



ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23

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INTRODUCTION



The Student Advice Service was established in 2010 to provide free, confidential, and independent advice, information and representation to all Cambridge University students, undergraduate and postgraduate, from all 31 Colleges. Students can access the Advice Service with any issues they might experience during their time at the University of Cambridge. Students who are intermitting, or who recently graduated are also able to access the Advice Service for support.

Advisors work by a code of practice that assures students that they will receive free, confidential, impartial, non-directive, and non-judgmental advice. As a generalist advice service, the Advice Service complements other more specialised University service providers such as the Counselling Service and the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre which deal with more specialist advice. Advisors can also work closely with tutors, other University or College service providers and departmental staff members if the student feels this would be useful.

ADVICE WORK



The Advice Service is available to all students studying at the University of Cambridge for support and guidance on any issue or problem they might experience whilst studying here. We support students on a wide range of issues, from loneliness and working relationships to exams, intermission, welfare concerns and financial hardship. Student cases are often complex and involve many interrelated issues. Students typically access the Advice Service with a particular issue; however, during the course of their interactions with an advisor, it is common for additional issues or concerns to emerge. It is rare that a student's situation or issue does not impact on other aspects of their academic or welfare life at the University.

The level of support and guidance provided is informed and led by the student and varies in each case.

In line with the advice sector's framework for defining the types of advice provided, the Advice Service splits cases into three categories - 'Information', 'Advice', and 'Advice with Casework'. In 2022-23 the Advice Service saw 79 information cases, 189 advice cases, and 168 advice with casework cases and 38 who failed to engage with the service.

Other types of Advice Work

The Advice Service is tailored toward directly supporting students. Nevertheless, contact by users who are not current Cambridge students is not uncommon. This includes past and prospective students, offer holders, students on intermission, students who are off the register, and visiting students. In 2022-2023, this accounted for 102 (20%) of our 499 service-user cases.



The Advice Service also records information regarding non-student users; for example, parents, relatives or friends of a student seeking advice for their loved-ones. Whilst we provide advice to non-student users, this is often limited and is usually focused on helping the non-student user encourage the student to access the Advice Service or support within their College. Our aim is to always work with the student directly. More informally, we also continue to welcome contact from tutors, other service providers and staff across the Collegiate University who wish to discuss with us options that may be available to a student they are supporting.

National Advice Community

The Advice Service is a member of Advice UK (the UK's largest support network for free, independent advice centres), AMOSSHE (Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education), UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs), NASMA (National Association of Student Money Advice) and has benefitted from the access to training, resources and advice that membership of these organisations affords.

In addition, the Advice Service has access to the NUS Workplace platform, where students' union advisors from across the higher and further education sector share knowledge and good practice.

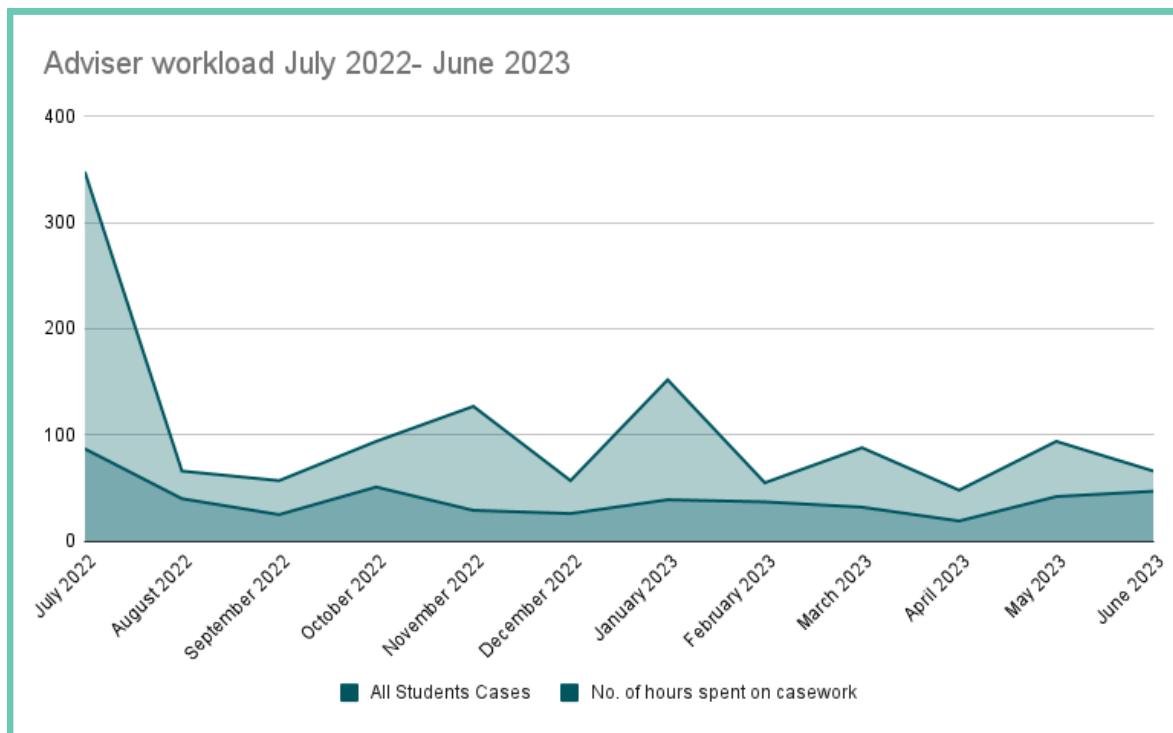


STATISTICS AND TRENDS



Service user data is gathered through the completion of the registration and monitoring forms. As this data is volunteered to us by students we do not have a complete set of personal data for every service user. The following measures of data were taken from the time period 1st July 2022 to 30th June 2023.

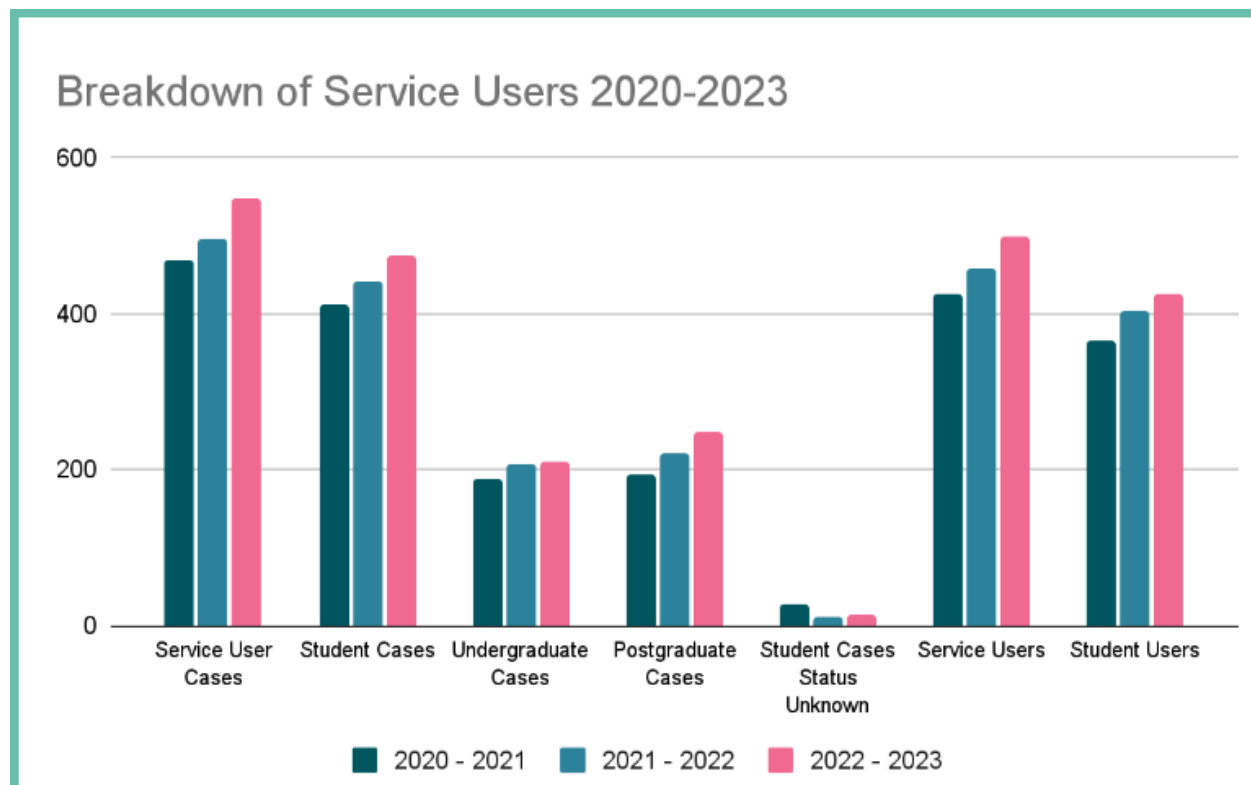
The Student Advice Service is open throughout the year, including outside of academic term time. The adjacent graph demonstrates the changing demand in the number of cases over the course of the reporting year. The most significant spike in cases is in July, as students receive their exam grades, and enquire about examination allowances, examination reviews, disciplinary action (plagiarism) or advice on what options were available in light of their results.



SERVICE USERS



In 2022-23, the Student Advice Service worked with a total of 499 service users of which 424 were students (including current students, intermitting, off the register, past, visiting, exchange, JBS and ICE students), a 9% increase on the previous year where we worked with 458 service users, of which 403 were students. Demand for the Student Advice Service has grown year on year, with 2022-23 seeing the highest number of students accessing the service to date.



Students who use the service for more than one issue are recorded as a new case on each occasion therefore our actual number of service user cases for the year was 549, of these:

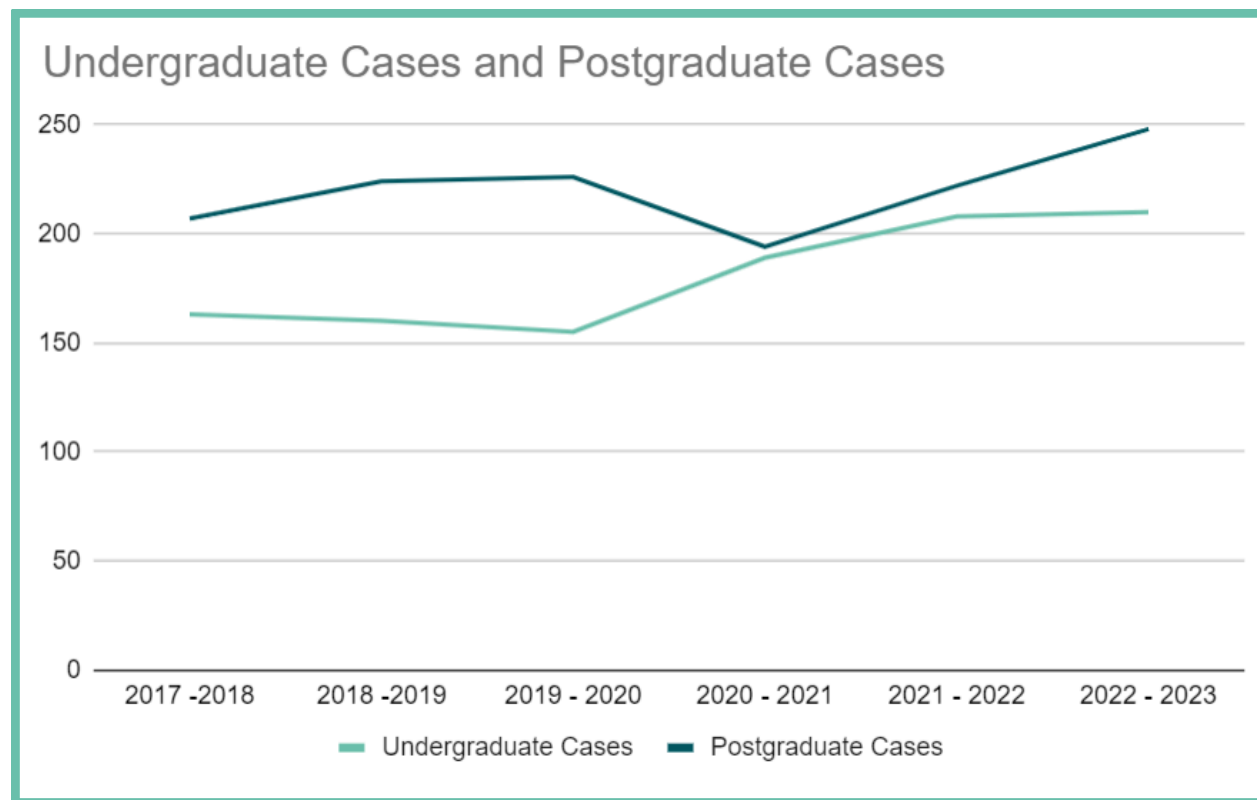
- 44 students accessed the service twice
- 3 students accessed the service three times
- 34 students continued to access support from the previous reporting period.

STUDENT STATUS

Service User Status	
Current student	358
Past student	45
Prospective student	24
Student on intermission	13
Offer holder	12
Relative of a student	8
Unknown	7
Support Officer (JCR/MCR/Peer2Peer)	6
ICE student	5
University staff (ADRC, USC, Admin, Other)	5
Other	5
Other person known to student but not relative or friend	3
Student from a different university	2
Friend of a student	2
Off the register	2
College staff (Senior Tutor/Tutor/Nurse/Tutorial Office)	1
Visiting Student	1
Total	499

The Student Advice Service works with service-users across a range of profiles. Current students, past, prospective and offer holder students or students on intermission. Additionally we provide information to non-students, such as relatives or friends of students, JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation Campaign Officers and Sports Welfare Officers who can access the Advice Service to discuss their specific role or any concerns they may have about a student in their community. In 2022-23 72% of service users were current students.

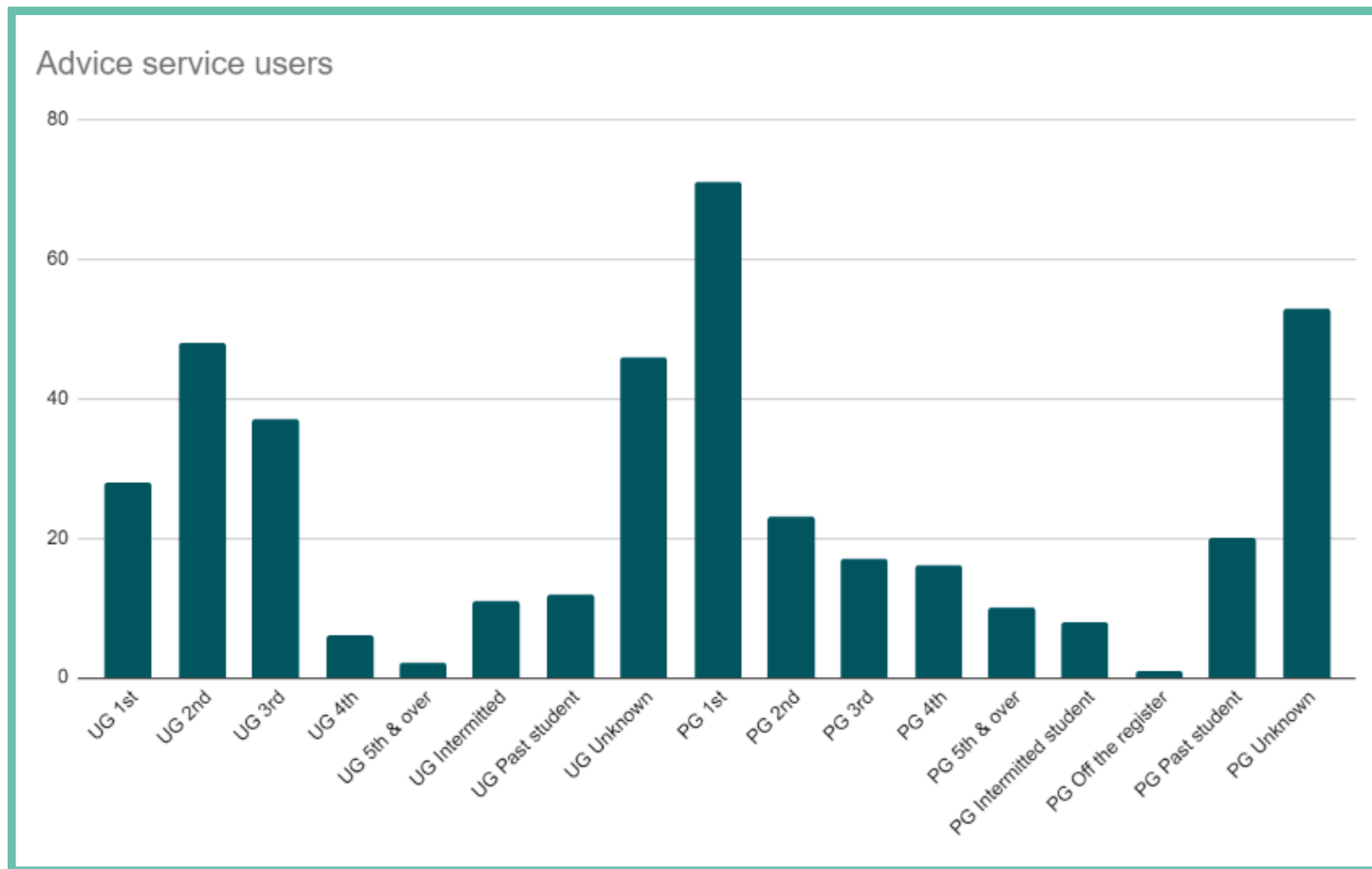




The Student Advice Service continues to support students across a wide range of degrees. 45% of students accessing the service in 22-23 were undergraduates, 22% were studying towards a PhD, 14% were MPhil students and 9% studying towards other Masters degrees. We saw a further 6% of students from unknown postgraduate qualifications, 3 students were studying for a PGCE, 2 students were studying for a postgraduate diploma, 2 students were studying CPGS, 2 students were on a foundation year, and 12 students we do not have data for. This continues a trend we have seen over the past five years for seeing more postgraduate students seeking advice from the service.

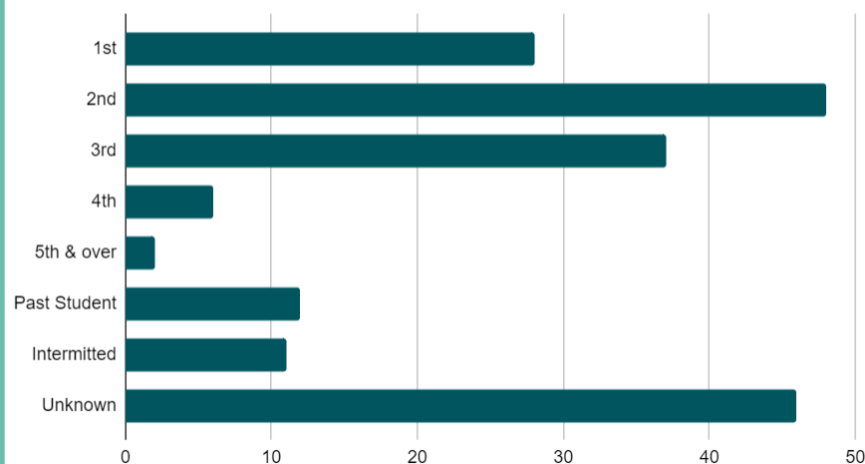


YEAR OF STUDY



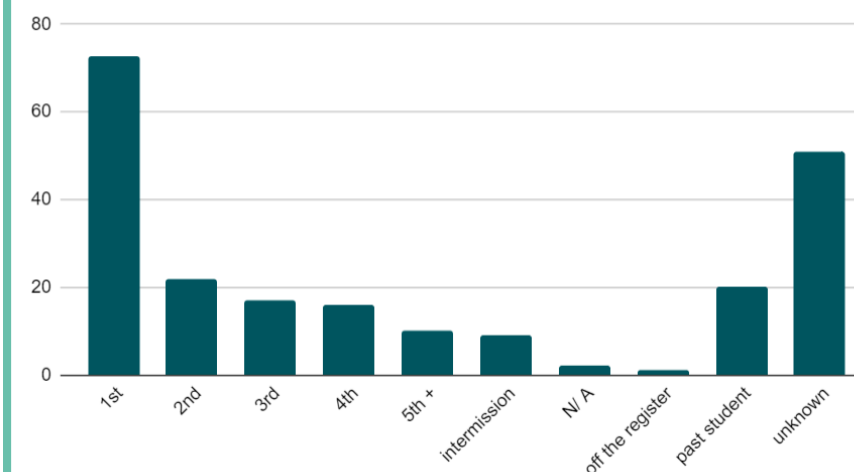
In 2022-23, 15% of undergraduate students who accessed the service were in their first year of study, 25% in their second year, 19% in their third year of study and 3% in their 4th year of study. The number of students on intermission and past students who access the service has remained consistent with the data from the last five years.

Undergraduate service user cases



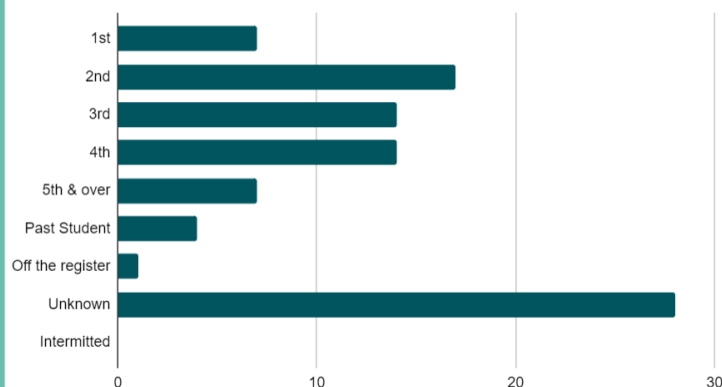
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Postgraduate advice service cases



The largest proportion of postgraduate students 73% who accessed advice in 22-23 were in their first year of study, this is a significant jump from the 29% that we recorded in 2021-22. The category of 'postgraduate' includes PhD students, MPhil, MFin, MBA, MRes, MSt, MEd, LLM and PGCE students. Within these sub-categories, usage of the Advice Service varies.

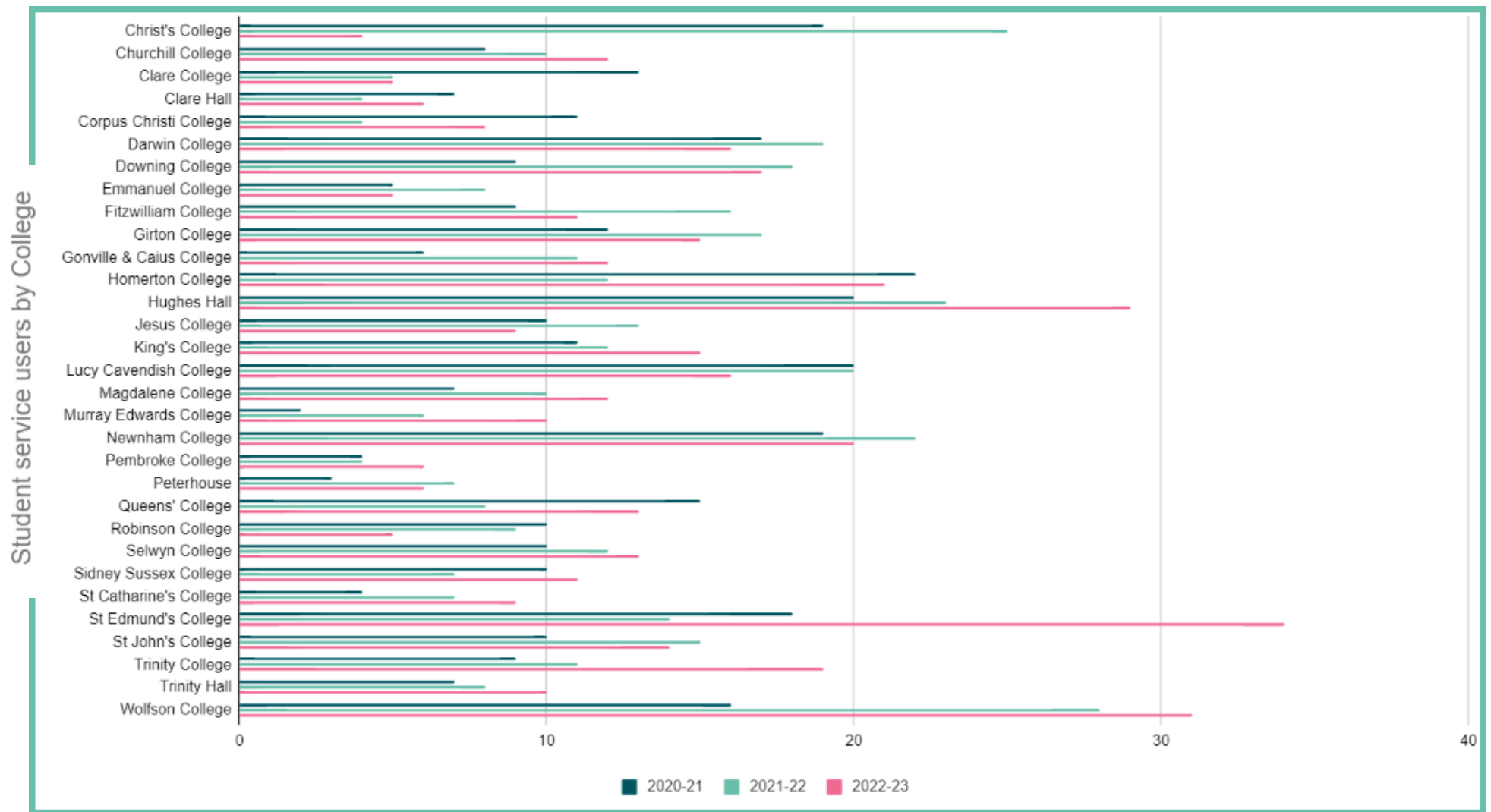
PHD service user cases



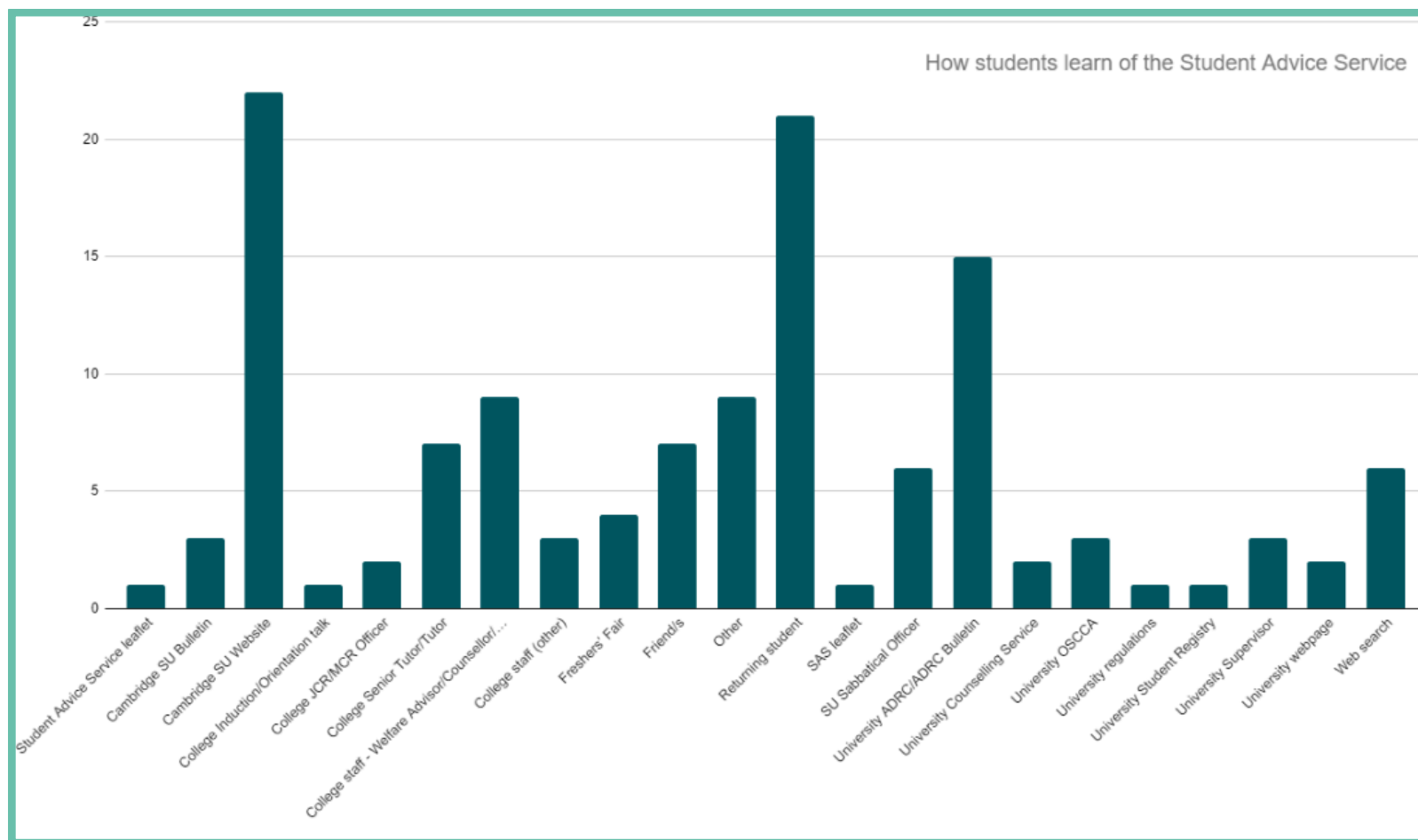
For PhD student service users, of the students who have disclosed their year of study, our largest cohort was from students in their 2nd year of study at 27%. Students in their 3rd and 4th year each made up 22% of PhD cases, and students in their first year of study made up 11% of cases. Students who were in their fifth year or beyond made up 11% of cases, and 6% were past students. We saw one student who was off register.

COLLEGE MEMBERSHIP

In 2022-23, the Student Advice Service supported students from all 31 Colleges. The number of students accessing the Advice Service from each College varies yearly and is not necessarily linked to the size of the College, the provision available from the College, or its proximity to the Advice Service. It should not be taken as an indication of the effectiveness or quality of support offered within different colleges. It is important to note that Cambridge SU considers it to be good practice for colleges to inform their students that they can receive independent advice via the Advice Service



AWARENESS OF THE SERVICE



Of the students who disclosed how they first heard about the Student Advice Service-

● 19%

Signposted by a University service provider or staff member, such as the Disability Resource Centre, Counselling Service, OSCCA, or departmental administrator

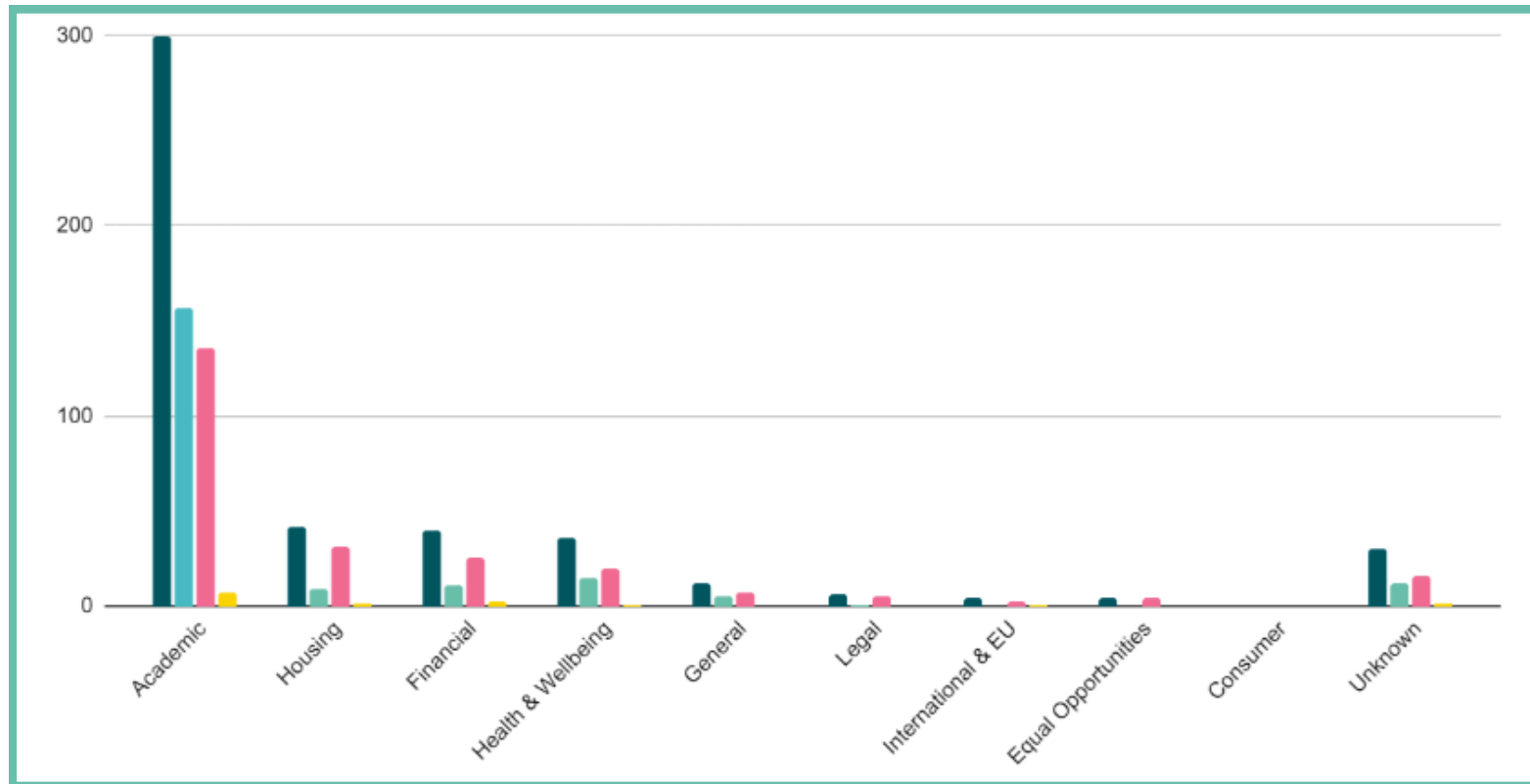
● 17%

Signposted by a College service-provider or staff member, such as Tutor, Senior Tutor, Nurse, Chaplain

● 28%

Signposted by Cambridge SU officers, staff members, events or advertising

STUDENT CONCERNS



The Student Advice Service assists students on a number of issues each year, these range from exam concerns to financial difficulties to intermission and issues regarding student-supervisor relations. Students will often come to the Advice Service for guidance and support on a specific issue (e.g. exam failure); it may then transpire during the discussion with the advisor that other issues are linked to the primary issue raised. For example, though few students access the Advice Service specifically for advice on mental health, many students raise mental health as a factor contributing to the issue for which they require support.

In the academic year 2022-23 the leading areas of concern for students booking their appointment was issues related to examinations, 115 cases were opened where this was the student's primary concern. Examination concerns include concerns over an exam result, degree classification/calculation, paper issues and technical difficulties, PhD registration, progression to part III, examination allowance, examination review, examination resits, examination worries and disregarding terms. Of these 115 students 65 were undergraduates, and 50 were postgraduate students.

The next highest area of concern was concerning complaints, with 36 undergraduate cases and 28 postgraduate complaint cases totaling 64 overall.

Concerns around mental health were equally spread between undergraduate and postgraduate students, with a total of 58 students seeking advice primarily on this area from both cohorts of students.

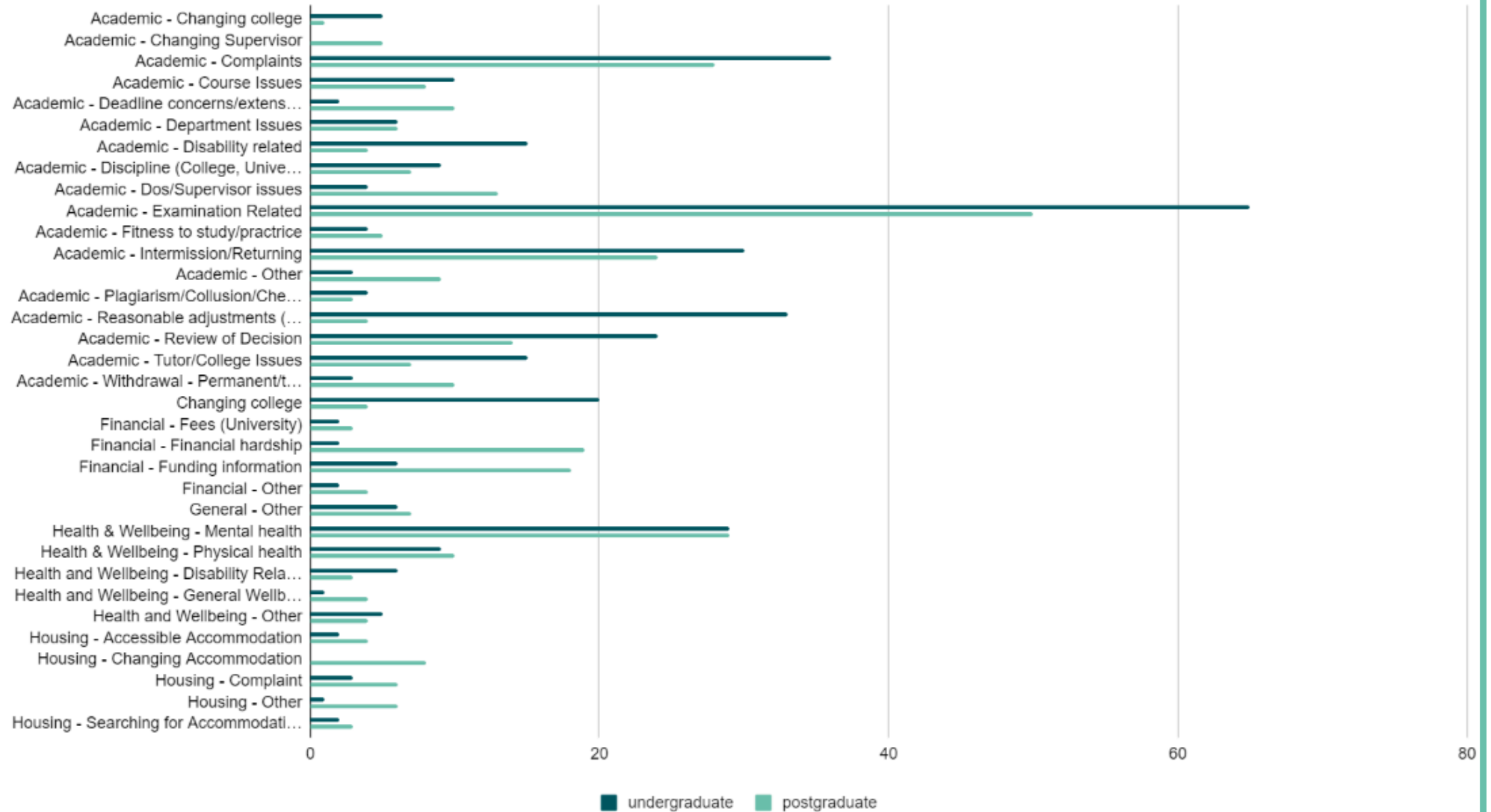
Advice on intermission and returning from intermission was given to 30 undergraduate students and 24 postgraduate students.

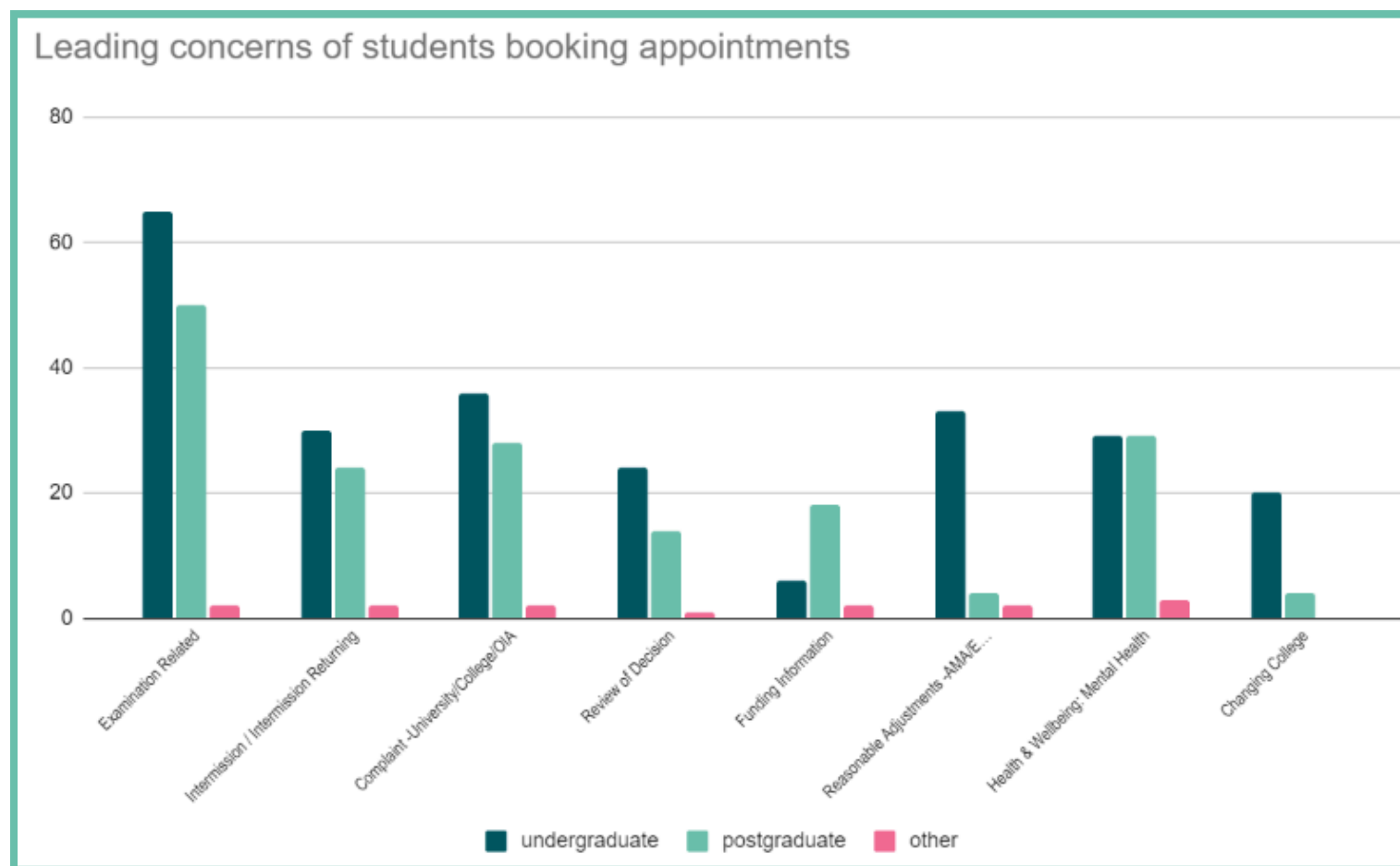
Issues concerning reasonable adjustment significantly impact undergraduate students over postgraduate students, of the 37 cases that included this subject only 4 were from postgraduate students.

Advice concerning financial issues and housing issues were in higher demand for postgraduate students as they are less likely to be housed in College accommodation, and so will face challenges in finding affordable private accommodation in Cambridge.



Primary concern when booking appointment





Advisors record all key issues that a student wishes to seek advice on, therefore the number of issues recorded is higher than the number of students who accessed the service, as the majority of students raised more than one issue. The leading issue that both undergraduate and postgraduate students sought advice on was examination-related, with 16% of cases covering this topic, unchanged from 2021-22. Students sought advice on making Complaints in 9% of cases, with 9% of undergraduate cases seeking advice on complaints and 8% of postgraduate cases. Advice on mental health was sought in 8% of advice cases.



DEMOGRAPHICS

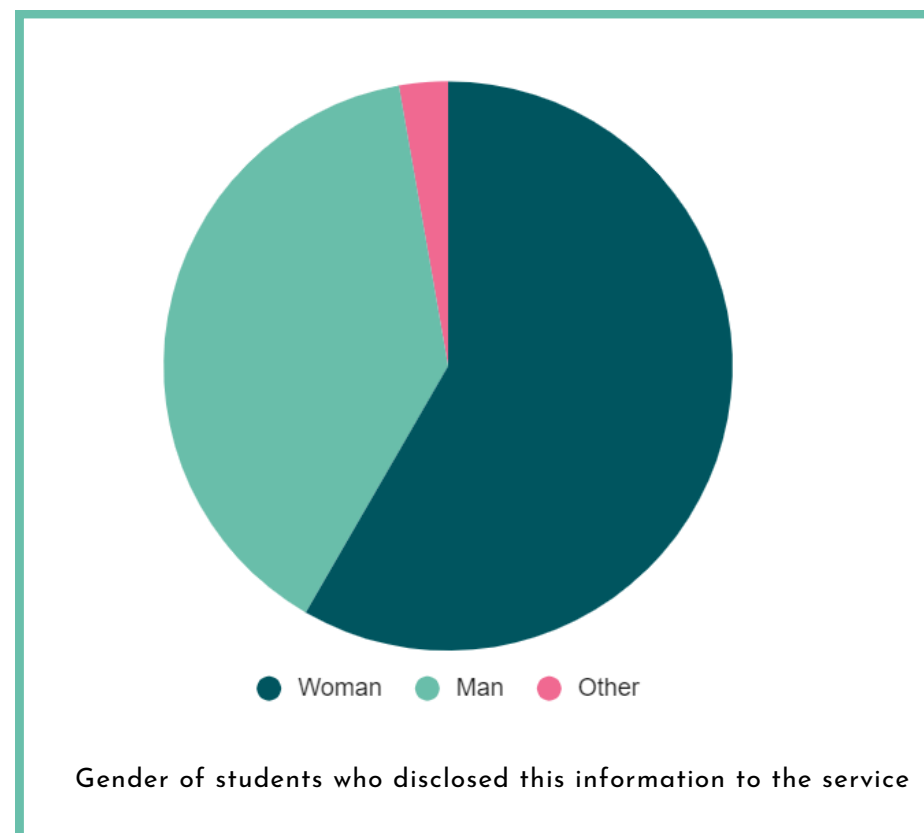


GENDER

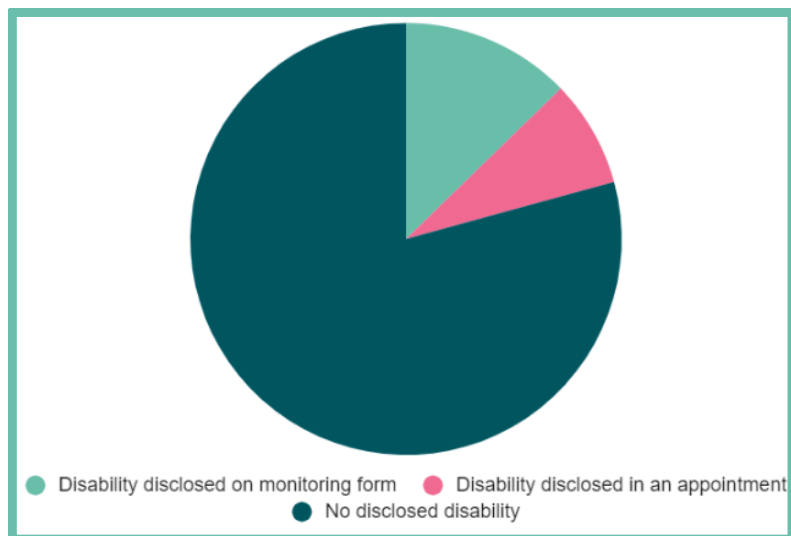
The service records gender data based on how a student declares their gender on the monitoring form. If a monitoring form is not received, for example, if the case is short-lived (such as some of those under the 'Information' category), or if communication with a service user is entirely by email, then the gender is recorded as undisclosed. Of the 108 students case users who disclosed their gender to us 57% identify as female. This is a higher ratio of female students accessing the service than the number of female students enrolled at the university. (50.8% at Undergraduate level, 50% at Post Graduate Taught and 44.3% at Post Graduate Research-The Cambridge University Equality and Diversity and Information Report 2022-23)

www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/edi_information_report_2022-23.pdf

This is a continuing trend for the Advice Service and highlights an area of work to promote the service to male, nonbinary and transgender students.

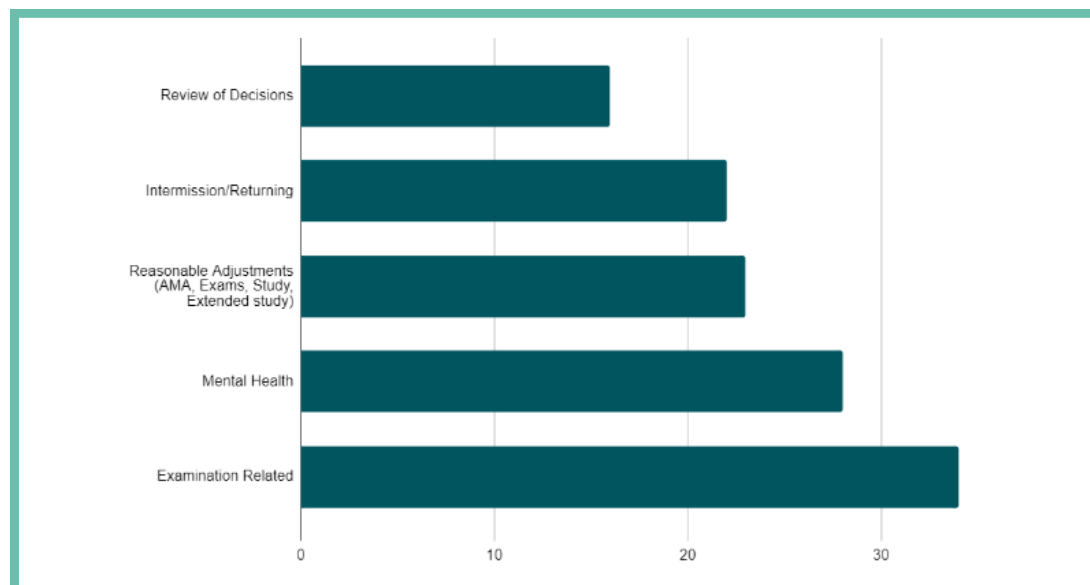


DISABILITY



The Student Advice Service requests that students self declare disabilities on the monitoring forms that students complete when confirming an appointment. In 2022-2023, 54 students disclosed a disability via the monitoring form. This represents 13% of the students who accessed the Service. An additional 34 students mentioned a possible disability to their Advisor during an advice appointment, raising the total to 21%. This figure is very close to the 20% of students disclaiming a disability to the ADRC.

www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/adrc_annual_report_2021-22.pdf

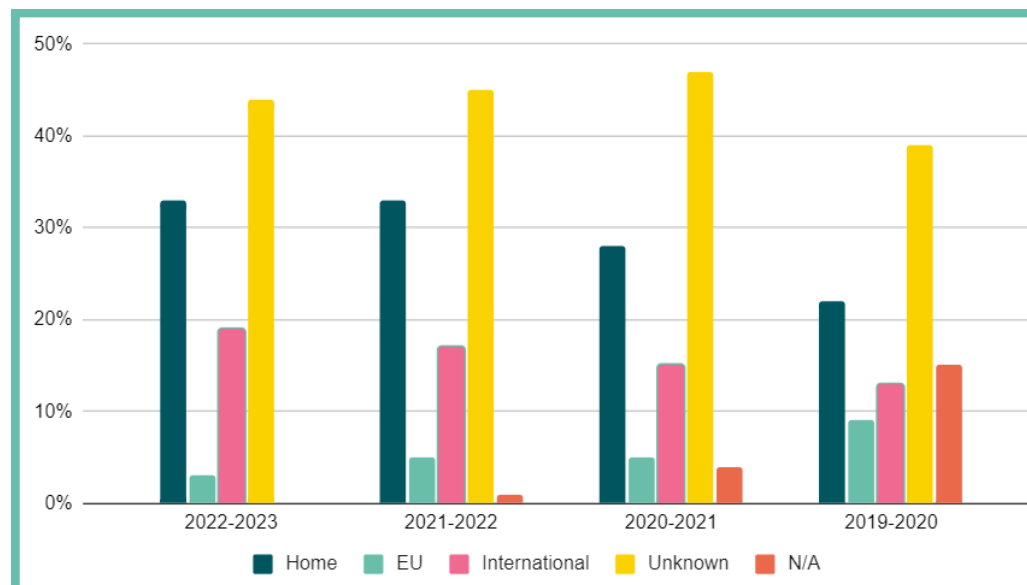


The primary concern for students with a disability was examination related, at 28% of cases this is a similar figure to the 27% of all students seeking examination related advice. The next leading area for students who disclosed a disability seeking support was for mental health support with 23 % of appointments concerning this issue, 13% higher than the 14% of students who engaged with the service who haven't disclosed a disability.

Of the students we gave advice to on intermission and returning from intermission, 5% more of these students had a disability (18%) than those who had not disclosed a disability (13%). The percentage of students seeking advice on reasonable adjustments was 10% higher (19%) than all students seeking advice on reasonable adjustments (9%), and a 4% higher figure for review of decisions (13%) than all student cases (9%).

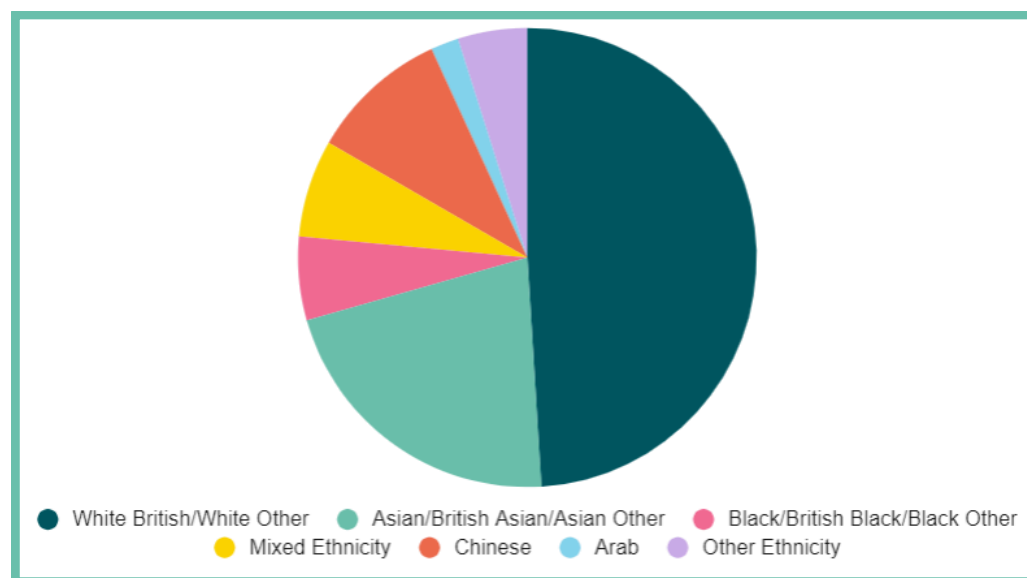
FEE STATUS

The recorded figures for fee status do not show any significant variations from last year. Of the known fee status of students we continue to see our largest cohort of 33% from home students.



ETHNICITY

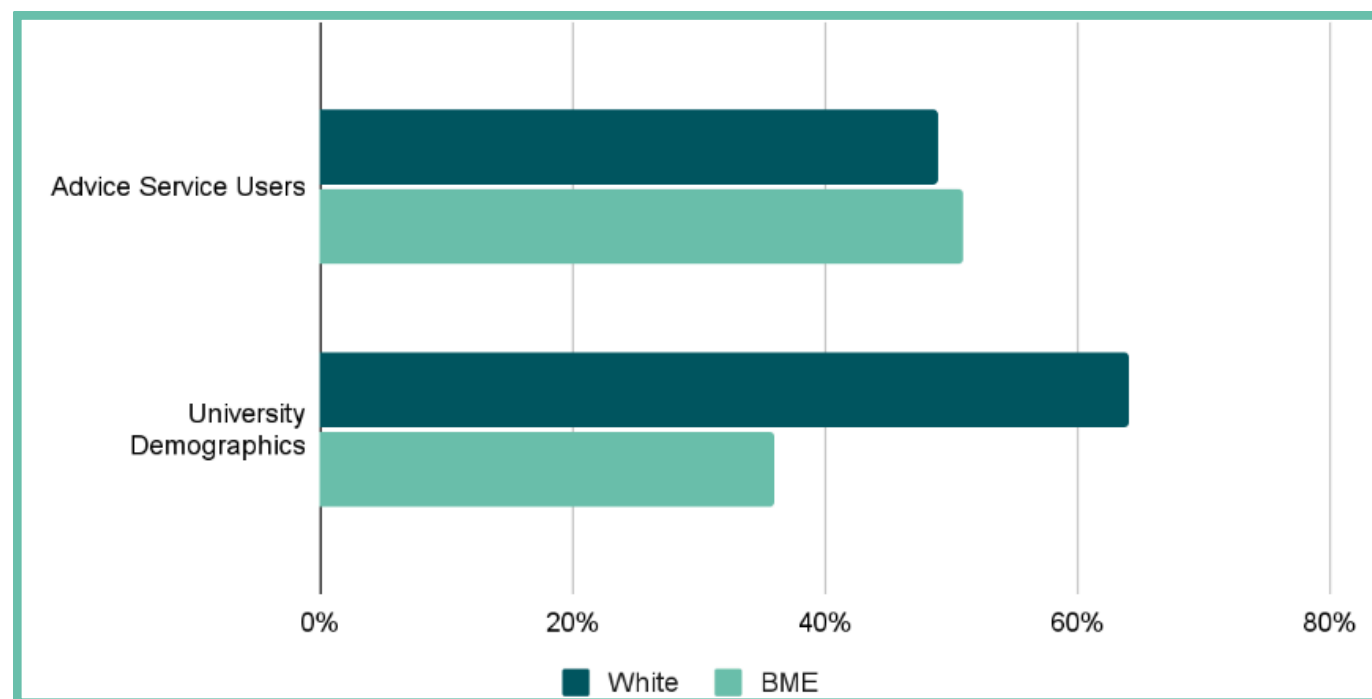
In 2022-23, using our monitoring forms when confirming student appointments, we recorded ethnicity data of 102 students (20%) who had accessed the service. Of the students who disclosed their ethnicity, 'White' students represented the largest group (47%), followed by 'Asian/British Asian/Asian Other' students (19%), 'Chinese' students (12%), 'Black/British Black/Black Other' students (8%), 'Mixed/Multiple Ethnicity' students (8%) and 'Other Ethnicities' (6%). Students from ethnicities other than 'White' represented 54% of students. This continues the growth in non-white students accessing the service in 2020-21, non-white students accessing the service made up 33% of students we had ethnicity recorded for, and in 2018-19 it was as low as 17%.



BME SERVICE USERS

In 2022-23 the advice service recorded 54% of the students accessing the service to have disclosed their ethnicity being BME.

The Cambridge University Equality and Diversity Information Report 2022-2023 reports that Cambridge student membership is made up of 37.3% BME students at undergraduate level, 45.5% at Post Graduate Taught, and 37.7% at Post Graduate Research.



The advice service figure sitting above all these measures would indicate that BME students are experiencing more issues than white students, or that BME students are more aware of the service. In November 2023 the Student Advice Service recruited a BME Advisor to offer specialised advice to BME students, and to create materials for students and forge relationships with the university and colleges.

The Cambridge University Equality and Diversity and Information Report 2022-23
[edi_information_report_2022-23.pdf \(cam.ac.uk\)](#)

CONTACT

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