

# Student Support Survey 2017/18

A report from the  
Personal Finance Research Centre

Sara Davies, Tony Hoare, Jamie Evans and Michaela Giasullo  
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University of  
**BRISTOL**

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UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL  
PERSONAL FINANCE RESEARCH CENTRE

**This report was prepared by**

**Sara Davies, Tony Hoare, Jamie Evans and Michaela Giasullo**

**University of Bristol**

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# 1 Introduction

This report details the findings from a survey exploring the financially-related aspects of student life, comparing the views and experiences of students in receipt of University of Bristol financial support, with those who aren't eligible, to establish the impact of financial support on the experience of those with an economic disadvantage. A similar survey was run in the academic year 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2016/17

The University of Bristol's student financial support package in 2017/18 consisted of:

- **The University of Bristol Bursary**, which in 2017/18 provided **financial** support for students from families with household incomes of £42,857 or less. The cash bursary ranged from £2,000 for those with a residual household income (RHI) of under £25,000, dropping incrementally down to £500 for those with an RHI of £42,857
- **The Access to Bristol Bursary**, where students who 'graduate' from the Access to Bristol (A2B) scheme<sup>1</sup> and have an RHI of under £25,000 receive a full tuition fee waiver for the first year of their study, and an annual cash bursary of £3,750 per academic year
- **The Bristol Scholars Bursary**, where students accepted to the university via the Bristol scholar programme and have an RHI of under £25,000 receive a full tuition fee waiver for the first year of their study, as well as an annual cash bursary of £3,750.

**Table 1.1 – Bursary schedule 2018**

Residual Household Income (RHI)	Bursary received
Higher Income (£43-80K)	None
Mid-Income (£25-43K)	£1,500 to £500
Low-income (Below £25K)	£2,000 - £3,750

<sup>1</sup> Access to Bristol is a programme run by the University in which local A-Level students attend a series of sessions at the University to experience what studying at Bristol consists of. It is a programme designed to particularly encourage participation from students who are either the first generation of their family to attend University or who live in low participation areas (LPA).

Throughout the report we will refer to those who come from households with an RHI of under £25,000 as low-income students, those who come from households with an RHI of £25,000 – £42,000 as mid-income students, and those who come from households with an RHI of over £42,000 – £80,000 as higher income students.

### 1.1 Survey methodology

The survey was conducted between 30<sup>th</sup> April and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2018, via Online Surveys. Students were asked a range of questions about their financial experience of University. The questions that students completed were dependent on both their year group and whether they had received financial support from the University. Some questions – for example, on internship participation – were asked only of those in years two and three, as they would not yet be relevant to those in their first year.

The link to the survey was sent to six different groups of students, as outlined below:<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1.2 – Response Rates by sample group**

Sample group	No. of responses	Response rate
Year 1 Low/Mid Income* (funded)	273	23%
Year 1 Higher Income (not funded)	121	21%
Year 2 Low/ Mid Income* (funded)	164	20%
Year 2 Higher Income (not funded)	81	21%
Year 3 Low / mid Income* (funded)	164	16%
Year 3 Higher Income (not funded)	48	18%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>20%</b>

\*we are unable to disaggregate the two RHI categories for the purpose of calculating the response rate

### 1.2 Analyses

The analysis of the data comprises of predominantly of cross-tabulations and descriptive statistics. Chi-square tests are used to

<sup>2</sup> A2B/BS and UoB bursary recipients are considered together in each year group, as there are low numbers of A2B/BS recipients

examine the statistical significance of relationships between categorical variables (e.g. faculty and whether student works during term-time) and, where applicable, column proportion z-tests are used to identify where the main statistically significant differences lie. For continuous variables (e.g. number of paid hours of work undertaken per week), t-tests are used to identify statistically significant differences between groups. Logistic regression analyses are also used where appropriate to examine relationships between variables in more detail whilst controlling for other factors. Statistically significant results ( $p < 0.05$ ) in these analyses are reported in **bold**.

Throughout the report, the survey results are cross-tabulated with a number of explanatory variables, the most important of which for the purposes of this report is a combined variable detailing students' funding status and level of household income, as detailed in table 1.1. Further to this, we will explore differences between students based on the level of funding received, divided into three categories: high funding (£2,000+), middle funding (£1500 - £1,250) and low funding (£750 - £500).

The results are also broken down by a number of demographic characteristics. These are:

- Gender: male / female
- Age group: under 21 / 21 and over on entry (mature students)
- Ethnic background: white / non-white
- Disability: yes / no
- Mental health problem: yes/no
- Faculty group: Arts, Social Sciences and Law (ASSL) / Science and Engineering / Medical Sciences
- Accommodation (year one only): halls / not halls

### **1.3 Measuring impact**

Our research design here is to survey those pre-identified as with and without bursaries across all three years, and the underlying premise is that a positive impact of receiving a bursary arises where such students are at least as positive in their survey responses as those receiving no bursary. As the receipt of a bursary is inversely related to the students' parental household income such an outcome could reasonably be interpreted as 'levelling the playing field' of undergraduate spending-power. Should funded students provide *more* positive outcomes than the unfunded then the argument for bursaries having a beneficial impact is correspondingly stronger still.

In this approach we are following not only our own previous annual surveys but also reflecting the methodology advocated by OFFA<sup>3</sup> (now the OfS) in its toolkit to support universities in measuring precisely this same impact of student bursaries across the sector, which it now expects as part of their annual Access Agreement submissions.

#### **1.4 Report Outline**

In chapter two, we examine the effect of financial support and cohort group on financial position of students, and their consequent behaviour; in chapter three we look at how finances affected the choice of university, and then in chapter four, how it affects the experience while there. In chapter five we examine the students' feelings about their finances at university, and in chapter six, their feelings about their own wellbeing. Finally, in chapter seven we conclude on what impact financial support appears to be having on student life. Where appropriate, we also highlight in the report any key differences in the 2018 survey findings compared to those of previous years, in particular the results from the 2017 survey. We will focus particularly on any differences between year three middle-income households, as this particular group was unfunded in 2017, but will have received funding this year.

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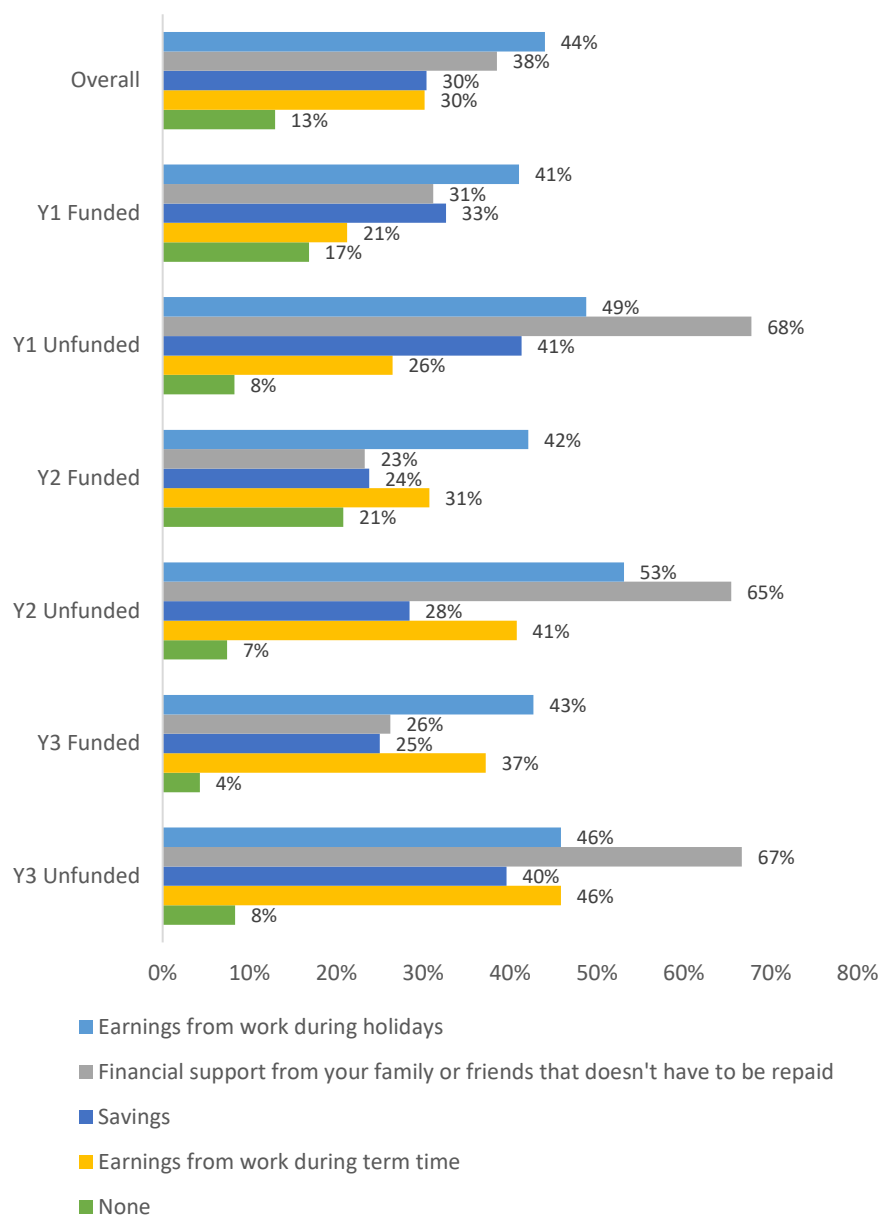
<sup>3</sup> Sheffield institute of Education (2016) Closing the gap: understanding the impact of institutional financial support on student success: Final Project Report for the Office for Fair Access

## 2 Student finances – income, borrowing and employment

This chapter explores where the students get their income from, the extent to which they have borrowings, and the level of paid employment undertaken while at university.

### 2.1 Sources of income

**Figure 2.1** Proportion of students who received income from each of the following sources



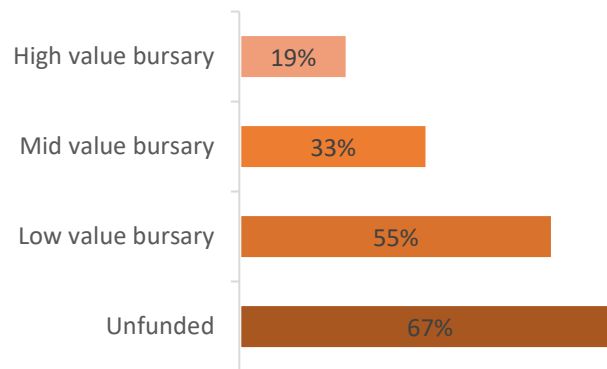


There has been little change to the main sources of incomes reported by undergraduates since 2017, with earnings from holiday work still the most common source of income (44 per cent), followed by financial support from family or friends (38 per cent), earnings from term-time work (30 per cent), and savings (30 per cent)

In 2017/18, only third year funded students were eligible for the non-repayable maintenance grant of up to £3,482, and the majority of them (84 per cent) were in receipt of it

Thirty-eight percent of students received money from their families that they didn't have to repay, a slight drop from last year (40 percent). Again, this was significantly more likely for those who didn't receive any student funding, regardless of year of study (67 per cent) than those who did (27 per cent). The amount of funding received was also important: students receiving the middle level of funding were more likely than those on the highest level of funding to receive this money, but less likely than those who received the lowest amount (55 per cent)

**Figure 2.2 Proportion of students who received money from families that they didn't have to pay back**

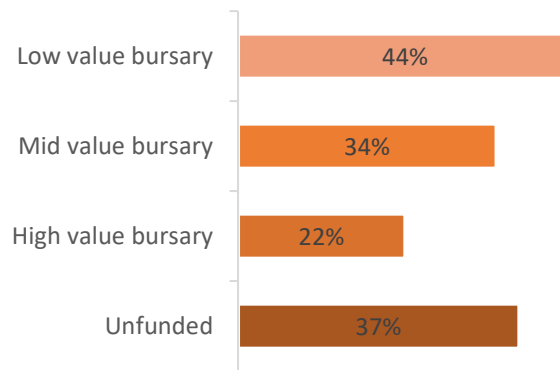


Interestingly, in comparison with year three mid-income students surveyed in 2015, who didn't then receive any funding but did in 2017/18, there is little difference: 49 per cent of mid-income year threes in 2017, in comparison with 45 per cent this year. This perhaps suggests that financial support from family is dependent more on whether the family can afford it, rather than whether there is an alternative source for that money or not.

Around one third of students (30 per cent) used savings as part of their income. This was significantly higher for unfunded students in

comparison with those who received funding (37 per cent cf. 28 per cent). However, those who received the highest level of funding were significantly less likely to rely on savings than those who received a lower amount.

**Figure 2.3 Proportion of students who used savings as part of their income**



Many students, both funded and unfunded, also relied on their earnings as part of their income: overall 44 per cent counted earnings from working during the holidays, and 28 per cent counted earnings from term time working as a source of income, which were similar percentages to 2017.

Similarly, receiving student funding made a difference to reported reliance on earned income; students who received funding were significantly less likely to count on holiday earnings than those who were unfunded (44 per cent cf. 50 per cent) and less likely, albeit not to a statistically significant level, to rely on earnings during term time (28 per cent vs 35 per cent).

In terms of other differences by demographic characteristics, mature students were significantly less likely to receive income from friends and family (7 per cent) than their younger peers (41 per cent), and more likely to receive income from work during term time (45 per cent) than their younger peers (29 per cent respectively). Female students were significantly more likely to receive income from earnings for work during the holidays (47 per cent) and saving (33 per cent) than males (37 and 25 per cent respectively).

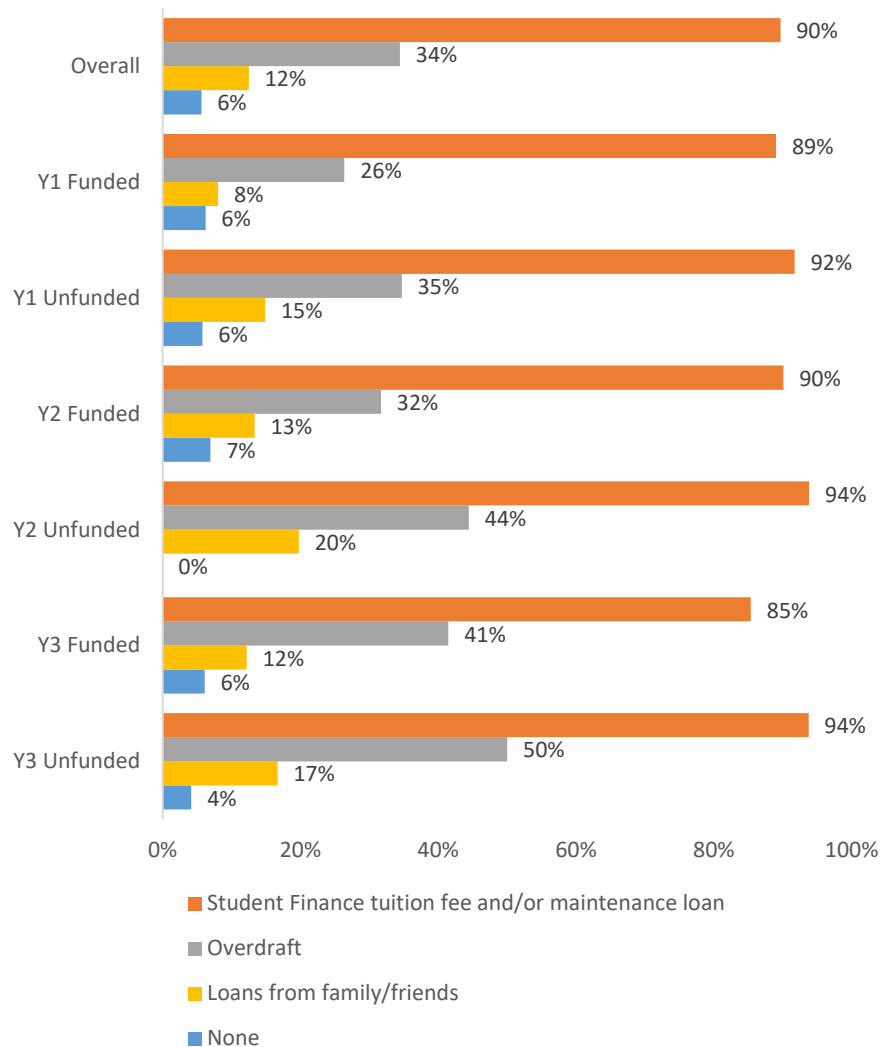
There were also differences within the faculties: students from the ASSL faculties were significantly more likely to count income from term time working, than those from the other faculties.

Overall, 15 per cent of students had no sources of income (in addition to any financial support they may have received from the University), which is far higher than in 2017, where only nine per cent had no other source. The level of student funding received had a clear effect on the number of sources of income that students reported. Funded year one and two students were the most likely to only rely on university funding, at 22 and 26 per cent respectively, and those who received the highest level of funding were significantly more likely to do so than those who received the middle or lower levels. On the other end of the scale, unfunded students were significantly more likely to rely on three or more sources of income (35 per cent) than funded students (23 per cent).

## **2.2 Sources of borrowing**

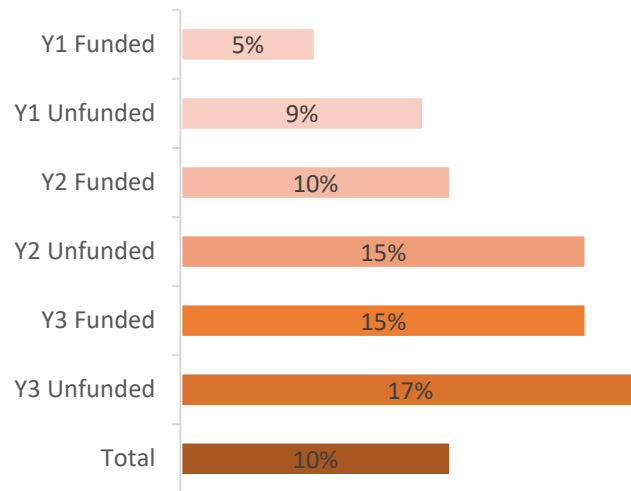
Unsurprisingly, and as in 2017, the majority (89 per cent) of students borrow money from Student Finance to fund their time at University. As shown in Figure 2.2, around one third (34 per cent) used overdrafts, while loans from family and friends remained the third most common source of student borrowing (12 per cent). Loans from commercial lenders were used by very few students, regardless of year or funding status.

**Figure 2.4 Main sources of borrowing (excluding student loan) by funding group**



An examination of borrowing by different funding groups does reveal differences; as with sources of income, funded students were significantly more likely to have no other sources of borrowing other than the student loan than those who were unfunded (63 per cent cf. 53 per cent). Unfunded year two students, and year three students regardless of funding group were the most likely to have two or more sources of borrowing. Those receiving the lowest level of funding were significantly more likely to borrow from family and friends (20 per cent) than those in receipt of higher levels of funding (8 and 9 per cent respectively)

**Figure 2.5 Proportion of students with two or more sources of borrowing**



Overdrafts were significantly more common among male students, mature students, and those in halls of residence. As in 2017, mature students had significantly higher levels of borrowings of all types than younger students, except in the case of student loans, where the reverse was found.

Students with disabilities also had higher levels of borrowing both commercially and from friends and families than those without disabilities. Students with mental health problems were significantly more likely to rely on borrowing from friends and family (20 per cent) than those without (11 per cent).

## **2.3 Students' employment patterns**

### **2.3.1 Term-time working**

Overall, just over one third of students (35 per cent) had worked during the current academic year 2017/18. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those in the first year were the least likely to have done so, with the year one funded students significantly less likely than any other year two and three group to do so (24 per cent). Overall, this is an area where funding appeared to have an impact; unfunded students were significantly more likely to have worked than those who received a bursary (41 per cent compared with 33 per cent). This pattern was remarkably consistent with the finding from the 2017 study.

The demographic differences were broadly similar to last year too, with mature students most likely to have worked during term-time

(53 per cent), as were students from the ASSL faculty group (42 per cent).

Again, as with 2017, there was a consistency across all types of students in terms of their motivation for working during term-time, with the clear majority (85 per cent) believing that work was necessary for financial reasons, and one in five (20 per cent) using it to gain work experience.

There were no differences observed between most of the various socio-demographic variables. There was, however, a significant difference between those living with and without mental health problems: those with mental health problems were significantly more likely to take up work during term-time because they saw it as necessary for personal financial budgeting over the year (96 per cent), compared with 83 per cent of those without a mental health problem

There were few differences in the level of importance placed on the income received from term-time working; overall, 61 per cent of those who worked for financial reasons felt it was important to their capacity to continue their studies. There were no statistically significant differences between funded and unfunded students, although funded students were more likely to place importance on the income from working (67 per cent) than unfunded students (58 per cent). However, among funded students, those who received the lowest level of funding were significantly more likely to place importance on the income from working (79 per cent) than those who received the highest amount (53 per cent). Similarly, third year middle-income students from 2017, who didn't receive any funding were more likely to place importance on working (74 per cent) than the same students this year, who did receive some funding (61 per cent). Students living with a disability were more likely to find term-time work to finance study important (78 per cent) than those living with no disability (58 per cent).

### 2.3.2 Holiday employment

Students from year one were asked about their employment patterns for the preceding Christmas vacation, whereas students in years two and three were asked about their employment from the summer

before. Students from both groups were also asked about their intention to work during the coming summer.

### 2.3.3 Year one students

The number of first year students who report working during the holidays has been rising over the last few years: this year, 41 per cent of students overall worked during the Christmas holidays, compared with 35 per cent in 2017, and 28 per cent in 2015. There were no significant differences observed by funding status.

However, as with participation in term-time employment, mature students were significantly more like to work during the Christmas holidays (62 per cent) than their younger peers (4 per cent). Similarly, ASSL students were significantly more likely to work during the Christmas holidays (49 per cent) than those in Science and Engineering (33 per cent).

When asked about their reasons for working in the Christmas holidays, the vast majority of students reported that it was necessary for financial reasons: 88 per cent worked for financial reasons, while only 11 per cent did it for work experience.

For those who did not work during the Christmas holidays, the main reasons given were revision (61 per cent), not being able to find work (22 per cent), or just didn't want to work (20 per cent) or didn't need to (17 per cent). Students belonging to the Science and Engineering faculty were significantly more likely to cite a busy revision schedule as to why they did not work over Christmas (69 per cent) than ASSL students (50 per cent).

In terms of summer work intentions, 90 per cent of the current year one students said that they intended to work in the upcoming summer holidays. Students from the Medical faculty were significantly less likely to have this intention than students from other faculty groups; nevertheless, over three quarters of them (76 per cent) were still intending to, as in 2017. However, second year students who received the highest level of funding were the group least likely to intend to work next summer (84 per cent), significantly less so than year two students who receive the middle amount (99 per cent)

Financial reasons were the most common explanation given for intending to work in the summer holidays (88 per cent), although the importance of summer work for work experience was also a relatively common reason (30 per cent).

There was no one clear reason why students did not intend to work in the next summer holidays, with the reasons split fairly evenly across not wanting to, not needing to, not feeling that they will be able to get employment or being unable to as a result of caring responsibilities.

#### 2.3.4 Year two and three students

Overall, just under three quarters of students in years two and three had taken paid employment during the summer holidays of 2017 (73 per cent), with no significant differences by funding group, or any other demographic factor. In 2017, unfunded students were significantly more likely to than funded students to have worked.

The motivations for working in the summer holidays were similar to motivations for working during term time; primarily for necessary financial reasons (87 per cent). However, around a quarter (27 per cent) also worked to gain work experience. There were no significant differences as a result of demographic characteristics or funding status.

For those who didn't work, the reasons given ranged from an inability to find work even though they wanted to (32 per cent), too busy with course placements (20 per cent), busy with voluntary work (19 per cent), having family or caring responsibilities (17 per cent), not needing to work for financial reasons (16 per cent) or they simply didn't want to work (19 per cent). There were few differences by funding status or any demographic characteristic in reasons given, although male students were significantly more likely to say that they didn't need to work (26 per cent) or they were unable to find work (45 per cent) than female students (12 and 26 per cent respectively). Conversely, females were significantly more likely than males to not have worked over the previous summer as they were busy with course placements (28 per cent against 2 per cent respectively).

Overall, 90 per cent of year two students were intending to work in summer 2019, which is an increase from 2017, when 75 per cent were intending to work in summer 2018. However, as with 2017, students from the Medical faculty were the least likely to be intending to.



### 3 Effect of funding choice on university

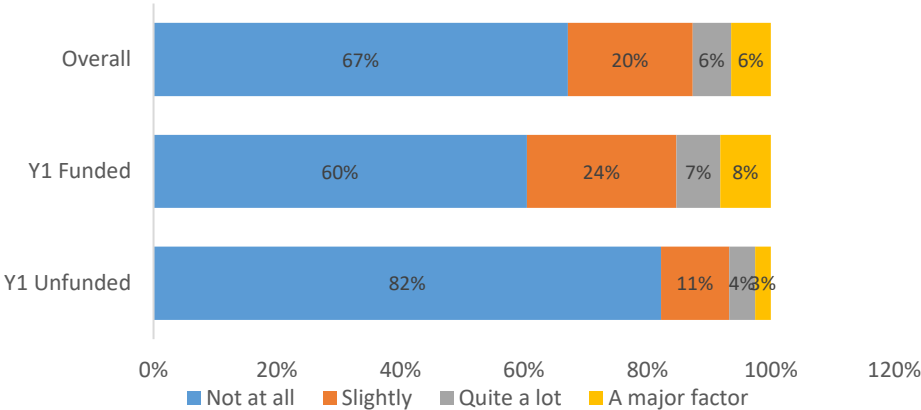
This section is about the role that finances may have played in first year students’ choices prior to coming to university. First year students were asked about the extent to which student funding affected their decision to both apply to and accept a place at the University of Bristol, and their level of awareness of funding prior to starting the course. They were also asked whether the cost of accommodation in Bristol had had an effect on their decision to apply and accept a place at the University.

#### 3.1 Impact of funding on decision to apply to and accept a place at Bristol

As shown in Figure 3.1, for the majority of first year students’ funding had not been a factor in their decision to apply for a place at the University of Bristol; Overall, two thirds of students report that funding did not affect their decision to apply to Bristol at all.

Unsurprisingly, unfunded students (82 per cent) were significantly more likely than funded students (60 per cent) to say funding did not affect their decision to apply to Bristol at all. There were also marked differences between students depending on the level of funding they received, however; only half of students (51 per cent) who received the highest level of funding reported that funding made no difference to their decision, in comparison with 71 and 81 per cent respectively with those who received middle and high-level funding. Indeed, those who received the lowest level of funding were no more influenced by receipt of funding than those who didn’t receive any.

**Figure 3.1 Extent to which funding affected decision to apply for a place at University at Bristol, by funding status**



Overall, 13 per cent of students who received more than £2,000 funding considered funding a major factor in their decision, significantly higher than all others.

However, the effect of funding on choices needs to be understood in the context of awareness of eligibility for funding. Among those who were eligible for bursary funding, there was a stark difference in prior knowledge of funding by level of funding received. Sixty-two per cent of those who received the highest funding were aware that they would be eligible prior to starting their course, in comparison with 29 per cent of those who received the middle level of funding, and fewer than one in five students who received the lowest levels (19 per cent), and one third of the highest funding group (34 per cent) knew how much they would receive, compared with 8 and 9 per cent respectively of the other two funding groups. However, overall, the actual percentage of students who were influenced by funding has dropped since 2017

As with 2017, prior knowledge of eligibility for funding did not appear to have much effect on the decisions to apply to Bristol; of those who were aware of their eligibility for funding, one quarter (28 per cent) felt that the support offered had affected their decision to apply to Bristol either quite a lot, or that it was a major factor, with a similar number (25 per cent) of those who were aware of how much they would receive. It is important to note, however, that students receiving the highest bursary amount, from low-income households, are likely to be eligible for bursaries elsewhere, and likely to be aware of this too.

### **3.2 Impact of accommodation costs on decision to come to Bristol**

We also considered the extent to which the cost of accommodation affected the decision to apply to and accept a place at the University of Bristol. Around one quarter (24 per cent) of first year students reported that the cost of accommodation had in no way affected their decision to come to Bristol, while 46 per cent said it had discouraged them 'slightly', 19 per cent admitted it discouraged them 'quite a lot' and only 8 per cent described it as 'a major factor'. Unfunded students were significantly more likely to cite accommodation cost as a major factor when deciding to apply to Bristol (17 per cent) than funded students (8 per cent). It should also be noted here, that, by definition, those who answered the survey

were not so deterred by the cost of accommodation that they went elsewhere, and we cannot quantify the number for whom it was ultimately a barrier.

## 4 Effect of finances on experience while at university

This chapter explores the ways in which the financial situation of the student affects their experiences once they are at university, in terms of their participation in different aspects of university life, and their perception of how their finances affected these choices.

### 4.1 Choice of accommodation

#### Year one students

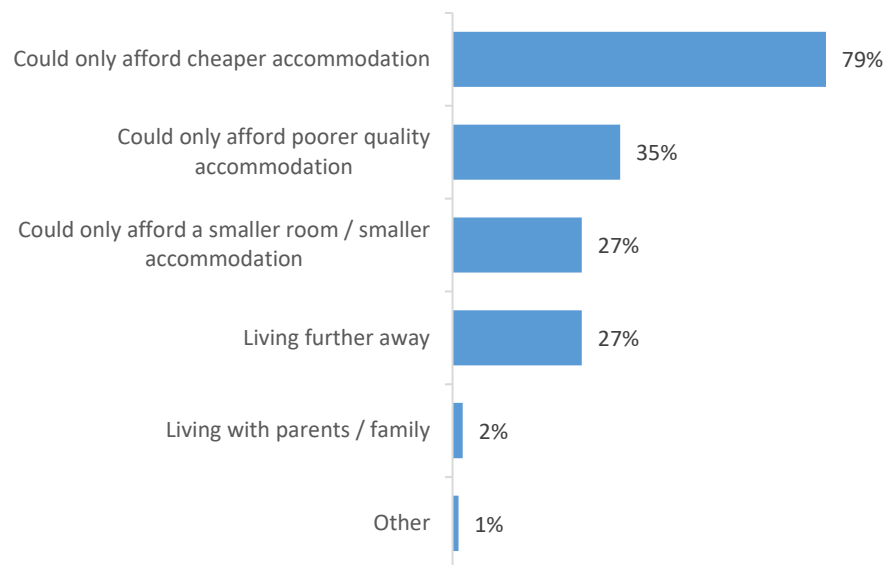
First year students were asked how concerned they were that their financial circumstances would limit their accommodation options in the following academic year, and a very similar number to last year, (52 per cent) reported that they were 'very' or 'quite' concerned about this. There were no statistically significant differences by funding status, or any demographic factors.

#### Year two and three students

Just under two thirds of second and third year students (65 per cent) felt that financial concerns had influenced their choice of accommodation for the 2017/18 academic year. There were no significant differences as a result of funding status however, three quarters of those who received the lowest level of funding felt that their accommodation decision was influenced by financial concerns. Year two students were significantly more likely to report this than year three students (69 per cent cf. 59 per cent), as were those who reported suffering mental problems (75 per cent cf. 63 per cent). Most year two students were making the decision to move away from university accommodation for the first time, so the decision may have weighed more heavily on them in part for that reason.

As shown in Figure 4.1 below, the primary way in which finances affected students' accommodation decisions was that they had to move into cheaper accommodation than they initially considered or preferred. Unfunded students were significantly more likely than those who were funded to only be able to afford both cheaper (88 per cent) and poorer accommodation they would otherwise have preferred (76 per cent) than those who received funding (76 and 30 per cent respectively)

**Figure 4.1 Ways in which finances affected accommodation decision**



*Base: 456, second and third year students who said that financial concerns had affected their choice of accommodation*

There were few differences between the different groups of students in how finances affected their accommodation choices, however, mature students were significantly less likely to choose cheaper accommodation than younger students (58 per cent, c.f. 80 per cent), but significantly more likely to live further away (53 per cent, c.f. 26 per cent). This demonstrates a similar pattern to 2017. Interestingly, when comparing funded students on the various financial support packages, again, the middle group of students were identified as 'better off'. Those who received the middle level of funding were significantly less likely to only afford cheaper accommodation (57 per cent) than students on other financial packages (highest funding: 79 per cent, lowest funding: 86 per cent cf. 88 per cent if unfunded).

## 4.2 Unexpected costs

Overall, around one third of students (35 per cent) had incurred unexpected costs through their undergraduate course. Unfunded students were significantly more likely to have incurred unexpected costs (41 per cent) than funded students (33 per cent).

In terms of demographic differences, female students (38 per cent) were more likely to have reported that they incurred such costs, while those from the Science and Engineering faculty group were less likely to (25 per cent) than students from other faculties. The levels of unexpected costs reported have continued on a downward trend in 2018. In 2017, 38 per cent of students reported having incurred them, and in 2015, it was just over half of first year students (51 per cent), and just under half of third year students (47 per cent).

Buying textbooks was the most commonly mentioned unexpected cost this year, as well as a number who mentioned other course costs such as printing, specialist stationery, technical equipment and even protective clothing

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*“I study English and Philosophy which involves buying compulsory texts which cost a lot. I think this should be included within the price.”*  
(year two, funded)

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Other commonly mentioned unexpected, non-course costs included travel for placements, costs other than flights for years abroad, the need to buy a gym pass to join sports societies, the cost of paying rent over the summer holidays and laptops. The high cost of living generally in Bristol was also highlighted.

While it was not necessarily unexpected, a relatively high number of students noted how hard it was to find the money for a deposit and rent for the upcoming year, while only having funding for the ongoing one.

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*“Agency fees and deposit on a house for next year meant that I spent £700 which was supposed to last me until summer.”*  
(year one, funded)

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Less frequently mentioned costs included extra charges for cleaning on top of the hall accommodation fee, and the cost of socialising, to the extent that this is part of university experience.

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*“Costs required to effectively participate in events hosted by academic societies to ensure I could engage with the social aspect of university and make friends on my course”*

*(year two, low-income , funded)*

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Again, veterinary science students had very specific complaints about the cost of travel and accommodation for the EMS placement, as well as the reduction in their ability to earn money during the holidays as a result.

In terms of ease of meeting the costs, just over a third of those who incurred unexpected costs found them easy to meet (36 per cent), again evenly spread among all funding, year and other demographic groups.

### **4.3 Participation in extra-curricular activities**

As in 2017, half of the students (50 per cent) in our survey considered their finances to be significantly limiting the ways in which they were able to participate in extra-curricular activities. Unfunded students were significantly more likely report this, with 60 per cent doing so, compared with only 46 per cent of those who received funding.

As with those who incurred unexpected costs, finances were more likely to be limiting activity among mature students (66 per cent), and among students with disabilities (59 per cent), and mental health problems (69 per cent).

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to identify the effect of various factors on extra-curricular participation when controlling for other factors. In the model below, shown in Table 4.1, we predict the likelihood of a student reporting that their personal finances significantly limit their participation in extra-curricular activities:

**Table 4.1 – Binary logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of students reporting that their personal finances significantly limit their participation in extra-curricular activities (0 = finances do not limit participation, 1 = finances do limit participation).**

	Odds ratio	Sig. diff.
Funding Status (Ref=Funded)		
Unfunded	<b>1.81</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Year (Ref=Year One)		
Year Two	1.36	0.070
Year Three	0.96	0.821
Number of sources of income (Ref=Three or more)		
None	1.56	0.076
One	1.05	0.810
Two	0.93	0.721
Number of sources of borrowing (Ref=None)		
One	<b>2.16</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Two or more	<b>4.27</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Gender (Ref=Female)		
Male	0.79	0.166
Age group (Ref=Under 21)		
21 plus	1.68	0.102
Faculty Group (Ref=Arts, Social Sciences & Law)		
Science and Engineering	0.88	0.414
Medical Sciences	1.13	0.609
Does respondent have a disability?(Ref=No)		
Yes	<b>2.09</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Ethnic group (Ref=White)		
Non-white	1.33	0.116
Constant	<b>0.43</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Figures in bold if statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$   
Nagelkerke R-Square = 0.150

The results show that not receiving financial support from the University is associated with increased odds that personal finances will limit a student's participation in extra-curricular activities. As noted in 2017, this may be related to the fact that not receiving funding appears to be associated with increased uptake of paid employment, and as highlighted below, term-time work does seem to limit participation in extra-curricular activities. Second year students were more likely to report this too, but not to a statistically significant degree



The biggest predictor of finances limiting participation, however, was level of borrowing; those who had two sources of borrowing (on top of the student loan) were over four times as likely to report that finances limited the participation in extra-curricular activities as those who had none, and even one sources of borrowing doubled the likelihood.

Having a disability was associated with double the odds of reporting that finances limit participation in extra-curricular activities, as was the case in 2017. Last year, mature students were the most likely to state this, however, whilst they were still more likely than younger students, the difference was no longer significant.

Again, the two main ways in which finances affected participation in extra-curricular activities were, firstly, that the costs of joining and attending societies (particularly those that required buying a sports pass) were often prohibitively high, and to a lesser extent, that undertaking paid employment meant that they were no longer free to go out with friends.

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*“I have not been able to join any sports society because I have had to spend money joining law societies in order to ensure I can be in the best position to get a training contract. I was a dancer and swimmer before I came to Bristol and I danced at a professional level.*

*(Year two, unfunded)*

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#### **4.4 Consideration of withdrawal from university**

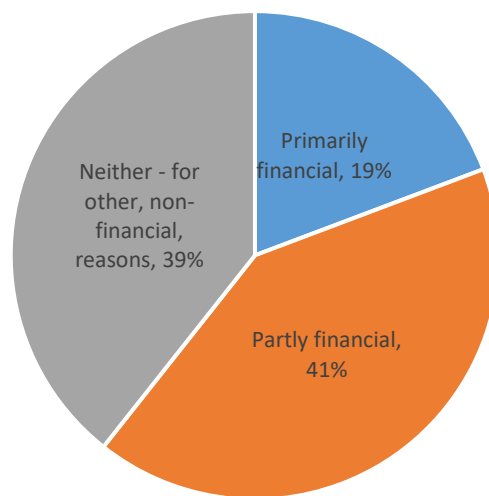
There has been a very slight increase in the number of students who had considered withdrawing from university during the academic year 2017/8; 27 per cent up from 24 per cent in the academic year 2016/17. There were no significant differences arising from year group or funding status.

However, there were some significant differences between students based on demographic characteristics: half of those with mental health problems, nearly half (48 per cent) of mature students, and 38 per cent of those with disabilities had considered withdrawing in the last year. Students from the ASSL faculties were also significantly

more likely to have considered dropping out than those from other faculties (34 per cent).

Students who had considered withdrawing were asked about the extent to which their finances had played a role in this consideration, as shown in Figure 4.2. Unfunded students were significantly more likely to report that finances were the primary reason (27 per cent cf. 16 per cent of unfunded).

**Figure 4.2 Reasons given by students for considering withdrawing from the University**



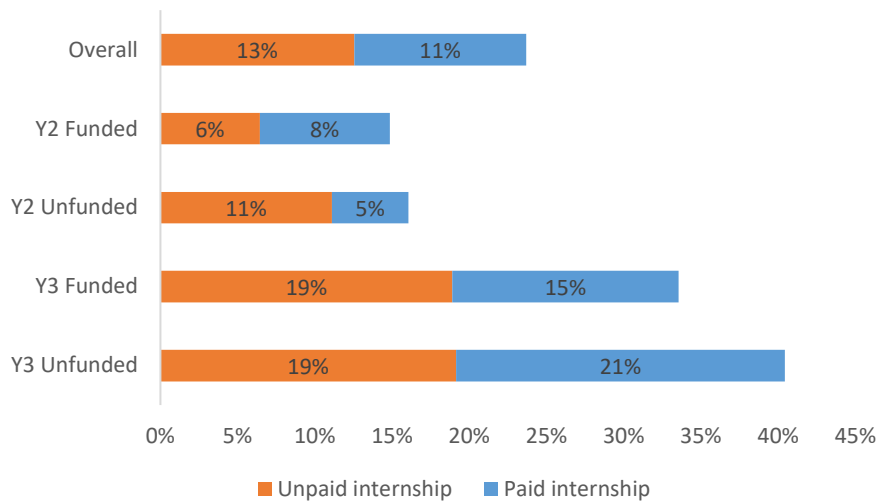
*Base: 279, students who said that they had considered withdrawing from University*

Overall, however, the students most likely to report than the reasons for considering withdrawal was primarily financial were students from the Medical faculty (40 per cent)

#### **4.5 Participation in internships**

All second and third year students were asked about whether they had participated in any intern schemes since they had started their undergraduate studies. Overall, as shown in Figure 4.3, 11 per cent of students had participated in a paid internship and a further 13 per cent had completed an unpaid internship during their time at University.

**Figure 4.3 Participation in intern schemes, by funding status**



Unsurprisingly, and as last year, the biggest differences between level of participation in internships or placements were between year groups, as was the case in 2017. On average, 85 per cent of year two students hadn't taken part in any internships, compared with 65 per cent of year three students.

Unfunded third year students were the most likely to have had a paid internship or placement, with just over one on five (21 per cent) having done so. This was not statistically significant, although was this was the group most likely to have had a paid internship in 2017 as well.

In terms of other characteristics, there was similar pattern to 2017; unpaid internships were more common among female students (15 per cent) and those from the Medical faculty (23 per cent).

Students with mental health problems were the least likely to have had a paid internship (5 per cent)

For those who hadn't taken part in an internship, the choice not to do so was affected by finances for less than one third of students (31 per cent). There were no significant differences by year group, funding status, or demographic characteristics.

#### **4.6 Intention to undertake postgraduate study**

Second and third year students were also asked about their intentions regarding postgraduate study once they had completed their undergraduate degree. Overall, 27 per cent said that they were

considering postgraduate study, 37 per cent said they were not, and a further 36 per cent were unsure.

Differences in intention were, as with internships, most influenced by year group, however, there was little statistically significant difference. Second year students were significantly more likely to be unsure than those in the third year (40 per cent cf. 30 per cent), and although less likely to be positively considering it (24 per cent cf. 32 per cent) it, the difference was not significant.

For those who had decided that they wouldn't pursue postgraduate studies, just under half (48 per cent) stated that finances were affecting this decision. This has dropped slightly from 2017, when 55 per cent of students reported this. There were no significant differences between funding or other demographic groups on this issue.

## 5 Perceptions of financial situation

### 5.1 Concerns over repayment of borrowings

Overall, fewer students surveyed (58 per cent) were concerned about repaying their borrowings this year, compared with students in 2017 (66 per cent). Year one students were the least likely to be concerned (60 per cent), significantly less so than year two students (70 per cent). Conversely, in 2017, first year students were the *most* concerned (70 per cent) while third year students were the least concerned (61 per cent). While there were no significant differences by funding group, in each year group, those who received funding were slightly less likely to be concerned than those who didn't.

As with 2017, however, those most likely to be concerned about repaying borrowing were female students (68 per cent) and those with disabilities (75 per cent), as well as those with mental health problems (72 per cent). and mature students (80 per cent).

Binary logistic regression analysis was performed to identify the factors which predicted students' level of concern over repayment of borrowings, as shown in Table 5.1

**Table 5.1– Binary logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of students reporting that they are concerned about repaying their borrowings (0 = not concerned, 1 = concerned)**

	Odds ratio	Sig. diff.
5 Group Categorisation (Ref = Y1 Funded)		
Year 2 Funded	1.35	0.183
Year 3 Funded	1.27	0.336
Year 1 Unfunded	1.05	0.859
Year 2 Unfunded	1.71	0.093
Year 3 Unfunded	1.10	0.811
Number of sources of income (Ref=Three or more)		
None	<b>2.63</b>	<b>0.001</b>
One	1.52	0.063
Two	1.08	0.742
Number of sources of borrowing (Ref=None)		
One	<b>3.99</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Two or more	<b>50.23</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Gender (Ref=Female)		
Male	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Age group (Ref=Under 21)		

21 plus	1.00	0.993
Faculty Group (Ref=Arts, Social Sciences & Law)		<b>0.011</b>
Science and Engineering	<b>0.60</b>	<b>0.004</b>
Medical Sciences	0.95	0.856
Does respondent have a disability?(Ref=No)		
Yes	1.39	0.109
Ethnic group (Ref=White)		
Non-white	1.03	0.880
Constant	0.93	0.741

Figures in bold if statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

Nagelkerke R-Square = 0.259

The results show, unsurprisingly, that borrowing from a greater number of sources is associated with increased odds of being concerned about repaying borrowings. Indeed, those with two or more sources of borrowing (not including their student loan) have nearly fifty times the odds of feeling concerned than those who have no other sources of borrowing. Even having borrowing from one other sources increased the likelihood of having concerns by nearly four times.

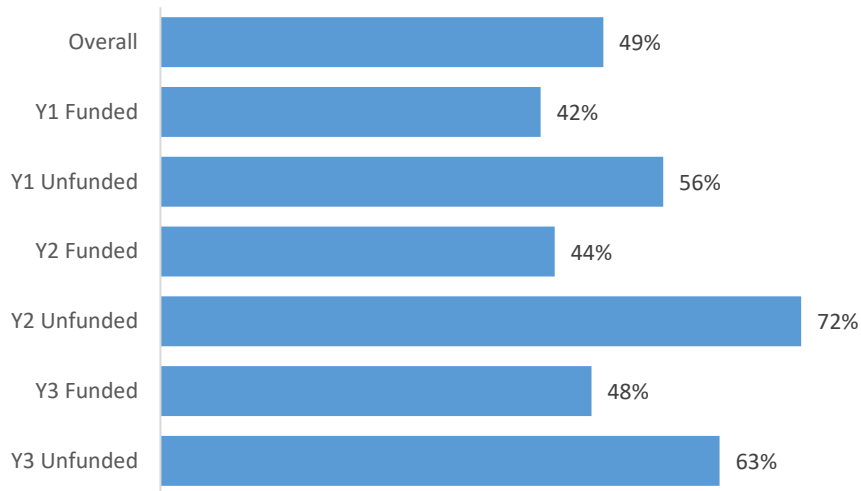
Funding status didn't appear to make any difference to likelihood of concern over repaying borrowing. The only other factor which appears to be associated with significantly higher odds of being worried about repaying borrowings is being female, and conversely, students from the faculty of Engineering were significantly less likely to be concerned.

## 5.2 Ease of managing costs at university

Students were asked about the ease with which they were able to meet their financial costs and outgoings during the academic year. The response was very similar to 2017; overall, just 4 per cent of students said they found it 'very easy' to meet their costs, 47 per cent reported it was 'quite easy', 39 per cent said, 'quite difficult' and 10 per cent said it was 'very difficult'.

Funding made a significant difference to the ease with which students could manage their financial costs. Overall, fewer than half of funded students (44 per cent) found it difficult (either very or quite) to meet the costs, whereas nearly two thirds of unfunded students did (62 per cent). As Figure 5.1 indicates, this was the case in each year group. Only just over one quarter of year two unfunded students (28 per cent) found it quite or very easy to meet the costs.

**Figure 5.1 – Proportion of students from each funding group that found it ‘very’ or ‘quite’ difficult to meet their financial costs and outgoings during the academic year.**



Students who had a mental health problem were the most likely to find it difficult to meet their costs (66 per cent), and those with a disability were significantly more likely to find it difficult to meet costs than those without (58 and 48 per cent respectively).

Logistic regression analysis was performed to identify the factors which predicted whether or not students found it difficult to meet their financial costs and outgoings throughout the academic year.

**Table 5.2 - Binary logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of students reporting that they find it difficult to meet their financial costs and outgoings (0 = very/quite easy, 1 = very/quite difficult)**

	Odds ratio	Sig. diff.
<b>5 Group Categorisation (Ref = Y1 Funded)</b>		
Year 2 Funded	0.92	0.682
Year 3 Funded	1.39	0.127
Year 1 Unfunded	<b>2.09</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Year 2 Unfunded	<b>3.93</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Year 3 Unfunded	<b>2.44</b>	<b>0.011</b>
<b>Number of sources of income (Ref=Three or more)</b>		
None	<b>2.09</b>	<b>0.003</b>
One	1.30	0.191
Two	0.87	0.490
<b>Gender (Ref=Female)</b>		
Male	1.10	0.564

Age group (Ref=Under 21)		
21 plus	1.29	0.395
Faculty Group (Ref=Arts, Social Sciences & Law)		
Science and Engineering	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.032</b>
Medical Sciences	0.97	0.890
Does respondent have a disability?(Ref=No)		
Yes	<b>1.93</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Ethnic group (Ref=White)		
Non-white	1.12	0.536
Constant	<b>0.58</b>	<b>0.010</b>

Figures in bold if statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$   
Nagelkerke R-Square = 0.093

As in 2017, the results show a clear pattern that, even when controlling for other factors, funding status is a significant predictor of a student's likelihood of finding it difficult to meet their financial costs and outgoings. Unfunded students have between two and four times the likelihood reporting difficulty, depending on their year group, compared with the first-year funded students. Looking at first year students specifically, unfunded students are twice as likely to find it difficult as funded ones.

Having no sources of income or having a disability (including mental health problems) are also both associated with higher odds of financial difficulty, while belonging to the Science and Engineering faculty group is associated with lower odds of financial difficulty (when compared with students from the ASSL faculty group).

### 5.3 Perceived financial value of the course

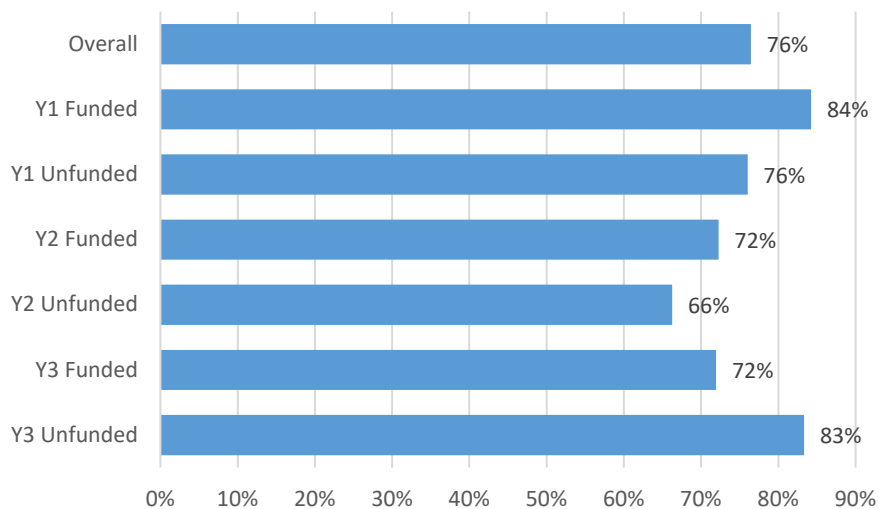
Second and third year students were asked how they would describe the financial value of their degree course to their future selves. As in 2017, around three quarters of students said that their degree was either a good or excellent personal investment (76 per cent). However, in 2015 over 90 per cent of third year students felt it was a good or excellent investment.

Both year group, and to a lesser extent, funding status affected perceived financial value of the degree. Eighty-two per cent of first year students were positive about the financial value of their degree, significantly higher than the 71 per cent of second years, and higher than the 75 per cent of third years. Overall, funded year one students were the most positive, with 84 per cent being so, significantly higher than both funded and unfunded year two students, and funded year three students. There were also significant differences in perception



by faculty. While 91 per cent of students from the Medicine and Dentistry faculty and 82 per cent of those from the Engineering faculty felt that their degree was excellent or good financial value, significantly fewer (67 per cent) of those from the Arts faculty felt the same way.

**Figure 5.2 – Proportion of students from each funding group who view their degree course as an ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ personal investment**



Logistic regression analysis was performed to identify the factors which predicted likelihood that a student says their course was a marginal or poor investment, the results of which are given in Table 5.3

**Table 5.3 – Binary logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of students believing that their course has been a marginal or poor investment (0 = good/excellent investment, 1 = marginal/poor investment)**

	Odds ratio	Sig. diff.
<b>5 Group Categorisation (Ref = Y1 Funded)</b>		
Year 2 Funded	<b>2.14</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Year 3 Funded	<b>2.45</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Year 1 Unfunded	<b>2.02</b>	<b>0.018</b>
Year 2 Unfunded	<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Year 3 Unfunded	1.05	0.913
<b>Number of sources of income (Ref=Three or more)</b>		
None	1.34	0.323
One	1.13	0.606

Two	0.91	0.687
Number of sources of borrowing (Ref=None)		<b>0.039</b>
One	<b>1.62</b>	<b>0.011</b>
Two or more	1.23	0.493
Gender (Ref=Female)		
Male	<b>0.60</b>	<b>0.012</b>
Age group (Ref=Under 21)		
21 plus	1.17	0.651
Faculty Group (Ref=Arts, Social Sciences & Law)		<b>0.000</b>
Science and Engineering	<b>0.47</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Medical Sciences	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Does respondent have a disability?(Ref=No)		
Yes	<b>1.90</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Ethnic group (Ref=White)		
Non-white	0.85	0.468
Constant	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Figures in bold if statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$   
Nagelkerke R-Square = 0.149

There were many factors that were significant predictors a student's likelihood of thinking that their degree course has not been a good investment. However, the biggest predictor was the faculty in which they studied: those who were in the Medical faculty had four times lower odds of thinking that their degree was a poor or marginal investment than those in the ASSL faculty group, and those from the Science and Engineering faculties had nearly half the odds of doing so. Students with a disability were nearly twice as likely as those without to feel that their degree wasn't a good investment, and female students were more likely than men. Interestingly, having one source of borrowing increased the likelihood of viewing the degree as a poor or marginal investment, but this was not the case for those who had two or more sources of borrowing

However, when a logistic regression analysis separating out year group and funding, it was year group rather than funding where the statistically significant difference lay. The two regressions together suggest however, that there funding does have some positive influence on perceived value of the degree.

	Odds ratio	Sig. diff.
Funding Status (Ref=Funded)		
Unfunded	1.25	0.264

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Year (Ref=Year One)		<b>0.006</b>
Year Two	<b>1.85</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Year Three	<b>1.65</b>	<b>0.029</b>

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Constant	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.000</b>
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Figures in bold if statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$   
Nagelkerke R-Square = 0.135

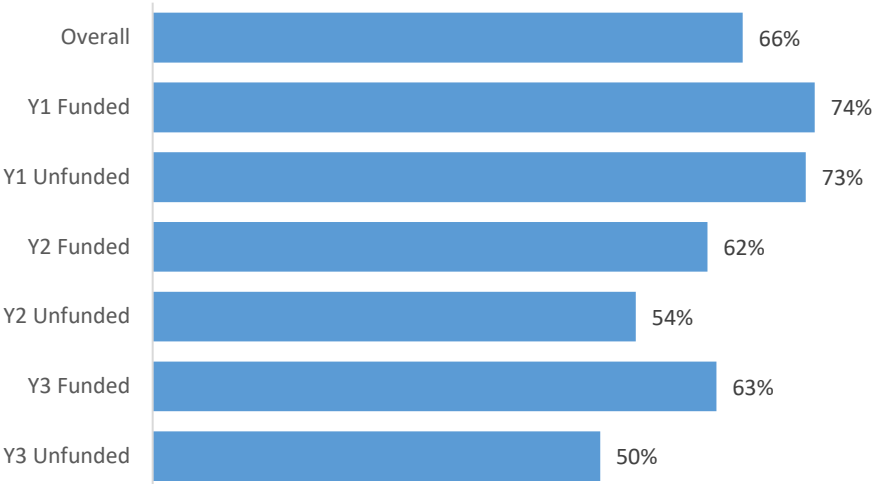
# 6 Perceptions of wellbeing at university

This section explores the students’ perception of their own wellbeing in the past year, to understand if financial support impacts more generally on the experience of being at university. For the first time in 2018, we asked all students to rate their overall wellbeing at the university, and their ability to cope with the demands.

## 6.1 Perceived overall wellbeing

As shown in Figure 6.1 below, self-reported wellbeing is influenced to a greater degree by year group than by funding status. Overall, wellbeing is highest in year one; nearly three quarters of first year students (74 per cent) rated their wellbeing as very or quite good, significantly higher than year two or three students (both 60 per cent). However, second and third year unfunded students reported the lowest levels of wellbeing of all, significantly lower than first year funded students.

**Figure 6.1 – Proportion of students who rated their wellbeing as either ‘very good’ or ‘quite good’.**



In terms of other demographic factors, students with a disability reported lower levels of wellbeing, with few than half (48 per cent)

rating their wellbeing as good, and unsurprisingly, those with a mental health problem, of whom only a quarter (26 per cent) reported good wellbeing.

Logistic regression analysis was performed to identify the factors which predicted likelihood that a student reports suffering from poor wellbeing, the results of which are given in Table 6.1

**Table 6.1 - Binary logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of suffering poor wellbeing this year at University (0 = very/quite good, 1 = not very good/not good at all)**

	Odds ratio	Sig. diff.
<b>5 Group Categorisation (Ref = Y1 Funded)</b>		
Year 2 Funded	1.52	0.065
Year 3 Funded	1.56	0.075
Year 1 Unfunded	1.17	0.586
Year 2 Unfunded	<b>2.96</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Year 3 Unfunded	<b>2.94</b>	<b>0.004</b>
<b>Number of sources of income (Ref=Three or more)</b>		
None	1.67	0.065
One	1.34	0.193
Two	1.29	0.262
<b>Number of sources of borrowing (Ref=None)</b>		
One	1.29	0.158
Two or more	<b>2.53</b>	<b>0.001</b>
<b>Gender (Ref=Female)</b>		
Male	0.71	0.061
<b>Age group (Ref=Under 21)</b>		
21 plus	1.18	0.610
<b>Faculty Group (Ref=Arts, Social Sciences &amp; Law)</b>		
Science and Engineering	0.71	0.053
Medical Sciences	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.028</b>
<b>Does respondent have a disability?(Ref=No)</b>		
Yes	<b>5.11</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Ethnic group (Ref=White)</b>		
Non-white	<b>1.63</b>	<b>0.013</b>
Constant	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Figures in bold if statistically significant at p<0.05

The results show a clear pattern that, even when controlling for other factors, funding status is a significant predictor of a student's likelihood of rating their wellbeing as not very or not at all good. Second and third year unfunded students were nearly three times as likely to suffer poor wellbeing than unfunded year one students. However, health was the biggest predictor of poor wellbeing: those with a disability (including mental health problems) were five times as likely to report poor wellbeing as those without. Those in the ASSL faculty were more likely than those in other faculties to do so; 30 per cent more likely as students in the Engineering faculty and nearly twice as likely as those in the Medical faculty.

Worries over money reportedly played a role in the poor wellbeing for some of the students, although many recognised that it was only part of the problem. For others, however, it was the particular context of the University of Bristol and finances that was harming their wellbeing.

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*“In terms of finance, I definitely felt isolated. It would seem the majority of Bristol students do not need to worry about finance at all, and that makes it hard to admit you are struggling if you feel like no one will understand.”*

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Other issues that affected wellbeing included existing mental health issues, family and personal problems, loneliness and isolation, and academic stress. Many cited a lack of support to deal with their issues as a barrier to better wellbeing.

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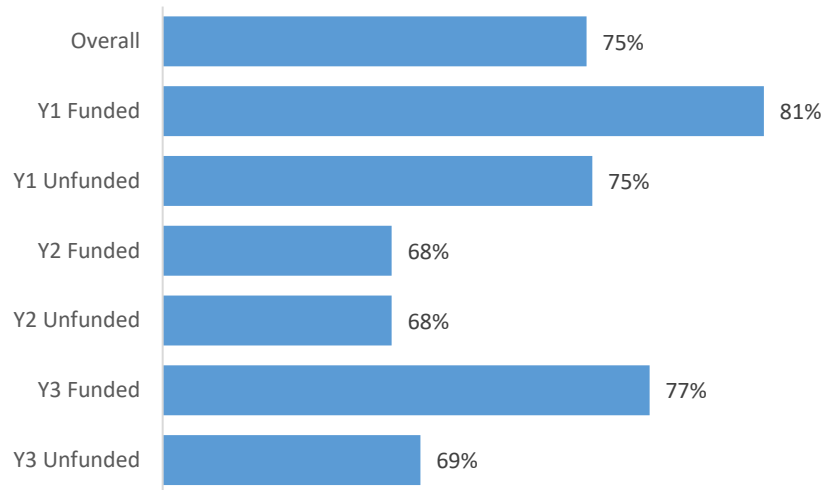
*“The counselling session waiting lists are far too long. It took me about 3 months before I could see someone for one-to-one counselling. Some of the tutors in the school are frankly just insensitive to mental health needs. They only focus on academic side.”*

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## **6.2 Ability to cope with the demands of university**

Second year students, regardless of funding status, were the least likely to believe they were able to cope with the competing demands of university life. Nonetheless, around two thirds (68 per cent) still believe that they were very or quite able to cope.

**Figure 6.2 – Proportion of students who felt either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ able to cope with demands of university**



There were no significant differences overall by funding status, however, those who received the lowest amount of funding were significantly less likely to report they were able to cope (68 per cent) than those who received the middle amount (84 per cent). As with wellbeing overall, health was a key factor in perceived levels of coping; those with a disability were significantly less likely to be able to cope than those without, and only 41 per cent of those with a mental health problem felt they were coping very or quite well with the demands of university.

**Table 6.2 - Binary logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of finding it hard to cope with demands of University (0=cope very/quite well, 1= cope not very well/not at all well)**

	Odds ratio	Sig. diff.
<b>5 Group Categorisation (Ref = Y1 Funded)</b>		
Year 2 Funded	<b>1.78</b>	<b>0.015</b>
Year 3 Funded	1.10	0.720
Year 1 Unfunded	1.33	0.329
Year 2 Unfunded	<b>2.25</b>	<b>0.010</b>
Year 3 Unfunded	1.54	0.292
<b>Number of sources of income (Ref=Three or more)</b>		
None	1.40	0.263
One	1.58	0.056
Two	1.54	0.075

Number of sources of borrowing (Ref=None)		<b>0.001</b>
One	<b>1.80</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Two or more	<b>2.38</b>	<b>0.002</b>
<hr/>		
Gender (Ref=Female)		
Male	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.045</b>
<hr/>		
Age group (Ref=Under 21)		
21 plus	0.99	0.977
<hr/>		
Faculty Group (Ref=Arts, Social Sciences & Law)		0.322
Science and Engineering	1.25	0.240
Medical Sciences	0.86	0.582
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Does respondent have a disability?(Ref=No)		
Yes	<b>4.02</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<hr/>		
Ethnic group (Ref=White)		
Non-white	<b>1.62</b>	<b>0.019</b>
<hr/>		
Constant	<b>0.09</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Figures in bold if statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$   
Nagelkerke R-Square = 0.168

The regression model confirms that second year students were more likely to find it hard to cope at university than students in other years, as well as those with a physical or mental health problem. Other predictors of finding it difficult to cope were being female, or from an ethnic minority.



## 7 Summary and conclusion

This is the fourth such annual survey of the financial situation of University of Bristol undergraduates, and follows a broadly similar pattern to those of previous years, with some additional broad-brush questions on coping at Bristol and feelings of wellbeing, as we flagged in last-year's report. This year's three-tier scale of University bursaries, common to all three years, was a simpler funding landscape than in 2017, making comparisons across years more straightforward. However, one significant difference from a year ago was the response rates. These were significantly lower: in 2018 the average response rate across the three student years was 20 per cent compared to 27 per cent a year before. Given that the fundamentals of the survey - its format of questions, online delivery mode and timing within the academic year - were unchanged, the only reason for this we can suggest is that this year's survey was not accompanied by the incentives, in the form of entry to a draw for Amazon vouchers, which we offered in 2017. This is now discouraged by the University's protocol on student surveys. Given that the value to the University of this and other similar surveys critically depends on number of responses and hence the response rate, this is something which might be revisited in the light of our 2017 and 2018 results. As far as we can tell, some other universities do offer incentives in similar circumstances.

As with its predecessors, the primary purpose of the 2018 survey was to examine whether and in what ways student experiences can be associated with receiving a particular University bursary or none at all, with the underlying premise that a positive impact of receiving a bursary arises where such students are at least as positive in their survey responses as those receiving no bursary. Taken together, the 2018 results we produced are very much in this positive vein, particularly when we simply compare those with some level of University bursary and those with none, respectively the 'funded' and 'unfunded' of the report. First, when we looked at sources of income, either through borrowings that would need future repayment or non-repayable finance, the bursary recipients show consistent and predictable differences from their peers. Funded students disproportionately have less call upon personal savings, funding from

family and friends and are less dependent on term-time employment than their unfunded peers. By inference, they have fewer funds to call upon here but also less pressure to call upon them. Equally, they are less dependent on repayable income streams (loans, overdrafts), maybe also because they come from low income backgrounds which traditionally tend to be risk-averse.

Second, as in previous years, the likelihood of a bursary influencing decisions to apply to and accept a place at Bristol is low. Given that many other universities our students apply to offer similar funding support this is not surprising, but as we noted last year, this is not an argument for discounting their role here; they would be likely to matter very much to Bristol's disadvantage in competitive recruiting of able students should they be withdrawn. We noted that bursaries do matter relatively more here for those receiving the highest level of such support. Not only is that much more money at stake but these students also have the greatest confidence that they will qualify for support when they apply for support, subsequent to their Year 1 registration.

Turning, thirdly, to the at-university experiences the 2018 survey surveyed, we find no clear evidence of any area in the survey where funded students are not at least as positive in their responses as their unfunded peers, so consistent with the 'pro-bursary' premise of our methodology. The role of the financial considerations in the two groups' choices of Year 1 accommodation is much the same, as is their likelihoods of seriously considering withdrawal from Bristol, in considering further post-graduate study and their levels of concern at repaying their borrowings. In other respects, the funded students' responses are more positive than their peers. In Years 2 and 3, when students largely move out of University-run accommodation and into the private sector, those with bursaries report their housing choices as *less* restricted by financial considerations than those who are unfunded. Equally, they are less restricted by finance in their extra-curricular activities (ECAs), and are less susceptible to the impact of unexpected costs (perhaps they plan more carefully or are simply better equipped financially and psychologically to cope). And while displaying similar levels of thoughts of withdrawal, these are less rooted in financial reasons for funded than for unfunded students. Ultimately, the role of funding in improving the experience of university life may be reflected by the findings that unfunded second

and third year students reported significantly lower levels of wellbeing than other groups.

As to the reasons for these differentials, we have again no direct evidence from the survey, but a number of arguments may be working together. Obviously, the financial boost from bursaries matters directly, but recipient students, being from less well-resourced backgrounds, may also moderate their lifestyles, including their spending intentions, compared to their peers. Finally, as others have noted, the receipt of a bursary may bolster the personal confidence and resilience of the recipients, and cement their sense of common purpose with, personal trust in, and identification with their University.

Whatever the causal processes, the first and most important conclusion from this year's financial survey is the continuing relevance of the University's bursary provision. It may not be the prime motivation behind most of our UCAS applications and acceptances, but it serves to keep Bristol 'in the game' for able 'WP' applications from less affluent backgrounds. And once here it plays a significant part in enriching their experiences as Bristol students both academically and otherwise and contributes to their positive attitudes and perceptions of being a Bristol undergraduate.

Turning now to other non-bursary related characteristics strongly related to the survey responses, four stand out this year: disability including mental health; gender; faculty of study; and age on entering Bristol. All present distinct and consistent stories.

Unsurprisingly, *Mature* students (21 and older on entry) live somewhat different student lives from their younger peers. They receive less income from family and friends but depend relatively more on income from other borrowings and term-time and holiday work. Financing their student lives can be difficult, which reduces their engagement with ECAs, adds to concerns about repaying their student debts, and makes them more likely than their peers to consider withdrawal. Finance doesn't lead to a lowering of ambitions when choosing their accommodation after Year 1, but they do live further away from Bristol, maybe because many have family homes there already.

The definition of '*disabled*' students covers multiple personal circumstances and needs, but taken as a group their borrowing levels are high from both commercial and personal sources. Their financial

concerns are wide-ranging, restricting their ECAs, and their thoughts of withdrawal higher than their peers. They worry over the value of their eventual degrees, how to meet their costs and cope with being at university, and report low levels of wellbeing. Many of these also findings also emerge among students with *mental health* issues, though here, borrowings draw particularly heavily on family and friends. Additionally, their accommodation preferences are scaled back for financial reasons, and they are relatively underrepresented in paid internships.

*Faculty* can matter in a number of ways, in providing very different amounts of discretionary time for term-time employment and both work and internships during holidays and in the likelihood of subject-linked, well-paid employment. Arts and Social Sciences (ASSL) students have the greatest capacity for part-time work, but they are also disproportionately likely to question the value-for-money of their degrees, to consider withdrawing and present low scores on wellbeing and high ones on financial difficulty and thoughts of withdrawing. Maybe the recent discourse about the cross-subsidisation of undergraduate courses of very different delivery costs from uniform tuition fee payments has heightened these anxieties, allied with national data on graduate salaries, which constantly show that many ASSL degrees generate below-average salary levels, compared to those in Engineering and Medicine, for example.

Finally, and perhaps the most surprising, our report highlights some *gender* differences, with female undergraduates presenting a picture of budgetary prudence combined with financial worries. They tend to eschew overdrafts in favour of reliance on savings and holiday earnings, while also being disproportionately concerned over repaying debts, the personal value of their degrees, and are less likely than male students to feel able to cope with the demands of university.

Whether and how the University should respond to these ‘non-bursary’ relationships is less obvious. The mental health evidence is both telling and timely, given the University’s current anxieties and practical responses to support students in this area. Therefore, our findings here should be seen as part of this wider debate, rather than in isolation. And the ‘Faculty’ findings, linked to such questions as whether student tuition fees should more closely align the very different costs of different degree provision and/or to subsequent

labour market returns, is bound up with the ongoing national review into student finance, launched by the Prime Minister in February 2018 and due to report in early 2019.

Finally, this year, for the first time, our student finance survey will be complemented by a parallel quantitative modelling project, to explore the relationships between students who hold a bursary and subsequent measures of their success – completion of their course, achieving a good degree, and securing a successful job or continuation into further study. This is also now part of Office for Students' Access Agreement expectations, and we hope to report on this later this term.

## 8 Appendix

### 8.1 Sample

	Y1 Funded Low	Y1 Funded Mid	Y1 Unfunded High	Y2 Funded Low	Y2 Funded Mid	Y2 Unfunded High	Y3 Funded Low	Y3 Funded Mid	Y3 Unfunded High	Total
Male	34%	27%	29%	31%	32%	33%	39%	33%	17%	32%
Female	66%	73%	71%	69%	68%	67%	61%	67%	83%	68%
under 21	87%	100%	100%	92%	97%	99%	80%	98%	100%	93%
21 plus	13%	0%	0%	8%	3%	1%	20%	2%	0%	7%
No disability	88%	87%	91%	84%	89%	94%	81%	91%	84%	87%
Has a disability	12%	13%	9%	16%	11%	6%	19%	9%	16%	13%
No mental health problem	89%	86%	84%	85%	78%	86%	81%	87%	79%	85%
mental health problem	11%	14%	16%	15%	22%	14%	19%	13%	21%	15%
Non-white	30%	17%	14%	26%	15%	14%	22%	19%	20%	21%
White	70%	83%	86%	74%	85%	86%	78%	81%	80%	79%
Arts, Social Sciences & Law	47%	50%	41%	46%	49%	48%	49%	40%	40%	46%
Science and Engineering	40%	39%	41%	40%	39%	42%	35%	50%	45%	40%
Medical Sciences	13%	11%	18%	14%	12%	10%	17%	10%	15%	14%
University self catered	57%	55%	55%	3%	3%	1%	6%	0%	2%	27%
University catered	14%	11%	12%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	6%
Unite	15%	28%	26%	3%	0%	3%	3%	4%	4%	11%
Private rent	9%	2%	4%	89%	97%	96%	87%	90%	91%	53%
Own home	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%	0%
Parents	4%	4%	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%	4%	0%	2%

Any significant differences in the demographic profile were largely within housing tenure and are explained by year group. Mature students were significantly more represented as third year low-income students, than any of the middle or higher income groups.

## 8.2 History of University of Bristol Bursaries 2014/15 to 2017/18\*

RHI	Under £15,000	£15,001 - £20,000	£20,001 – £25,000	£25,000 - £43,000 (approx.)
<b>2014 (UoB)</b>	£4,500 fee waiver (up to £2k can be taken in cash)	£3,500 fee waiver (up to £2k can be taken in cash)	£2,000 fee waiver (which can be taken as a cash bursary)	n/a
<b>2014 (A2B)</b>	Full fee waiver plus of £3,750 cash bursary each year			n/a
<b>2015 (UoB)</b>	Cash bursary of £2,000			Cash bursary of £1500 - £500
<b>2015 (A2B)</b>	Full fee waiver for first year only plus of £3,750 cash bursary each year			UoB bursary of £1,500 to £500
<b>2016 (UoB)</b>	Cash bursary of £2,000			Cash bursary of £1500 - £500
<b>2016 (A2B)</b>	Full fee waiver for first year only plus of £3,750 cash bursary each year			UoB bursary of £1,500 to £500
<b>2017 (UoB)</b>	Cash bursary of £2,000			Cash bursary of £1,500 to £500
<b>2017 (A2B/scholars)</b>	Full fee waiver for first year only plus of £3,750 cash bursary each year			UoB bursary of £1,500 to £500

*\* based on first year entry – second and third years on previous schedules may receive existing award amounts*



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