UCL GRADUATE SCHOOL
RESEARCH STUDENT SURVEY
JULY 2008
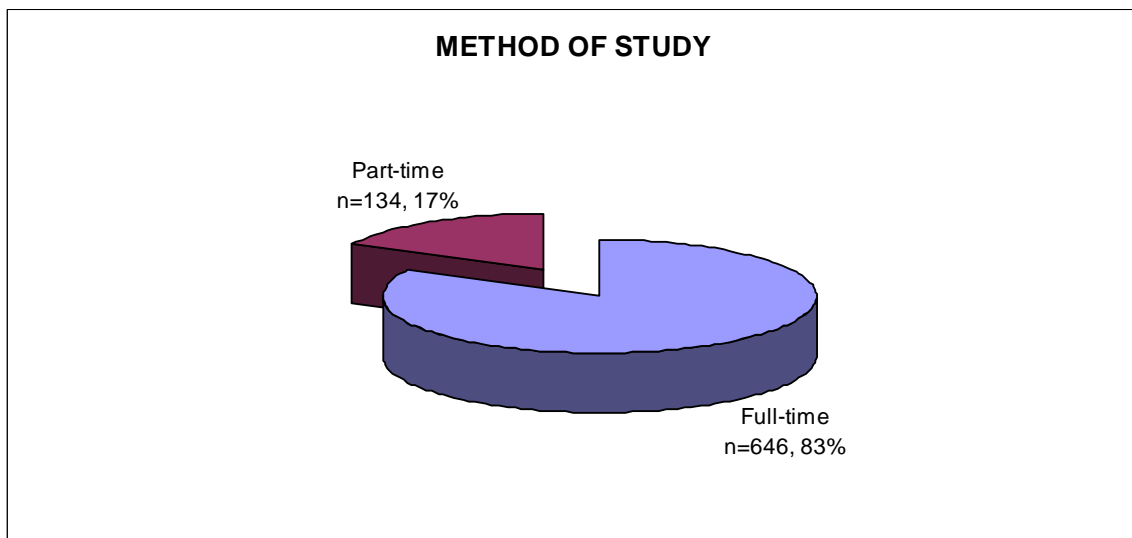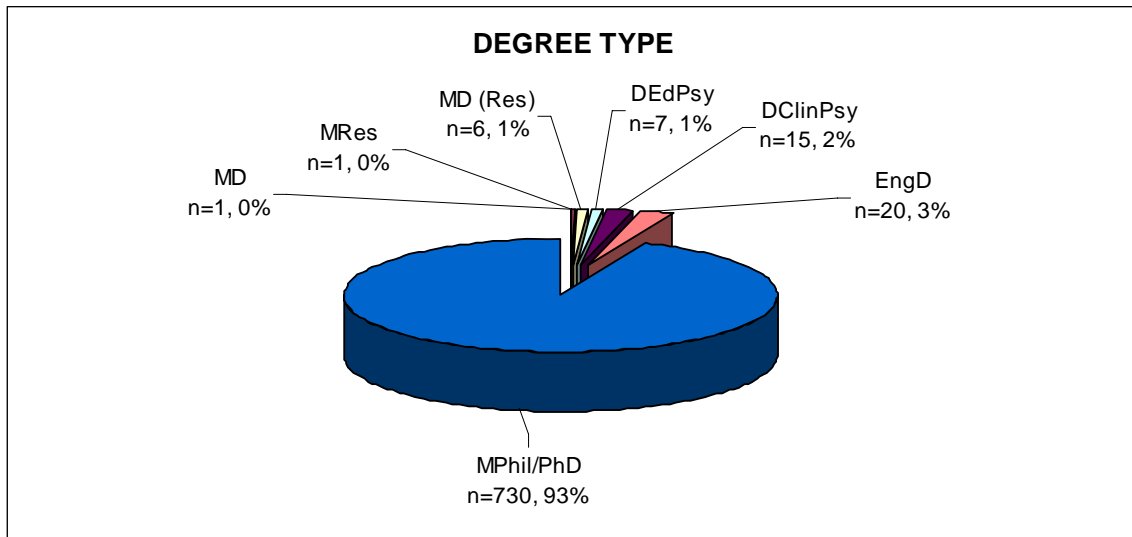
A total of 780 out of 3069 people responded to a research student satisfaction survey, representing 25.4% of the registered research student cohort when the survey was commissioned in July 2008. The survey randomly sampled the student body in order to assess levels of satisfaction regarding the following aspects of the research student experience at UCL: admissions, induction, the Graduate School, research, finances, skills development, the research student log, libraries, computing, the Student Union, the Careers Service and ethics.
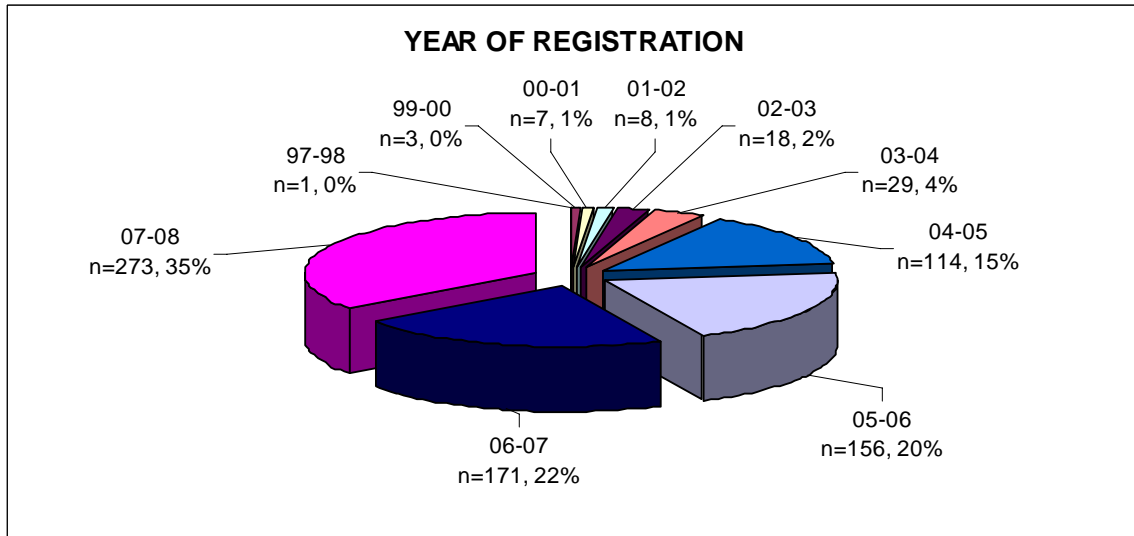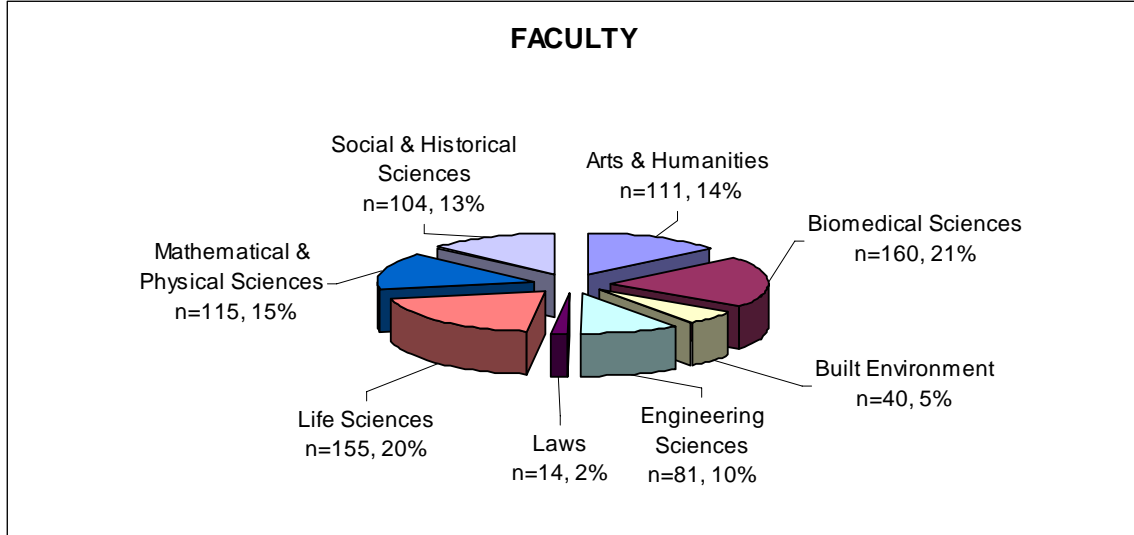
Summaries of the responses to each question are presented below, with the exception of questions that asked for additional comments on specific subjects. The total number of respondents is assumed to be 780 unless otherwise noted in individual charts and tables.

A. INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DEGREE

The majority of research students who responded to the survey are MPhil/PhD students (93%) and the remaining 7% are registered for six other research degree programs. The majority of respondents are registered full-time (83%).

DEGREE TYPE

MD (Res)
n=6, 1%

DEdPsy
n=7, 1%

DClinPsy
n=15, 2%

MRes
n=1, 0%

MD
n=1, 0%

EngD
n=20, 3%

MPhil/PhD
n=730, 93%

METHOD OF STUDY

Part-time
n=134, 17%

Full-time
n=646, 83%

The respondents are registered in eight different faculties, and the majority (92%) began their studies between the 2004-2005 and 2007-2008 academic years.

FACULTY

Social & Historical Sciences
n=104, 13%

Arts & Humanities
n=111, 14%

Biomedical Sciences
n=160, 21%

Mathematical & Physical Sciences
n=115, 15%

Built Environment
n=40, 5%

Life Sciences
n=155, 20%

Laws
n=14, 2%

Engineering Sciences
n=81, 10%

YEAR OF REGISTRATION

00-01
n=7, 1%

01-02
n=8, 1%

99-00
n=3, 0%

02-03
n=18, 2%

97-98
n=1, 0%

03-04
n=29, 4%

07-08
n=273, 35%

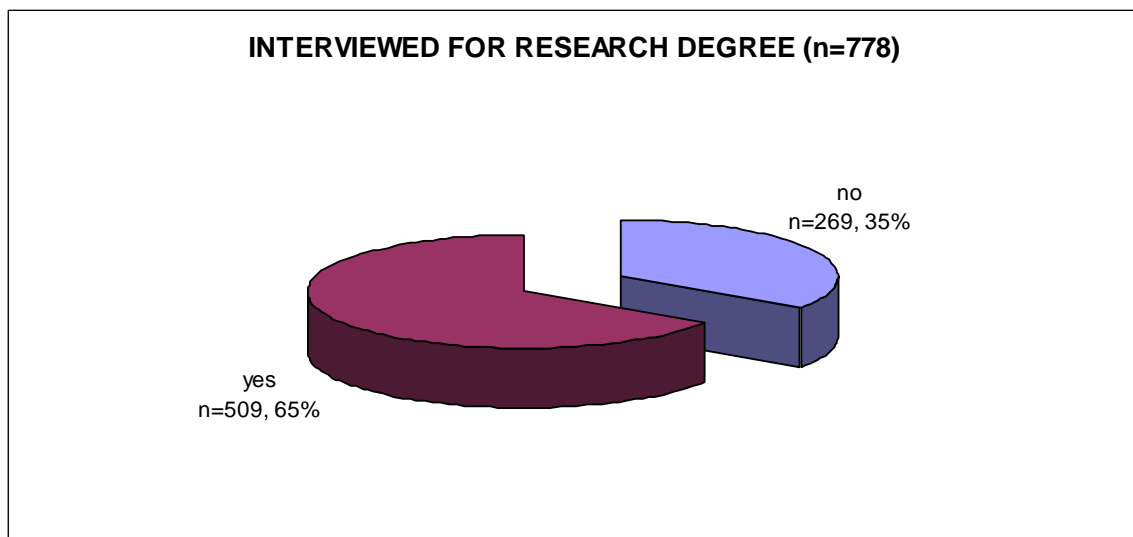04-05
n=114, 15%
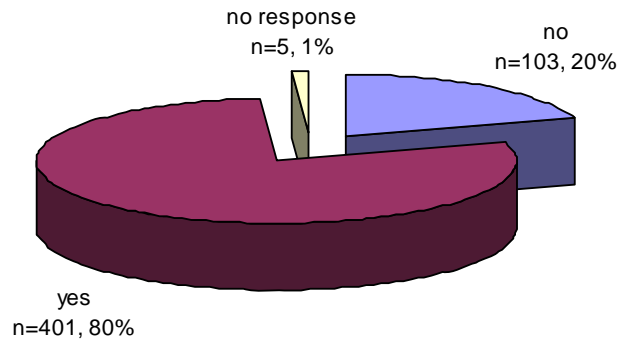
05-06
n=156, 20%

06-07
n=171, 22%

B. ADMISSIONS AND SELECTION

The majority of students (78%) rated the admissions process excellent (26%) or good (52%). Only 4% found the process was unsatisfactory.

ADMISSION PROCESS RATING

Satisfactory
n=142, 18%

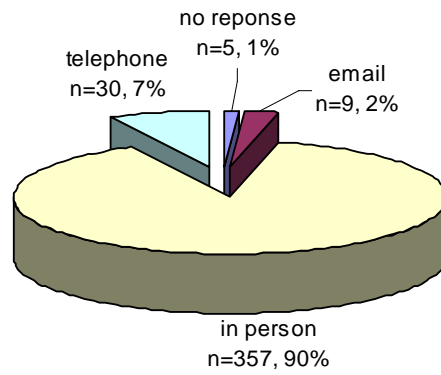Unsatisfactory
n=35, 4%

Excellent
n=206, 26%

Good
n=397, 52%
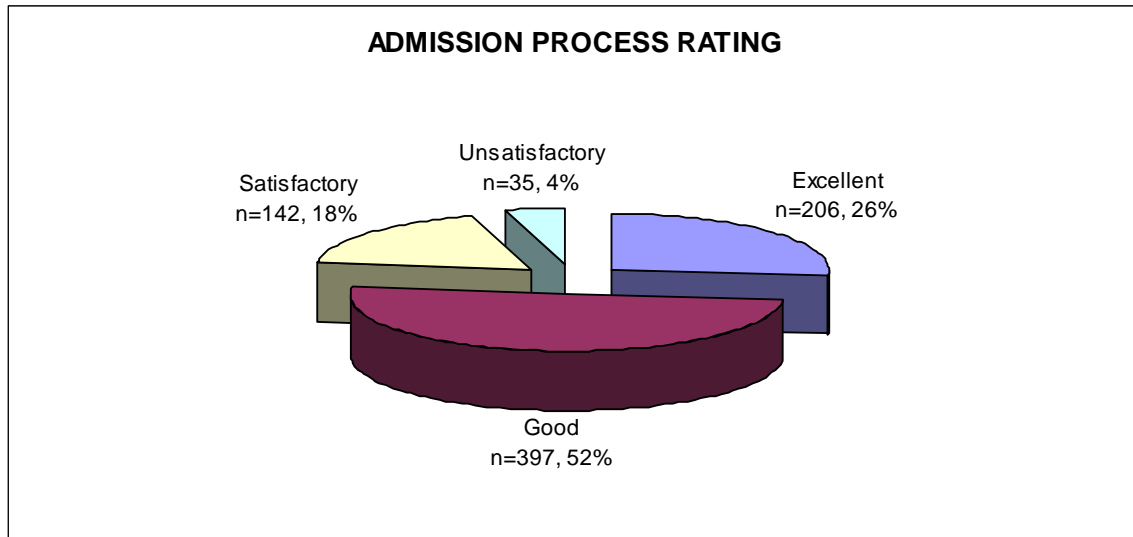
Of the 778 people who chose to answer the question, 65% were interviewed during the admissions process. 80% of these students were interviewed by their supervisor. These interviews were mainly conducted in person (90%), although a smaller percentage spoke to their supervisors over the phone (7%) and the remaining interviews were conducted via email.

INTERVIEWED FOR RESEARCH DEGREE (n=778)
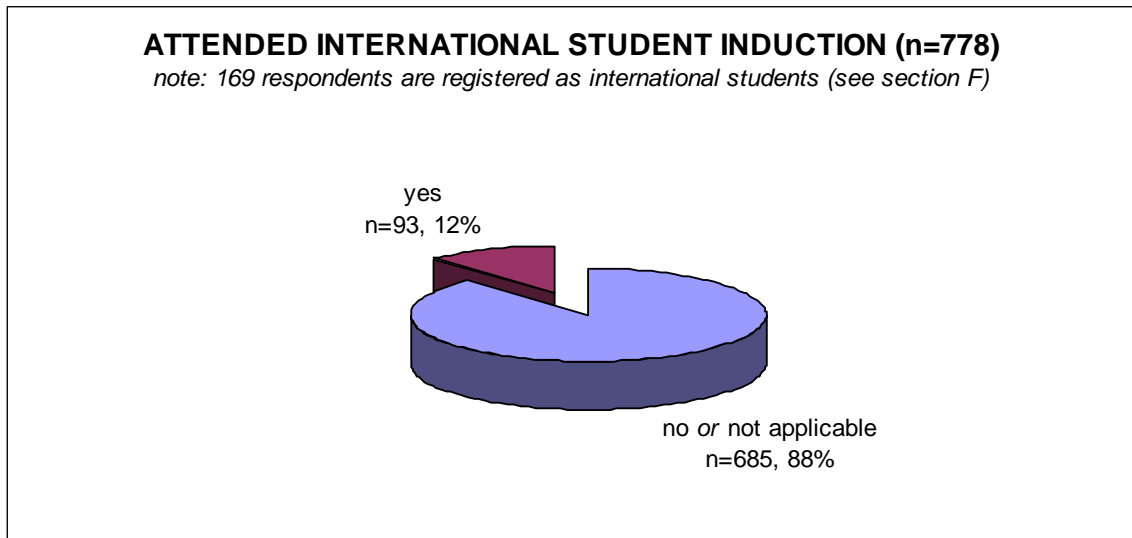
no
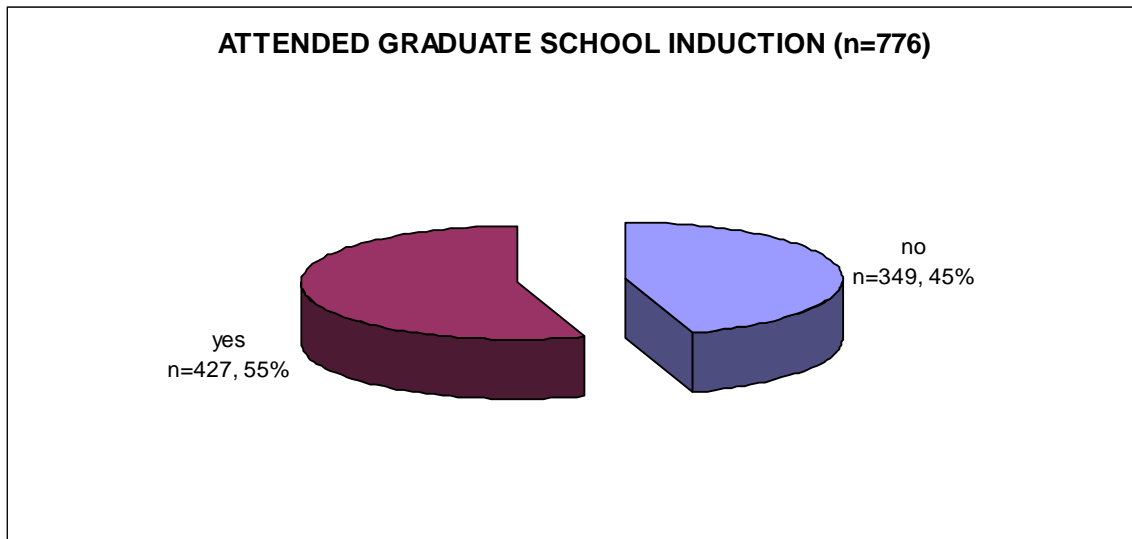n=269, 35%

yes
n=509, 65%

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY SUPERVISOR (n=509)

no response
n=5, 1%

no
n=103, 20%

yes
n=401, 80%

FORMAT OF INTERVIEW WITH SUPERVISOR (n=401)

no reponse
n=5, 1%

telephone
n=30, 7%

email
n=9, 2%

in person
n=357, 90%

C. INDUCTION

Approximately half of the students (55%) who answered the question attended the Graduate School welcome/induction programmes. 12% of those who responded attended the international students induction (however, please note that only 169 of the total respondents are registered as international or overseas students – see Section F later in this report for these data). Departmental or Faculty induction programmes were attended by 64% of the 778 respondents.

ATTENDED GRADUATE SCHOOL INDUCTION (n=776)

no
n=349, 45%

yes
n=427, 55%

ATTENDED INTERNATIONAL STUDENT INDUCTION (n=778)
note: 169 respondents are registered as international students (see section F)

yes
n=93, 12%

no *or* not applicable
n=685, 88%

ATTENDED DEPARTMENT OR FACULTY INDUCTION (n=778)

no
n=279, 36%

yes
n=499, 64%
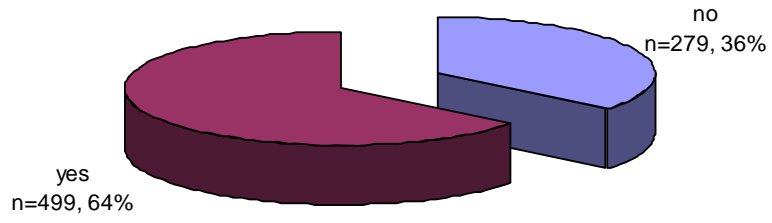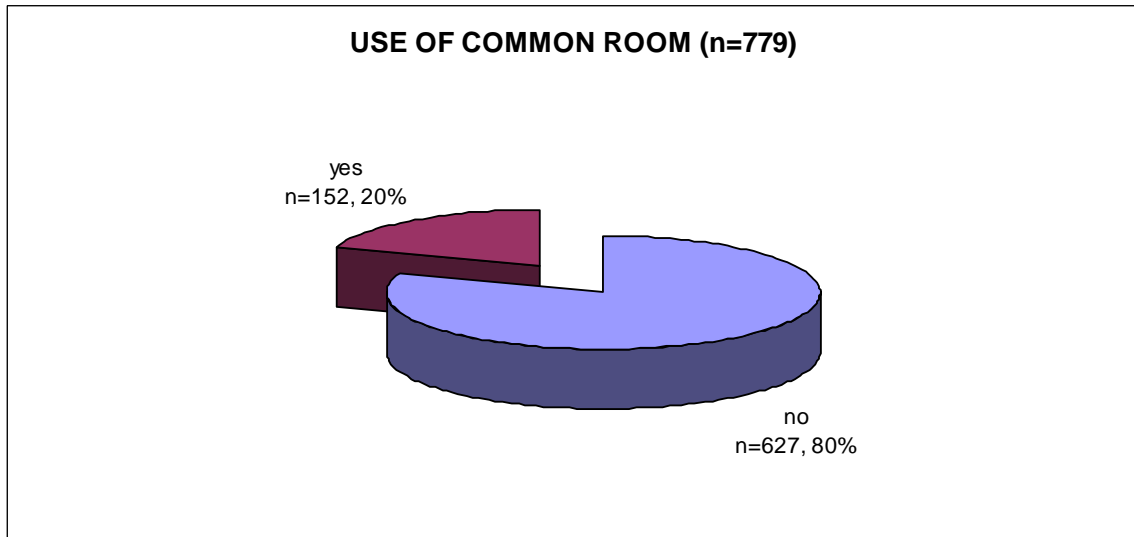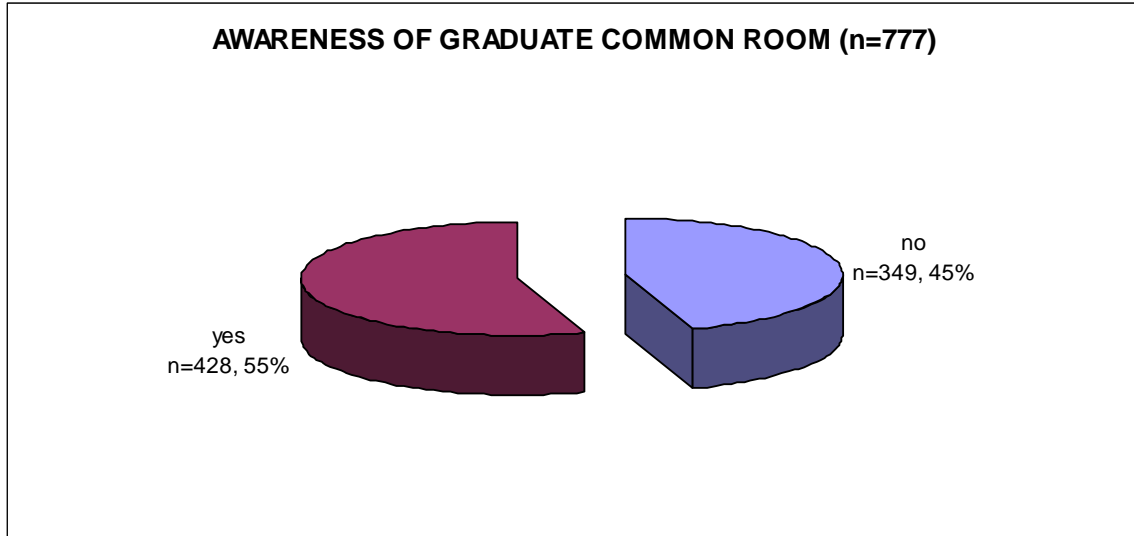
D. UCL GRADUATE SCHOOL

The following table summarises the various ways in which the surveyed students had heard of the UCL Graduate School. Note that respondents could select every option that applied. Only 2.2% of the surveyed students had not heard of the UCL Graduate School.

	N	% of 780
Website	312	40.0
Graduate School Handbook	268	34.4
UCL Prospectus	214	27.4
Departmental Graduate Tutor	186	23.8
Some other way	173	22.2
Friend	84	10.8
Never heard of it	17	2.2
UCL Union Postgraduate Association	11	1.4

The surveyed students have contacted the Graduate School for a number of reasons, which are summarised in the table below. Respondents could select all that applied. The most popular reason for contacting the Graduate School is for the skills courses and workshops offered (62.4%). 19.5% of students have never contacted the Graduate School.

	N	% of 780
Skills Courses/Workshops	487	62.4
Funds	268	34.4
Scholarships	193	24.7
Never	152	19.5
Help/Advice	116	14.9
Poster Competition	87	11.2
Regulations/Code of Practice	83	10.6
Ethics	50	6.4
Research Images as Art Competition	41	5.3

The Graduate School supports a Graduate Common Room in the South Junction of the Wilkins Building at the central UCL campus on Gower Street. Approximately half of the 777 people who responded have heard of this room. 20% out of 779 have made use of this room.

AWARENESS OF GRADUATE COMMON ROOM (n=777)

no
n=349, 45%

yes
n=428, 55%

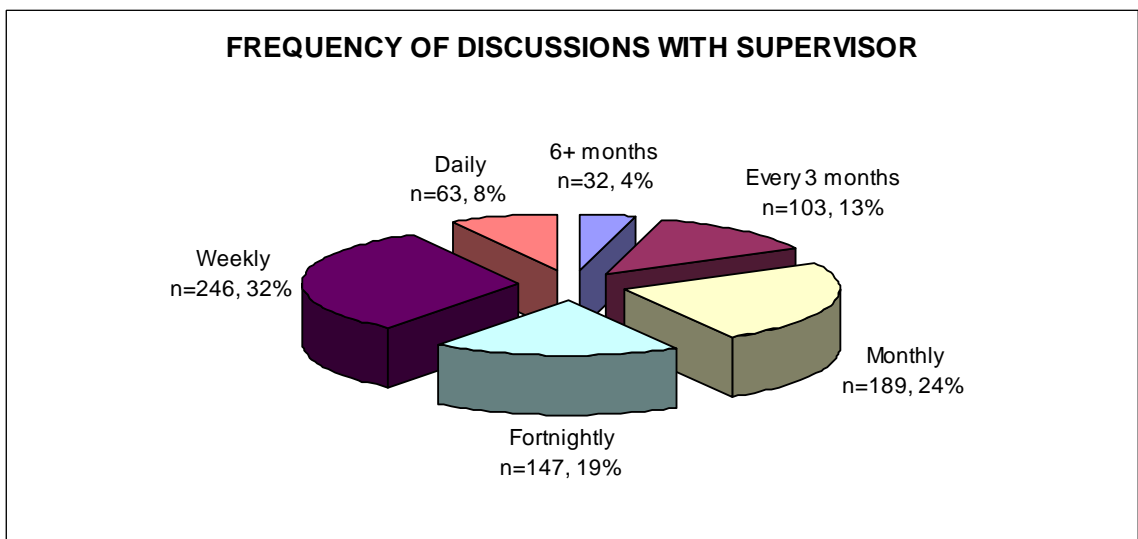**USE OF COMMON ROOM (n=779)**

yes
n=152, 20%

no
n=627, 80%

E. RESEARCH

Over half of the surveyed students (61%) who answered this question are aware of the UCL Graduate School Code of Practice for Graduate Research Degrees.

AWARENESS OF GRADUATE SCHOOL CODE OF PRACTICE (n=778)

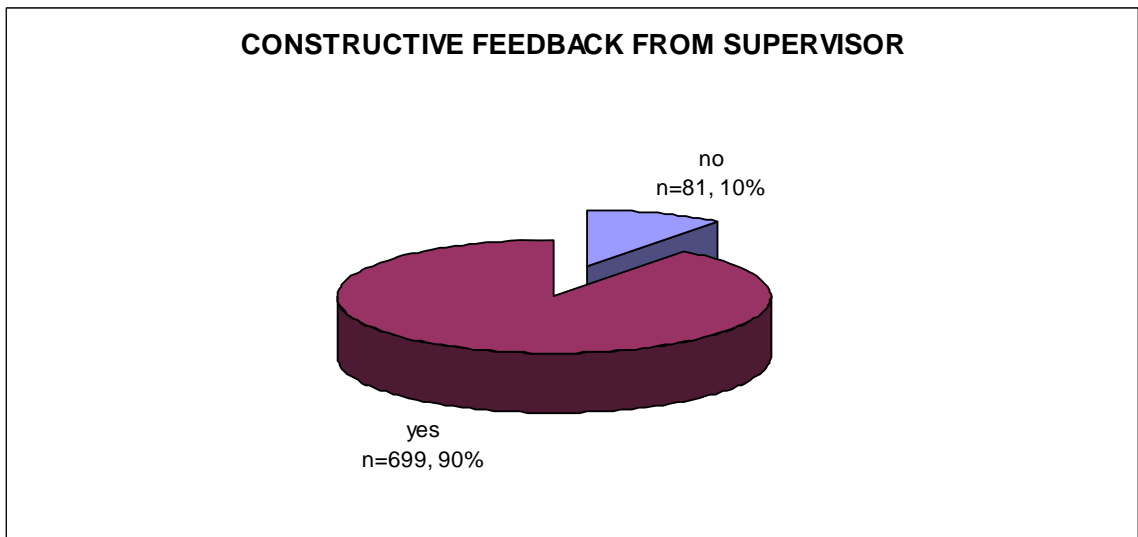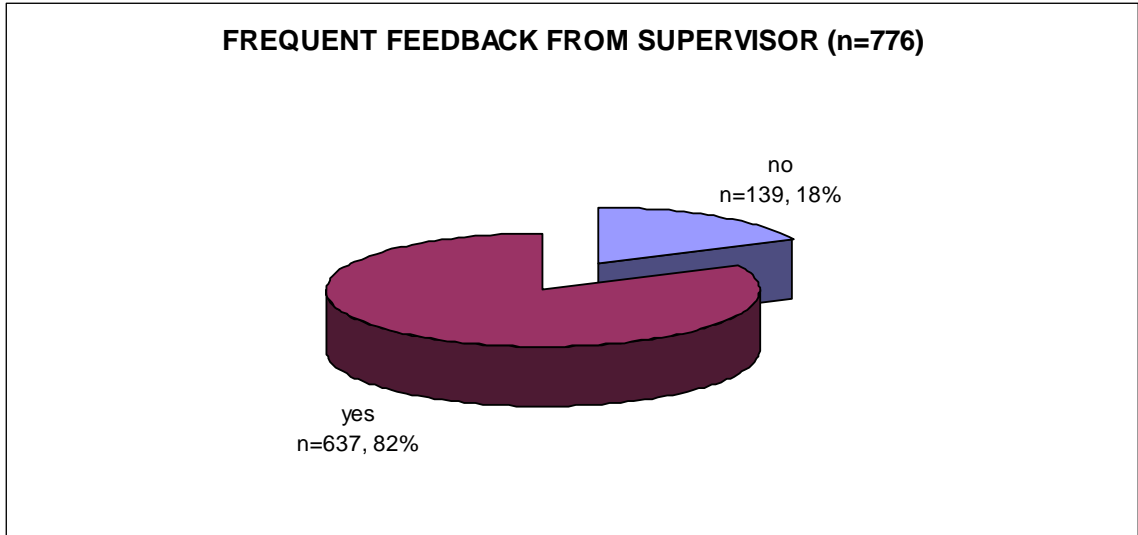no
n=03, 39%

yes
n=475, 61%
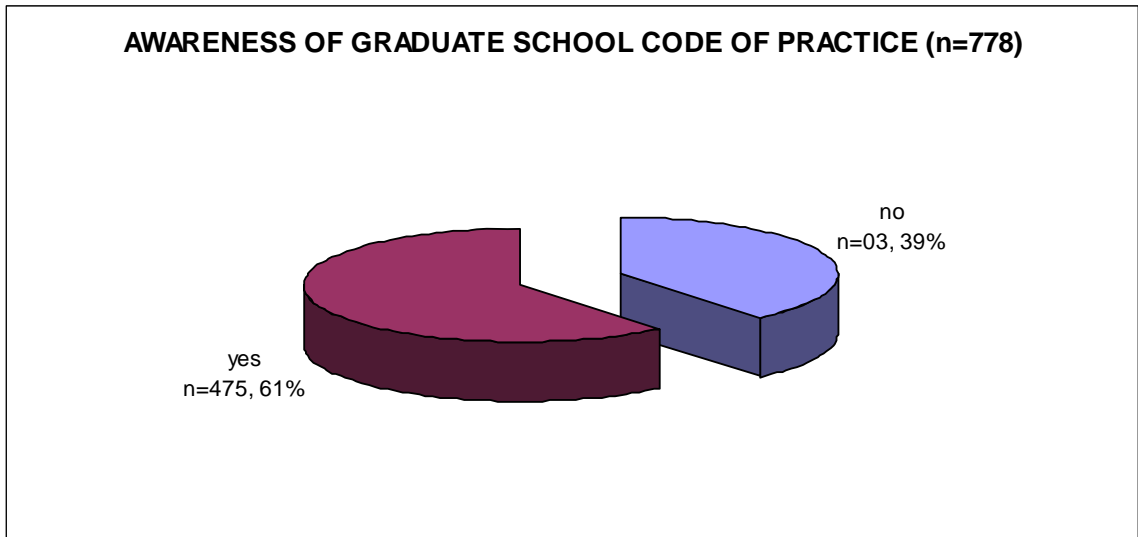
PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR

The majority of research students meet with their principal supervisor *at least* once a month (daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly), with only 17% meeting with him/her every three (13%) or six months (4%).

FREQUENCY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH SUPERVISOR

Daily
n=63, 8%

6+ months
n=32, 4%

Every 3 months
n=103, 13%

Weekly
n=246, 32%

Monthly
n=189, 24%

Fortnightly
n=147, 19%

Feedback from the principal supervisor is described as frequent by 82% and constructive by 90% of respondents.

FREQUENT FEEDBACK FROM SUPERVISOR (n=776)

no
n=139, 18%

yes
n=637, 82%

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK FROM SUPERVISOR
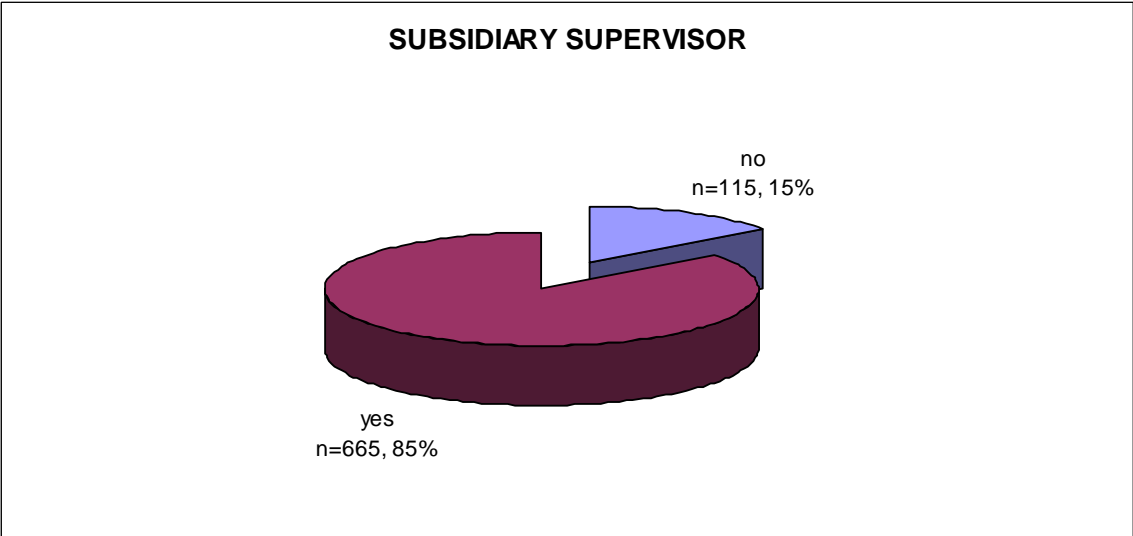
no
n=81, 10%

yes
n=699, 90%

A total of 81% of students describe their relationship to their principal supervisor as either excellent or good and only 4% feel that the relationship is unsatisfactory.

RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPERVISOR

Satisfactory
n=117, 15%

Unsatisfactory
n=34, 4%
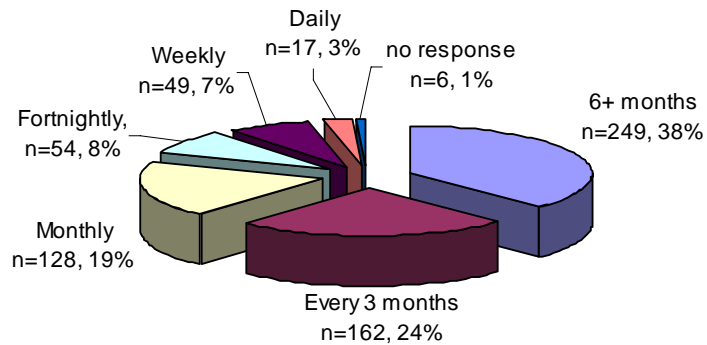
Excellent
n=399, 52%

Good
n=230, 29%
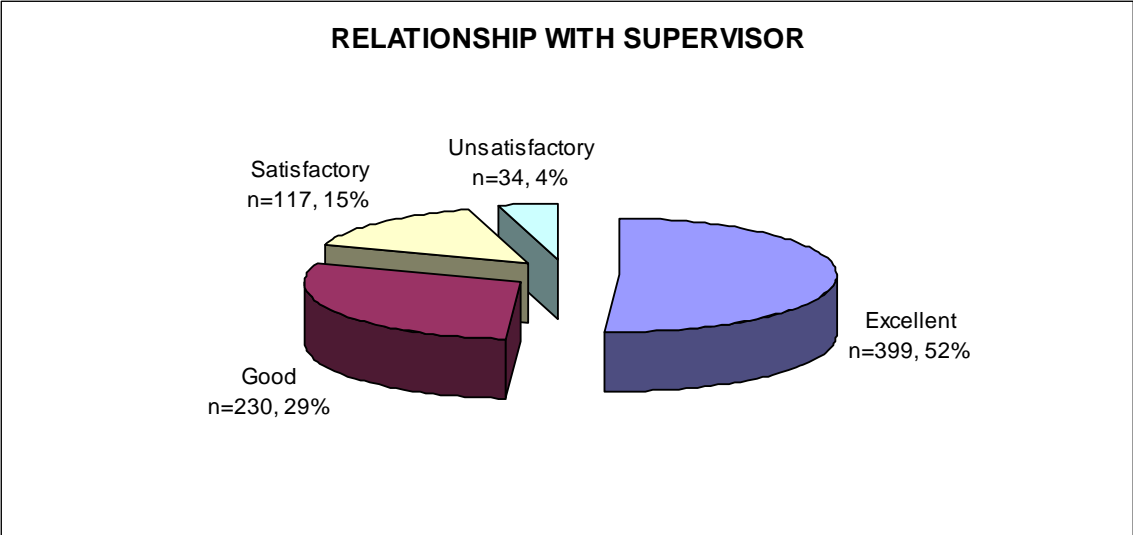
SUBSIDIARY SUPERVISOR

A total of 665 of the surveyed students have a subsidiary supervisor. They report that meetings occur less frequently than with the principal supervisor, with more than half (62%) meeting with him/her approximately every three (24%) or six (38%) months.


SUBSIDIARY SUPERVISOR

no
n=115, 15%

yes
n=665, 85%

FREQUENCY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH SUBSIDIARY SUPERVISOR (n=665)

Daily
n=17, 3%

no response
n=6, 1%

Weekly
n=49, 7%

6+ months
n=249, 38%

Fortnightly,
n=54, 8%

Monthly
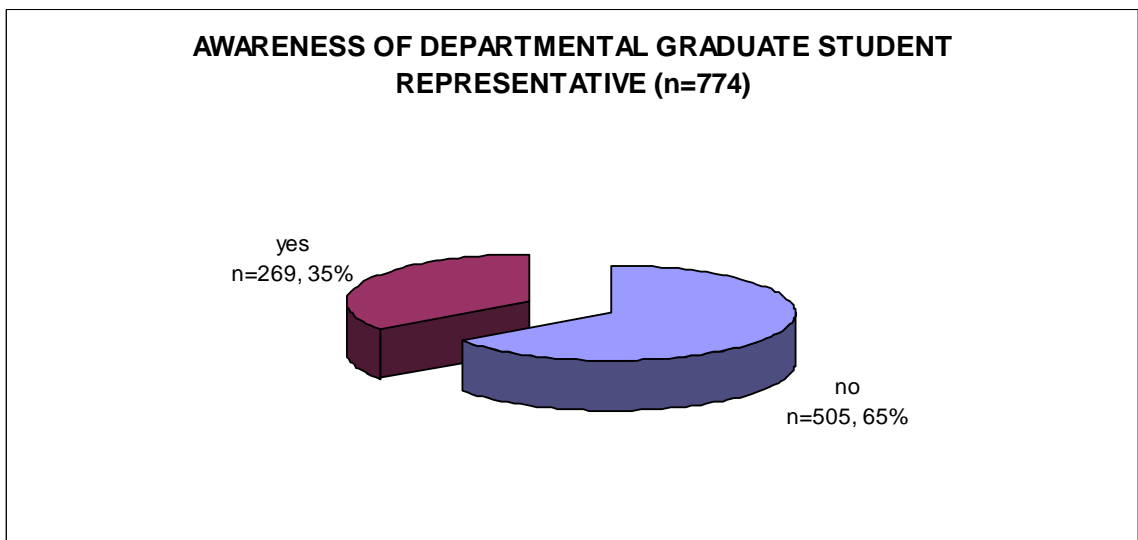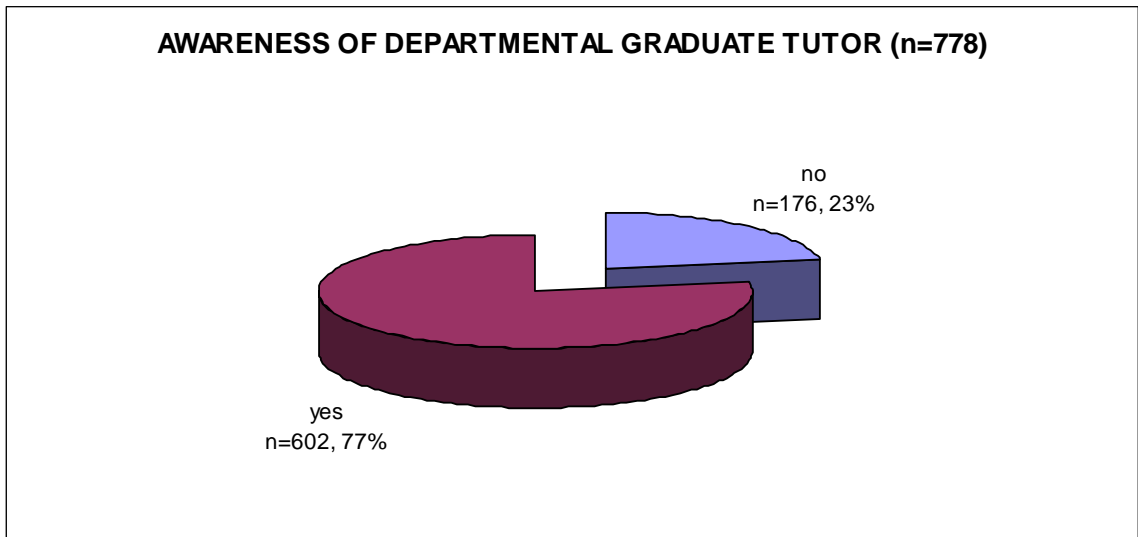n=128, 19%

Every 3 months
n=162, 24%

The relationship is described as either excellent or good by 72% of students. 21% feel the relationship is simply a satisfactory one, while only 6% feel it is not satisfactory.

RELATIONSHIP WITH SUBSIDIARY SUPERVISOR (n=665)

Unsatisfactory
n=41, 6%

no response
n=7, 1%

Satisfactory
n=138, 21%

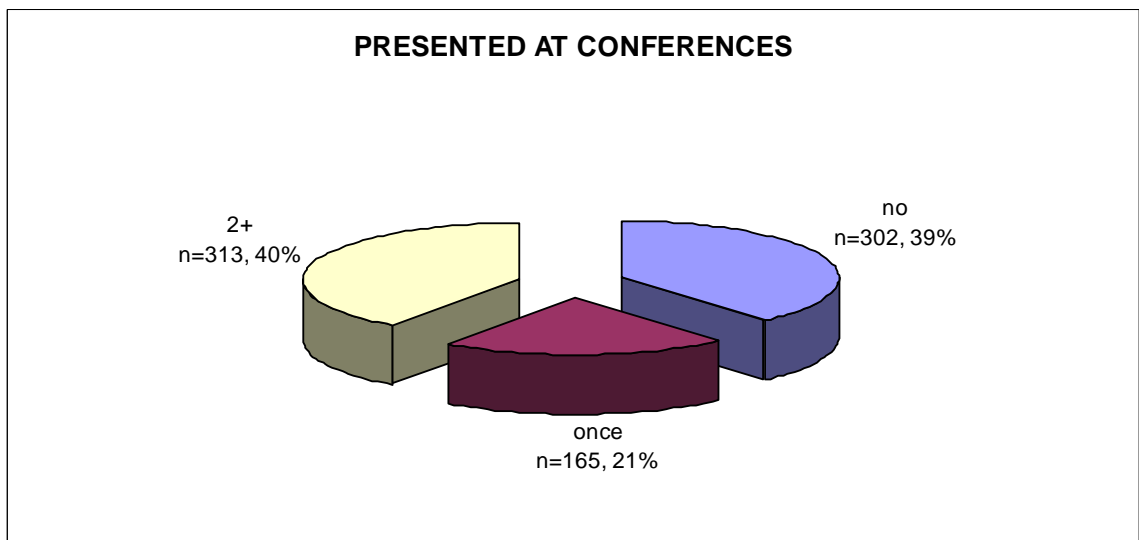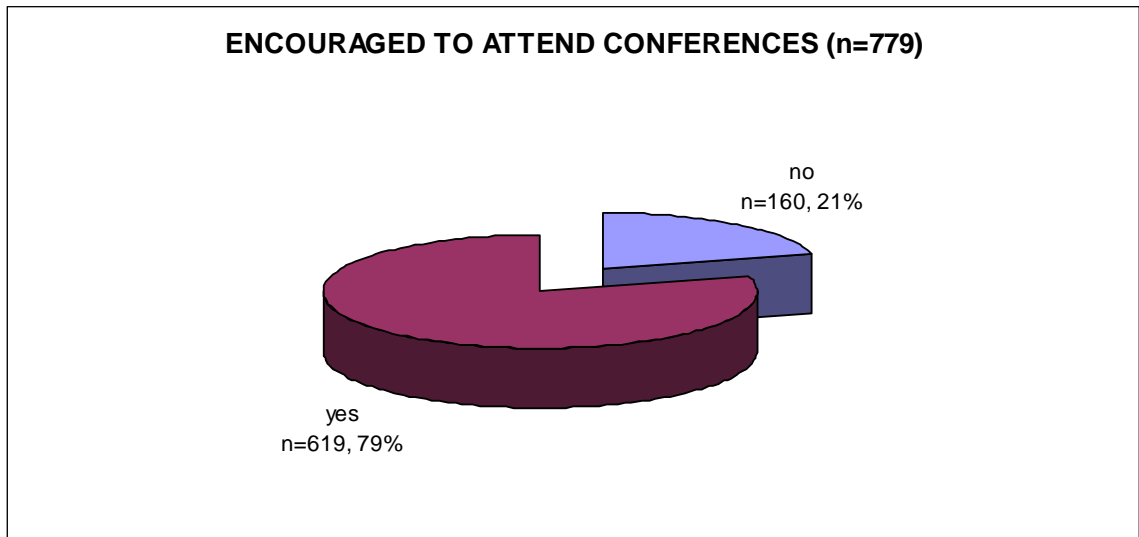Excellent
n=239, 36%

Good
n=240, 36%
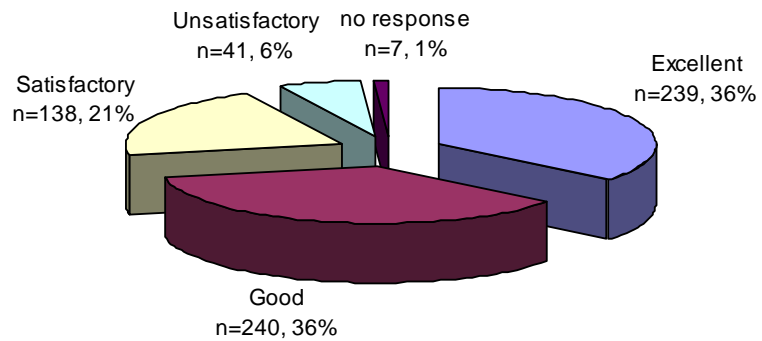
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Of the students who chose to respond to the questions, 77% are aware of their departmental graduate tutor, while only 35% are aware of their departmental graduate student representative.
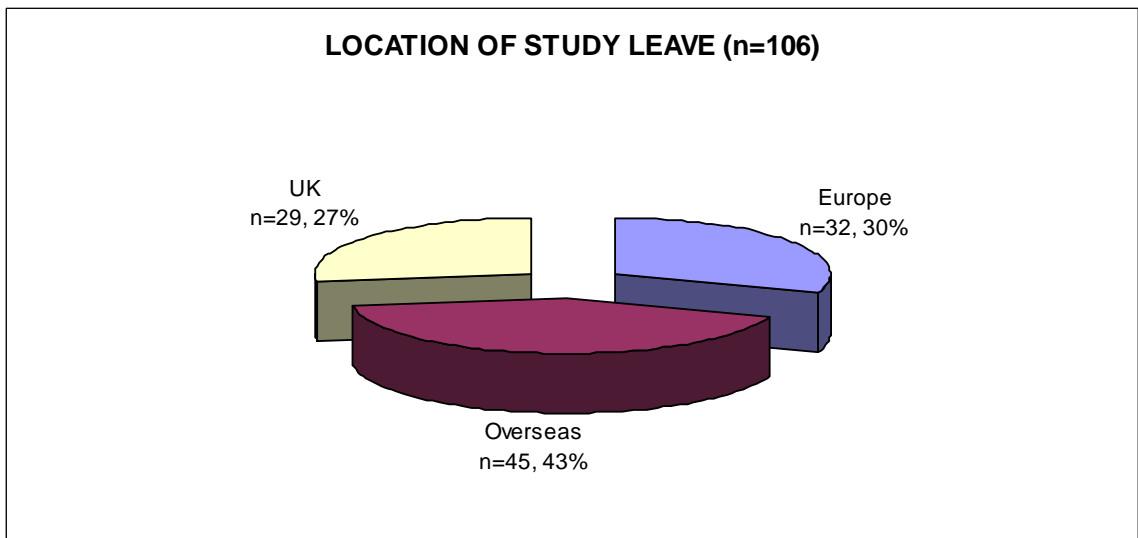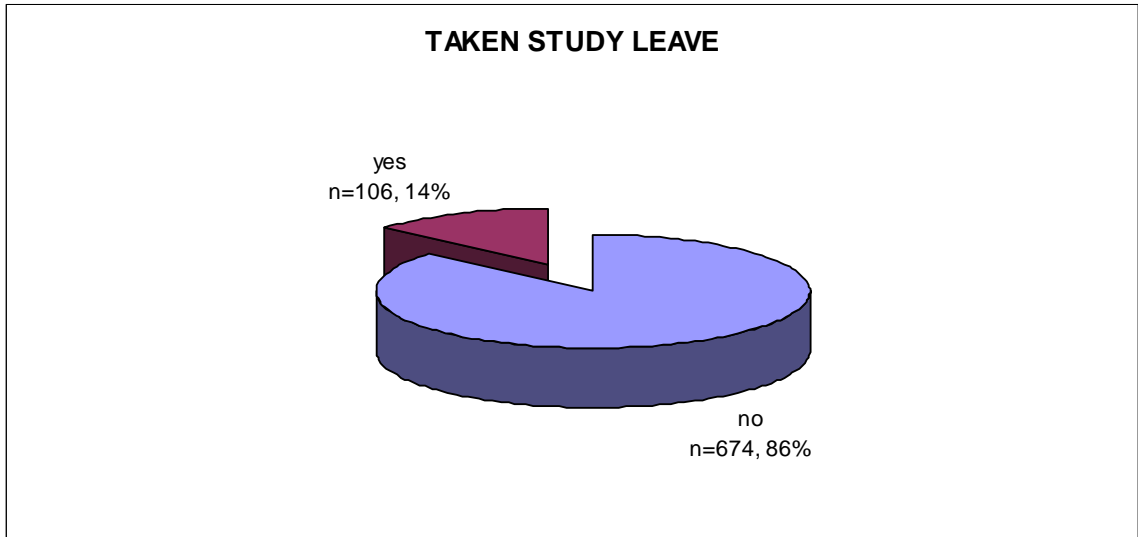
AWARENESS OF DEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE TUTOR (n=778)

no
n=176, 23%

yes
n=602, 77%

AWARENESS OF DEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE (n=774)

yes
n=269, 35%

no
n=505, 65%

CONFERENCES

The majority of students (79%) feel that their supervisors encourage them to participate in conferences, but almost 40% of students have not done so. However, 40% of students have presented at or been involved in a conference on two or more occasions.

ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND CONFERENCES (n=779)

no
n=160, 21%

yes
n=619, 79%

PRESENTED AT CONFERENCES

2+
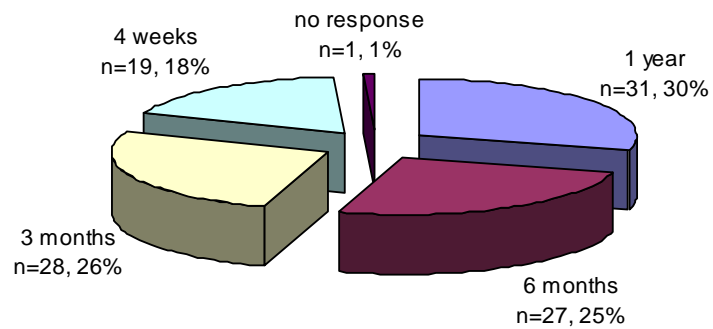n=313, 40%

no
n=302, 39%

once
n=165, 21%

STUDY LEAVE

Only 14% of the respondents have taken study leave during the course of their research degree. Out of these 106 students, only 27% of them have remained in the UK during this time. Approximately half of the students (51%) have taken study leave that lasted more than one but less than six months. Another third (30%) has taken study leave between six months to one year.
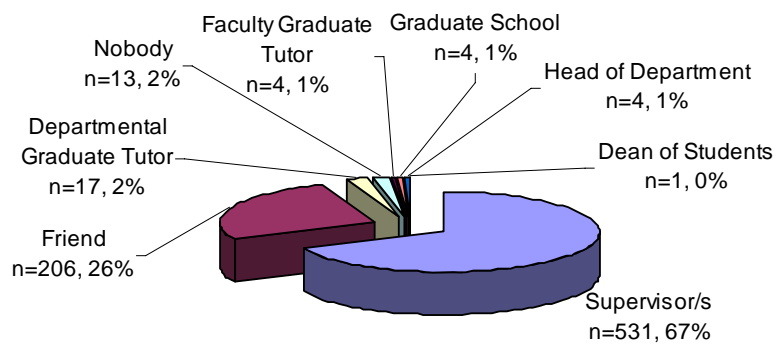
TAKEN STUDY LEAVE

yes
n=106, 14%

no
n=674, 86%

LOCATION OF STUDY LEAVE (n=106)

UK
n=29, 27%

Europe
n=32, 30%

Overseas
n=45, 43%

DURATION OF STUDY LEAVE (n=106)

4 weeks
n=19, 18%

no response
n=1, 1%

1 year
n=31, 30%

3 months
n=28, 26%
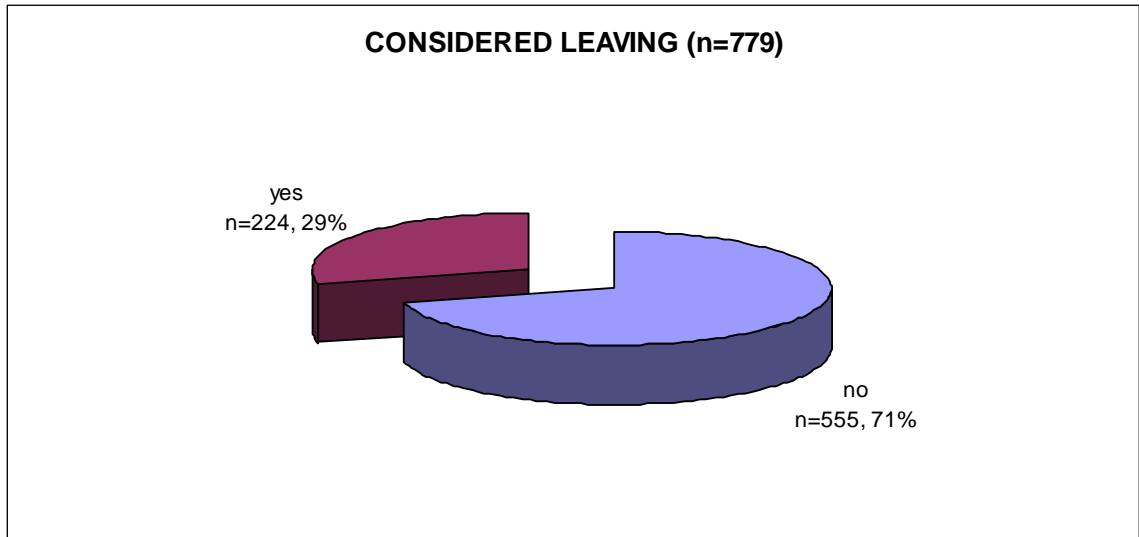
6 months
n=27, 25%

PROBLEMS WITH STUDY

The majority of students (67%) would confide in their supervisors if they encountered problems during their research degree. 26% would confide in a personal friend, while smaller numbers would seek help and advice elsewhere in the university. Almost one-third of the students (29%) have considered leaving their course.

CONFIDING PROBLEMS

Nobody
n=13, 2%

Faculty Graduate
Tutor
n=4, 1%

Graduate School
n=4, 1%

Head of Department
n=4, 1%

Departmental
Graduate Tutor
n=17, 2%

Dean of Students
n=1, 0%

Friend
n=206, 26%

Supervisor/s
n=531, 67%

CONSIDERED LEAVING (n=779)
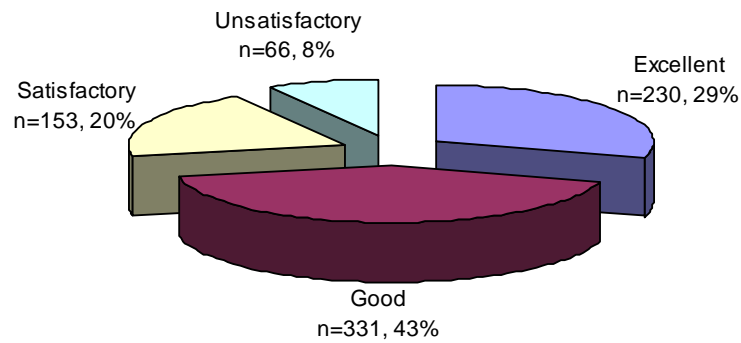
yes
n=224, 29%

no
n=555, 71%

The table below summarises the problems that students feel have affected their research programme. Please note that respondents could select all options that applied. The most common difficulties experienced by approximately 35% and 27% of the survey population, relate to personal circumstances and personal finances, respectively. Conflicts with supervisors have affected 11.5% of the surveyed students.

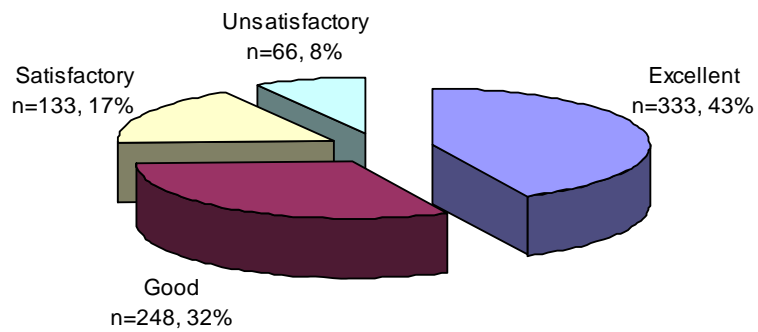|	N	% of 780
Personal circumstances	274	35.1
N/A	271	34.7
Personal finance	209	26.8
Lack of equipment/facilities	152	19.5
Project finance	98	12.6
Conflict with Supervisor	90	11.5

OVERALL RATINGS

When considering the overall research environment at UCL the majority of the surveyed students feel that it is excellent (29%) or good (43%). Only 8% feel that it is an unsatisfactory. Similarly, 8% would rate their supervision as unsatisfactory. However, 43% would rate their experience with supervision as excellent and 32% feel it has been good (see also the sub-section regarding supervision above).

OVERALL RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT RATING

Unsatisfactory
n=66, 8%

Satisfactory
n=153, 20%

Excellent
n=230, 29%

Good
n=331, 43%

SUPERVISION RATING

Unsatisfactory
n=66, 8%

Satisfactory
n=133, 17%
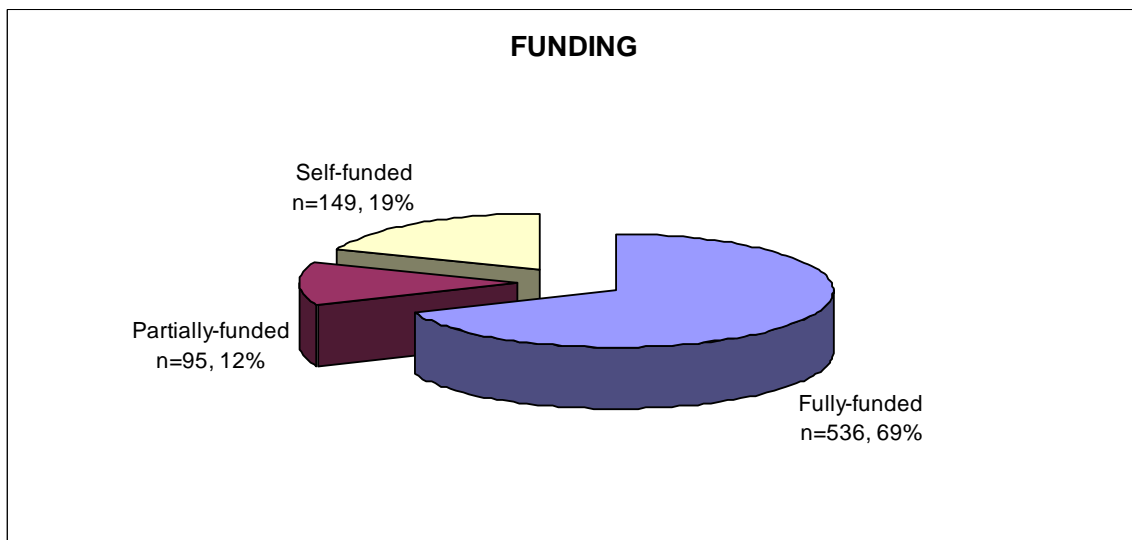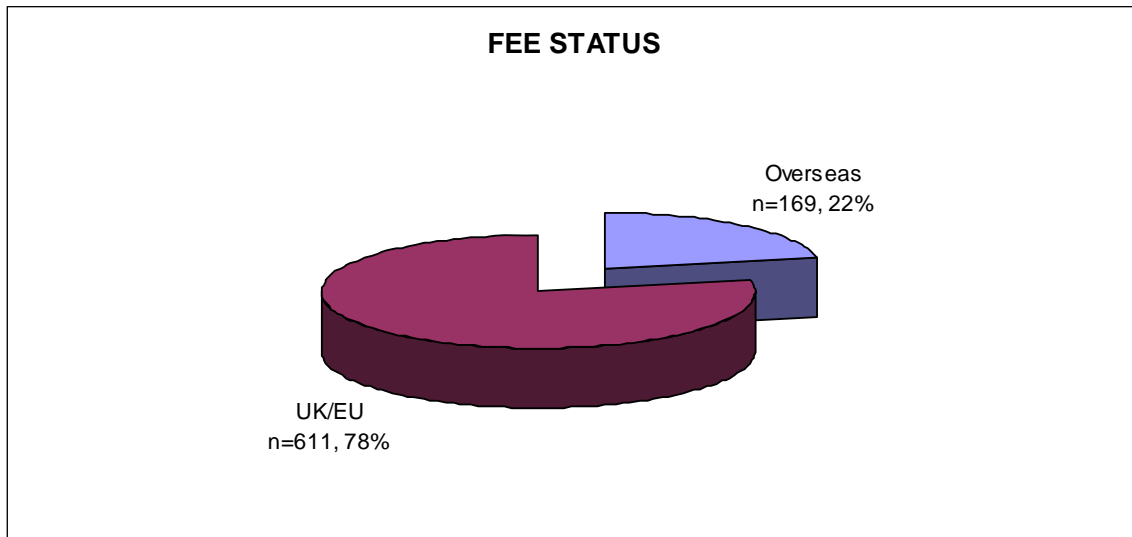
Excellent
n=333, 43%

Good
n=248, 32%

When asked to consider their overall experiences as a research student, the highest proportion of respondents report that it has been good (45%). Approximately one-third (29%) rate their overall experience as excellent. Only 7% feel that it has been an unsatisfactory.

RESEARCH STUDENT EXPERIENCE RATING

Unsatisfactory
n=57, 7%

Satisfactory
n=149, 19%

Excellent
n=226, 29%

Good
n=348, 45%
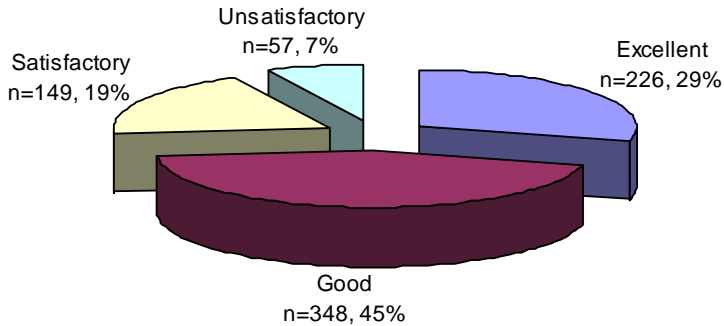
F. FINANCES

78% of the survey population are registered UK or EU students, while 22% are overseas students. The majority of students receive funding for their programmes, with 69% reporting that they are fully-funded and 12% partially-funded. However, 19% of the students are entirely self-funded.

FEE STATUS

Overseas
n=169, 22%

UK/EU
n=611, 78%

FUNDING

Self-funded
n=149, 19%

Partially-funded
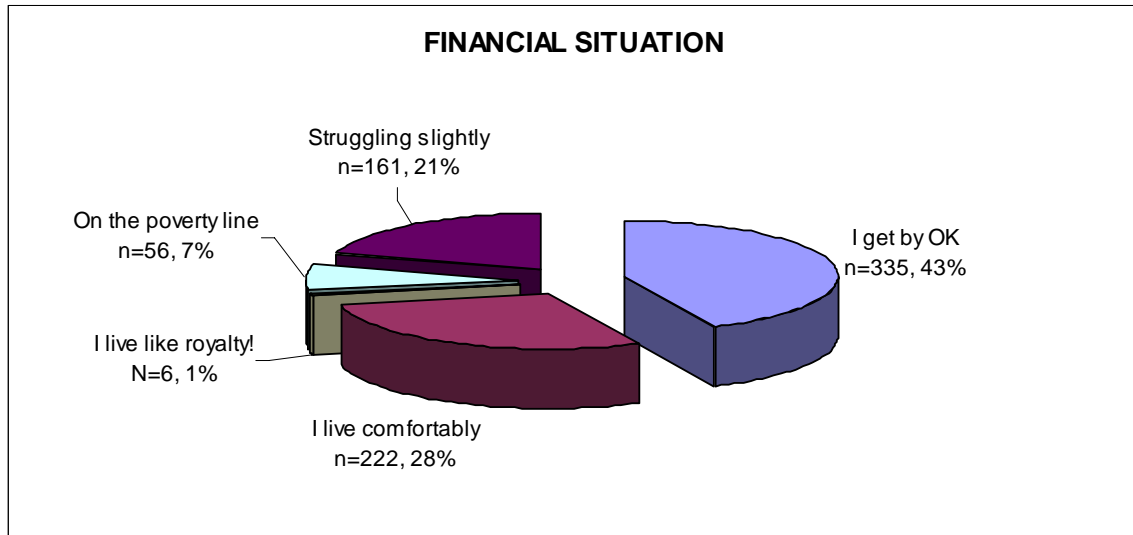n=95, 12%

Fully-funded
n=536, 69%

The majority of students live in a rented room or flat (58%) and nearly one-quarter live in their own homes (24%). Smaller numbers live in student houses (3%), halls of residence (5%) or with friends or relatives (8%).

TERM-TIME RESIDENCE
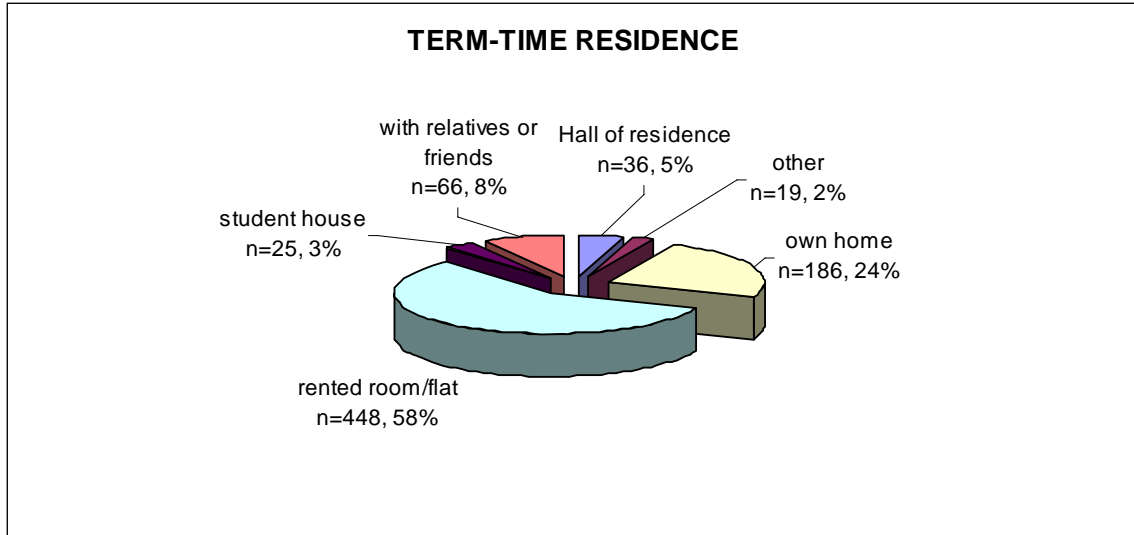
Approximately one-third of the surveyed students have undertaken part-time jobs during the course of their research degree.

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT (n=778)
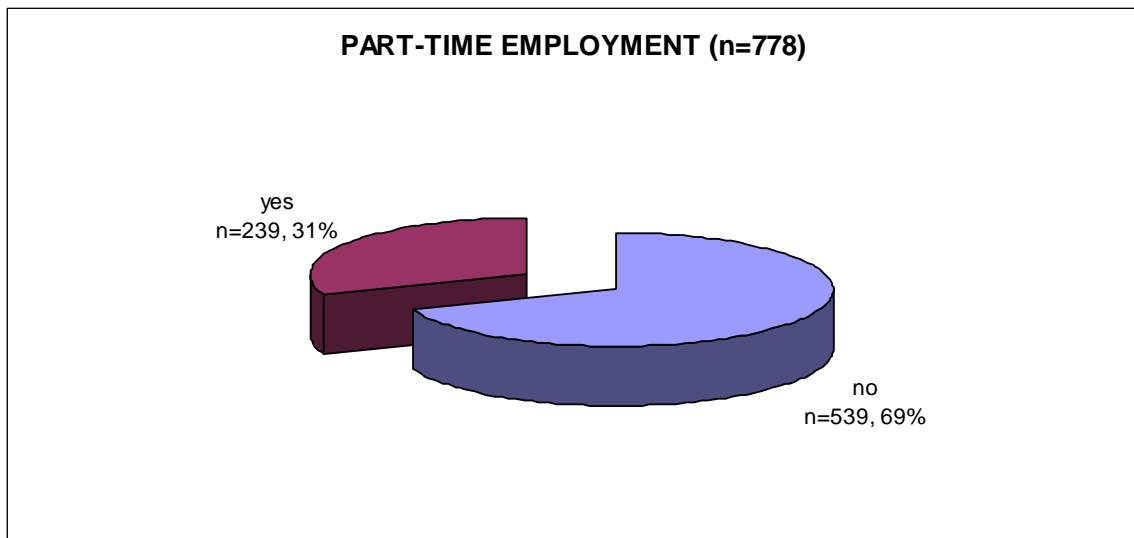
The majority of respondents report on positive finances with 28% living comfortably, 43% "getting by ok" and a very small 1% living like royalty! 21% feel that they are struggling slightly and 7% are living on the poverty line.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Struggling slightly
n=161, 21%

On the poverty line
n=56, 7%

I get by OK
n=335, 43%

I live like royalty!
N=6, 1%

I live comfortably
n=222, 28%

The following table summarises the financial problems that are faced by UCL's research students. Note that respondents could select all options that applied. Although one-third report that they are not suffering any financial difficulties, approximately 44% and 37% are experiencing problems with the cost of living and paying rent, respectively. 15.4% have difficulties paying their fees and 23.3% in meeting the cost of travelling. Supporting dependents affects 6.5% of the students while other unspecified problems concern 7.4% of respondents.
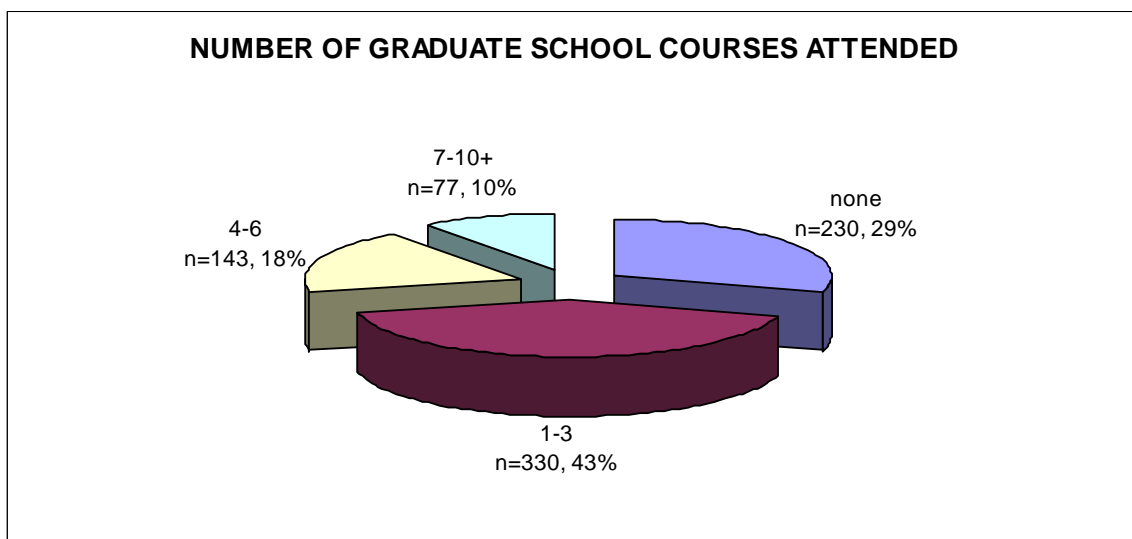
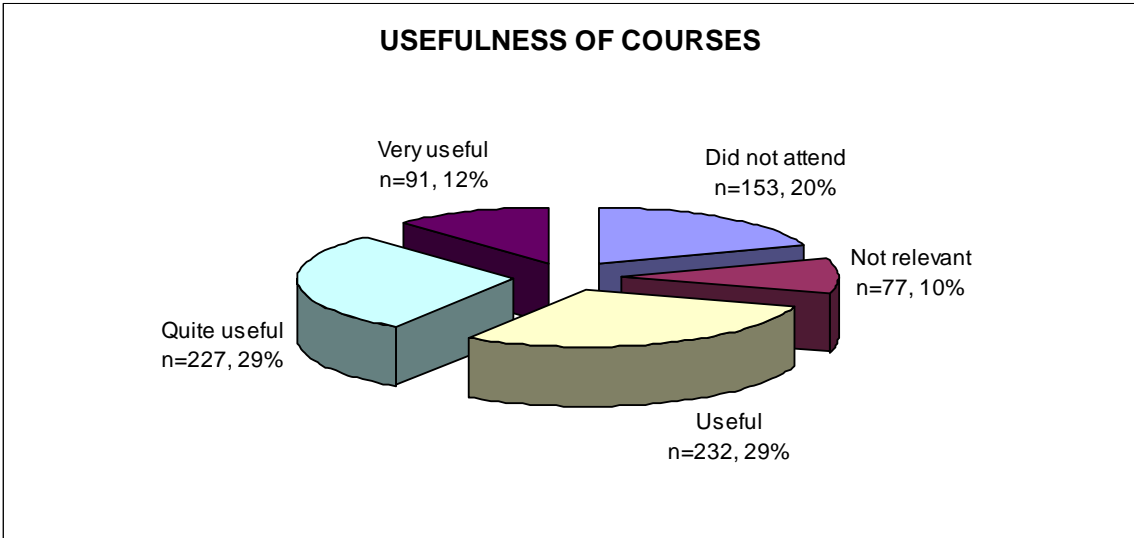|	N	% of 780
Cost of living	340	43.6
Rent	288	36.9
n/a	261	33.5
Travel Costs	182	23.3
Fees	120	15.4
Other	58	7.4
Dependents	51	6.5

G. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Almost one-quarter (23%) of the respondents have not spent any time engaged in skills development training. However, 44% have spent up to two weeks a year and 33% have spent more than two weeks a year participating in such training.

TIME SPENT IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

none
n=180, 23%

less than two weeks
a year
n=344, 44%

more than two weeks
a year
n=256, 33%
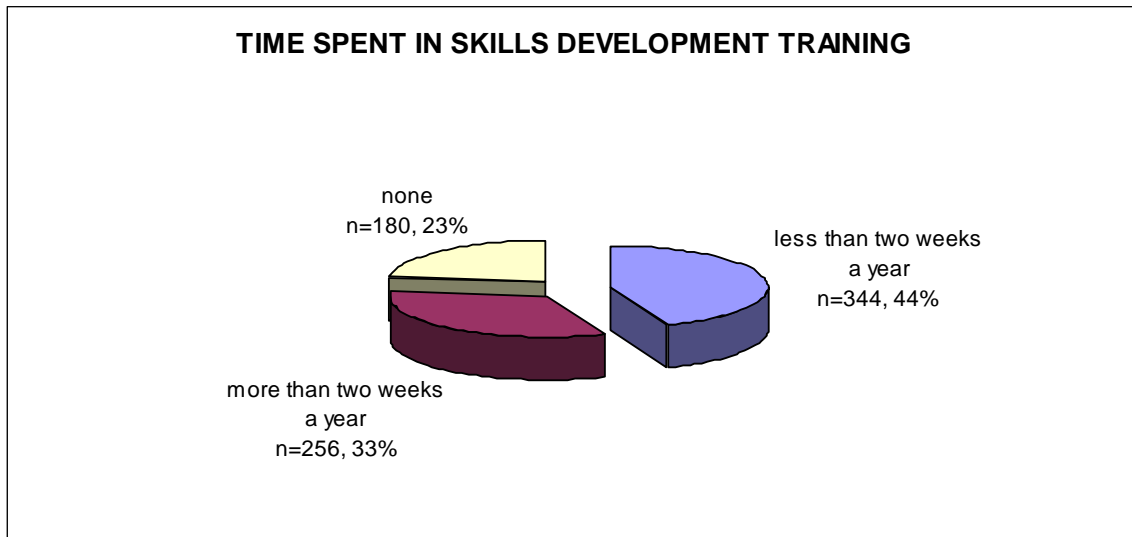
A total of 71% of students have attended at least one skills development training course offered by the UCL Graduate School. 41% felt that they were either very or quite useful and 29% found them useful.

NUMBER OF GRADUATE SCHOOL COURSES ATTENDED

7-10+
n=77, 10%

none
n=230, 29%

4-6
n=143, 18%

1-3
n=330, 43%

USEFULNESS OF COURSES

Very useful
n=91, 12%

Did not attend
n=153, 20%

Not relevant
n=77, 10%

Quite useful
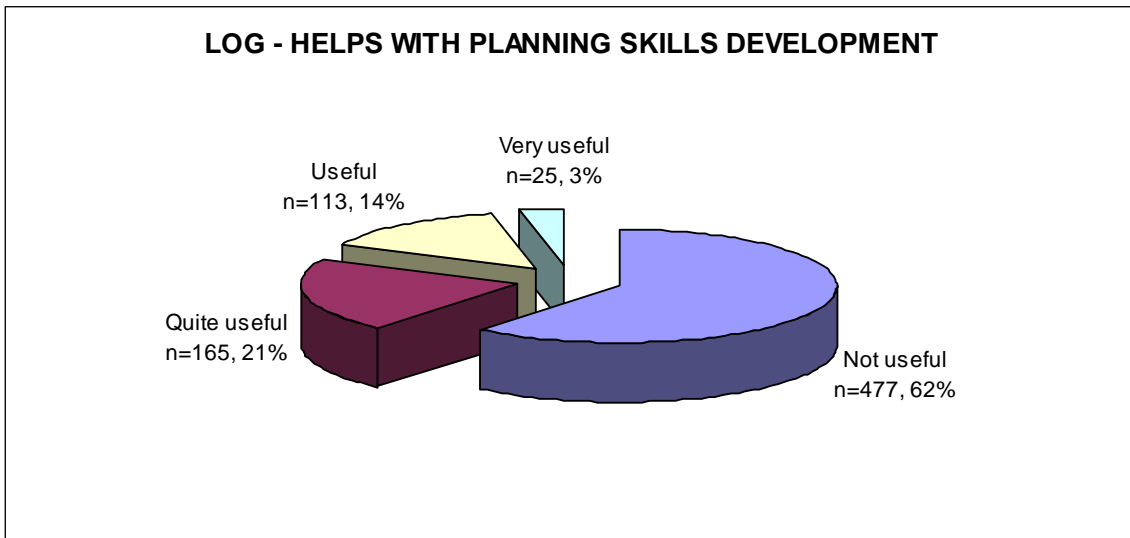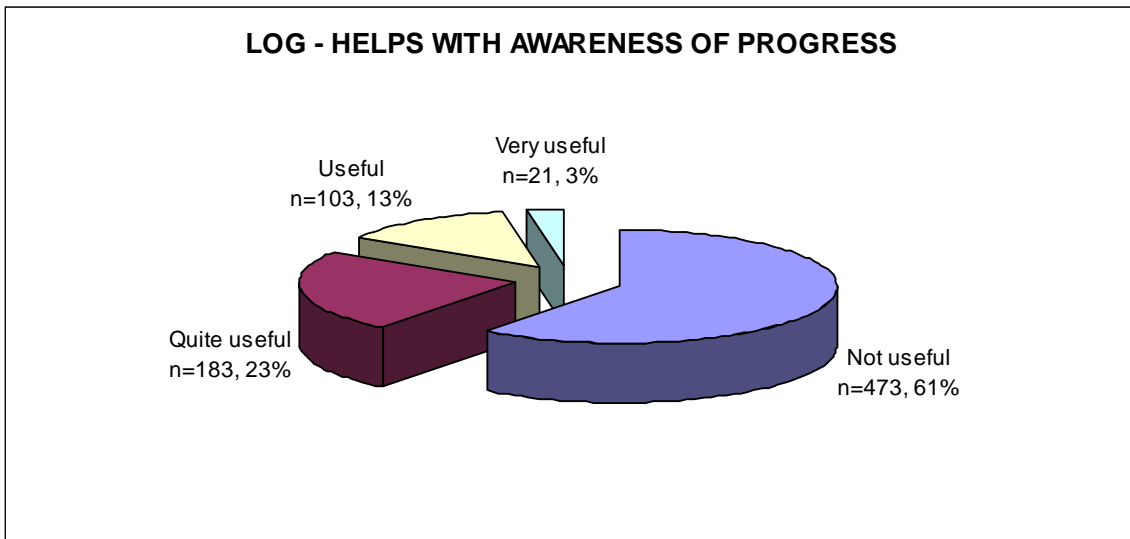n=227, 29%

Useful
n=232, 29%

Approximately half of the survey population (48%) reported that their supervisors have encouraged them to attend the skills development courses offered by the Graduate School.

ENCOURAGED BY SUPERVISORS TO ATTEND GRADUATE SCHOOL COURSES

yes
n=374, 48%

no
n=406, 52%
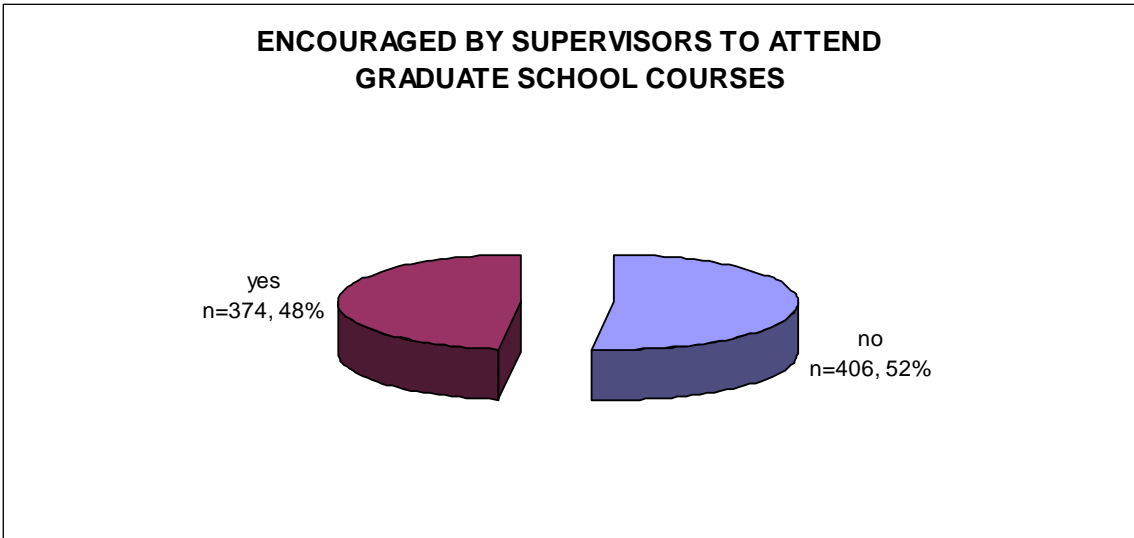
H. RESEARCH STUDENT LOG

Similar proportions of students report that they do not find the research student log useful in making one aware of progress (61%) or in planning and tracking skills development training (62%). Only 3% find the logs very useful for both. More than one-third of respondents report that they are useful (13%) or quite useful (23%) in tracking progress. Similarly, they also report that they are useful (14%) or quite useful in planning and tracking skills development (21%).

LOG - HELPS WITH AWARENESS OF PROGRESS

Very useful
n=21, 3%

Useful
n=103, 13%

Quite useful
n=183, 23%

Not useful
n=473, 61%

LOG - HELPS WITH PLANNING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Very useful
n=25, 3%

Useful
n=113, 14%

Quite useful
n=165, 21%

Not useful
n=477, 62%

More than half of the students surveyed indicate that they are not encouraged by their supervisors to use the log.

**ENCOURAGED TO USE LOG**

yes
n=349, 45%

no
n=431, 55%
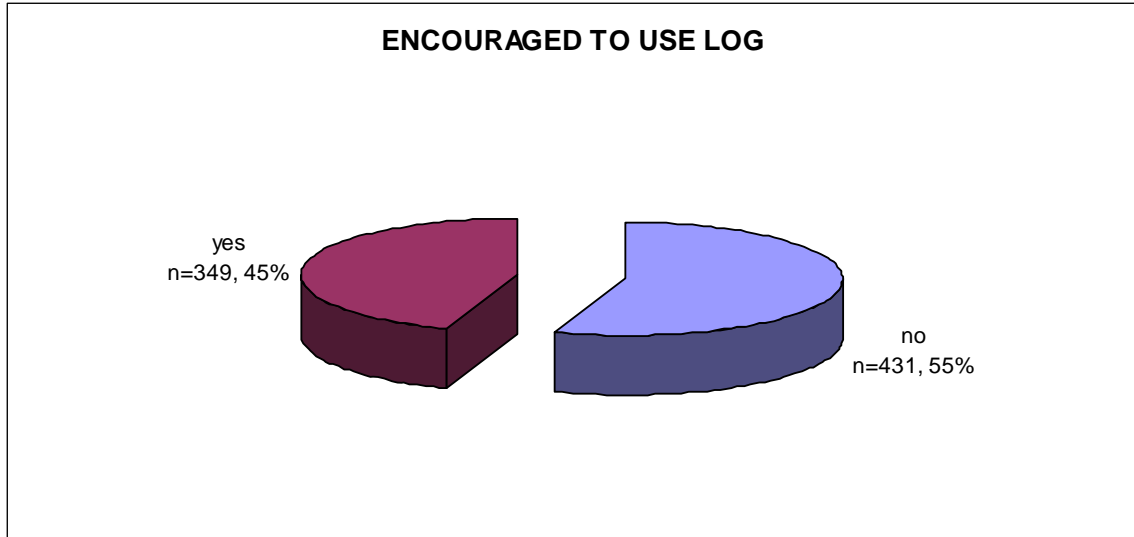
I. LIBRARY

Almost all respondents feel that the UCL Library Services meets their research needs completely (46%) or partially (48%).

NEEDS ARE MET BY LIBRARY SERVICES

Poorly
n=45, 6%

Completely
n=356, 46%
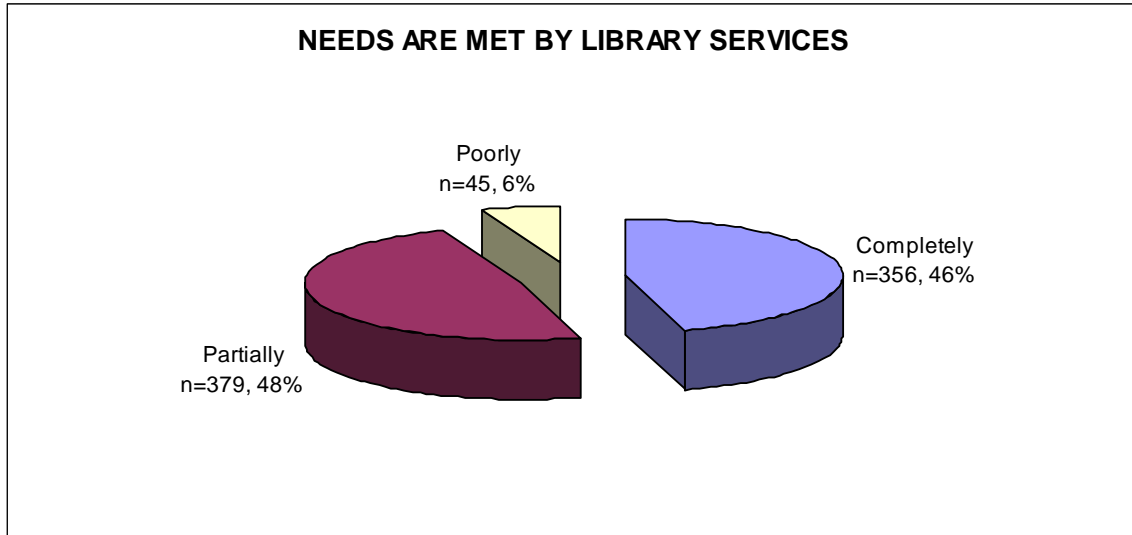
Partially
n=379, 48%

Most students also report that the paper and electronic resources are very useful (71%) and partially useful (26%). However, 42% find that the Information Skills training offered by the Library Services is not very useful.

USEFULNESS OF PAPER AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Not very useful
n=23, 3%

Partially useful
n=202, 26%

Very useful
n=555, 71%
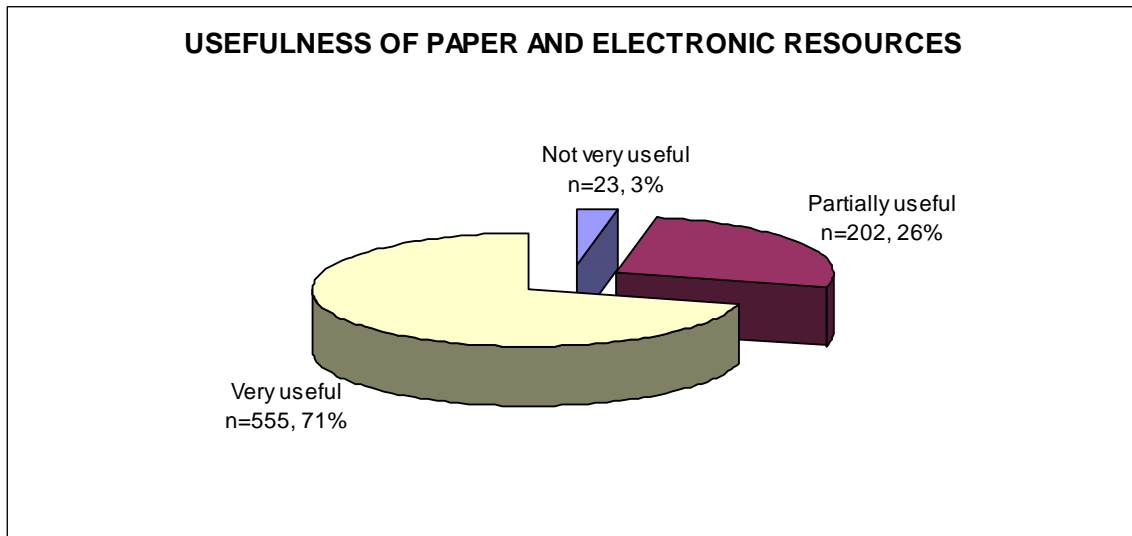
USEFULNESS OF LIBRARY SERVICES INFORMATION SKILLS TRAINING

Very useful
n=134, 17%

Not very useful
n=328, 42%

Partially useful
n=318, 41%
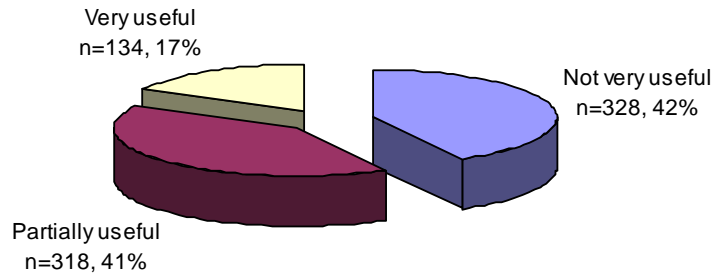
Two-thirds of research students utilise the Library Services resources very frequently (34%) and frequently (33%). Only 6% never make use of them.

FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY SERVICES USEAGE

Very frequently
n=262, 34%

Frequently
n=264, 33%

Occasionally
n=211, 27%

Never
n=43, 6%
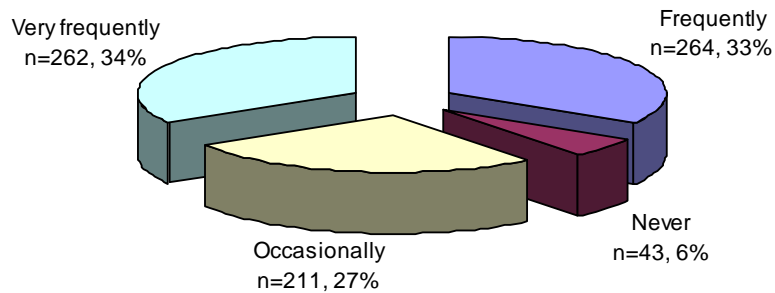
Of the 767 students who responded to the question, 93% find that the extended library opening hours convenient. However, the number of students that find the library's vacation opening hours convenient drops to 78%.

**CONVENIENCE OF EXTENDED LIBRARY OPENING HOURS (n=767)**

no
n=57, 7%

yes
n=710, 93%
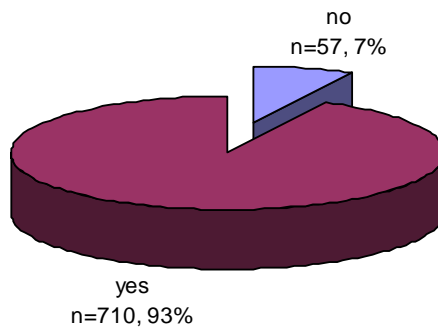
CONVENIENCE OF LIBRARY VACATION OPENING HOURS (n=772)

no
n=171, 22%

yes
n=601, 78%
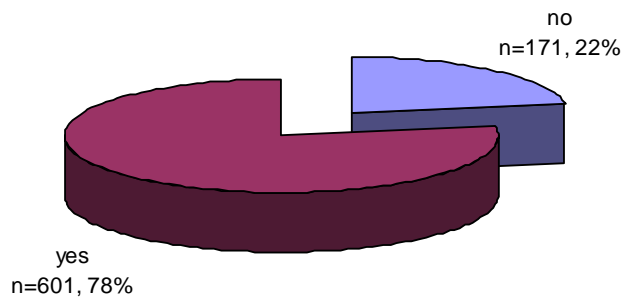
The following two charts summarise the hours during which research students wish to see the library opened on both weekdays and weekends. Nearly all students would like the library to open between 0900 and 1900 during the week and between 0900 and 1700 on the weekend. For every hour of the day *at least* 10% of the respondents would like to see the library open (i.e. 24-hour access).

IDEAL LIBRARY OPENING HOURS - WEEKDAYS

percentage of
respondents

hour

IDEAL LIBRARY OPENING HOURS - WEEKENDS

percentage of
respondents
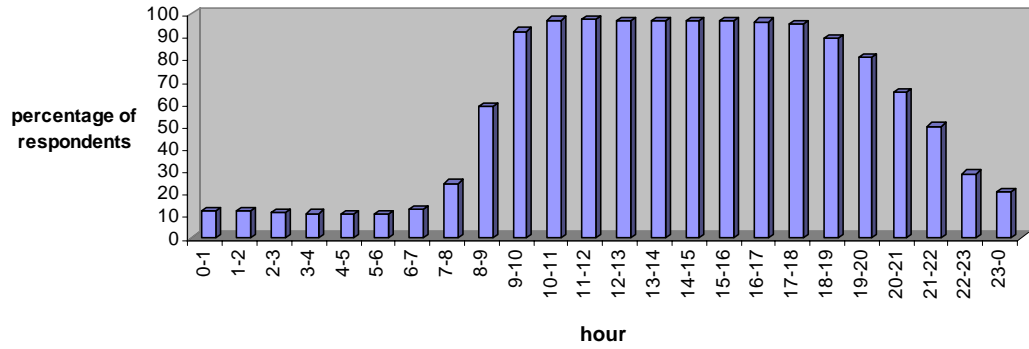
hour
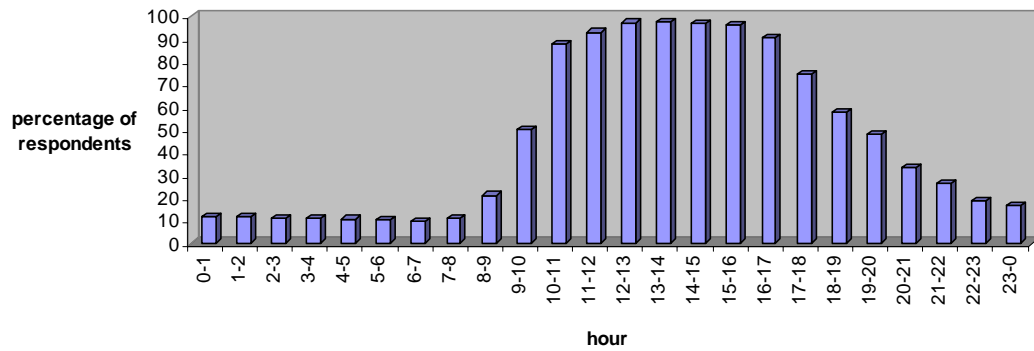
J. COMPUTING

Of the students who answered the questions, 94% report that they have sufficient computer access for their studies. 91% own or have the use of a laptop.

SUFFICIENT COMPUTER ACCESS (n=778)

no
n=49, 6%

yes
n=729, 94%

OWN/HAVE USE OF LAPTOP (n=779)

no
n=72, 9%

yes
n=707, 91%
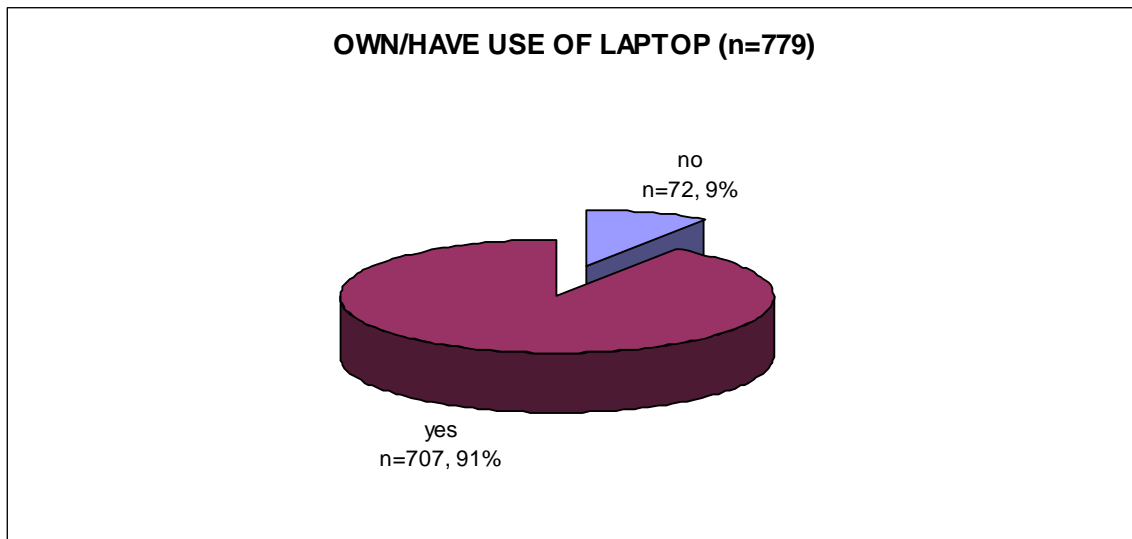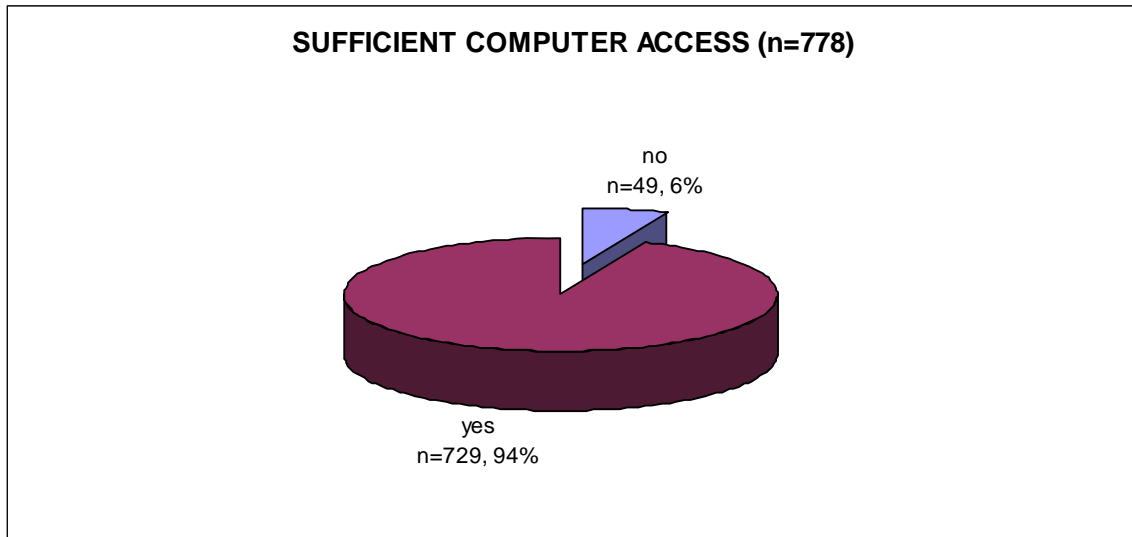
The following table summarises the computing facilities available to the surveyed students at home during term-time. Note that respondents could select all that applied. Nearly all students have access to a computer and the internet, however only approximately half (52.6%) have access to a printer.

	N	% of 780
Computer	760	97.4
Printer	410	52.6
Internet	702	90.0

The following table summarises the various computing facilities used by the students. Note that respondents could select all that applied. By far the most popular facility is a UCL email account (91.2%).
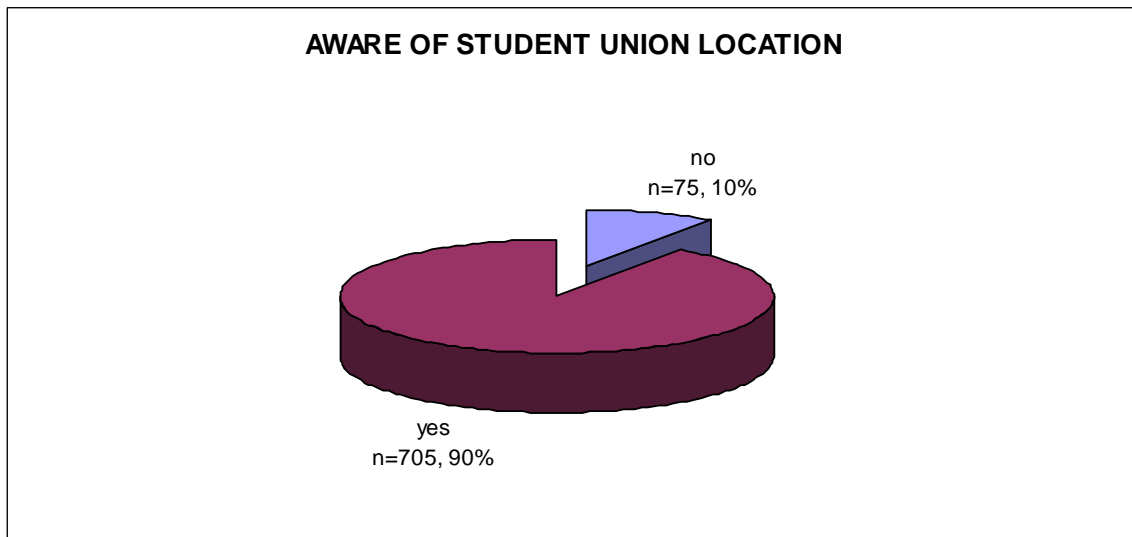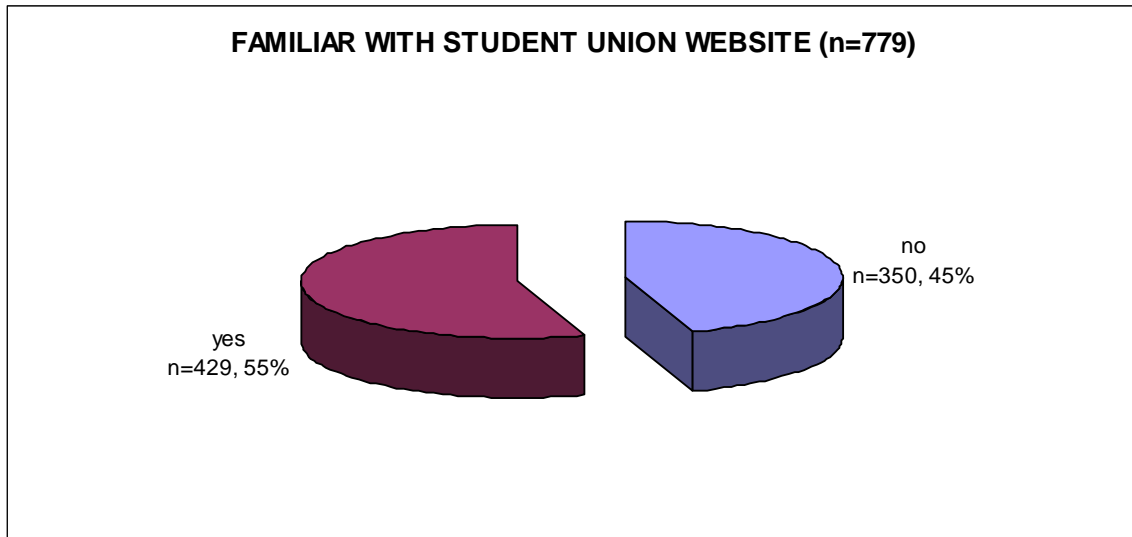
	N	% of 780
UCL email account	711	91.2
Departmental computers	495	63.5
IS Helpdesk	431	55.3
Cluster computers	411	52.7
Cluster printers	364	46.7
Remote Cluster (WTS) student service	326	41.8
RoamNet network connection	268	34.4
IS IT Training	255	32.7
Graduate cluster computers	193	24.7
Hall of residence network connection	56	7.2

Overall, a total of 23% of the respondents rate the computing facilities as excellent. Half report that they are good and 22% satisfactory. Only 5% feel they are unsatisfactory.
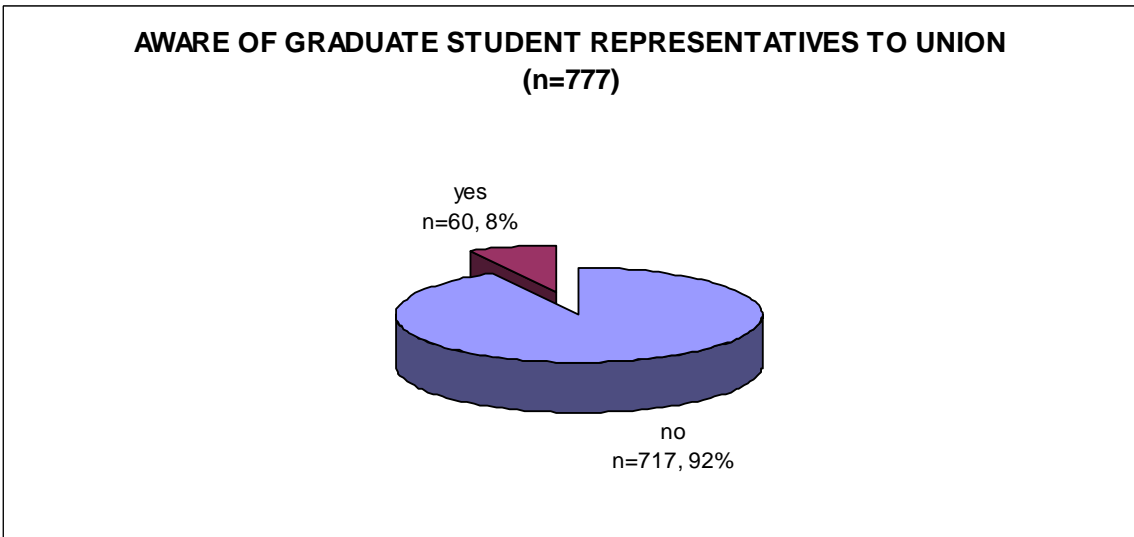

COMPUTING FACILITIES RATING

Unsatisfactory n=39, 5%
Excellent n=181, 23%
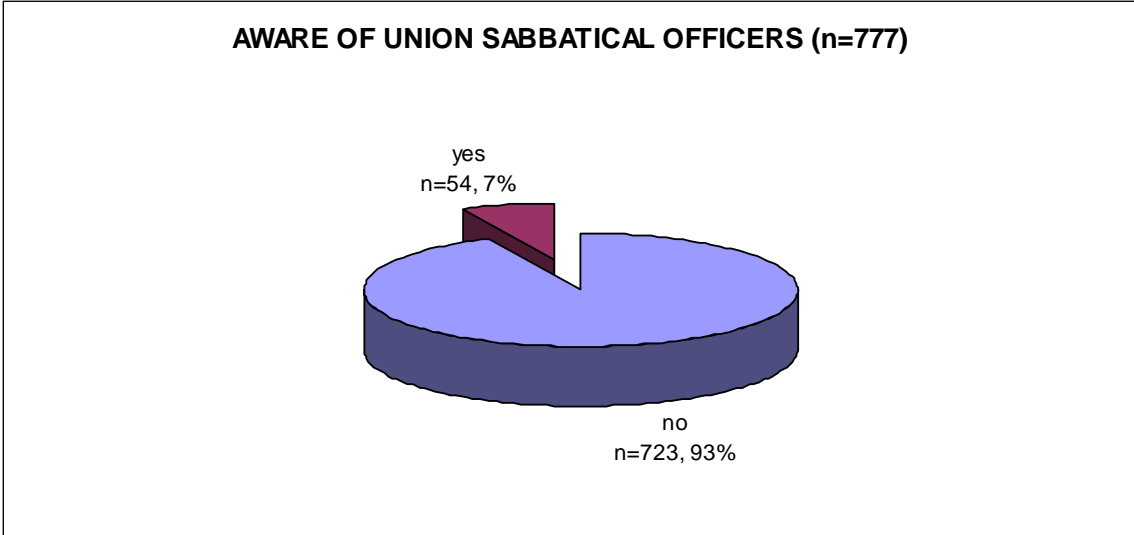Satisfactory n=168, 22%
Good n=392, 50%
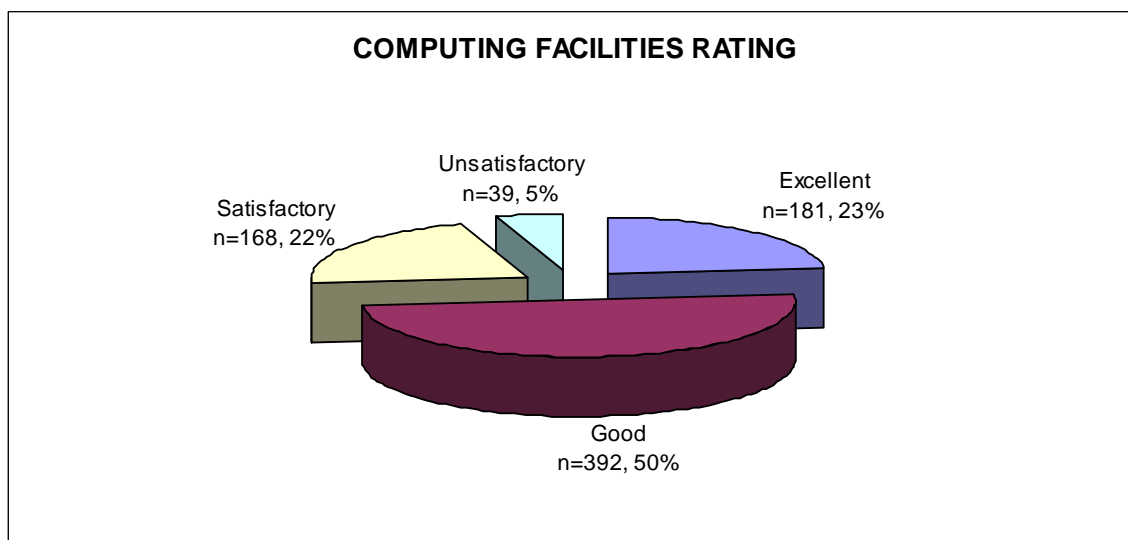
K. STUDENT UNION

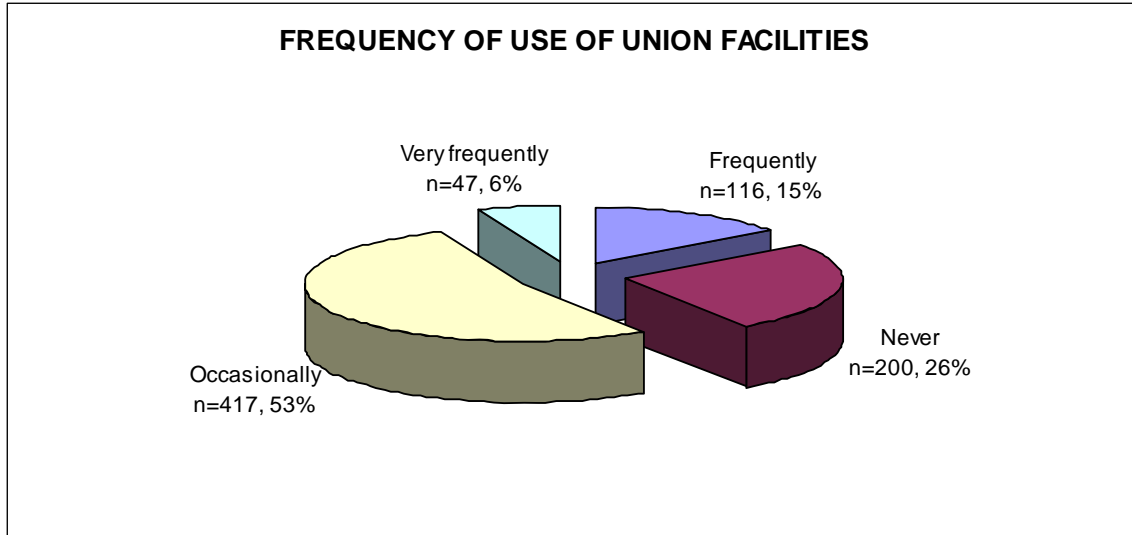Over half of the research students are aware of the UCL Student Union website (55%) and nearly all are aware of its location (90%).

FAMILIAR WITH STUDENT UNION WEBSITE (n=779)

no
n=350, 45%

yes
n=429, 55%

AWARE OF STUDENT UNION LOCATION

no
n=75, 10%

yes
n=705, 90%

Out of the 777 students who answered the questions, very few are aware of the Student Union sabbatical officers (7%) or the graduate student representatives to the Union (8%).

AWARE OF UNION SABBATICAL OFFICERS (n=777)

yes
n=54, 7%

no
n=723, 93%

AWARE OF GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES TO UNION (n=777)
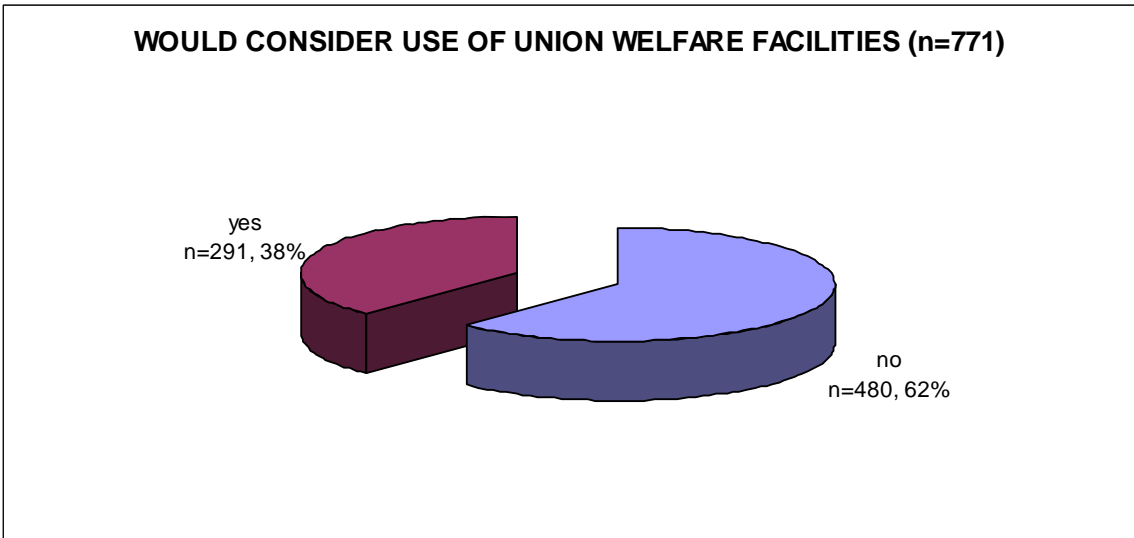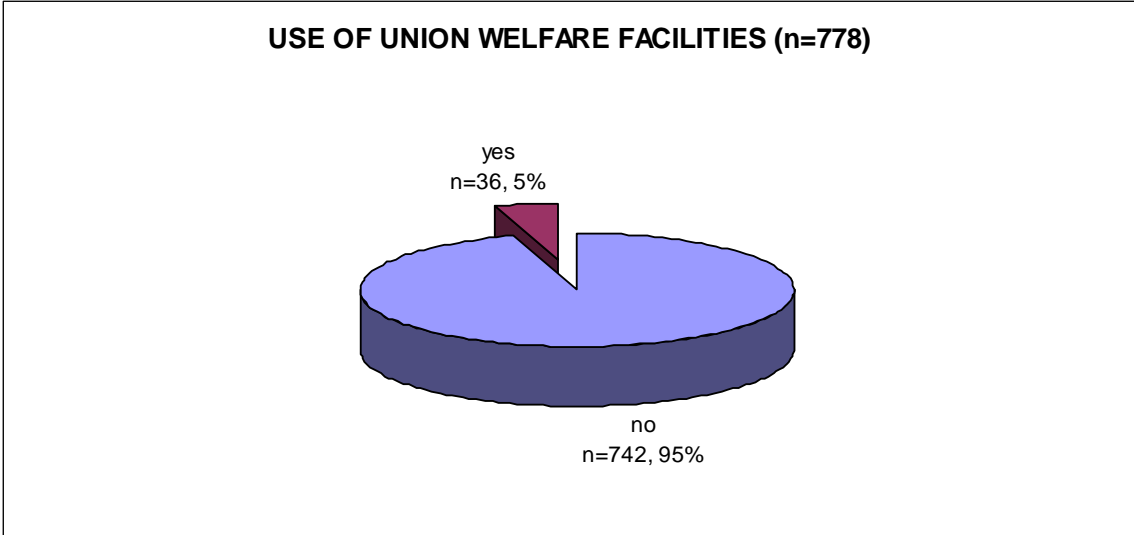
yes
n=60, 8%

no
n=717, 92%

Approximately one-quarter of the surveyed students report that they never use the Student Union's facilities (26%). 21% use it frequently or very frequently and just over half use them occasionally (53%).

FREQUENCY OF USE OF UNION FACILITIES

Very frequently
n=47, 6%

Frequently
n=116, 15%

Never
n=200, 26%

Occasionally
n=417, 53%

The table below summarises the Student union facilities used by the surveyed students. Note that respondents were allowed to select all that applied. The most popular services provided by the Union are café's and snack bars, which are used by 64.7% of the respondents, followed by shops (48.1%).

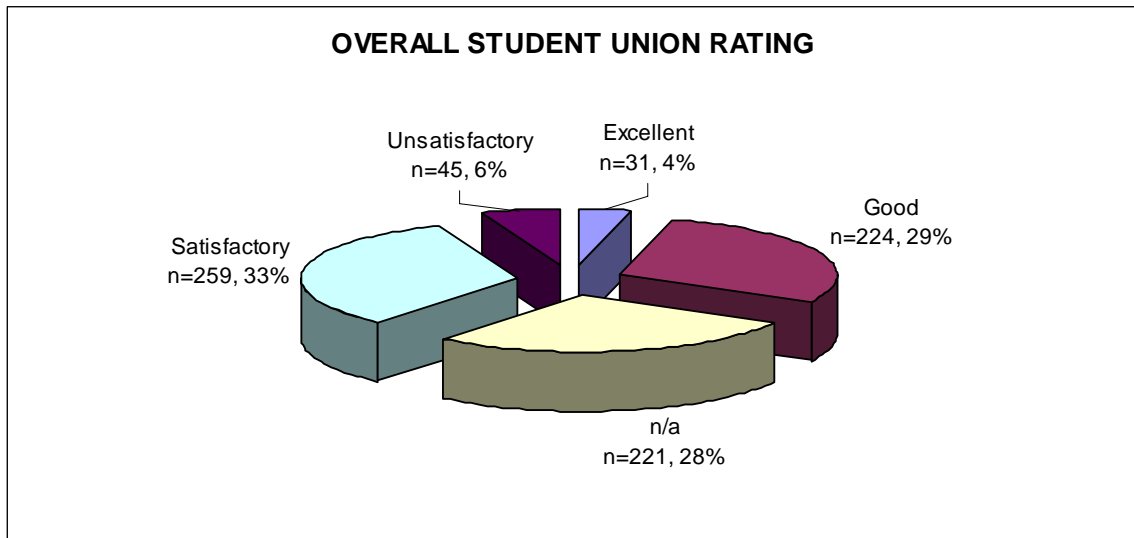|	N	% of 780
Cafes / Snack bars	505	64.7
Shops	375	48.1
Bars	232	29.7
Sports Facilities	150	19.2
Clubs / Societies	85	10.9
Welfare / advice	55	7.1
Workstation	31	4.0
None	151	19.4

Only 5% of research students have used the Union's student welfare or pastoral care facilities, although 38% of the 771 who responded would consider doing so if necessary.

USE OF UNION WELFARE FACILITIES (n=778)

yes
n=36, 5%

no
n=742, 95%

WOULD CONSIDER USE OF UNION WELFARE FACILITIES (n=771)
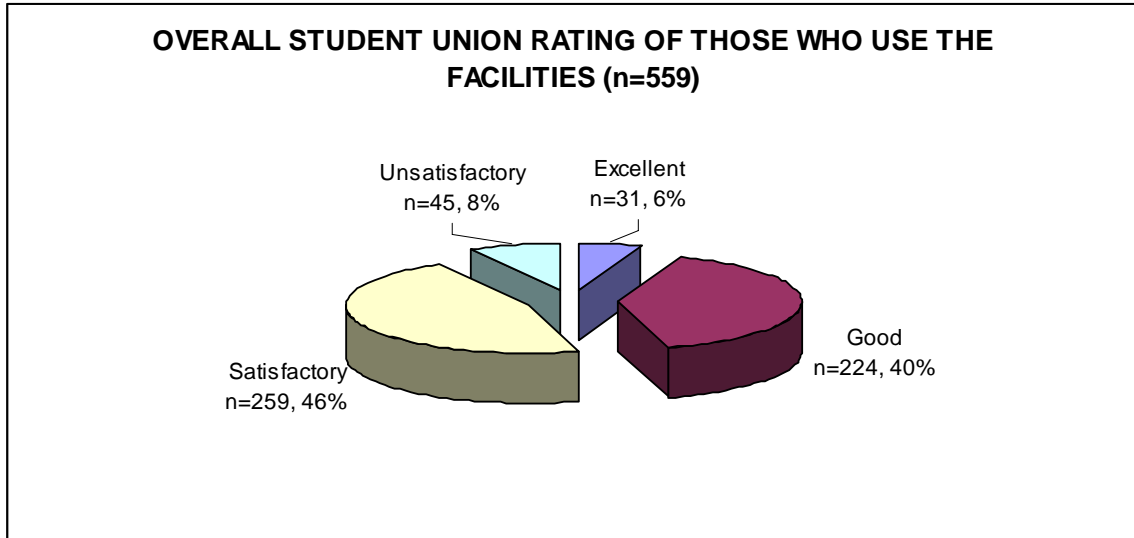
yes
n=291, 38%

no
n=480, 62%

37% of respondents feel that the Student Union's opening hours are convenient and only 8% feel that they are not. More than half indicated that this question was not applicable (55%), which is perhaps surprising since only 26% indicated in a question above that they do not use the Union's facilities.

CONVENIENT UNION OPENING HOURS (n=776)

yes
n=285, 37%

n/a
n=431, 55%

no
n=60, 8%
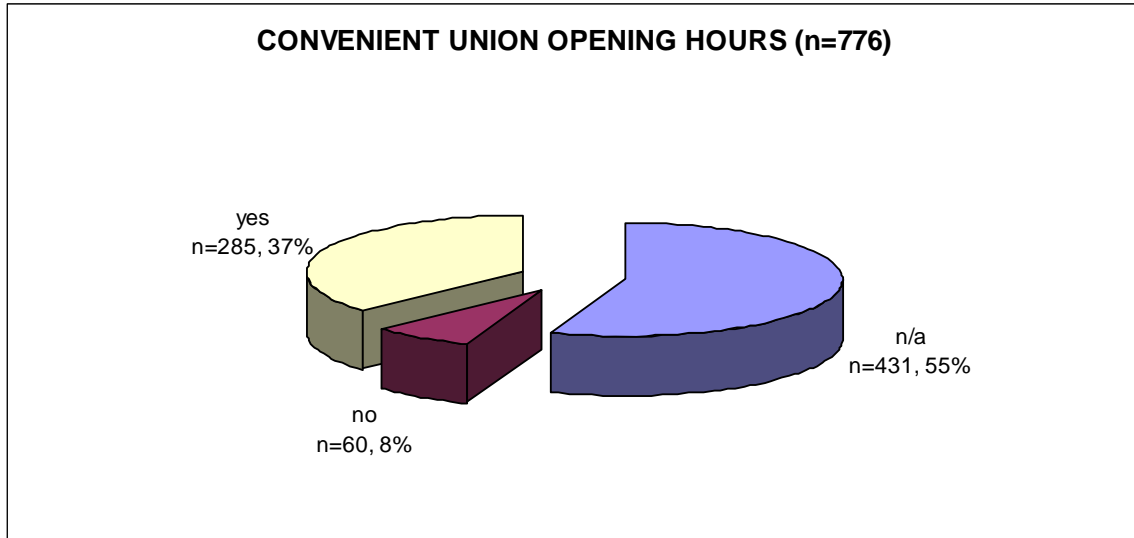
Approximately two-thirds of research students would rate the UCL Student Union as either good (29%) or satisfactory (33%). However, only 4% rate it as excellent, while 6% feel it is unsatisfactory.

OVERALL STUDENT UNION RATING

Unsatisfactory
n=45, 6%

Excellent
n=31, 4%

Good
n=224, 29%

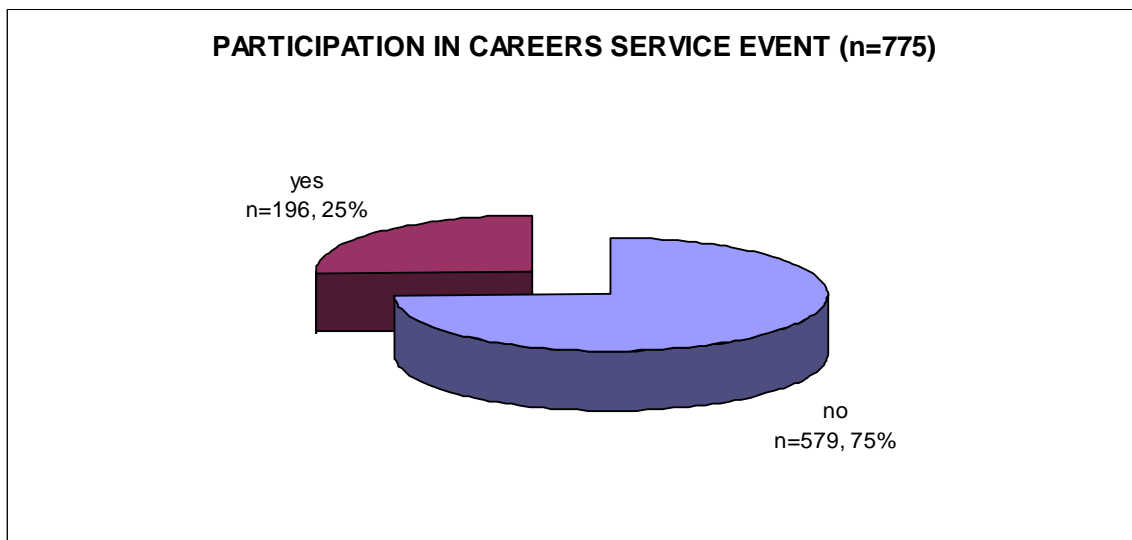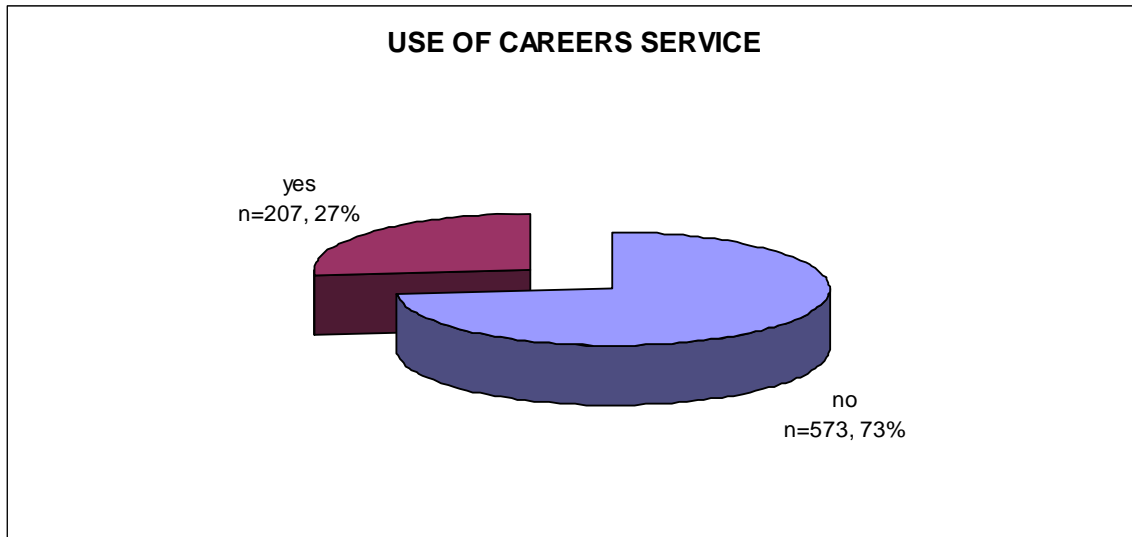Satisfactory
n=259, 33%

n/a
n=221, 28%

Considering only those research students who use the UCL Student Union's facilities and answered this question, the overall rating of the Union was reported as either good (40%) or satisfactory (46%) by a combined total of 86% of respondents. 6% rate it as excellent and 8% as unsatisfactory.

OVERALL STUDENT UNION RATING OF THOSE WHO USE THE FACILITIES (n=559)

Unsatisfactory
n=45, 8%

Excellent
n=31, 6%

Good
n=224, 40%

Satisfactory
n=259, 46%

L. CAREERS SERVICE

One-quarter of research students have used the UCL Careers Service (27%) or participated in a Careers Service event (25%).

USE OF CAREERS SERVICE

yes
n=207, 27%

no
n=573, 73%

PARTICIPATION IN CAREERS SERVICE EVENT (n=775)

yes
n=196, 25%

no
n=579, 75%

The table below summarises the percentage of respondents who have made use of particular Careers Service facilities and events. Note that respondents could select all that applied. No more than 11% of students have participated in or utilised any one event or facility.

	N	% of 780
n/a	471	60.4
Adviser-led skills workshop	84	10.8
Careers fair	77	9.9
Quick query	68	8.7
Employer presentation	64	8.2
Employer-led skills workshop	58	7.4
Information library	50	6.4
Hour long discussion	20	2.6
Focus on Management Course	14	1.8
Mock interview	11	1.4

32% out of the 771 students who responded to the question are aware of the Careers Service GradClub Scheme.

AWARE OF GRADCLUB SCHEME (n=771)

yes
n=250, 32%

no
n=521, 68%
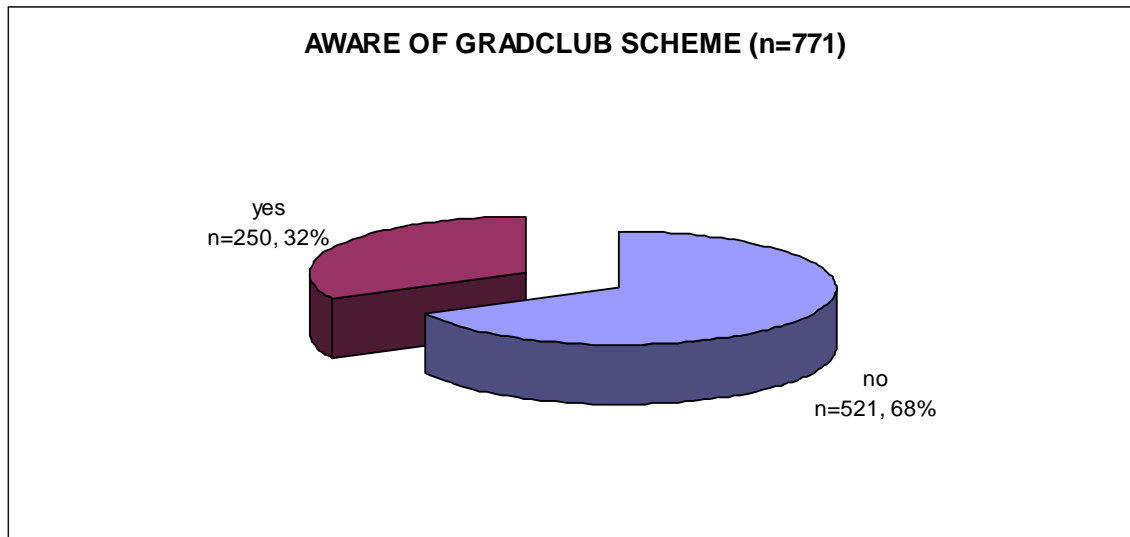
M. Ethics

71% of the surveyed students report that they are aware of UCL's policy on Research Ethics.

AWARE OF RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY (n=777)

no
n=225, 29%

yes
n=552, 71%
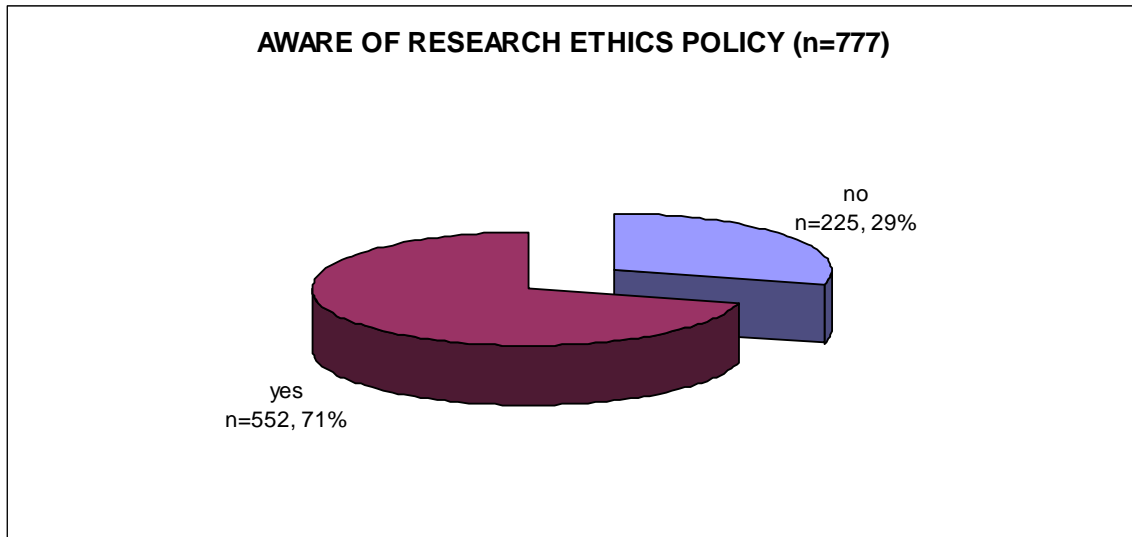
One-third of UCL's research students involve human participants in their research projects.

RESEARCH INVOLVES HUMAN PARTICIPANTS (n=778)

yes
n=258, 33%

no
n=520, 67%