ASTON STUDENTS' UNION

LET'S CHAT SURVEY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25

An analytical summary of students' academic experiences.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the second time running, Aston Students' Union have released the scheme titled "Let's C.H.A.T" (Come Here for Academic Talk). It allows Aston University students to express views on their academic experiences, as well as to share their thoughts on improvements. In this report, quantitative analysis is performed for students' opinions and ratings on services and platforms, as well as qualitative analysis of students' comments to categorise wants and needs.

OneAston is a recently released platform integrating various services into one place. This is an area that needs awareness.

Key findings after data analysis reveal that:

1. An undergraduate home student in their first year studying a degree from the college of Business and Social Sciences is demographically the most likely student from 1158 in this survey.

2. Students' experiences were generally good from an academic perspective and were positive from interacting with services such as Student Solutions Centre and Aston Futures.

3. Study material and assignment feedback were mostly to students' expectations.

4. OneAston needs more student awareness. The platform was deemed impactful.

5. Themes drawn from students' wants and needs were website development, support from services and improved study materials.

6. In comparison with last year's review, more students have applied. Artificial intelligence, hardware and software maintenance have generally declined, while study space awareness, collaboration with Aston Futures on employability and assignment guides for writing emerged.

SUMMARY REPORT CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

LET'S C.H.A.T SCHEME

First opened on 18th November 2024 and distributed to all Aston University students through the ASU (Aston Students' Union) website and social media channels from the Vice President of Education, ASU launched the "Let's Chat" scheme as a replacement to Speak Week. The "C.H.A.T." acronym invites students to "Come Here [for an] Academic Talk", by sharing their thoughts and observations on their academic experiences.

The scheme's responses were collected through an online survey that lasted until 29 November 2024. Incentives such as a Polaroid Camera were promised through a prize draw after completion.

The survey investigated effectiveness of interactivity between students, services, staff and academics. With the release of OneAston Student Portal for students to access a centralised system of services such as Solve (IT Support), Aston MAP (Online student dashboard) and the official university website, students are obliged to share information and experiences of this platform, shown in Figure 1, to raise awareness.
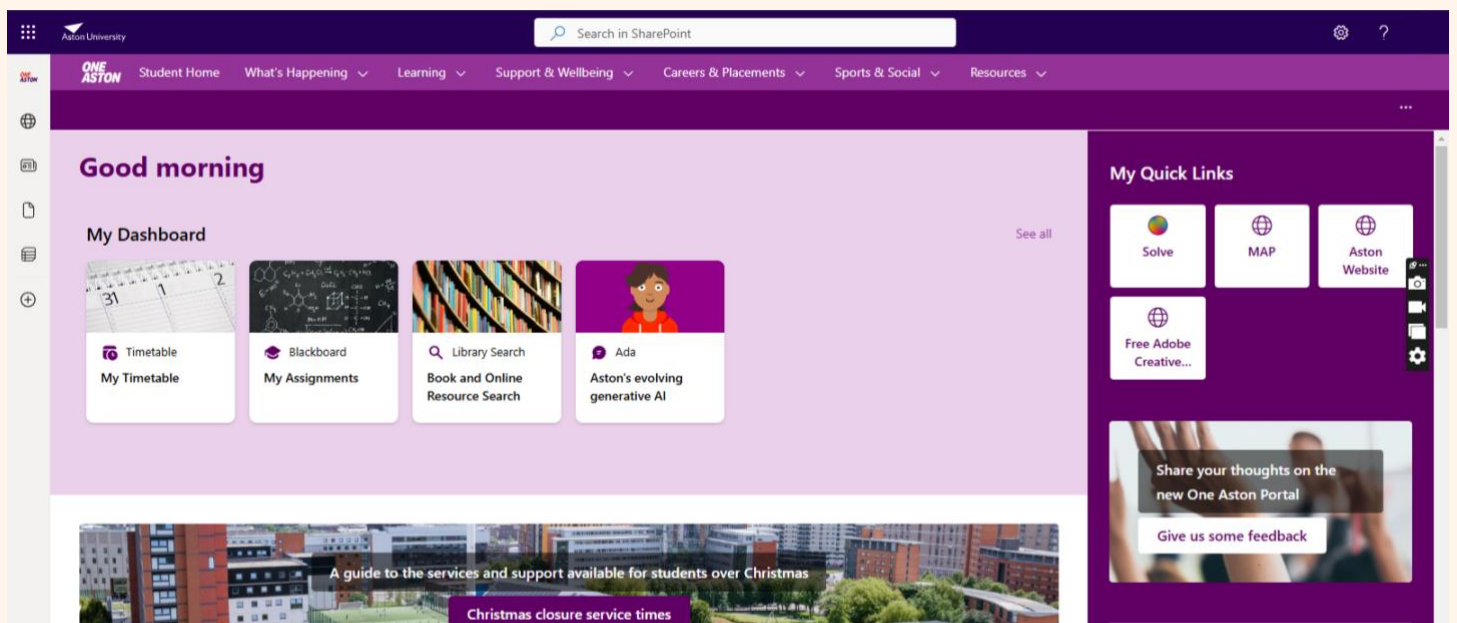
REPORT OUTCOMES

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim is to analyse students' experiences in relation to studies, staff, services and academics for ASU sabbatical officers to improve their strategies from January 2025.

The main objectives are:

1. To present data on various topics from demographics to experiences using the survey questionnaire as a guide.
2. To investigate awareness of OneAston Student Portal
3. To analyse students' wants and needs using comments, drawing comparisons to 2023's survey for key differences.

2.1.1 Potential analysis of survey questions

The survey contains twelve questions; however, the number of questions vary by qualification. For the student as a participant in the survey, the questions are sequenced as follows: Introductory questions determine the participant's area of study; the main questions ask about difference services provided, academic structures and support during academics. The final question allowed participants to express ways of improving their experiences through an open-end question.

Table 1 details the survey questions' chronological order and the methods of recording participants' responses:

Table 1: List of survey questions asked, methods of data capture and analysis required for investigation

No.	Question	Method of data capture	Type of analysis required
1	What is your current domicile status?	Multiple choice	Quantitative
2	What college do you belong to?	Multiple choice	Quantitative
3	Year of Study?	Multiple choice	Quantitative
4	How would you rate your academic experience at the university?	Likert scale (1-5)	Quantitative
5	Do you receive sufficient study materials to help you prepare for your assessments?	Binary (Yes/No)	Quantitative
6	Does the feedback you receive clearly guide you on how to improve for future assessments?	Binary (Yes/No)	Quantitative
7	Do you think having a personal tutor has positively impacted your overall university experience?	Ranking (strongly agree-strongly disagree)	Quantitative
8	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The solutions provided by the Student Solutions Centre meet my needs and expectations.	Ranking (strongly agree-strongly disagree)	Quantitative
9	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The university provides effective support and resources to help me prepare for my career and secure placements or internships	Ranking (strongly agree-strongly disagree)	Quantitative
10	Have you used the new OneAston Portal?	Binary (Yes/No)	Quantitative
11	If yes, do you find the OneAston Portal impactful for accessing university resources and support?	Binary (Yes/No)	Quantitative
12	Is there any other feedback or additional support you would like to share to help improve your experience at the university? (e.g. wellbeing, IT support, study facilities, etc.)	Free sentences	Qualitative

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSES

COLLEGE DISCIPLINE

For studying their qualification, students enrol in a college to complete assignments. Figure 2 shows that 444 out of 1158 students surveyed study in the college of Business and Social Sciences.

Students are in the college of:

Health and
Life Sciences
32%

Engineering and
Physical Sciences
30%

Business and
Social Sciences
38%
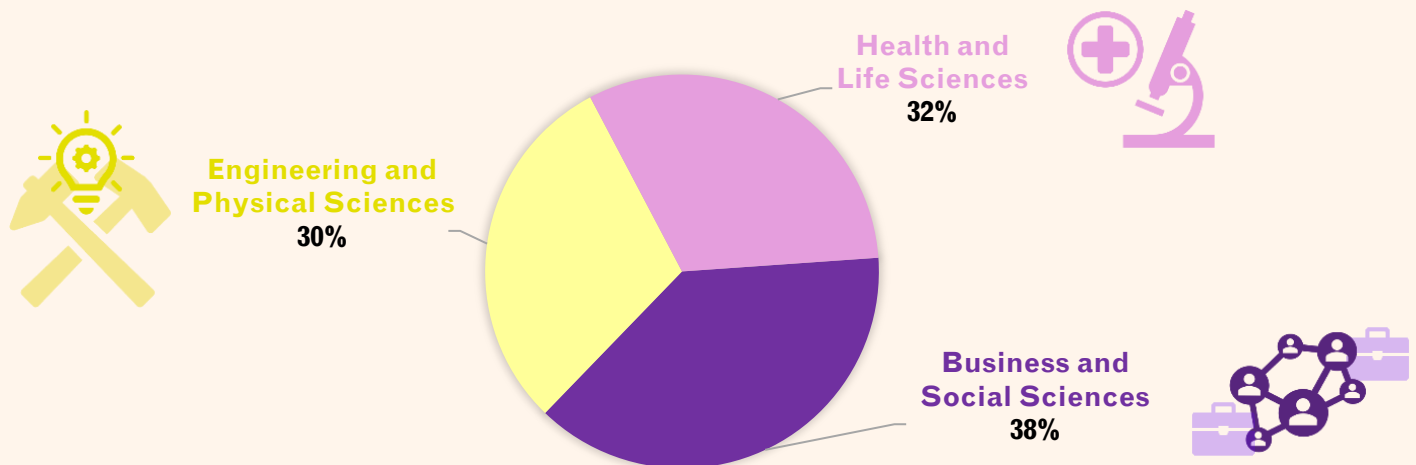
Figure 2: Distribution of students by college

YEAR OF STUDY

The survey did not explicitly ask for the academic level of study, as different degrees have different structures. In Figure 3, 39.3% of students are in their first year of study. Final year students are compromised of final year undergraduates and master's student.

Students are in:

Foundation Year	First Year	Second Year	Placement Year	Final Year
32	455	288	55	328

Figure 3: Distribution of students by year

Aston University has a diverse and multicultural student population. From Figure 4, 654 students reside in the United Kingdom.

Current domicile status of students
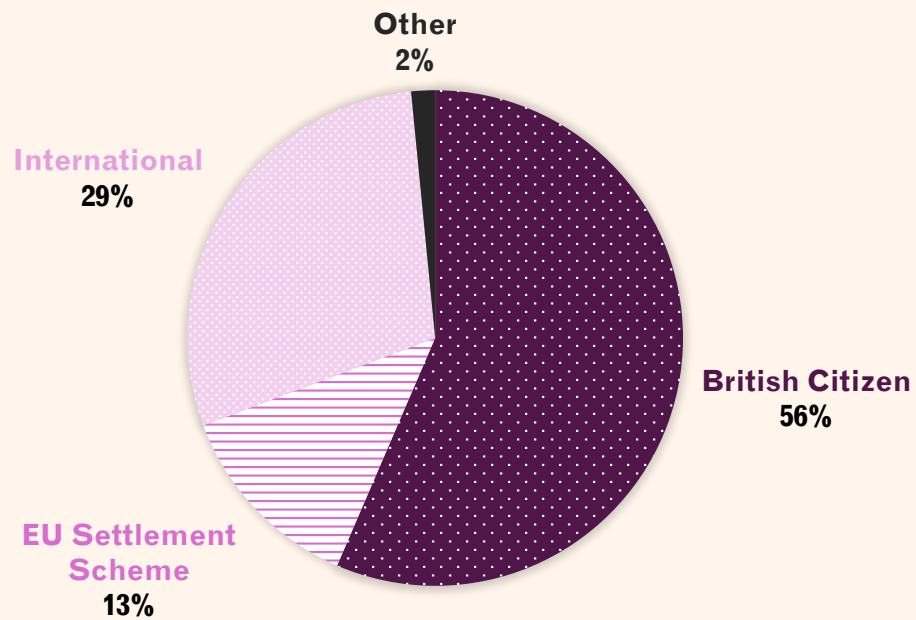
Figure 4: Diversity of students' backgrounds

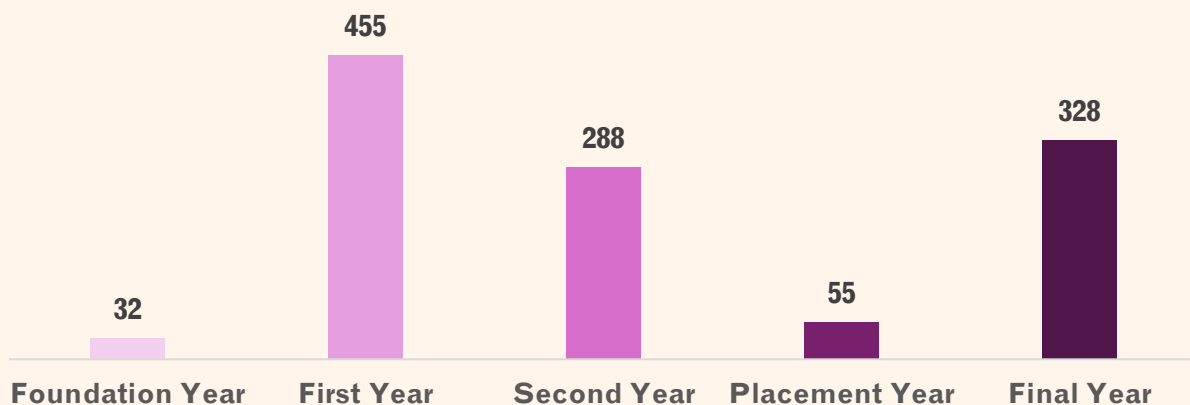# STUDENT EXPERIENCE ANALYSES

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

In Figure 5, 1154 students rated how their academic experience was so far. 48.1% believed their academic experience was good.

Students' academic experiences are:
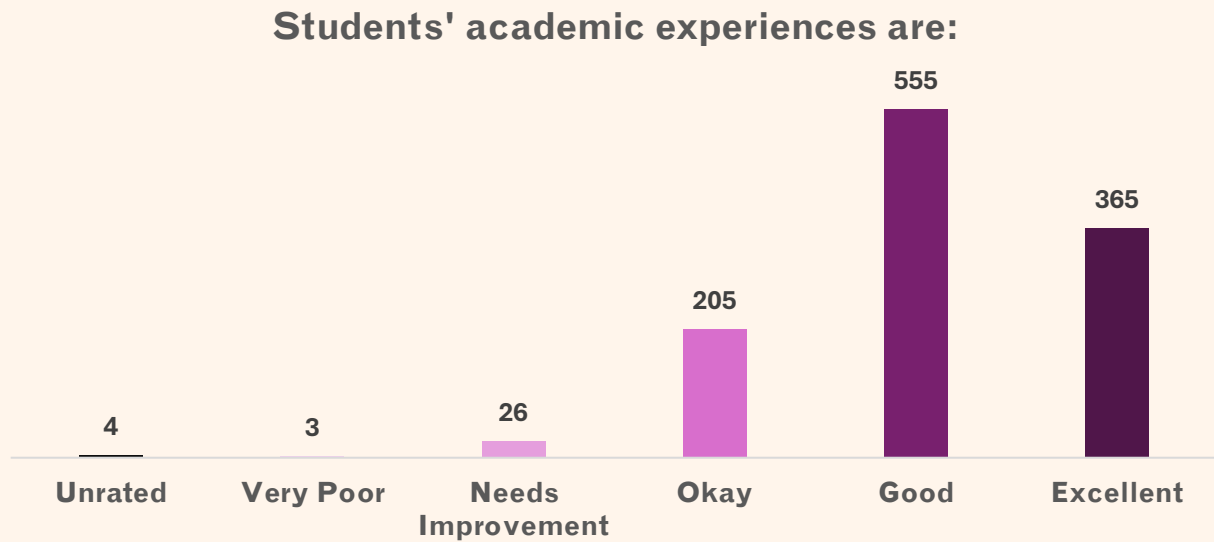
Figure 5: How students rated their academic experience at university

PERSONAL TUTOR EXPERIENCE

Personal tutors are students' contacts for issues outside of academic studies. 56.5% of students in Figure 6 believe their personal tutor made a positive experience.

Has a personal tutor made a positive experience?
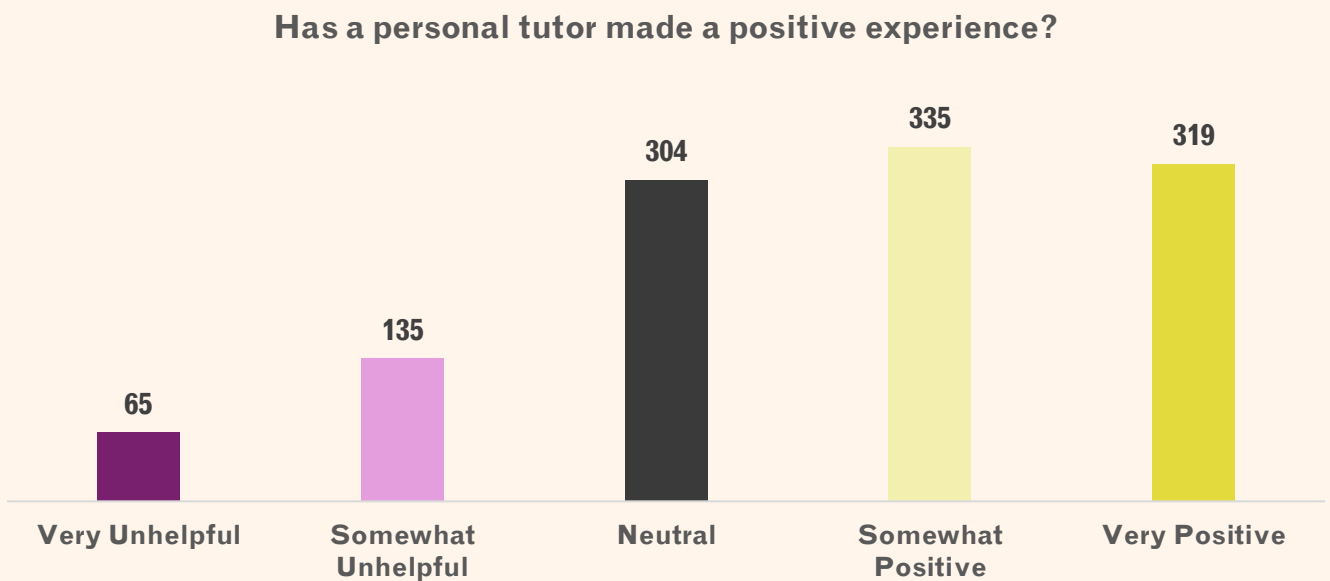
Figure 6: Opinion of students on their personal tutors

STUDENT SOLUTIONS CENTRE

Previously named The Hub, the Student Solutions Centre provides information and solves enquiries using specialist support. 59.1% of students in Figure 7 (Strongly) agreed that the service meets their expectations.

Have the Student Solutions Centre met students' expectations?

| Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14	25	435	457	227
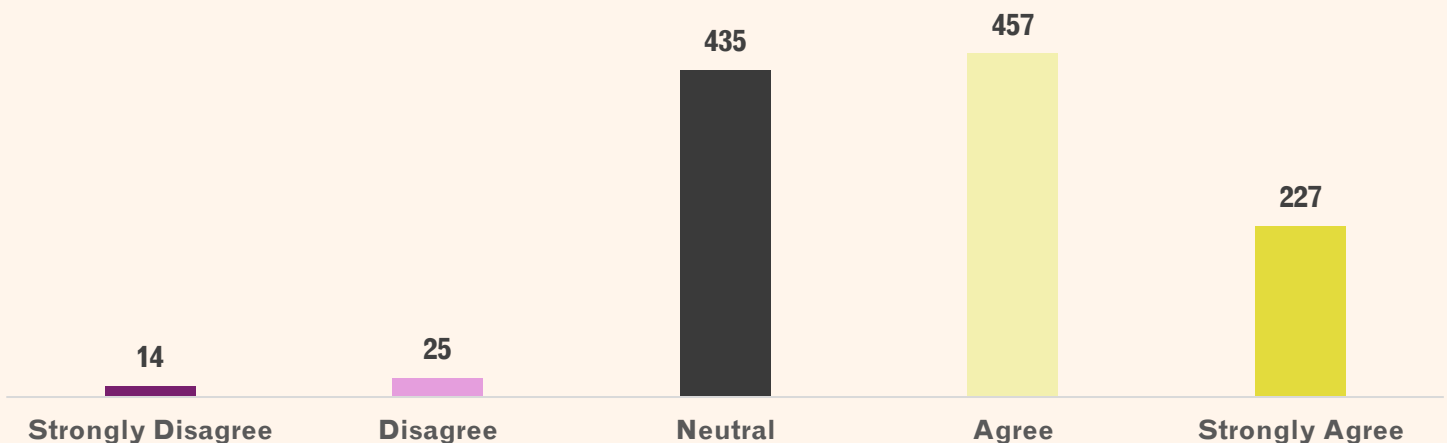
Figure 7: Students' opinions on the Student Solutions Centre

SUPPORT FOR JOB PROSPECTS

Aston Futures Team hold information on employment such as interviews, CV adjustments and skills gaps. 75.7% of students in Figure 8 believed the service have provided sufficient support in searching for placements and internships.

Have university provided sufficient support for placements/internships?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
17	45	219	569	308
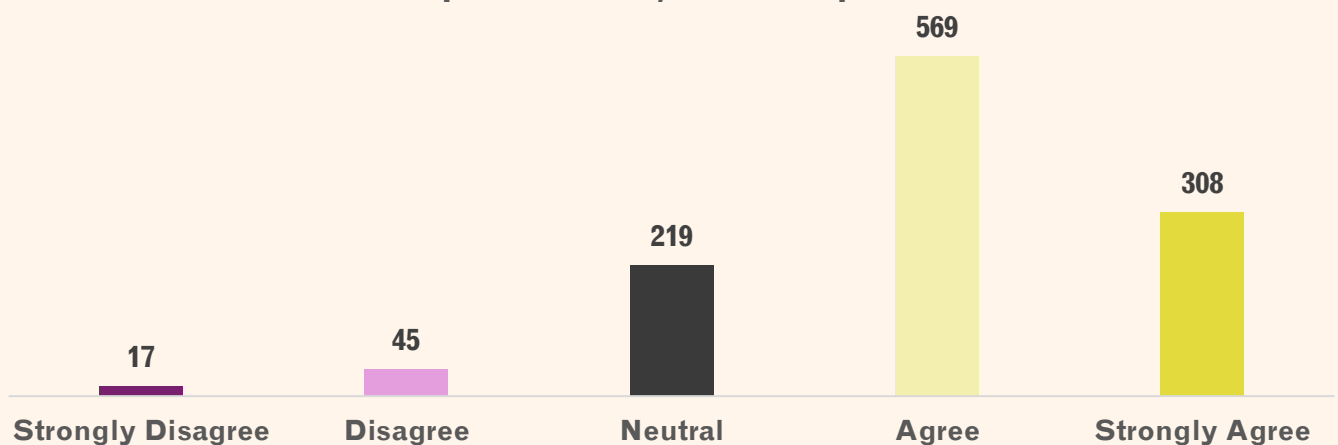
Figure 8: Students' opinions on Aston Futures

SUFFICIENT INTERACTIVITY ANALYSES

STUDENT STUDY MATERIAL

Study material comes in the form of lectures, notes, videos and other interactive media. 991 students in Figure 9 said they received sufficient study material.

Do students receive sufficient study material?

Yes
86%

No
14%
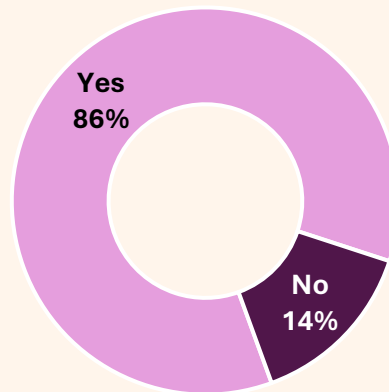
Figure 9: Students' agreement of sufficient study material

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT FEEDBACK

Students submit assignments to Blackboard for feedback on the quality of work. 899 students in Figure 10 believed feedback was sufficient in their assignment submissions.

Do students receive sufficient feedback on assessments?

Yes
78%

No
22%
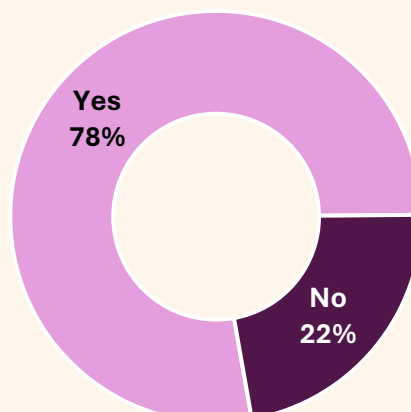
Figure 10: Students' agreement on sufficient assessment feedback

AWARENESS OF ONEASTON

OneAston portal's development was recently shown to Aston University students. ASU wants to determine if students are aware of the system.

Figure 11 shows that 49.7% of students were aware of OneAston.

Have students used OneAston portal?

Yes 575	No 583

Figure 11: Students' awareness of OneAston portal

Figure 12 shows that out of 575 students who were aware, 91.7% believed OneAston was impactful.

Did you find OneAston impactful?

Yes
527

No
48

Figure 12: Student's review of OneAston if used

STUDENTS' WANTS AND NEEDS

COMMON THEMES

386 students (33.3% of the survey intake) provided a comment on their wants and needs.
Out of 198 comments after data cleaning and filtering positive, indifference or non-replies,
these themes occurred. Figure 13 shows the organisation of these subthemes.

MAIN TOPIC
(## responses)

KEYWORD ONE
➢ Generalised statement featuring keyword(s) **(## students)**

KEYWORD TWO
➢ Generalised statement featuring keyword(s) **(## students)**

Figure 13: Template of common themes found in students' comments

WEB DEVELOPMENT

BLACKBOARD/MAP
(10 responses)

➢ Some UI redesigns on Aston MAP and Blackboard. It is confusing to navigate **(4)**
➢ Potential merge? **(3)**
➢ Useful to inform how to obtain online/ physical library resources **(3)**

ASTON
(12 responses)

ONEASTON

PORTAL

➢ Some help using OneAston, but is very helpful **(4)**
➢ Nice if everything was on one portal **(2)**

INCREASED DEMAND OF…

*MORE… **(83 RESPONSES)***

SUPPORT(ING)
(23 responses)

MENTAL HEALTH

WELLBEING

FINANCE

IT

PLACEMENT

INTERNSHIP/ JOB

PERSONAL

➢ More support in mental health and wellbeing **(5)**
➢ Financial support **(2)**
➢ IT support, especially with lectures **(3)**
➢ Support for employment in internships, placements and their locations, especially in future summer positions **(6)**
➢ Strong personal tutor connection for academic support, especially with guidance on assignment writing **(4)**

CAREER(S)
(11 responses)

- TRAINING
- GUIDANCE
- MEETINGS

➢ Include HVAC and water fountains in study

➢ More training sessions from degree to industry through learned skills **(3)**

➢ More guidance on what to expect from searching and doing placements **(4)**

➢ Control over meetings with career advisers **(2)**

HELP(FUL)
(19 responses)

- PAPER
- WASS
- PLACEMENT

➢ Practice and past papers for exams more helpful **(4)**

➢ Help with WASS Booking systems **(2)**

➢ More people to access help in placement team **(5)**

STUDY
(37 responses)

- FACILITIES
- QUIET
- TIME

➢ Improve study facilities, mainly Wi-Fi speed **(14)**

➢ Awareness of Quiet study spaces **(4)**

➢ Visible opening and booking times on study spaces, specifically near peak hours **(5)**

IMPROVED STUDY MATERIALS

RESOURCE(S)
(9 responses)

➢ Useful to inform how to obtain online/physical library resources **(3)**

EXAM(INATIONS)/
ASSIGNMENT(S)
(18 responses)

➢ Practice material and mock tests **(7)**
➢ More understanding of writing for assignments using samples and guides for marks **(4)**
➢ Feedback for submissions **(2)**
➢ Support regarding mock exam practice **(8)**

LECTURE/ TUTORIAL
(22 responses)

➢ Lectures to be recorded, and have subtitles or accessible from a livestream **(6)**
➢ Well informed, interactive and balanced material from academics in tutorials and lectures **(8)**

LIBRARY
(11 responses)

➢ More seating in the library **(4)**
➢ Open library at 24/7 arrangement **(2)**

UNIVERSITY (17 responses)

HELP

PROVIDE

SUPPORT

- Applications for part-time jobs **(2)**
- Environment can be tense. Expand to more 6 counselling session **(2)**
- Compulsory placements and help searchi them **(3)**

COMPARISON TO LAST YEAR

In 2023, there were 1021 students, 137 less in 2024. Demographically, the survey sample had less entries outside of undergraduate years.

Students' wants and needs change each year. These themes have been noticeably reduced:

Use of Artificial Intelligence for assignments

Application development and improvements, including AstonApp

Computer and laptop maintenance

Contrasting to this, these new themes have developed:

Awareness of services and study spaces

Placements and employability help from Aston Futures

Assignment guides for writing

CONCLUSIONS

The 2024 survey "Let's C.H.A.T" amassed 1158 students to share their experiences on their academic journey from all colleges and years in their studied subject.

From 10 survey questions, demographically, the likeliest student is a Home (British Citizen) student in their first year, studying at the college of Business and Social Sciences.

Across all services, students' experiences were very positive. There were general agreements on sufficient support from staff, services and academics to guide students on their academic journey. In addition, students believed that sufficient study material and feedback on assignments were given.

Although approximately half of the students surveyed knew about OneAston portal and its availability, those who used the platform found it impactful.

From researching students' comments, common themes on improving academic experiences were: Integrating more services in the same platform for website development; more support from services such as the library with searching for information and the university for placements; and available writing guides for assignments and practice materials for examinations. Demand has increased with careers and placements, as well as study spaces for computer use and booking.

In comparison with last year, more students have answered. This year, there has been a different variety of themes tested to accompany what the student representatives wanted to see. These have been included to seek the effectiveness of different services. Themes have changed from artificial intelligence, hardware and app maintenance to services, placement searches and study awareness. This does not indicate a decline in the past issues, topics have just been redirected during the survey.

NEXT STEP

The following outlines some key issues that can be used to improve student experience during their time, with recommendations and suggestions to improve services.

Personal tutors

Whilst many students found their personal tutor helpful, the remaining 43.5% (100% - 56.5%) may have been neutral, dissatisfied, or had no opinion about their tutor. It emphasizes that personal tutors play an important role in the student experience, but there might still be room for improvement to increase satisfaction among the remaining students.

A possible recommendation is to standardise the quality of personal tutor support through additional training, focusing on empathetic communication, mental health awareness, and non-academic guidance and enforcing an anonymous feedback system for students.

One Aston Portal

The portal has a strong positive reception among aware students with a high satisfactory rate of 91.7%. Efforts should focus on improving awareness so more students can engage with and benefit from One Aston Portal.

This can be through creating "How-To" guides or videos to show the portal's benefits, encouraging more students to explore its functionality.

Assessment and feedback

33.3% of the total survey participants (386 students) provided feedback on wants and needs. Students specifically highlighted themes like website development, improved study materials, and more support from services. 991 students (85.6%) believed study materials met their needs, while 899 (77.6%) felt assignment feedback was sufficient. These figures reinforce the need to focus efforts on addressing these core areas for improvement.

Possible recommendations include standardising feedback quality, utilising digital feedback tools and promoting self-assessments (templates or tools for students to self-assess their work against before submission).

These recommendations serve as suggested actions based on student feedback and survey findings. While they highlight key areas for improvement, their implementation depends on further discussion, feasibility assessments, and collaboration between the University and the Students' Union to ensure they align with institutional priorities and resources.

FINAL NOTE

I want to personally thank every student who took the time to participate in this survey and share their experiences. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us understand what's working well and where improvements are needed.

A huge thank you to our incredible student representatives for their dedication in gathering insights and representing the student voice. I also appreciate the University and its various services, including Aston Futures, for their collaboration and commitment to enhancing the student experience.

As a member of the Students' Union, I'm proud of the work we've done to facilitate this survey and ensure student feedback is heard. We will continue working alongside the University to drive meaningful change based on your input.

Your voices matter, and together, we can make a real difference.