

# Prove it - Using evidence to represent international students



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**Q: What's wrong  
with the  
international  
student  
experience at  
your university?**



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1. What's wrong with the international student experience at your university?
2. So what? Why does that matter to the uni?
3. How do you know it's a problem? Can you prove it?



# Types of wrongness!

- That's a bad way to treat people in general
- That was a need we ought to have predicted
- That relates to a duty we have in law (immigration)
- That relates to an educational duty
- That could harm our reputation
- (That could harm my reputation)
- That could harm our recruitment



# Risk...

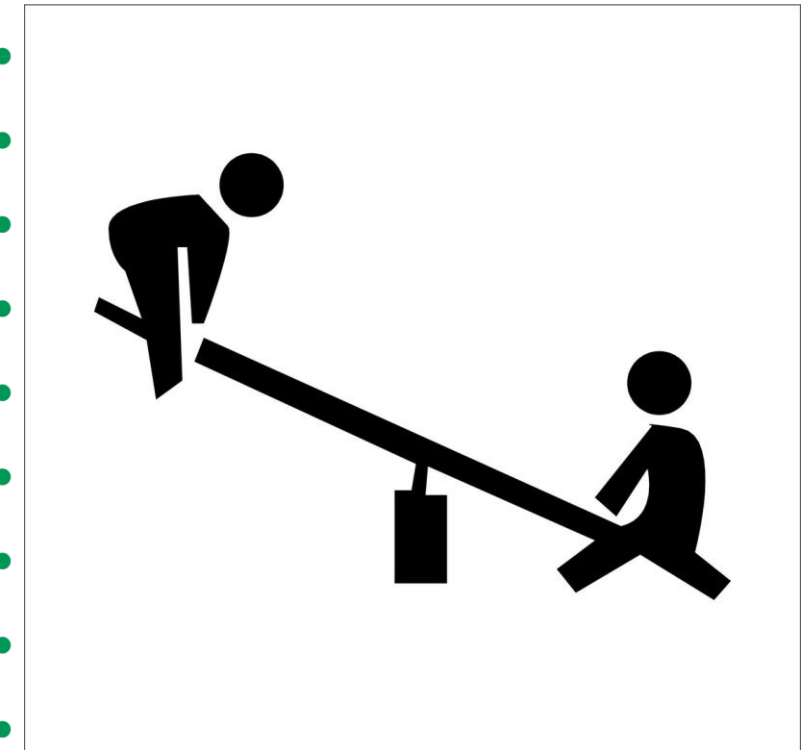
What is riskier?

- Acknowledging, addressing, dealing with this issue?
- Minimising, side-lining, shifting or obfuscating over the issue?

Consider – what would motivate a university to move your issue(s) into the second category?

Once you know that, you know the sort of evidence to gather...

The audience for your evidence is crucial – and more complex if you're trying to ramp up risks of not acting





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- **Let's work on Access and Participation**
- **Look at the BAME attainment gap!**
- **Oh, a lot of that is international students**
- **Can we find out how much is home students?**
- **Look at the (home) BAME attainment gap!**
- **Let's find out why**
- **Yeah, but...**



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# Williamson

I would like the OfS to consider what steps it can take to ensure international students feel:

- feel **integrated** on campus
- are supported in terms of their **mental health and wellbeing**
- receive the **employability skills** they need and are supported into employment, whether in their home country or the UK.

It will, therefore, be critical to ensure the OfS:

- makes public transparent data on the **outcomes** achieved by international students
- data should also inform the approach the OfS takes to setting and monitoring compliance with its **quality** requirements
- OfS's work on harmful **student recruitment practices** also seems relevant to international students







The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) is a national exercise, introduced by the government in England. It assesses excellence in teaching at universities and colleges, and how well they ensure excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate-level employment or further study.

## How are the TEF ratings decided?

The ratings are decided by an independent panel of experts, including academics, students, and employer representatives.

Assessments are based on a set of metrics using national data and written evidence submitted by the university or college. The metrics cover continuation rates, student satisfaction, and employment outcomes for undergraduate students. The assessment takes into account each course provider's particular mix of students – their characteristics, entry qualifications, and subjects studied.



### Continuation

We use this data to tell you what students are doing one year after starting the course. The number of students still on the course is called the 'continuation rate'.

It's not unusual for some students to leave during their first year. If the continuation rate is much lower than other courses this could be a sign that the course is not meeting students' expectations.

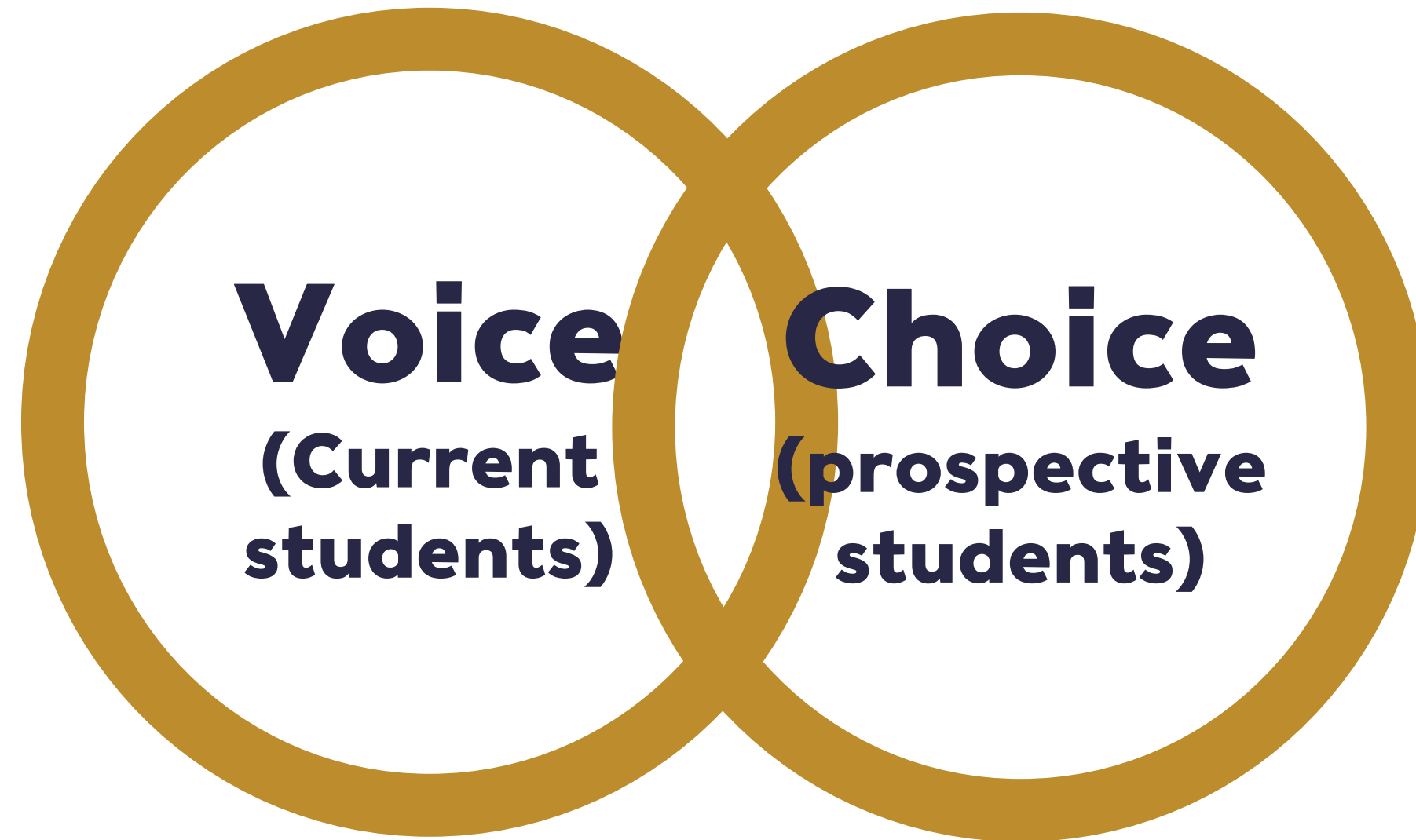
# But...

- Only undergraduates
- No testing for shared perceptions/understanding
- No work on setting expectations for students to reflect back on
- Progression metrics not included
- Doesn't pick up on wider experience that impacts learning

# Representing students

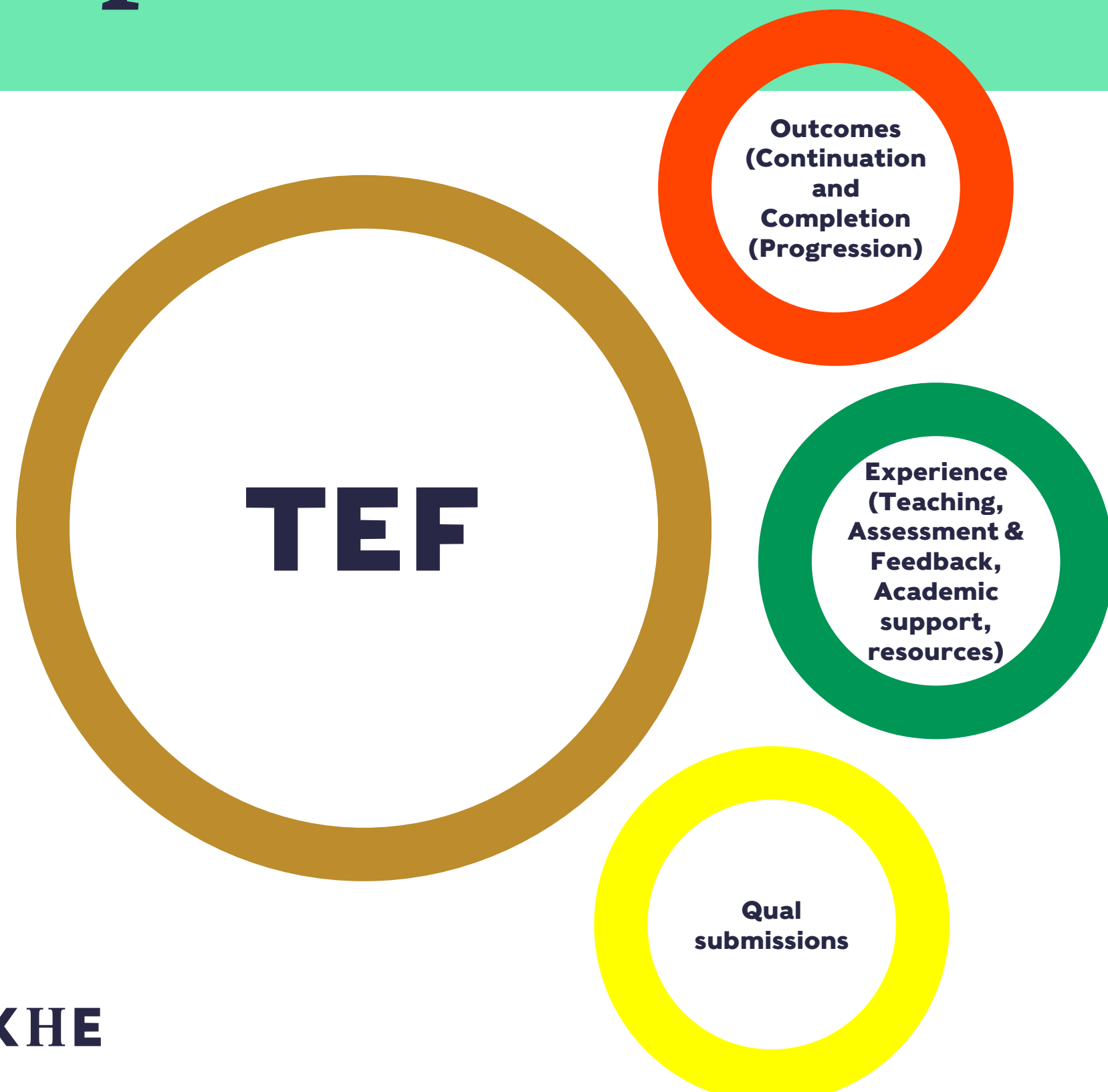


# Representing students





# Prospective students



# Prospective students



# Current students

**Evidence  
(Data)**

**Voice  
(Narrative)**

# Current students

**Satisfaction**

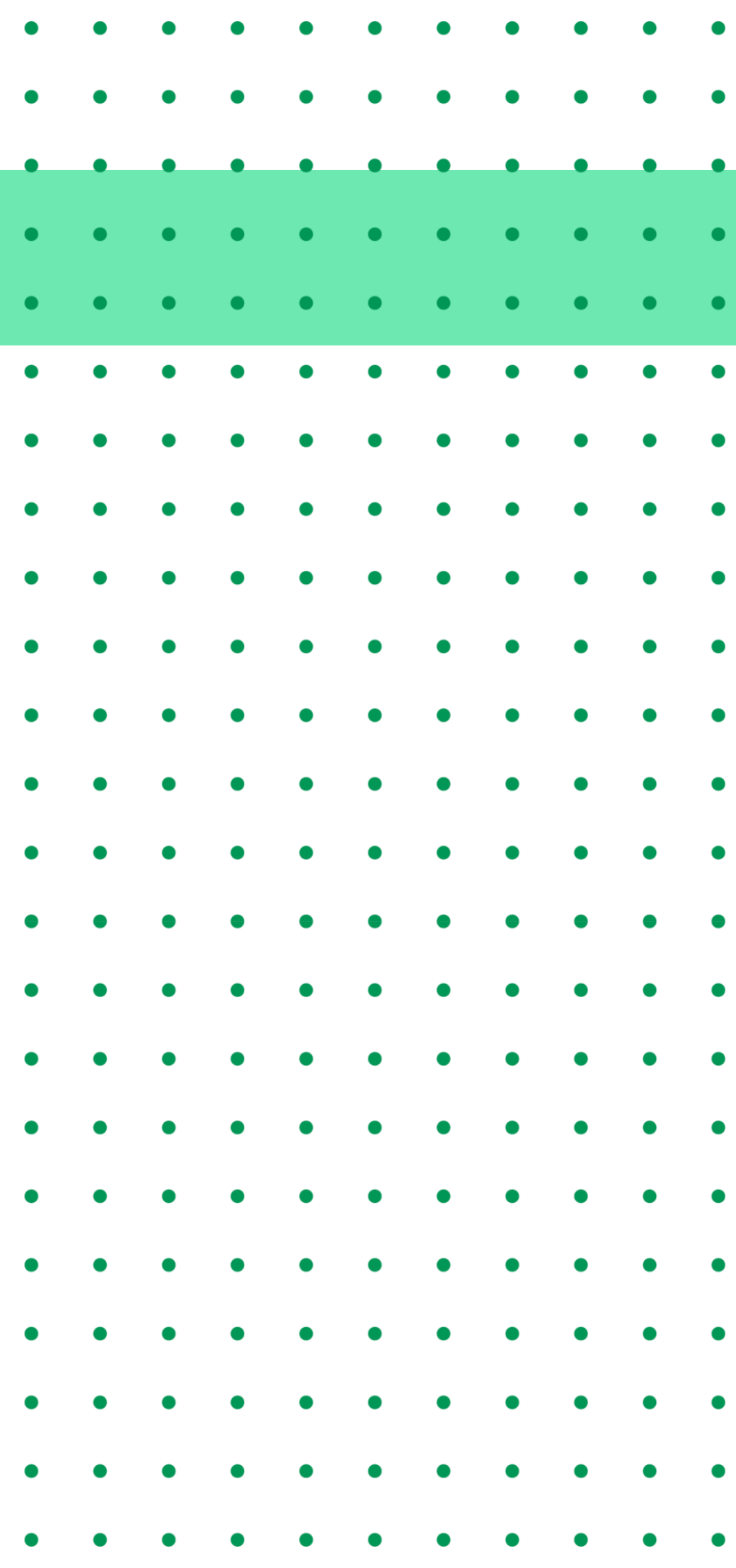
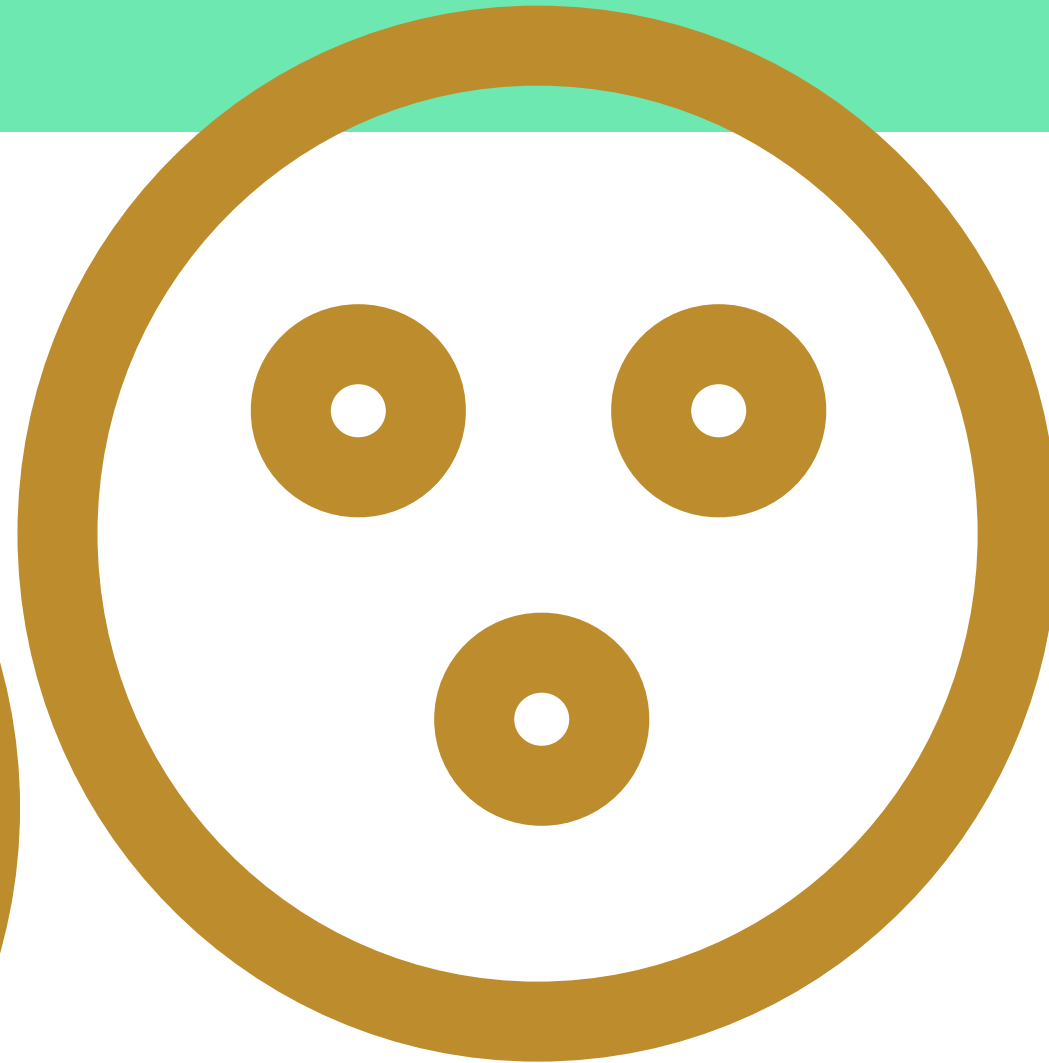
**Estates**

**Catering**

**Student  
services**



# Current students



# Current students

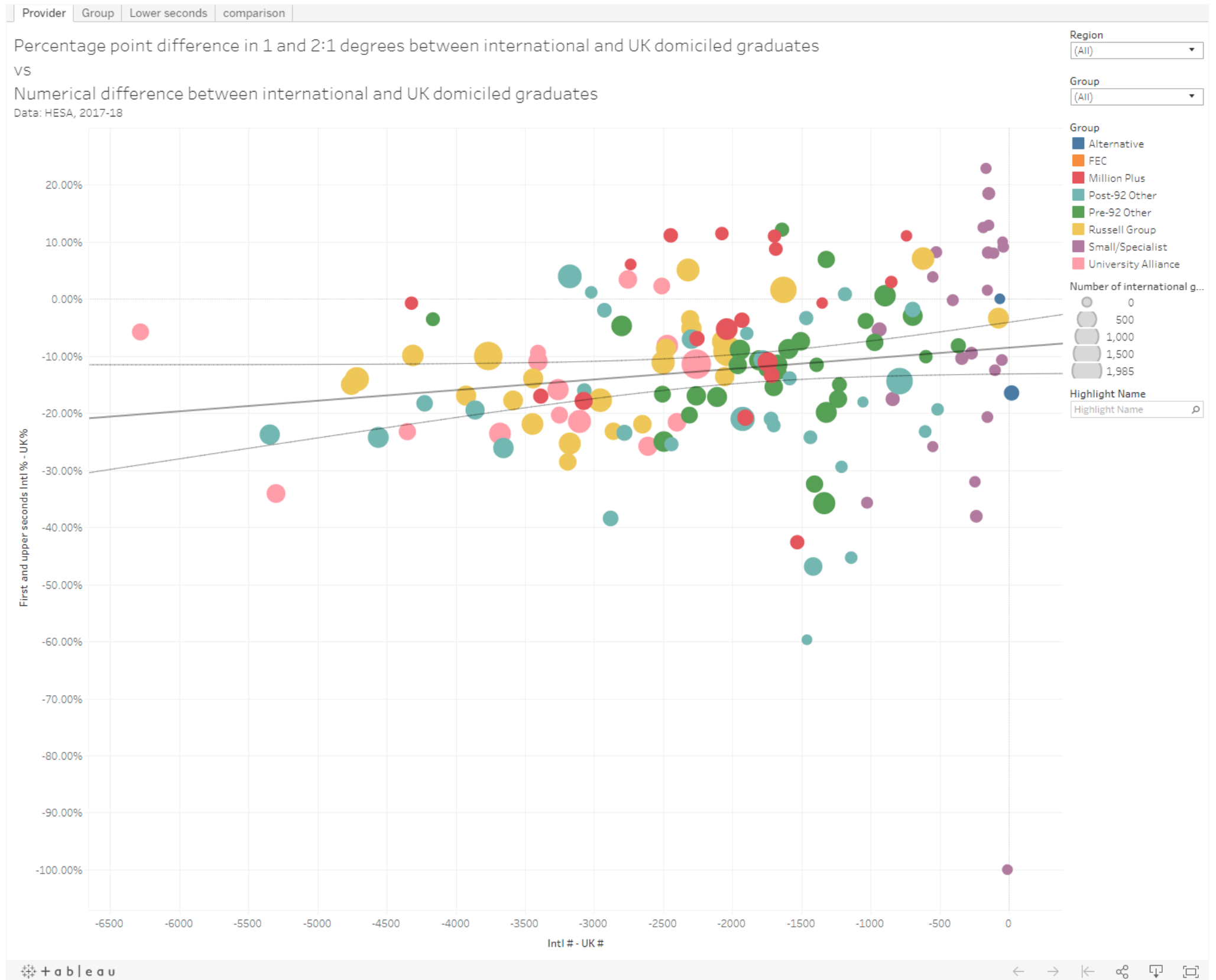


**Students as  
objects of data**

**Students as  
commissioners  
and users of  
evidence**

# Gap?

National attainment gap (good honours) around 10% points

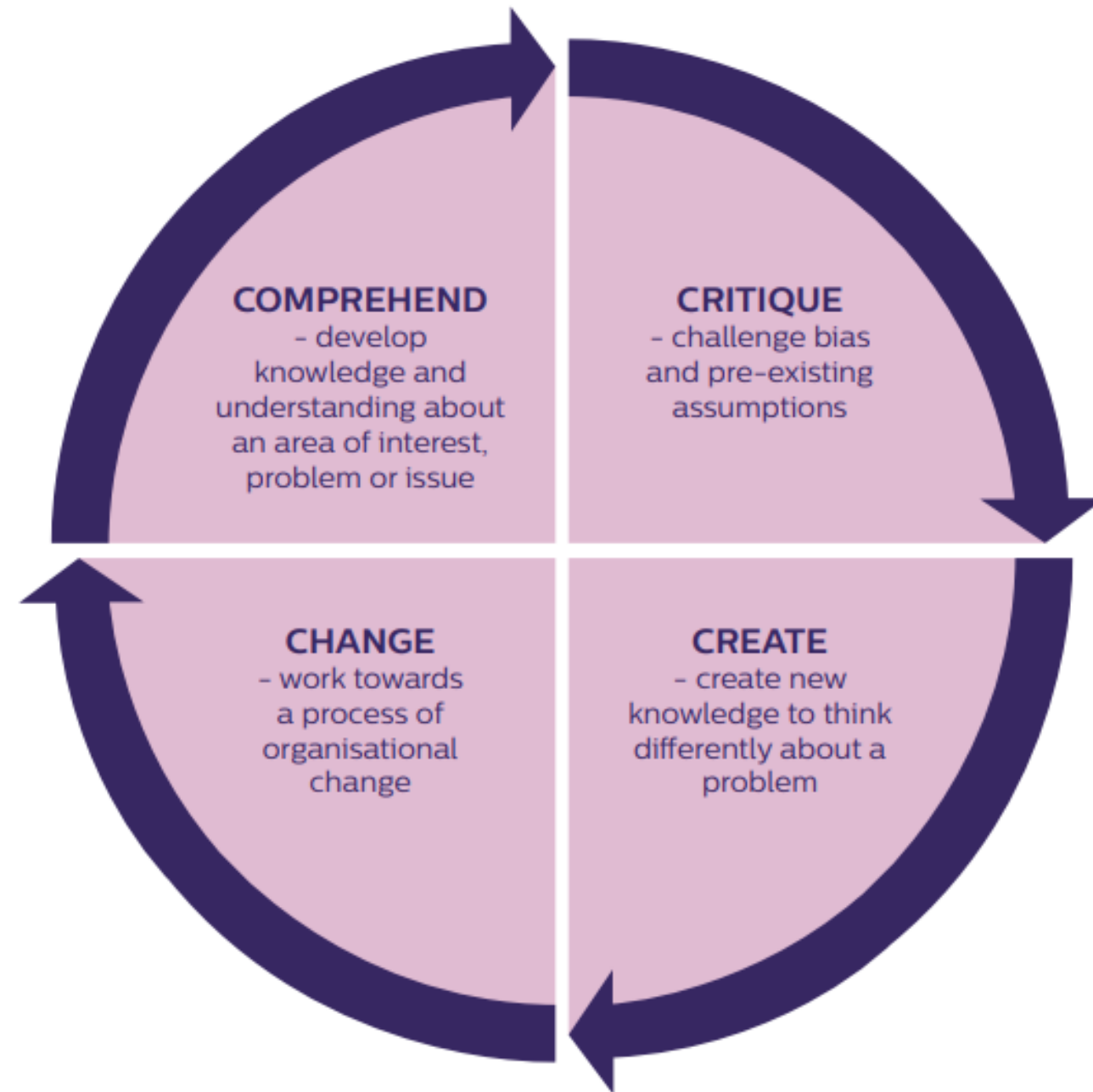


# BME attainment gap

- Measured, published, communicated to applicants
- Noticed at institutional (and deeper) level
- Hypotheses testing – understanding why?
- “Quality” of student v “Quality” of support & environment
- Interventions deployed



# Using evidence



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## Guide to Using Evidence



Dr Liz Austen (Sheffield Hallam University)  
Professor Stella Jones Devitt (Staffordshire University)

September 2019



# Quantitative data


Course	Overall satisfaction	1 year trend	4 year trend	2018 Rank & relative position	2017
Course A	99%	15%		22/73	↑ 4
Course B	97%	-4%		36/56	→ 0
Course C	96%	18%		18/30	→ 0
Course D	95%	11%		41/55	↑ 3
Course E	93%	8%		13/35	→ 0
Course F	93%	2%		12/71	→ 0
Course G	92%	6%		22/74	→ 0
Course H	83%	5%		6/18	↓ -1



### Guide to Using Evidence

Dr Liz Austen (Sheffield Hallam University)  
Professor Stella Jones Devitt (Staffordshire University)

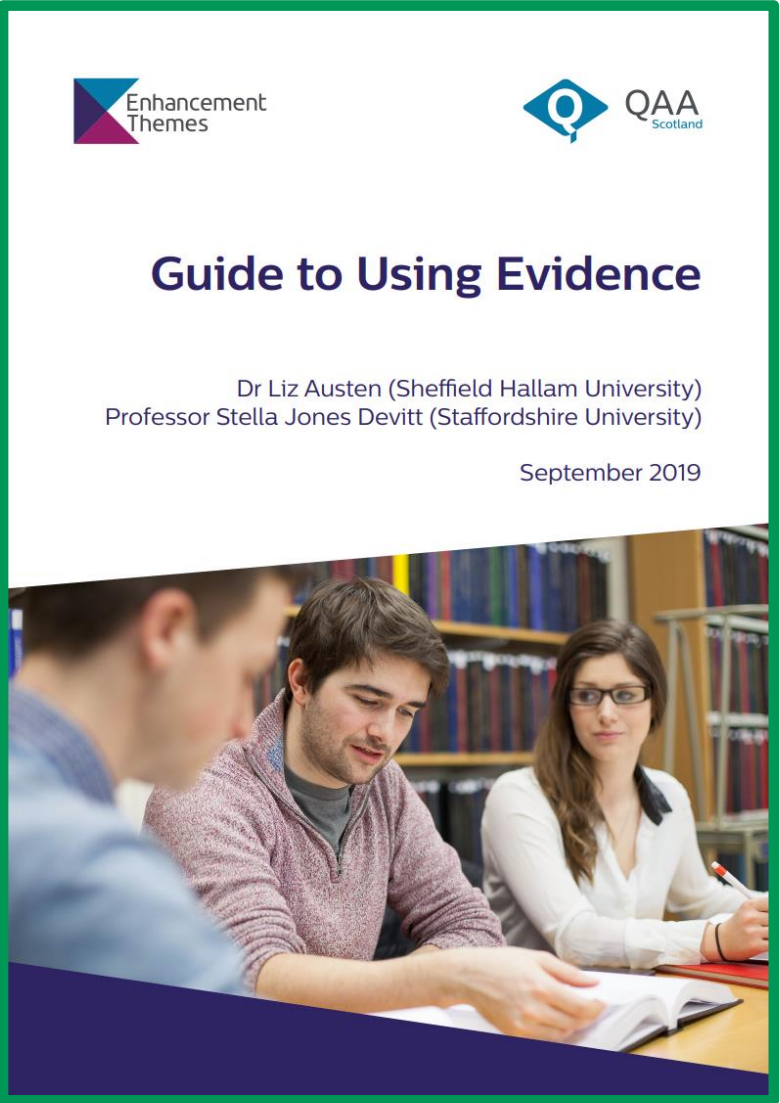
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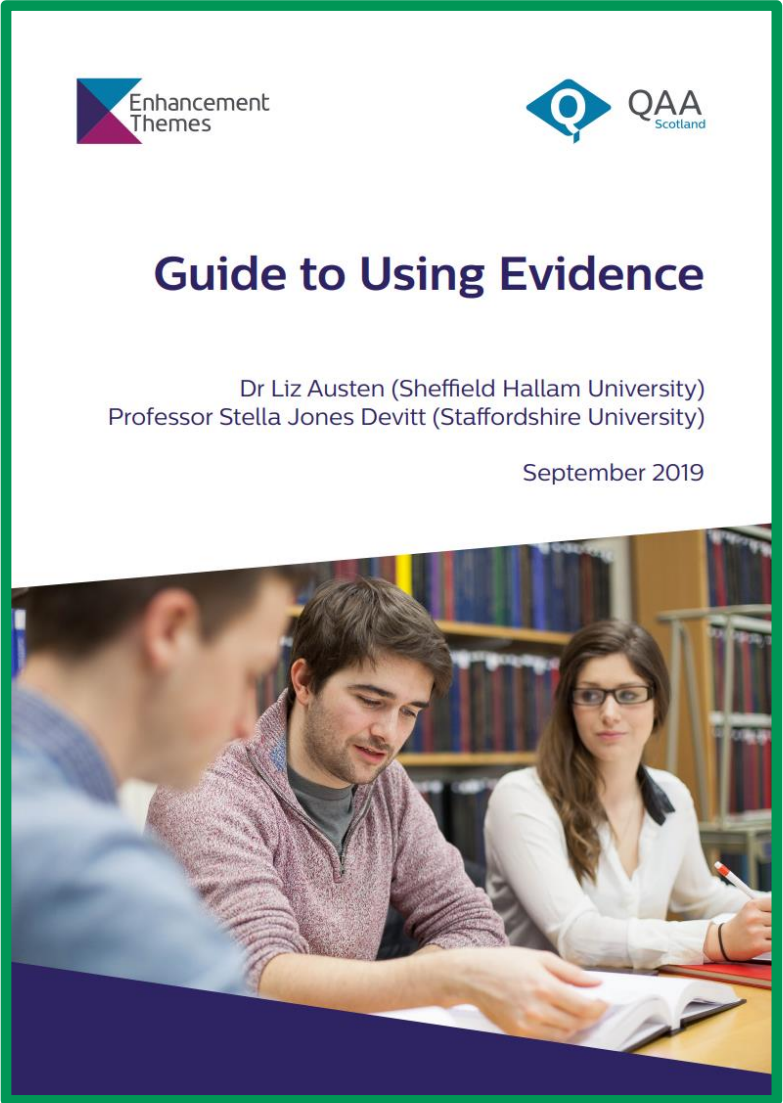
# Qualitative data

Quantitative Survey Data	Qualitative Survey Data
Can tell you what your respondents are doing	Can tell you why your respondents are doing it
Will ask questions that have pre-determined answers designed by the researcher ( <a href="#">closed questions</a> )	Will ask questions which allow the respondent to add their own comments ( <a href="#">open questions</a> )
Will have a limited number of possible answers	Can offer additional answers by adding comments via an 'Other' response option
Answers (variables) become units of measurement and are analysed numerically, for example frequency counts, averages or measures of dispersion (range of lowest and highest numerical scores)	Answers are analysed by reading written comments from all respondents and grouping them into themes
Results for each variable can be presented in charts or tables or analysed together to show relationships between variables	Results can be described as key themes with quotes taken from respondents to help illustrate key points. Qualitative data can also be analysed quantitatively (content analysis - a frequency count of key words or phrases)
Findings can be biased by the way the researcher has designed the questions and possible answers	Findings can be biased during the interpretation of the written answers



# Overlooked data

Evidence	Challenge questions
Innovative	What's written on your toilet walls and on social media? How could you make use of this feedback?
Anecdotal 'in the moment' reflections	How do you capture the end of lecture conversations?
Documentary sources	Can you systematically analyse meeting minutes, strategy documents and external examiner reports? Where is this data stored? How would you access this?
Evidence collected for a different purpose	Can you find out what had been done before and whether there is permissions to share? Do you have a repository for reports, papers and data?
Evidence of failure	Lack of success is often underreported, but what are the lessons learned?
Unintended outcomes and researcher reflections	What else happened as a result of this research/evaluation?
Process based	Are you only interested in the outcome, what about how you got there?





# What's out there?

- National student survey
- UK Enhancement Survey
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
- The International Student Barometer™
- Key outcomes – continuation, completion

If I needed help, there are people  
who would be there for me

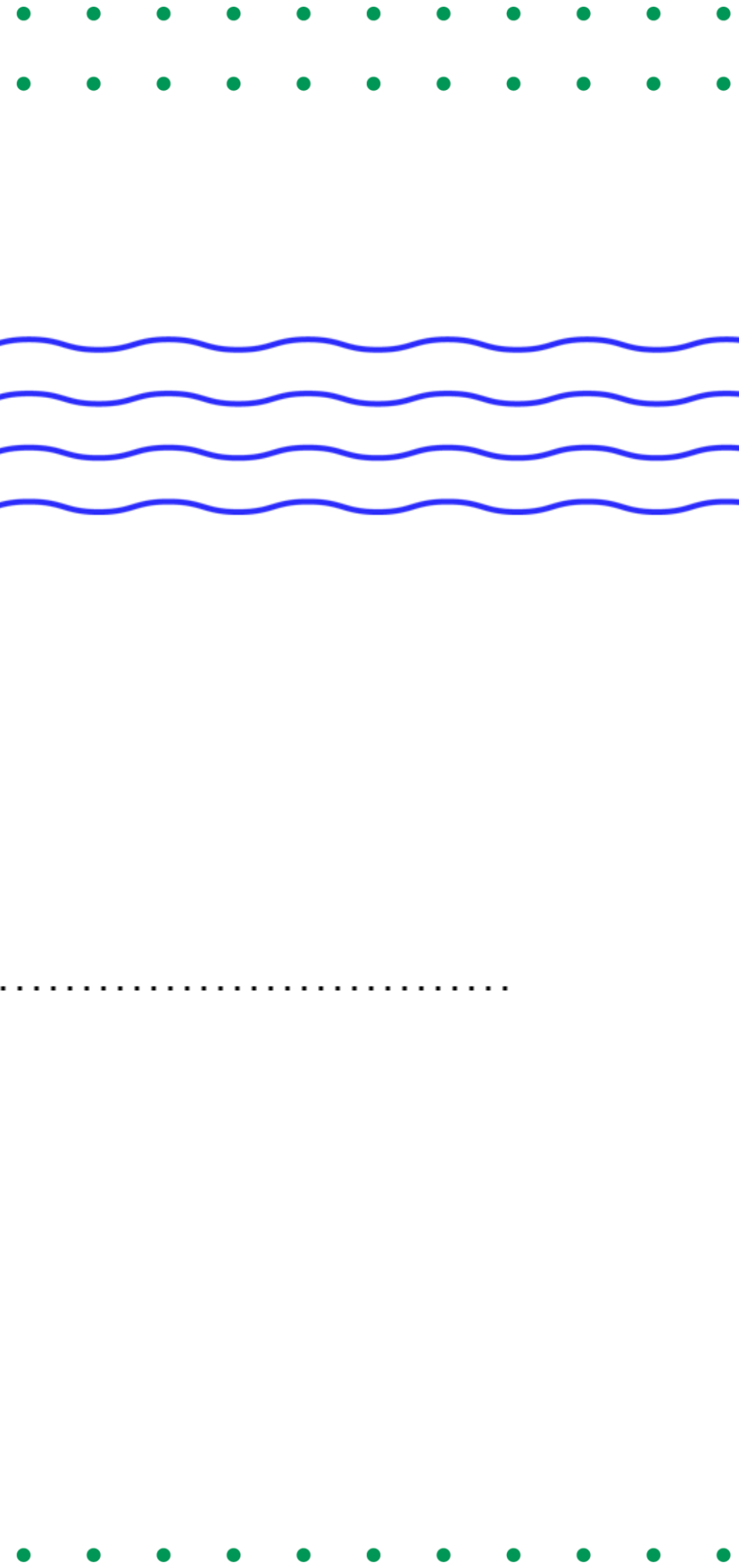


**77%**    **17%**    **6%**

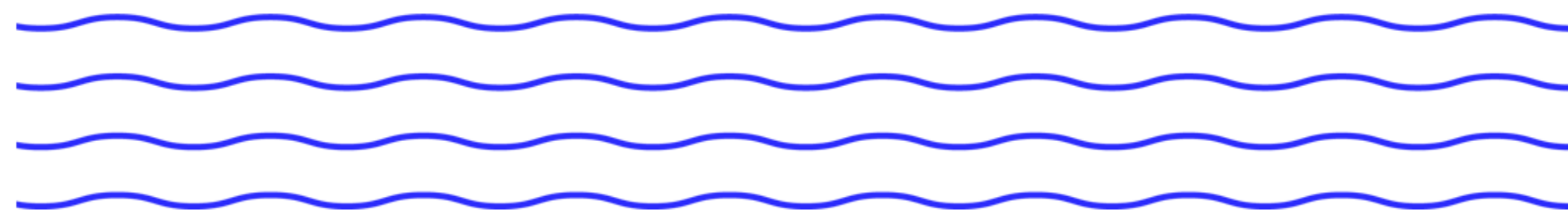
**AGREE**

**NEITHER**

**DISAGREE**



If I wanted company or to socialise,  
there are people I can call on



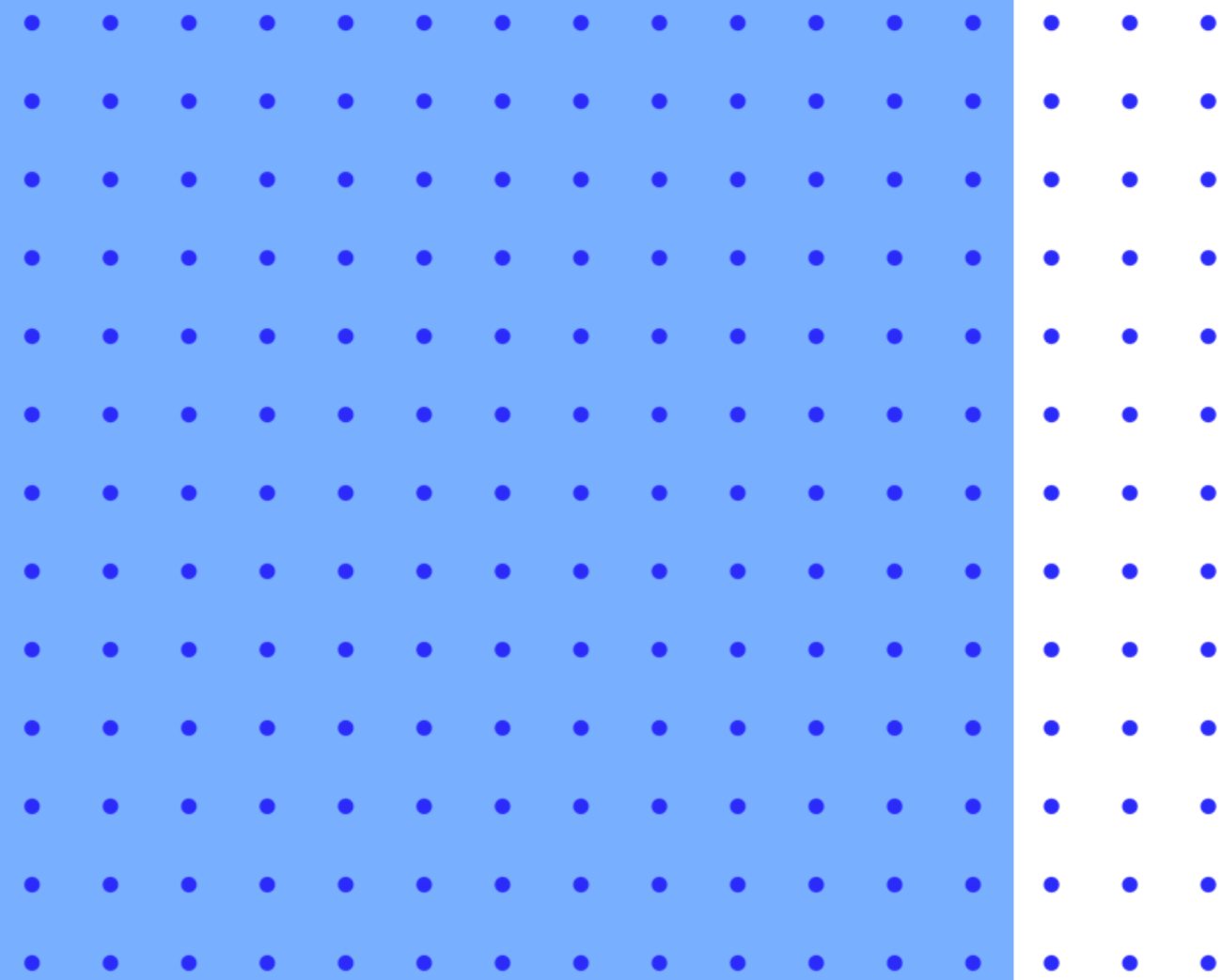
75% 15% 10%

AGREE

NEITHER

DISAGREE

**Non EU students are  
almost 10% points  
less likely to agree  
that there are people  
they can call on.**





Which of the following statements  
is most like you at university?

**21.4%**

**LOTS**

I have a large group of  
friends at university

**61.9%**

**SOME**

I have a small group of  
friends at university

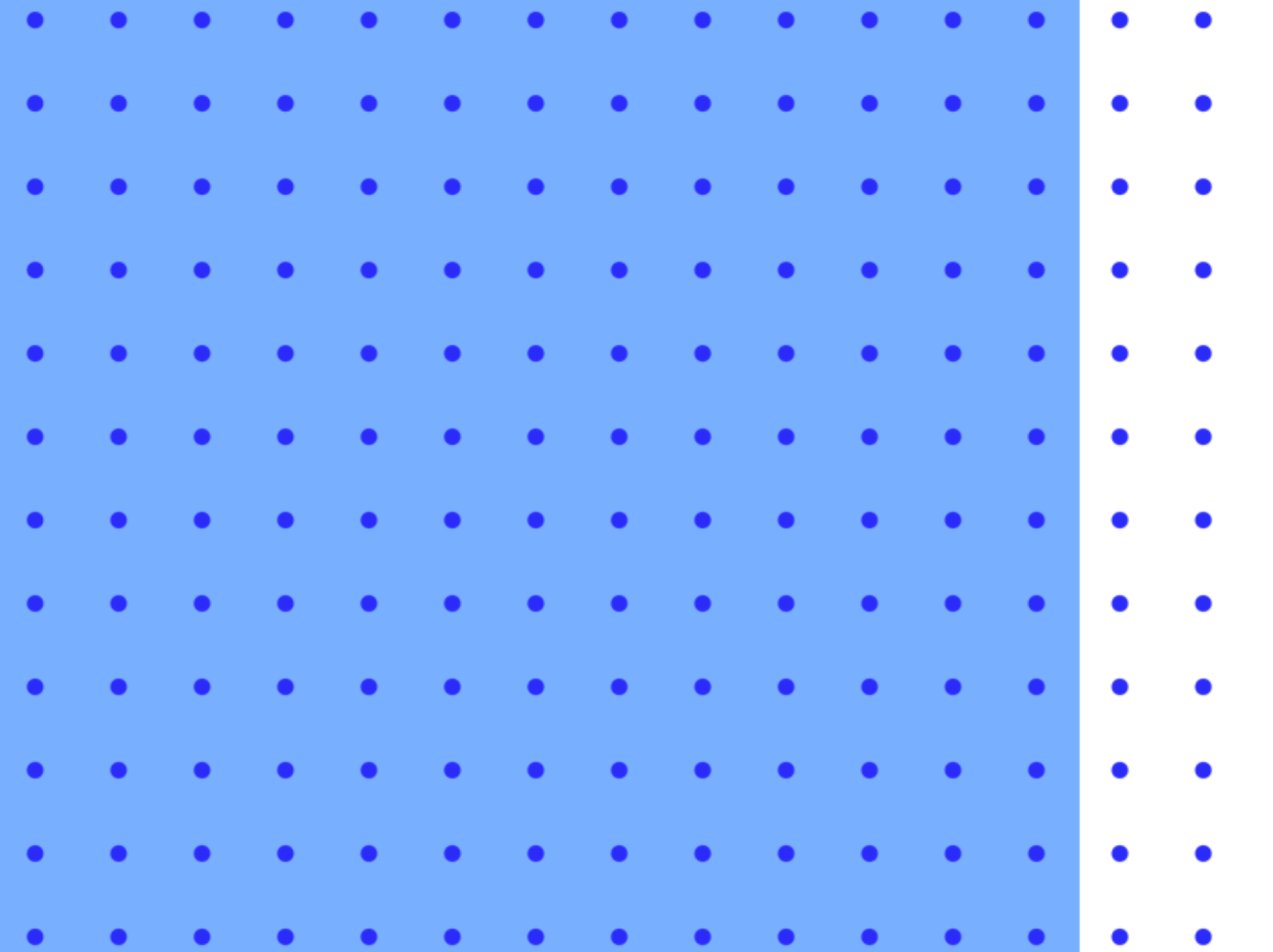
**16.6%**

**NONE**

I do not consider myself to  
have any true friends at  
university



**20% of  
international  
students say they  
have “no true  
friends”**



# Things to think about

1. What's there that I haven't seen?
2. What's there that might have an international slice?
3. What isn't there that we need to know?
4. What can my SU do to help?
5. What access does the SU have that I could use to insert an international perspective?
6. Does my issue relate to an existing set of data?
7. Am I looking at depth or breadth of issue?
8. Does my issue illustrate another issue?
9. Is there a way to capture the lived experience of students?
10. Is there somewhere to present it?

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