DON’T DROP OUT
Averting a Covid retention crisis
WONKHE
Why?

• Non continuation the biggest issue of the Autumn.
• We wanted to know whether students are considering dropping out, who is most at risk, and the reasons why they’re thinking about it.
• We also wanted to know what they think universities and students’ unions could do to help.
What and how:

- Student “settling in” survey
- Codesigned with 30 students’ unions
- Distributed to Trendence database and promoted by partner SUs
- Open throughout October
- 7,273 respondents from 121 providers
- Weighted by university
Weighted respondent profile

- BAME 37%
- LGBT+ 23%
- International 35%
- Disabled 19%
- First year of course 44%
I am satisfied with the academic experience so far this term

- **Definitely disagree**: 11.1%
- **Mostly disagree**: 6.1%
- **NAND**: 19.9%
- **Mostly agree**: 19.8%
- **Definitely agree**: 43.2%
Academic experience cut by characteristic

- **All**:
  - Negative: 19.8
  - NAND: 34.4
  - Positive: 54.2

- **Disabled**:
  - Negative: 25.9
  - NAND: 32.9
  - Positive: 48.3

- **State school**:
  - Negative: 29.7
  - NAND: 20
  - Positive: 50.3

- **Home students**:
  - Negative: 28.3
  - NAND: 18.6
  - Positive: 53.2

- **1st years**:
  - Negative: 19
  - NAND: 19.7
  - Positive: 61.3

- **Final years**:
  - Negative: 32.9
  - NAND: 18.6
  - Positive: 48.5

Legend:
- Red: Negative
- Orange: NAND
- Green: Positive
Academic experience: qual

Negative responses focussed on:
1. Interaction with other students
2. Accessing teaching (tech)
3. Interaction with academics
4. Teaching volume
5. (Promoted) expectations v realities
6. Organisation and management
7. Practical components/experience
8. Accessing facilities
Academic experience: qual

Positive responses focussed on:
1. Access to academics & 121 support
2. Interactivity of the teaching
3. Academic and institutional “effort” in context

Social and interaction as hygiene not motivator of satisfaction
What’s going on?

• A large number of dissatisfaction comments relate to online learning, preferring face to face and being disappointed at the “amount” of face to face on offer.

• But a closer look suggests students are that dissatisfied with “online” teaching are not unhappy with it per se; they are unhappy at not being able to access it or unhappy that it fails to provide social interaction.

• In a large number of cases there appear to be significant differences in approach to and quality of online teaching between modules/classes for individual students.

• Meanwhile those happy with online teaching praise the individual support they get from academic staff or interaction with peers.

• Even where students do express being unhappy with online teaching, they often contextualise that as problematic because they have moved unnecessarily to the local area to experience it, rather than “it” itself.
Key drivers of academic dissatisfaction

• Inconsistency across programmes
• Inconsistency with others
• Inconsistency against expectations
• Academic isolation from other students and academics
• Organisation and management
I am satisfied with the wider student experience so far this term

% agree

- Definitely disagree: 28.3%
- Mostly disagree: 7.6%
- NAND: 10.5%
- Mostly agree: 24.6%
- Definitely agree: 29%

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Wider experience cut by characteristic

- All: 53.7%
- Disabled: 28.9%
- State school: 32.3%
- Home students: 28.8%
- 1st years: 29.5%
- Final years: 29.5%

Legend:
- Negative
- NAND
- Positive
How often, if ever, do you feel lonely? May 2019

% agree

- Daily: 18.6%
- Weekly: 12.4%
- Less than weekly: 26.4%
- Never: 42.6%
How often, if ever, do you feel lonely?

Oct 2020

% agree

- Daily: 17.4%
- Weekly: 32.2%
- Less than weekly: 32.1%
- Never: 18.3%

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Loneliness by living situation

- **All**: 50.4% daily or weekly, 49.6% less often
- **Uni owned**: 59.7% daily or weekly, 40.3% less often
- **Private halls**: 57.7% daily or weekly, 42.3% less often
- **Parents**: 44.2% daily or weekly, 55.8% less often
- **Own home**: 37.3% daily or weekly, 62.7% less often
- **HMO**: 48.3% daily or weekly, 51.7% less often
- **Remote**: 45.2% daily or weekly, 54.8% less often

Legend:
- Orange: Daily or weekly
- Yellow: Less often

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I feel part of community of staff and students
May 2019

60.3% agree
25.2% disagree or strongly disagree
14.4% NAND

Disagree or strongly disagree  NAND  Agree or strongly disagree
I feel part of community of staff and students
Oct 2020

% agree

- Disagree or strongly disagree
- NAND
- Agree or strongly agree

24.9
24.7
50.4
How often do you consider dropping out of your course?

- Every day: 3.7%
- Every week: 8.9%
- Less than weekly: 20.8%
- Never: 66.5%
In the following slides...

- Daily or weekly = At risk
- Less often or never = Not at risk
Drop out risk by characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Daily or weekly</th>
<th>Less often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State school</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home students</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st years</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Daily or weekly**

**Less often**
Drop out risk by academic satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Drop out risk</th>
<th>Not risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative academic</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAND</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive academic</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drop out risk by non academic satisfaction

- **All**: 87.4% not drop out risk, 12.6% drop out risk
- **Negative non academic**: 76.6% not drop out risk, 23.4% drop out risk
- **NAND**: 89.1% not drop out risk, 10.9% drop out risk
- **Positive non academic**: 93.6% not drop out risk, 6.4% drop out risk

*DON'T DROP OUT*
Drop out risk by feeling part of a community

- All: 87.4%
- Community negative: 73.9%
- Community NAND: 86.4%
- Community positive: 93.5%

- Drop out risk
- Drop out not at risk

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Drop out risk by loneliness

- All: 87.4%
- Daily lonely: 12.6%
- Weekly lonely: 12.9%
- Less often lonely: 5.5%
- Never lonely: 7%

Daily or weekly: 31.5%
Less often: 68.5%

(Chart showing drop out risk by loneliness categories.)
Happiness (9 or 10 agree)

- ONS Young people 2019: 32%
- HEPI/Advance HE 2020: 14%
- Wonkhe/Trendence Oct 2020: 8.2%

- Rating 5 or less – 45.9%
Drop out risk: qual

1. Isolation and loneliness
2. Academic confidence (often related to isolation and loneliness)
3. “Missing out” (academic, co curricular and extra curricular)
Wider experience: qual

Almost all comments on isolation and loneliness

Suggestions:
1. Safe face to face activity
2. More online activities – course, interest, student characteristic
3. More proactive outreach
I understand my rights and entitlements as a student and how to complain if unhappy
Rights understanding by drop out risk

- **Drop out daily**
  - Rights negative: 50.6%
  - Rights NAND: 18.4%
  - Rights positive: 31%

- **Drop out weekly**
  - Rights negative: 36.4%
  - Rights NAND: 28.6%
  - Rights positive: 35%

- **Drop out less often**
  - Rights negative: 24.2%
  - Rights NAND: 20.5%
  - Rights positive: 55.3%

- **Drop out never**
  - Rights negative: 17.7%
  - Rights NAND: 17.3%
  - Rights positive: 65%
Rights understanding by drop out risk

- Academic disagree: 38.3% Rights negative, 23% Rights NAND, 23% Rights positive
- Academic NAND: 49.5% Rights negative, 28.4% Rights NAND, 12.1% Rights positive
- Academic agree: 72.7% Rights negative, 14.8% Rights NAND, 12.5% Rights positive
Rights understanding: qual

Key themes:

• A large number do not understand their rights.
• Many worry that complaining would not achieve anything or that it would harm their academic career.
• Many either do not understand the basis on which they might make a complaint, or trust that it would achieve anything.
Conclusions

• Students regard this term's provision as antisocial education – teaching is artificially separated from social activity and it is being assumed that the former can be successful without the latter.

• Students are much less happy than usual, are expressing confidence fears, worried about dropping out and are bitterly lonely.