

How students are feeling about the new academic year, plans for open day attendance and what support first year undergrads want for starting uni

Student sentiment update by The Student Room

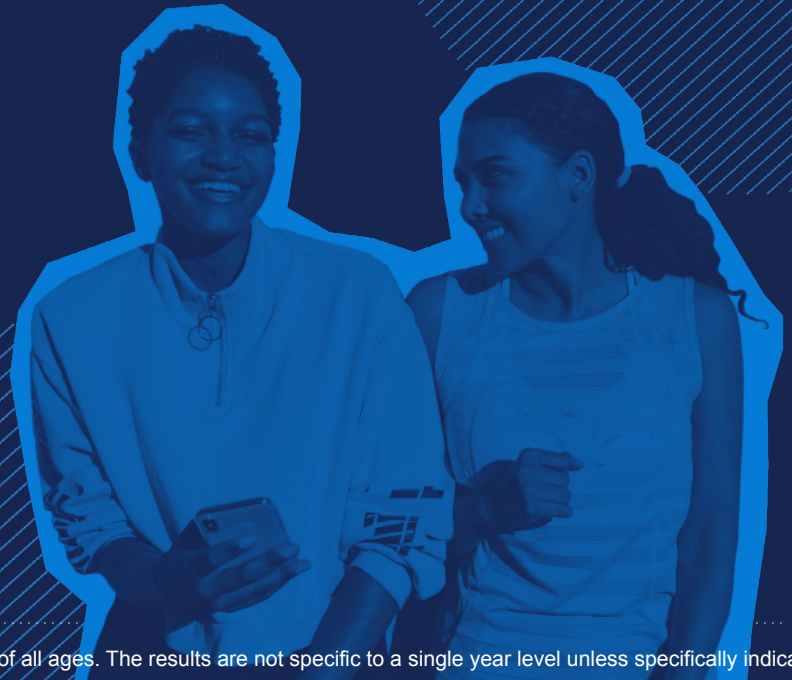
2 September - 30 September 2023



Sharing the student voice

As the UK's largest online student community, we are privileged to witness the support, reassurance and advice young people share with one another everyday. What we learn about their experiences and concerns guides us in the support we provide.

We have an incredible opportunity (and responsibility) to raise the voice of students and share it with people like you who are there to support them. It's by listening to students and working across every sector together that we can make a real difference in students' lives.



Highlights in this update

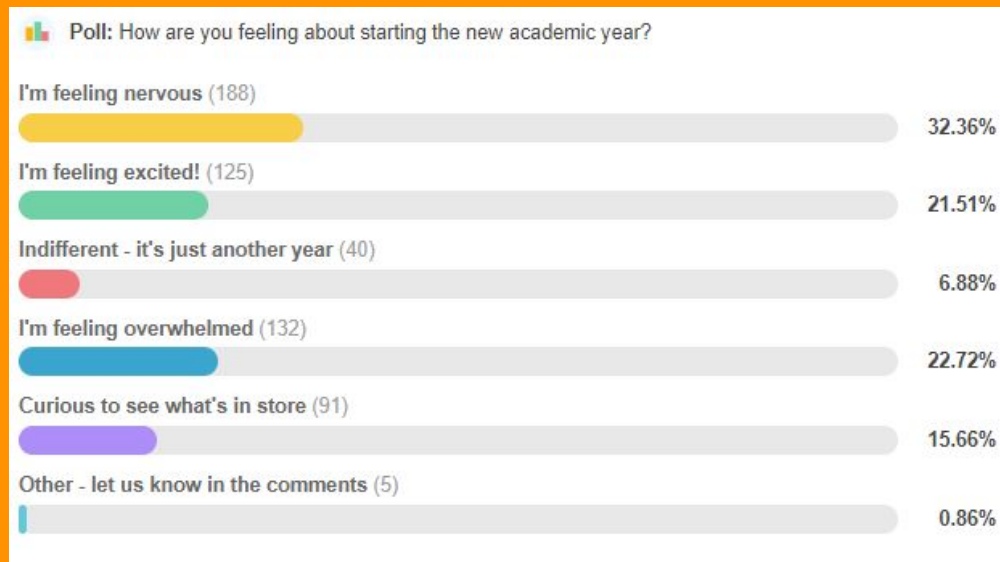
- A new academic year brings nervousness as well as one in five feeling overwhelmed at the prospect
- Money management and study skills are top areas students are looking for support in to prepare for University
- Student experiences of Clearing
- Nearly two fifths of surveys 2023 undergrads felt that visits, either Open days before they applied or Applicant days / other visits after they applied, had been the most influential information when deciding which university to go to

Students feel nervous and excited about the start of the new academic year

Most notably from the responses in this poll, the feeling of nervousness as students approach the beginning of the academic year is evident (32%) and a further one in five were feeling overwhelmed. The unease that surrounded exams and exam results was prevalent in conversations across site and the emotional burnout that has followed this.

However, amidst the nervous energy there were still feelings of excitement for the next steps in their educational journeys; seeing the new academic as an opportunity for a fresh start.

Based on the poll responses, the feeling of nervousness and being overwhelmed stems from the need to tackle what a large proportion of students consider daunting prospects, such as making new friends, balancing studies with personal life and the transition from GCSE to A-Level (or similar), A-Level to beyond.



"I'm excited for it but the stress and burnout from GCSEs are still fresh which is kinda offputting."

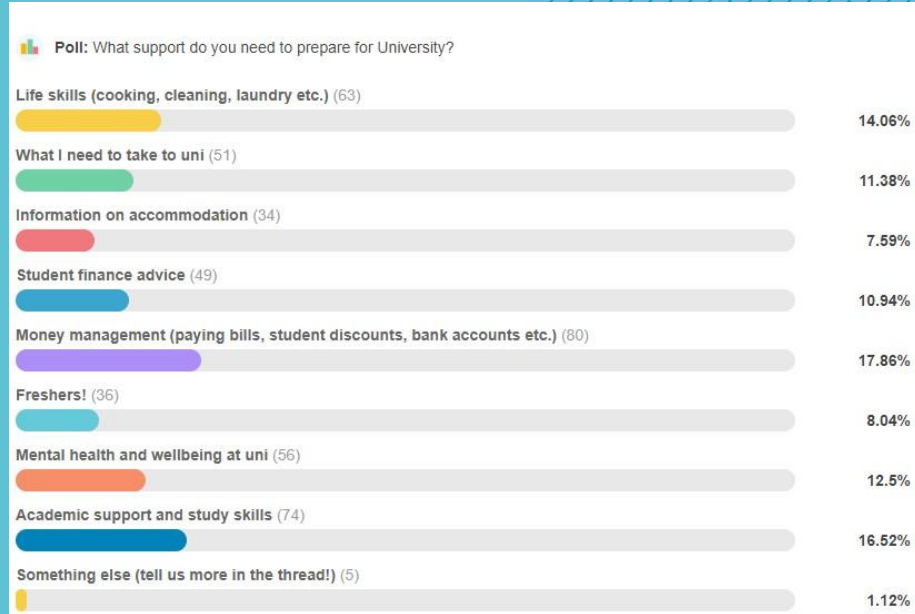
"I'm starting year 12 too, but I'm excited to meet new people and to kinda reinvent myself! :P"

Students need money management support and academic support/study skills to prepare for University

The transition to university is understandably, a daunting prospect for students.

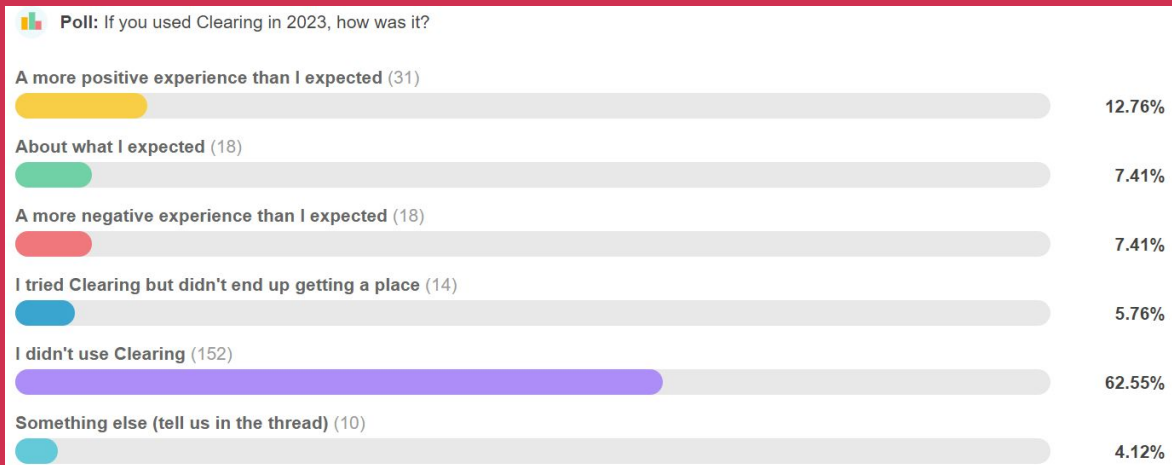
As the majority take the leap into a more independent way of living, 18% of voters felt like they needed more guidance around money management at university and a further 14% wanted support on skills like cooking, cleaning and laundry. These responses show that students across the site are feeling concerned about acquiring crucial life skills that come with independent living and are feeling unequipped to tackle these challenges.

Even though the start of the academic year at Universities was only a few weeks away at the time of the poll, support is still needed and valued in these areas in the coming weeks.



Experiences of Clearing were mixed

While the majority of the TSR community members who voted in this poll hadn't used Clearing, the 34% who did, had varied experiences. This poll also ran last year and had just half the responses in 2022 (126 votes) although results are almost identical. The main difference being 'I tried Clearing but didn't get a place' - last year was 14% and this year just 6%. Not all experiences were positive as our quote shows...



"Probably one of my worst weeks on the planet. Rejection after rejection. I had the grades for their entry requirements and was constantly told there was no space. I was not too much of a fan of my firm choice...ever since results day I've been consistently contacting places but met with the same answer. It's late September now, and my chances have shrunk to essentially 0. They made clearing look simple, yet I had the exact opposite experience."

Mixed feelings on how open days will support decision making

Our open day poll reveals a diverse range of opinions among students regarding their attendance at open days.

A significant portion, **37%**, already have several open days lined up, indicating a proactive approach to exploring their options early on in the academic year. Another **10%** express their intention to attend open days but are still undecided about which ones to visit.

Interestingly, a smaller group of 4% are opting for online open days over in-person ones, possibly due to convenience/accessibility, although relatively small numbers, there is still a need to cater for these students.



Mixed feelings on how open days will support decision making

A substantial 23% of respondents stated that open days are a waste of time, indicating that these particular students are either not considering university as a pathway or require further information on the benefits of attending such events from education providers.

One in ten responded that they find them too expensive, a relatively smaller number than what many would predict with the rising cost of living and continued concerns around this.

These statistics paint a picture of students' diverse attitudes and considerations when it comes to attending open days, highlighting the importance of universities and colleges offering a range of options and advice to accommodate these differing preferences.

"I've been to a couple of open days already and I have a couple more lined up"

"Unfortunately I live in the middle of nowhere, so they're all simply too far away to attend. The closest uni to me is Cambridge, which I have been to, and that's still 2.5 hours away by car."



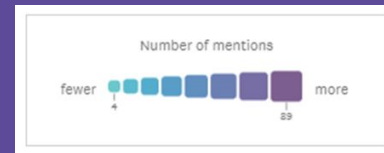
Insight from TSR Asks surveys

TSR Insight: How 2023 entry undergrads feel about starting university



Earlier in this sentiment deck we showed how students across all year groups were feeling ahead of their new academic year. This slide shows responses from just a **2023 undergraduate entry audience** via TSR Asks. In the survey, respondents had mixed feelings about starting university, while many were excited or happy, others were nervous, stressed or anxious.

Q: What one word describes how you feel about starting university? (Open comment)



Methodology: Online survey
Audience: 2023 entry prospective UGs
Fieldwork: 1st – 4th September 2023
Base: 218 responses

TSR Insight: What were the most influential information sources for 2023 entry undergrads uni choices

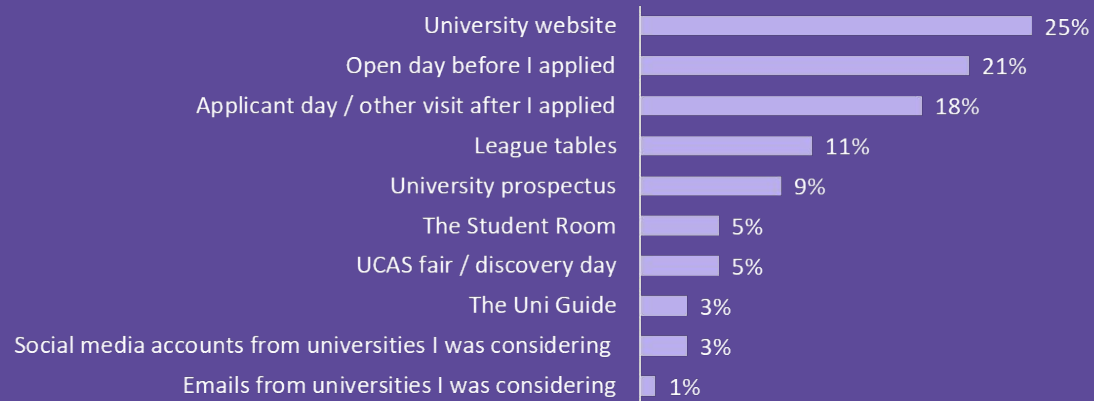


Reflecting back on their information gathering and decision making 2023 entry respondents most frequently identified University websites (25%) as the single most influential information source.

Nearly two-fifths (39%) felt that visits, either Open days before they applied (21%) or Applicant days / other visits after they applied (18%), had been the most influential information when deciding which university to go to.

One in 20 identified The Student Room as the most influential information source when deciding which university to go to.

Q: What was the most influential information deciding on the university you would go to? (Single response)



Methodology: Online survey

Audience: 2023 entry prospective UGs

Fieldwork: 1st – 4th September 2023

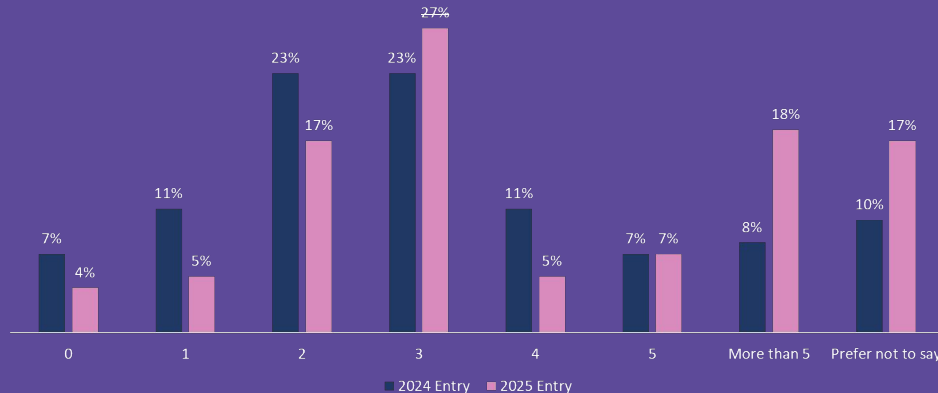
Base: 218 responses

TSR Insight: How many on-campus open days do 2024 and 2025 entry undergraduates plan to attend?



Respondents most frequently planned to attend around three on-campus university open days. 2025 entry respondents were significantly more likely than 2024 entry respondents to be planning to attend **more than five** on-campus university open days in total (18% cf. 8%)

Q: How many on-campus university open days do you plan to attend in total? (Single response)



Methodology: Online survey
Audience: 2024 and 2025 entry prospective UGs
Fieldwork: 1st - 4th September 2023
Base: 362 responses 169 2024 entry, 193 2025 entry)

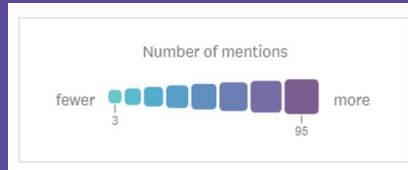


TSR Insight: How 2024/2025 entry undergrads feel about visiting university open days?



Respondents' feelings about visiting university open days varied. Excited was the most frequently used word among both 2024 and 2025 entry respondents. Interested, intrigued and curious were also mentioned.

Q: What one word describes how you feel about visiting university open days? (Open comment)



I think they are good because its different seeing the university on campus than seeing it through a screen. it can really make or break whether you attend the university. (2024 entry)

It's inaccessible to me because I live too far away. (2024 entry)

Excited, however I don't know how I will afford the travel (2024 entry)

However, nervous, apprehensive and anxious also featured for both audiences. Overwhelmed also appeared in the 2024 entry respondents' list.

Methodology: Online survey
Audience: 2024 and 2025 entry prospective UGs
Fieldwork: 1st - 4th September 2023
Base: 277 responses - 138 2024 entry, 139 2025 entry



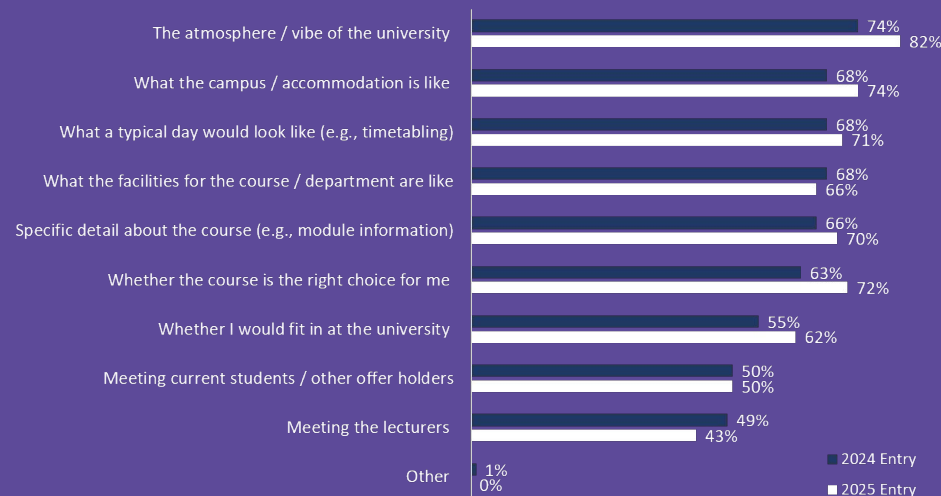


TSR Insight: What 2024/2025 entry undergrads want to find out from on-campus open days

Opinions remained relatively consistent among 2024 and 2025 entry respondents as to the most important things they wanted to find out. Most frequently identified as important by both cohorts were the atmosphere / vibe of the university and what the campus / accommodation is like.

2025 entry respondents were slightly more interested in finding out **whether their course is the right choice for them** (72% cf. 63%), and **whether they would fit in at the university** (62% cf. 55%).

Q: What are the most important things you want to find out from an on-campus open day? Please select all that apply.



Methodology: Online survey

Audience: 2024 and 2025 entry prospective UGs

Fieldwork: 1st - 4th September 2023

Base: 356 responses - 167 2024 entry, 189 2025 entry)