissertation/major project	45,703	86%	85%	84%
The learning materials provided on my course are useful	80,034	86%	84%	82%
As a result of the course I am more confident about independent learning	74,631	86%	83%	79%
I understand the required standards for the dissertation/major project	49,529	86%	83%	80%
My course has challenged me to produce my best work	80,911	85%	83%	79%

	2023		2022	2021
	Response	Agree %	Agree %	Agree %
The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance	81,590	84%	82%	81%
The support for academic skills meets my needs (for example, support for your writing, language, subject-specific skills)	73,209	84%	81%	76%
I have been encouraged to think about what skills I need to develop for my career	73,138	83%	81%	76%
My supervisor provides helpful feedback on my progress	44,608	83%	81%	79%
My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my course	73,280	82%	80%	74%
I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback on my experience	80,440	83%	82%	78%
Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	80,174	81%	79%	78%
My confidence to be innovative or creative has developed during my course	73,961	81%	78%	73%
As a result of the course I feel better prepared for my future career	73,083	81%	79%	75%
The course has created sufficient opportunities to discuss my work with other students	80,687	81%	76%	65%
Feedback on my work has been useful	80,522	81%	78%	77%
I am happy with the support for my learning I receive from staff on my course	80,254	80%	77%	73%
I was given appropriate guidance and support when I started my course	80,572	79%	77%	75%
I am happy with the support I received for planning my dissertation/major project	47,461	79%	76%	73%
The timetable fits well with my other commitments	81,310	78%	78%	79%
The course is well organised and is running smoothly	81,055	77%	76%	74%
Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair	80,477	77%	76%	76%

	2023		2022	2021
	Response	Agree %	Agree %	Agree %
The support for my health and wellbeing meets my needs (for example, personal tutor, student support and counselling services)	70,654	76%	74%	68%
Feedback on my work has been prompt	80,011	75%	73%	71%
There is sufficient contact time to support effective learning	79,332	75%	71%	62%
The workload on my course has been manageable	80,054	73%	71%	67%
Feeling a sense of belonging	80,668	69%	-	-
I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run	79,754	69%	67%	64%
Feeling part of a community	81,427	69%	-	-
The opportunities to interact	80,481	64%	-	-



## Appendix 3. Demographic characteristics

Significant differences (at 95% confidence level, not adjusted for multiple tests) to all respondents are indicated in **bold**

	Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course				Thought about leaving 2023
	2023	2022	2021		
	Response	Agree %	Agree %	Agree %	
All respondents	82835	83%	82%	78%	18%
<b>Age</b>					
25 or under	33186	83%	82%	<b>77%</b>	16%
26 to 35	30395	83%	81%	<b>78%</b>	16%
36 or over	17769	<b>84%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>84%</b>	24%
<b>Sex</b>					
Female	48148	83%	82%	-	19%
Male	32823	<b>85%</b>	<b>84%</b>	-	14%
<b>Trans status</b>					
Is trans or has a trans history	1272	<b>86%</b>	84%	-	27%
Is not trans and has no trans history	73500	84%	<b>83%</b>	-	17%
<b>Gender</b>					
Man	32277	<b>85%</b>	<b>84%</b>	79%	14%
Woman	47051	83%	82%	<b>79%</b>	19%
Non-binary	716	73%	74%	<b>70%</b>	37%
In another way	188	<b>76%</b>	76%	<b>69%</b>	42%
<b>Disability</b>					
Declared disability	8147	<b>75%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>71%</b>	41%
No declared disability	70651	<b>85%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>80%</b>	14%

	Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course				Thought about leaving 2023
	2023		2022	2021	
	Response	Agree %	Agree %	Agree %	
Kind of disability					
Blind or have a visual impairment	228	86%	81%	73%	47%
D/deaf or have a hearing impairment	331	77%	80%	75%	38%
Development condition	229	73%	75%		49%
Learning difference such as dyslexia, AD(H)D	3458	74%	73%	70%	42%
Long-term illness or health condition	1137	78%	75%	73%	40%
Mental health condition, challenge or disorder	3674	73%	71%	68%	47%
Physical impairment	733	74%	73%	74%	46%
Social/communication conditions	768	72%	75%	67%	47%
An impairment not listed above	333	65%	73%	73%	47%
Country group – domicile					
UK incl. Channel Islands	29334	79%	79%	77%	29%
European Union	2875	79%	79%	77%	19%
Other Europe	1016	78%	78%	74%	18%
Africa	10118	88%	86%	83%	13%
Asia	33435	87%	86%	83%	8%
Oceania	215	80%	78%	77%	23%
Middle East	1697	78%	78%	76%	19%
North America	2213	73%	71%	71%	28%
South America	431	77%	75%	75%	20%
Free school meals					
Had free school meals	2531	78%	-	-	29%
Did not have free school meals	24682	81%	-	-	19%

	Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course				Thought about leaving 2023
	2023		2022	2021	
	Response	Agree %	Agree %	Agree %	
HE Background					
First generation to go to university	33891	85%	-	-	19%
Not first generation to go to university	45498	83%	-	-	16%
Ethnicity (UK domicile)					
Asian	3785	82%	81%	76%	19%
Black	2745	85%	83%	80%	23%
Mixed	1157	76%	78%	75%	33%
Other ethnicity	514	77%	77%	74%	29%
White	20105	79%	79%	77%	31%
Mode of learning					
Full-time	65585	84%	82%	77%	15%
Part-time	17183	82%	82%	82%	29%
Mode of teaching					
Mostly or completely virtually/online	18766	82%	79%	77%	24%
A mixture of in-person and virtually/online	41411	84%	83%	85%	15%
Mostly or completely in-person	22350	84%	84%	84%	17%

	Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course				Thought about leaving 2023
	2023		2022	2021	
	Response	Agree %	Agree %	Agree %	
Subject (CAH1)					
Medicine and dentistry	1673	83%	80%	80%	20%
Subjects allied to medicine	7619	80%	80%	78%	25%
Biological and sport sciences	1985	86%	85%	81%	19%
Psychology	3671	76%	77%	73%	31%
Veterinary sciences	110	77%	84%	82%	
Agriculture, food and related studies	881	87%	83%	85%	16%
Physical sciences	814	86%	81%	77%	17%
Mathematical sciences	1102	81%	79%	77%	19%
Engineering and technology	5904	85%	84%	80%	13%
Computing	5657	81%	79%	74%	14%
Architecture, building and planning	2406	80%	81%	74%	17%
Social sciences	5876	82%	80%	77%	22%
Law	2173	84%	82%	77%	19%
Business and management	25043	87%	85%	80%	10%
Language and area studies	1966	83%	82%	82%	25%
Historical, philosophical and religious studies	1572	84%	85%	83%	28%
Education and teaching	5881	84%	81%	81%	24%
Combined and general studies	293	77%	86%	85%	31%
Media, journalism and communications	1379	81%	80%	76%	18%
Design, and creative and performing arts	5143	80%	78%	75%	20%
Geography, earth and environmental studies	973	81%	82%	78%	21%
Qualification					
Taught Masters	73017	83%	82%	78%	17%
Postgraduate Certificate (including PGCE)	5982	82%	79%	78%	24%
Postgraduate Diploma	2919	82%	81%	79%	21%
Other	840	83%	83%	83%	22%

## Appendix 4. Participating institutions

Aberystwyth University	Nottingham Trent University	University of Essex
Arden University	Oxford Brookes University	University of Exeter
Aston University	Plymouth Marjon University	University of Greenwich
Bangor University	Ravensbourne University London	University of Hertfordshire
Birkbeck University of London	Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	University of Highlands and Islands
Birmingham City University	Queen Mary University of London	University of Huddersfield
Bournemouth University	Queen's University Belfast	University of Hull
Buckinghamshire New University	Royal College of Art	University of Kent
Canterbury Christ Church University	Royal Veterinary College	University of Lincoln
Cardiff Metropolitan University	School of Advanced Study	University of Northampton
City University of London	Sheffield Hallam University	University of Nottingham
Coventry University	SOAS University of London	University of Oxford
Cranfield University	St Georges University of London	University of Plymouth
De Montfort University	St Mary's University Twickenham	University of Portsmouth
Durham University	Staffordshire University	University of Reading
Edinburgh Napier University	The Institute of Cancer Research London	University of Roehampton London
Goldsmiths University of London	The Open University	University of Southampton
Harper Adams University	The University of Edinburgh	University of St Andrews
Hartpury University	Ulster University	University of Stirling
Heriot-Watt University	University College Birmingham	University of Strathclyde
Keele University	University for the Creative Arts	University of Suffolk
King's College London	University of Aberdeen	University of Surrey
Kingston University London	University of Bath	University of Sussex
Lancaster University	University of Birmingham	University of the Arts London
Leeds Beckett University	University of Bolton	University of Warwick
Liverpool John Moores University	University of Bradford	University of West London
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	University of Brighton	University of Wales Trinity Saint David
London Metropolitan University	University of Bristol	University of Westminster
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine	University of Cambridge	University of Wolverhampton
London South Bank University	University of Chester	University of Worcester
Loughborough University	University of Cumbria	UWE Bristol
Middlesex University London	University of Derby	Wrexham Glyndwr University
Newcastle University	University of Dundee	York St John University
Norwich University of the Arts	University of East London	

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