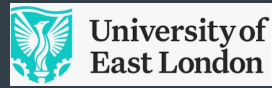


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Jisc

# Supporting the Postgraduate Taught Student Experience using a Pre-arrival Academic Questionnaire

Dr Michelle Morgan, Dean of Students, University of East London

Professor Paul Wakeling, Dean of York Graduate School, University of York



# Aims and Objectives

- +Background and history of the pre-arrival academic questionnaire
- +Rationale and purpose of the pre-arrival academic questionnaire
  - What it is and is not
  - National pilot
- +Key findings from the National Pilot

# Known and unknowns

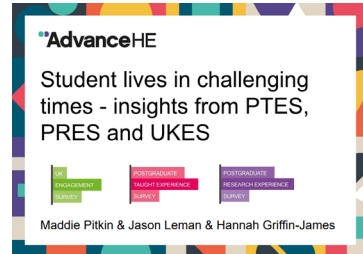


There are known knowns.  
These are things we know that  
we know. There are known  
unknowns. That is to say, there  
are things that we know we  
don't know. But there are also  
unknown unknowns. There are  
things we don't know we don't  
know

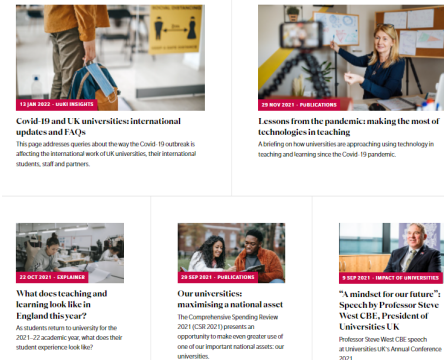
Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense 2001-06, USA

# Background and context: the changing taught postgraduate landscape

# The importance of supporting student transitions



Student Surveys | Advance HE ([advance-he.ac.uk](https://advance-he.ac.uk))



[Covid \(universitiesuk.ac.uk\)](https://universitiesuk.ac.uk)

## TURBOCHARGING THE FUTURE

The Interim Report of the UPP Foundation Student Futures Commission

[Turbocharging the future \(upp-foundation.org\)](https://upp-foundation.org)

UCAS



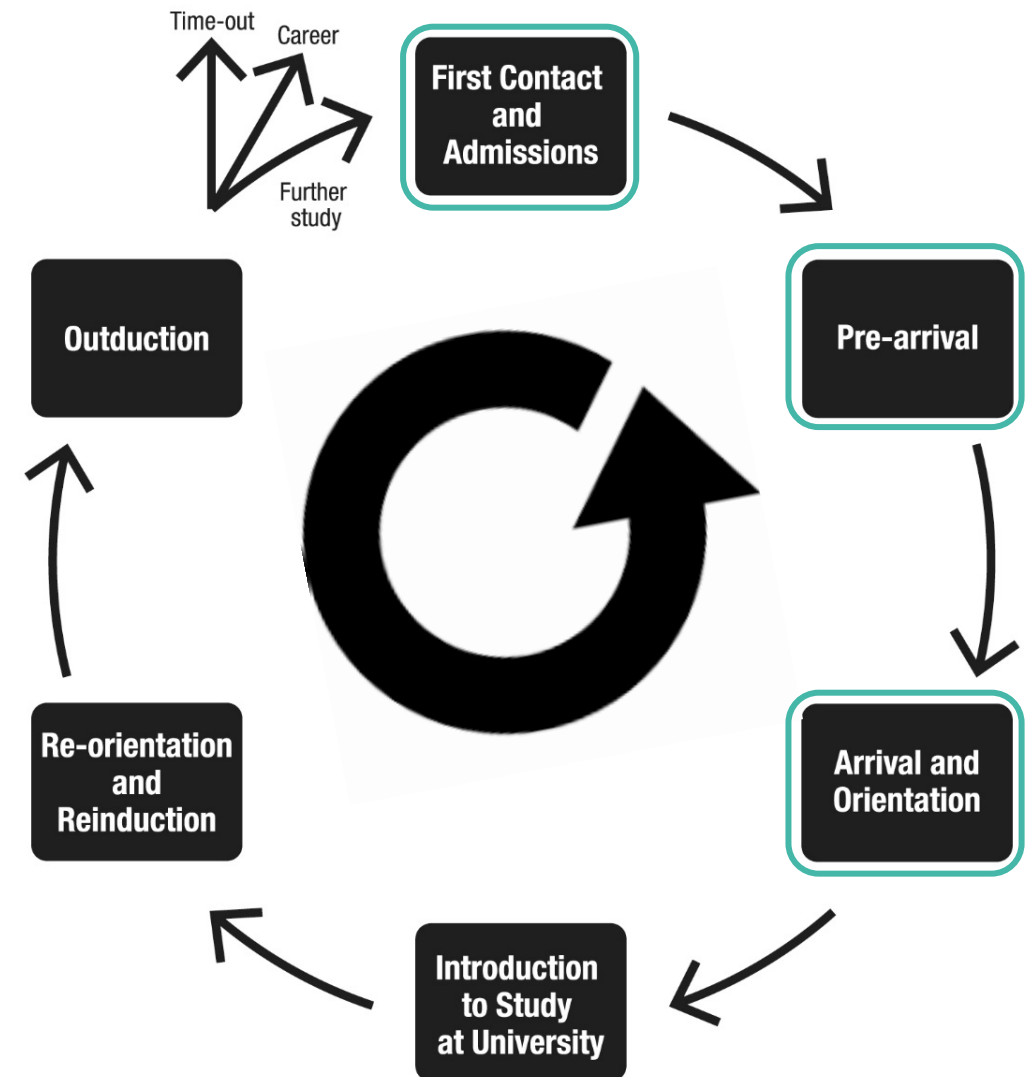
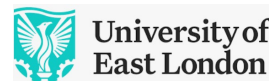
[Data and analysis | UCAS](#)

## Students' perceptions of belonging and inclusion at university

February 2022

AdvanceHE

[Belonging-and-inclusion-survey-Wonkhe-Pearson-Feb-22.pdf](#)



[Improving the Student Experience - Official Website](#)



# The journey to where we are now

Wakeling, P. (2005) La noblesse d'état anglaise? Social class and progression to postgraduate study. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 26 (4), 505-22.

Wakeling, P. (2009) Social Class and Access to Postgraduate Education in the UK: A sociological analysis PhD Thesis, Manchester: The University of Manchester

Wakeling, P. and Hampden-Thompson, G. (2013) Transition to higher degrees across the UK: an analysis of national, institutional and individual differences, York: HEA.

Morgan, M. (2007) Barriers to Postgraduate Study, paper presented at the *National Postgraduate Committee Annual Conference*, 10 April, Keele: University of Keele.

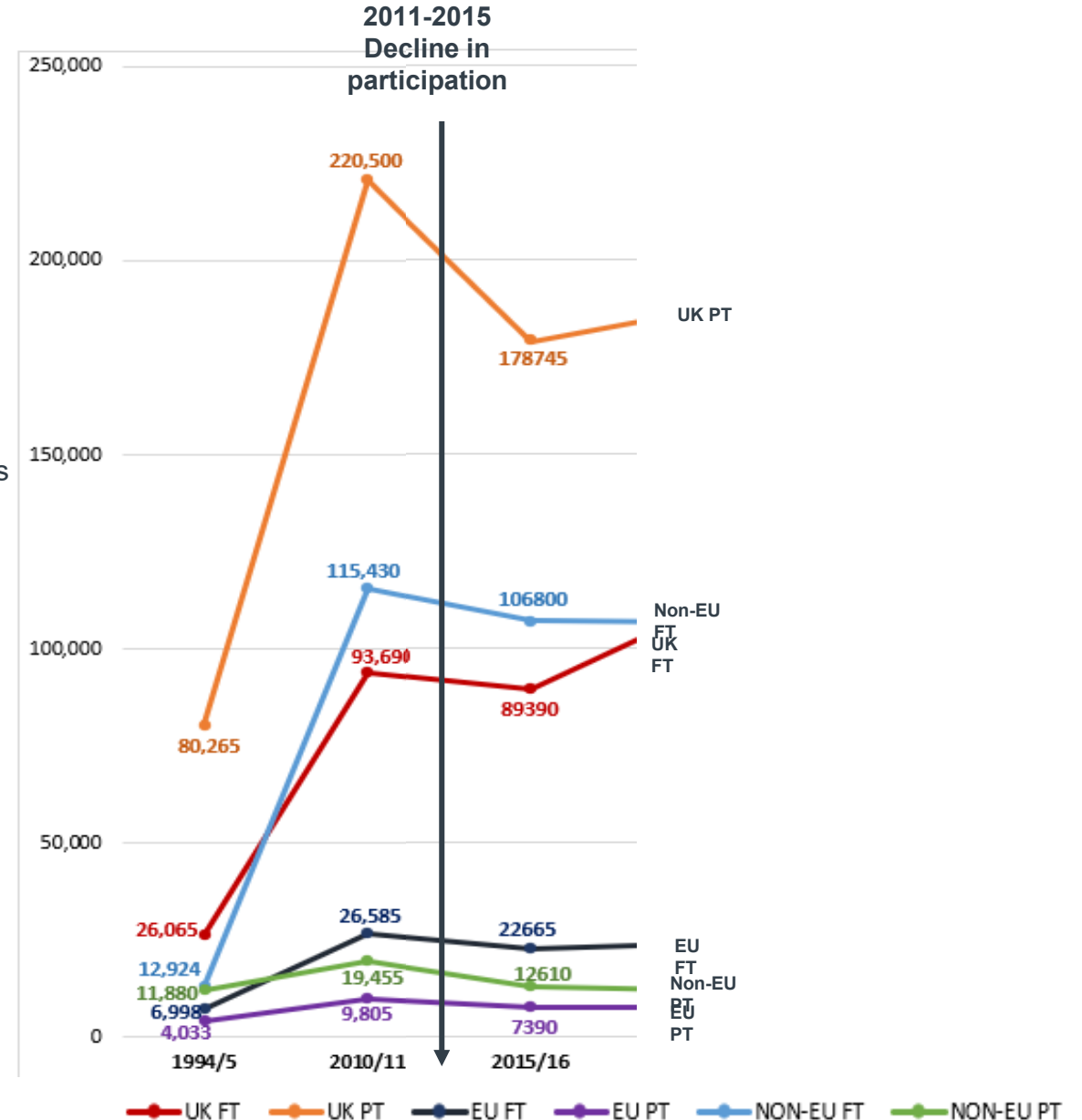
Morgan, M. and Wakeling, P. (2007) Widening participation in postgraduate Study, paper presented at the *Promoting excellence in HE management-the Annual Conference and Exhibition of the Association of University Administrators (AUA)*, 2-4 April, Nottingham: University of Nottingham.

Morgan, M. (2013a) Individual Project Report - Understanding prior feedback experiences of new postgraduate taught (PGT) STEM students' and their expectations and attitudes towards PGT level study at a 1992 institution, York: HEA.

## All PGT enrolments (including masters, PGCE and Other PG)

HESA student figures include student remains active for **more than two weeks** after their engagement start date or the subsequent anniversary of that date.

- Up to 2010/11 increase in overall enrolments
- Growth was in OS (Non-EU) participation
- UK domiciled growth substantially declining especially part-time = dominant mode of participation
- 2011/12 start of decline across all domiciled groups and modes of study



# The journey to where we are now

## HEFCE Phase 1

20 projects funded  
£25m in funding

## HEFCE Phase 2

Introduction of £10K grants

Programme Analysis of HEFCE's Postgraduate  
Support Scheme: Final Report to ESRC and HEFCE  
- York Research Database

**Introduction of PG Loan 2016**

PAQ formalised through the 11 University,  
£2.7m HEFCE funded Phase 1 Postgraduate  
Experience Project

(called Entry to Study Survey)



**Widening and sustaining postgraduate taught (PGT)  
STEM study in the UK: a collaborative project**  
Creating change through understanding expectations and attitudes towards  
PGT study, experiences and post-study outcomes from the perspective of  
applicants, students, universities and employers.

Analysed and written by Michelle Morgan and Ines Direito  
Edited by Michelle Morgan

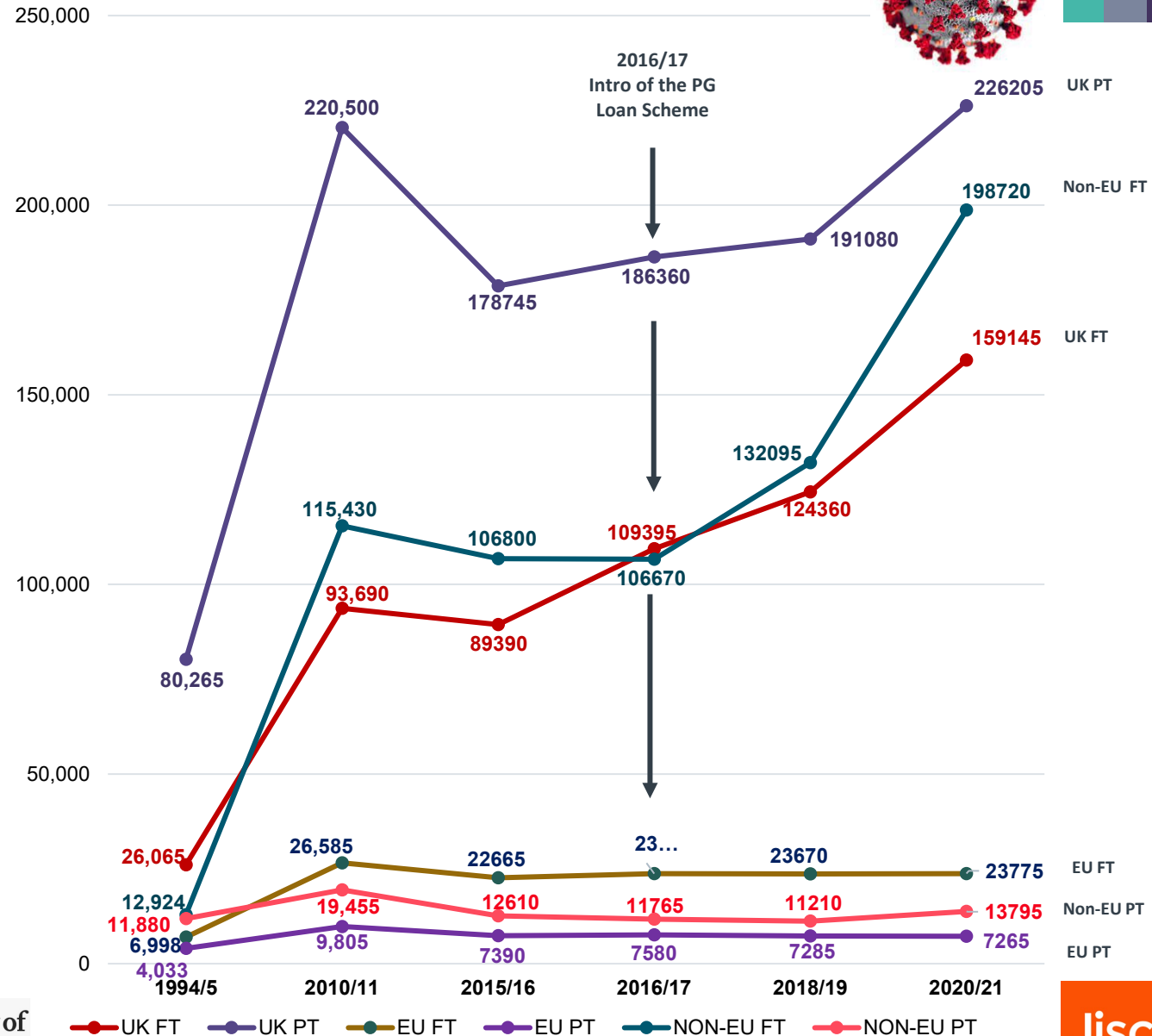


Postgraduate Experience Report Final.pdf

# Who participates in PGT Study?

## ALL PGT enrolments (including masters, PGCE and Other PG)

- PG Loan introduced 2016/17
- PG Loan availability
  - UK and Wales- Only masters
  - Scotland-PGDip and masters
  - NI-PG Cert/Dip and masters (taught/research)
- Immediate increase in UK domiciled participation (orange, red)
- EU full and part-time participation is consistent over 30-year period (purple, dark blue)
- Non-EU full-time study is dominant mode (light blue)
- Increase in participation between 2016/17 and 2020/21:
  - Non-EU FT = 86.3%
  - UK FT = 45.5%
  - UK PT = 21.4%
- Across all types of PGT study part-time mode for UK domiciled remains dominant



# Level and type of study- All UK enrolments

Country of HE provider  Entrant marker  Mode of study   
 Sex  Permanent address

|                                               | 2020/21        | 2021/22        | 2022/23        | 2023/24        | 2024/25        |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Postgraduate</b>                           |                |                |                |                |                |
| Doctorate research                            | 30,120         | 28,100         | 27,895         | 29,210         | 29,365         |
| Other postgraduate research                   | 5,800          | 5,170          | 4,610          | 4,715          | 8,185          |
| Institutional credit at postgraduate research | 170            | 325            | 100            | 85             | 80             |
| <b>Total postgraduate research</b>            | <b>36,095</b>  | <b>33,600</b>  | <b>32,605</b>  | <b>34,010</b>  | <b>37,630</b>  |
| Master's taught                               | 334,495        | 377,120        | 439,365        | 403,230        | 379,840        |
| Postgraduate Certificate in Education         | 29,870         | 26,230         | 19,870         | 18,130         | 19,125         |
| Other postgraduate taught                     | 54,565         | 56,965         | 56,325         | 57,760         | 56,080         |
| Institutional credit at postgraduate taught   | 27,940         | 32,775         | 32,985         | 35,145         | 31,940         |
| <b>Total postgraduate taught</b>              | <b>446,875</b> | <b>493,090</b> | <b>548,545</b> | <b>514,265</b> | <b>486,985</b> |
| <b>Total postgraduate</b>                     | <b>482,965</b> | <b>526,685</b> | <b>581,150</b> | <b>548,275</b> | <b>524,615</b> |

Country of HE provider  Entrant marker  Mode of study   
 Sex  Permanent address

|                                               | 2020/21        | 2021/22        | 2022/23        | 2023/24        | 2024/25        |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Postgraduate</b>                           |                |                |                |                |                |
| Doctorate research                            | 13,345         | 11,960         | 12,145         | 12,850         | 12,815         |
| Other postgraduate research                   | 1,935          | 2,080          | 1,790          | 1,910          | 5,425          |
| Institutional credit at postgraduate research | 90             | 240            | 85             | 70             | 60             |
| <b>Total postgraduate research</b>            | <b>15,370</b>  | <b>14,275</b>  | <b>14,015</b>  | <b>14,830</b>  | <b>18,305</b>  |
| Master's taught                               | 179,875        | 244,900        | 315,955        | 283,485        | 254,820        |
| Postgraduate Certificate in Education         | 885            | 765            | 745            | 1,035          | 930            |
| Other postgraduate taught                     | 4,685          | 5,075          | 4,895          | 5,000          | 5,580          |
| Institutional credit at postgraduate taught   | 1,615          | 1,745          | 1,655          | 1,600          | 1,600          |
| <b>Total postgraduate taught</b>              | <b>187,060</b> | <b>252,485</b> | <b>323,250</b> | <b>291,115</b> | <b>262,930</b> |
| <b>Total postgraduate</b>                     | <b>202,435</b> | <b>266,765</b> | <b>337,265</b> | <b>305,945</b> | <b>281,235</b> |

2021/22 pivotal year  
Non-EU Master participation  
surpassed UK

**PGT 2024/5**  
*FT* 298,120  
*PT* 108,695

UK

1. India  
2. China  
3. Asia

UK  
HESA

EU

1. China  
2. Ukraine  
3. Asia

EU  
EUROSTAT

# Introducing the Pre-Arrival Academic Questionnaire (PAQ)

# Purpose and scope of the National PAQ Pilot



There are a range of overarching objectives for this OfS EOO Innovation funded project.

- **To establish consistency** in how the sector collects and acts upon information from students upon arrival around their learning styles, expectations, challenges and requirements.
- **To drive dedicated activity at local level** to close the gap between expectations, requirements and the actual experience upon arrival.
- **To provide robust data-led evidence** to enable institutions to address inconsistencies in how different groups of students (for example by social background, qualification type, geography and demographics) begin their learning and develop a platform to progress to good outcomes.
- **To create a fuller understanding** across the sector of the Pre-arrival experience, providing evidence for wider policy making and cross-sector activity.
- **Support providers** in delivering a range of practical outcomes across different student groups, including improved wellbeing and belonging, improved continuation and attainment. Earlier and preventative intervention should further contribute to higher progression to further study or employment.

# Methodology

- Institutions run the survey with our support, in Jisc Online Surveys using a master template
- 15 Institutions took part in Phase 1 with 13 undertaking the PGT PAQ
- Year 1: **5,548** undergraduate responses
- Year 1: **2,285** postgraduate responses
- Pre arrival activity **and/or** Post arrival in-class activity
- Institutions own their data / Delivery partners own the combined data
- Institutional results immediately available in Jisc
- Detailed benchmarking comparisons provided to each institution by Advance HE
- Ethical approval obtained via UEL for wider analysis, articles and blogs by sector experts

# **Year 1 – PAQ selected key findings**

**What would you do if you knew this?**

**Does it confirm or shatter your assumptions?**

# Visits to a university before making their choice



Abbreviations      All= whole dataset, CG= Comparison Group, 1U= one Uni

Year achieved highest entry qualification for PGT study

Visits to universities by applicants before choosing and starting their course

|      | All | CG  | 1U  |    | All UG | 1U  | All PGT | 1U  |
|------|-----|-----|-----|----|--------|-----|---------|-----|
| 2025 | 20% | 26% | 17% | 0  | 29%    | 42% | 71%     | 73% |
| 2024 | 19% | 14% | 22% | 1  | 21%    | 21% | 16%     | 14% |
| 2023 | 15% | 12% | 16% | 2  | 21%    | 19% | 7%      | 8%  |
| 2022 | 9%  | 8%  | 10% | 3  | 15%    | 11% | 5%      | 4%  |
|      |     |     |     | 4+ | 14%    | 6%  | 1%      | 1%  |

Reasons

- I am an international student, but I looked at the institution online 64%
- I am an international student, but I looked at the institution through social media 26%

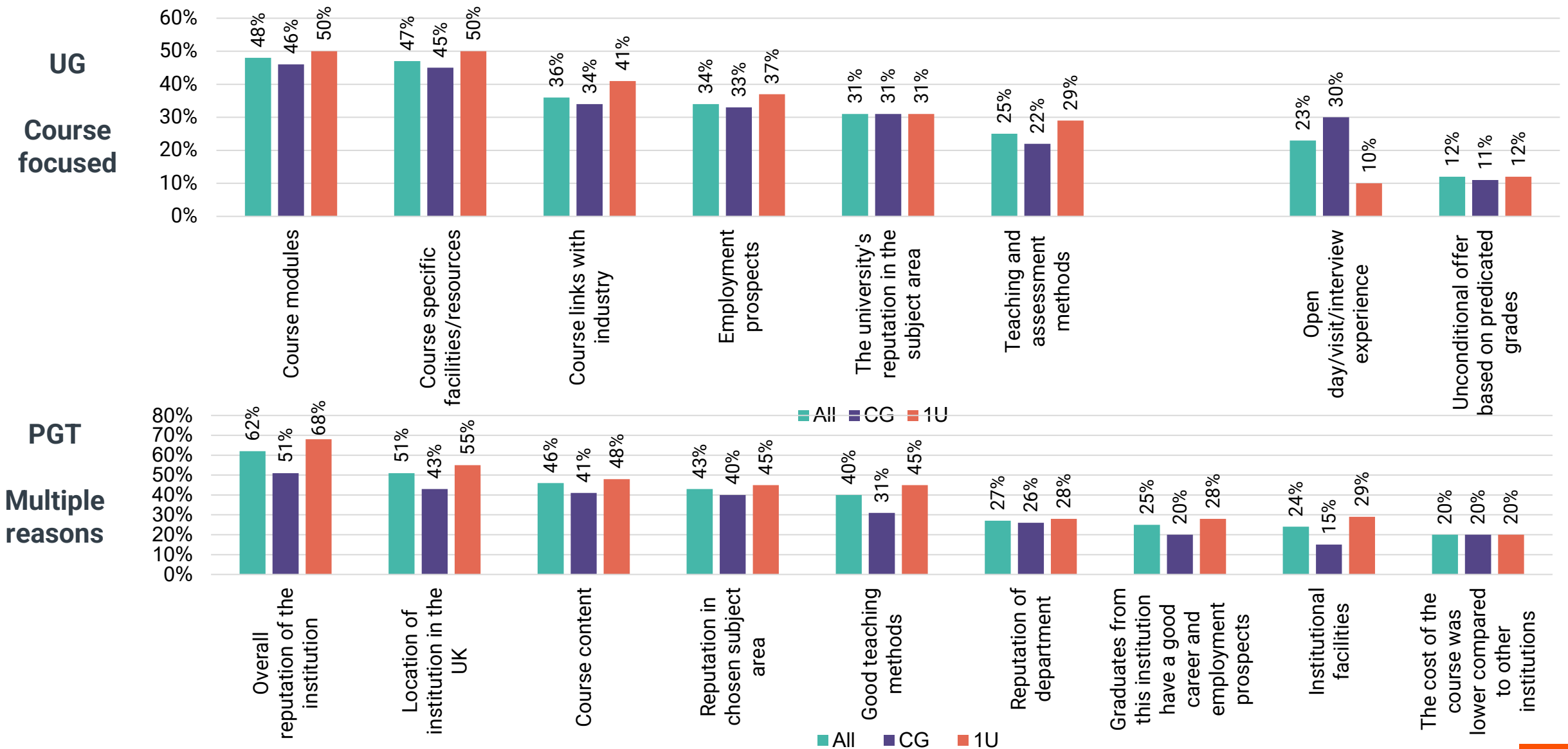
# Reasons for doing a PGT course



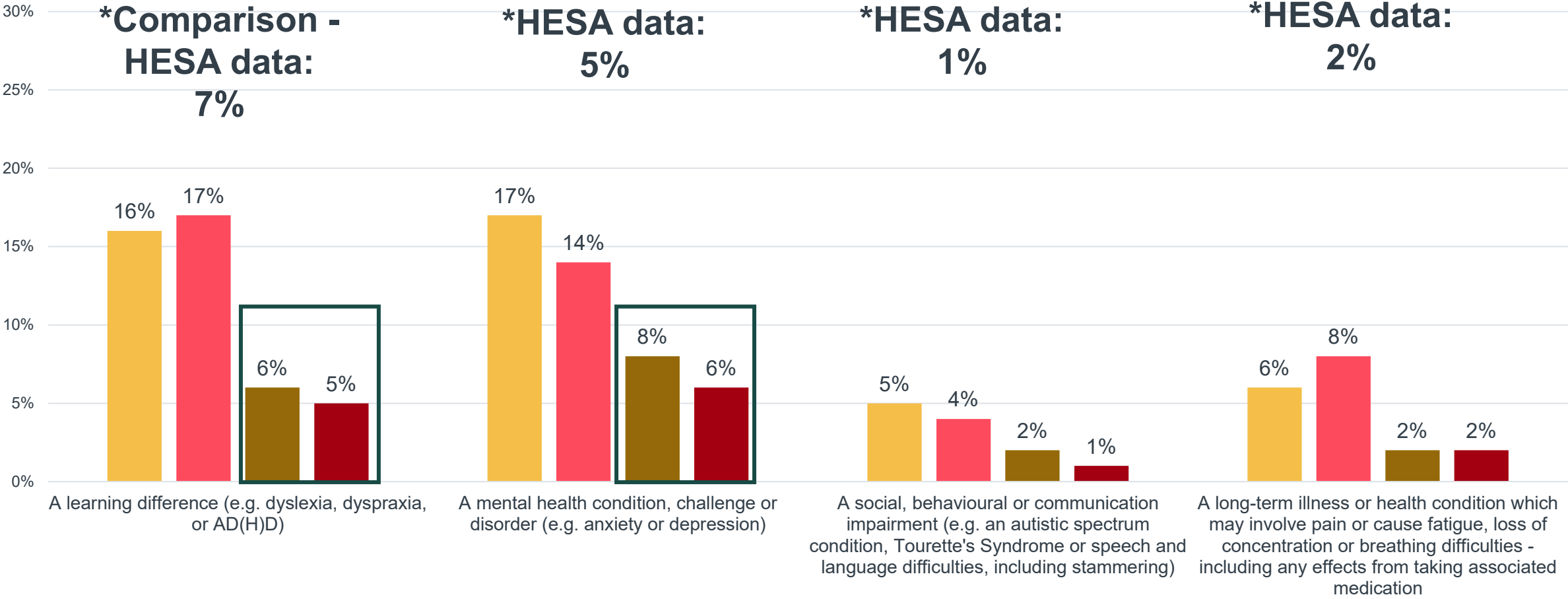
| UG                                  |     | PGT                                |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|
|                                     |     |                                    |     |
| I was interested in the subject     | 70% | To follow my career ambitions      | 54% |
| To follow my career ambitions       | 65% | To develop professional networks   | 46% |
| I wanted to continue studying       | 49% | To progress in my current career   | 43% |
| To get a higher paid job            | 30% | To improve my employment prospects | 41% |
| To improve my employments prospects | 29% | To get a higher paid job           | 33% |

**PGT very career focused**

# Reasons for choosing the course



# Prevalence of disabilities via PAQ is higher than officially declared data – and much higher for home students



*\*Table 15 - UK permanent address student enrolments by disability and sex 2014/15 to 2024/25 | HESA*

■ UG UK   ■ PGT UK   ■ UG Non-UK   ■ PGT Non-UK

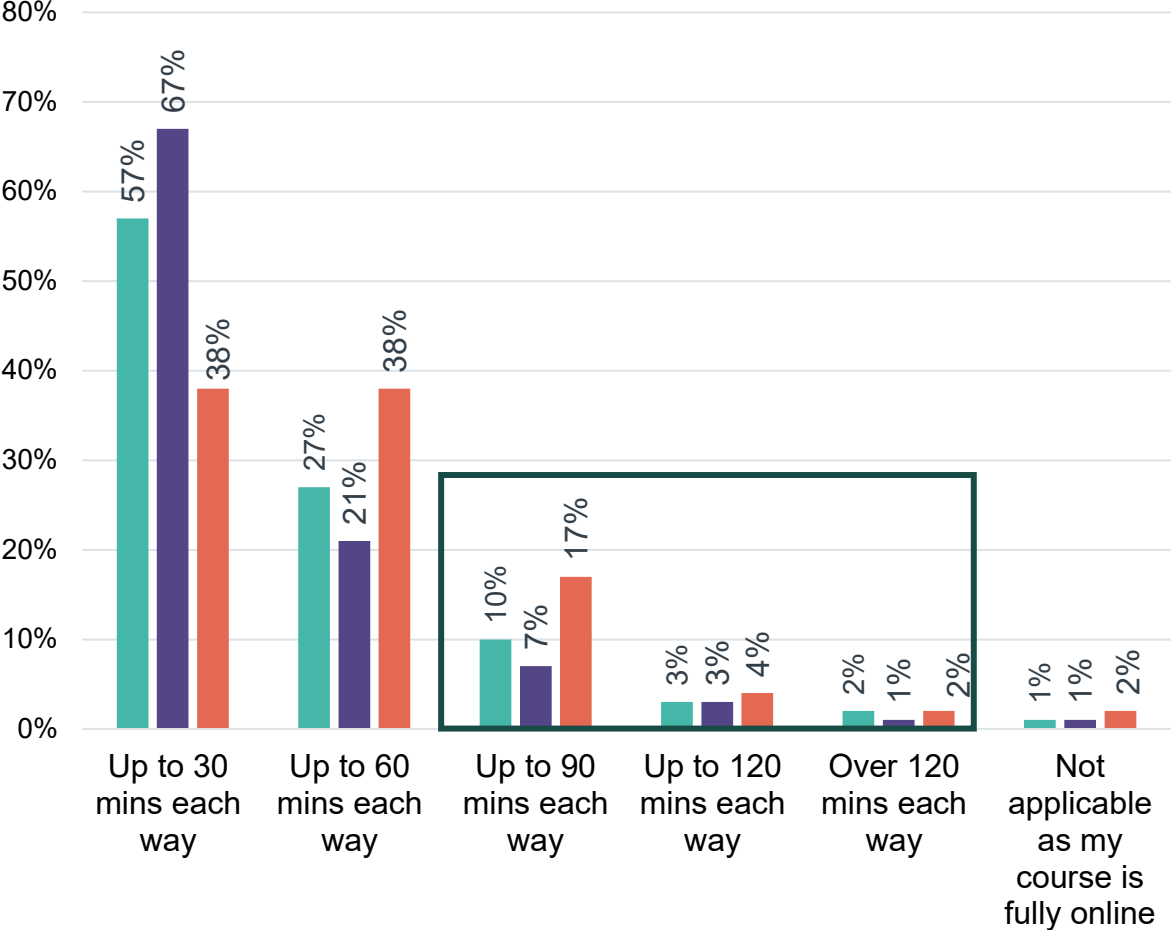
# A large proportion of students on entry hold multiple financial concerns

| UG top 10 concerns                                   |            | PGT top 10 concerns                                      |            |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Cost of living</b>                                | <b>55%</b> | <b>Cost of living</b>                                    | <b>68%</b> |
| Coping with the level of study                       | 48%        | Coping with the level of study                           | 64%        |
| Fitting in with new classmates                       | 42%        | Fitting in with new classmates                           | 54%        |
| <b>Getting into debt</b>                             | <b>42%</b> | Lack of information about how to study at university     | 52%        |
| Lack of information about how to study at university | 41%        | <b>Mental health and wellbeing</b>                       | <b>50%</b> |
| <b>Sufficient funding</b>                            | <b>39%</b> | <b>Cost of travel to university</b>                      | <b>49%</b> |
| Getting on with fellow students                      | 37%        | <b>Sufficient funding</b>                                | <b>49%</b> |
| <b>Cost of travel to university</b>                  | <b>36%</b> | Concerns about knowledge gaps due to prior learning      | 44%        |
| <b>Mental health and wellbeing</b>                   | 36%        | Getting back into study as been out of study for a while | 44%        |
| <b>Lack of confidence in my ability</b>              | 35%        | <b>Getting into debt</b>                                 | <b>44%</b> |

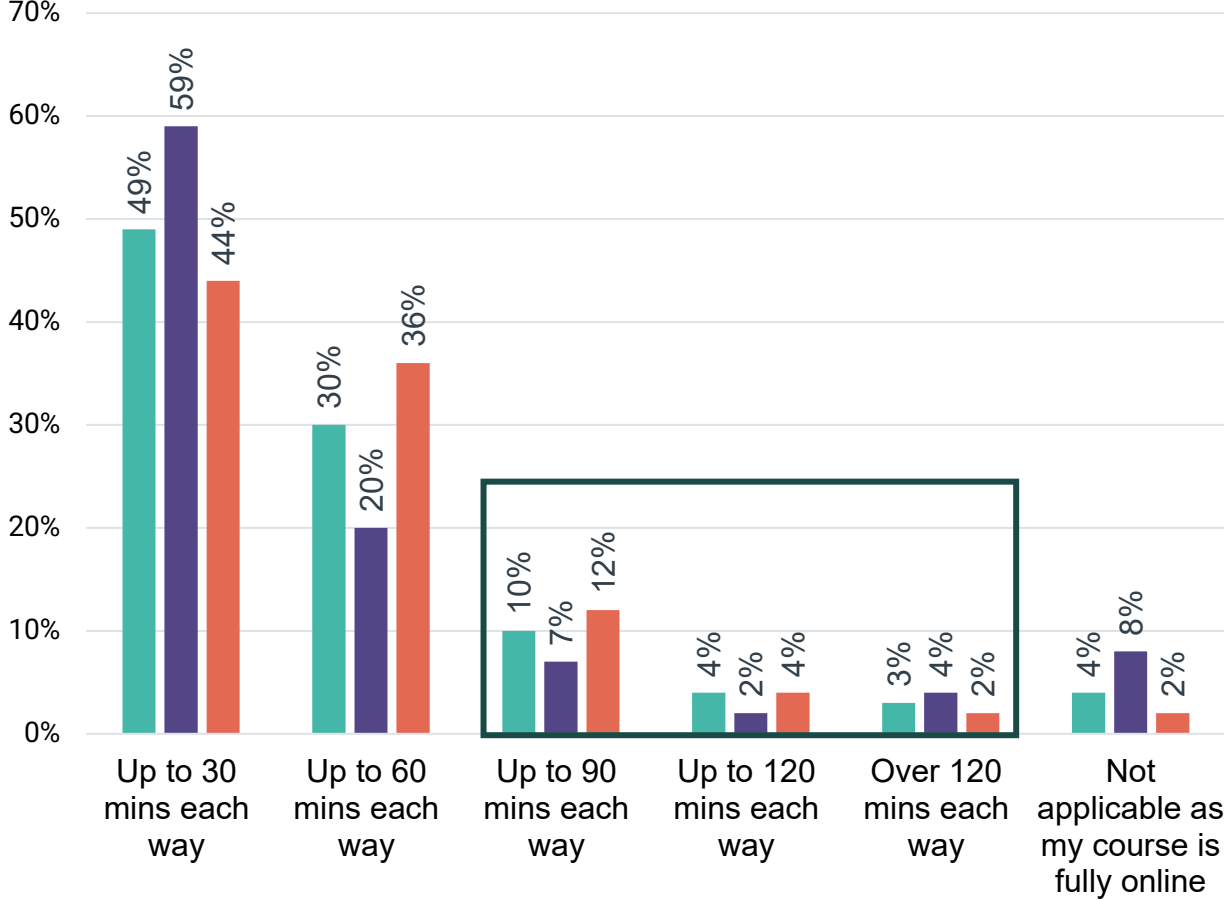
# A significant minority face a long commute – how do on-campus services adapt to this?



## UG



## PGT

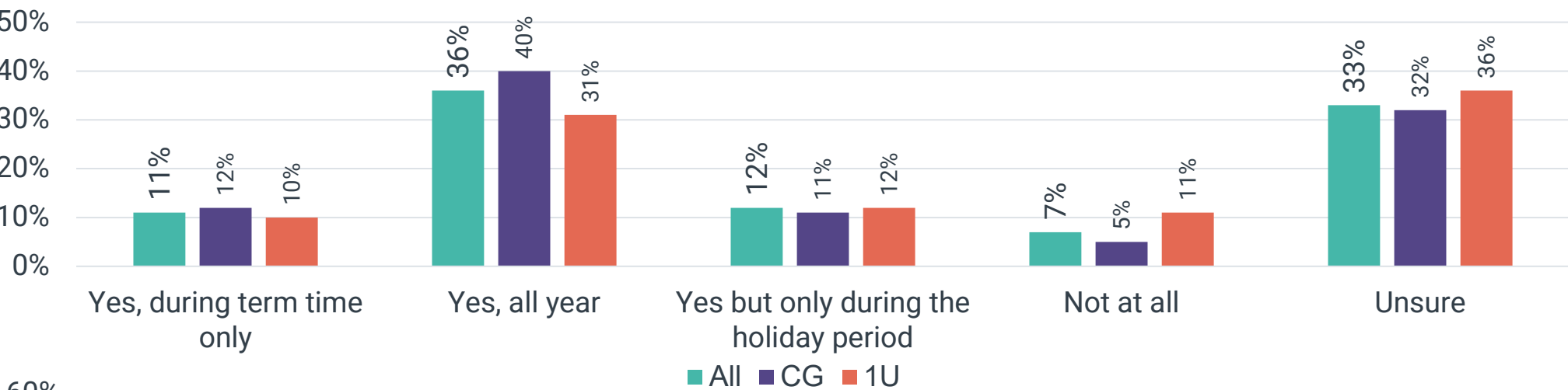


■ All ■ CG ■ 1U

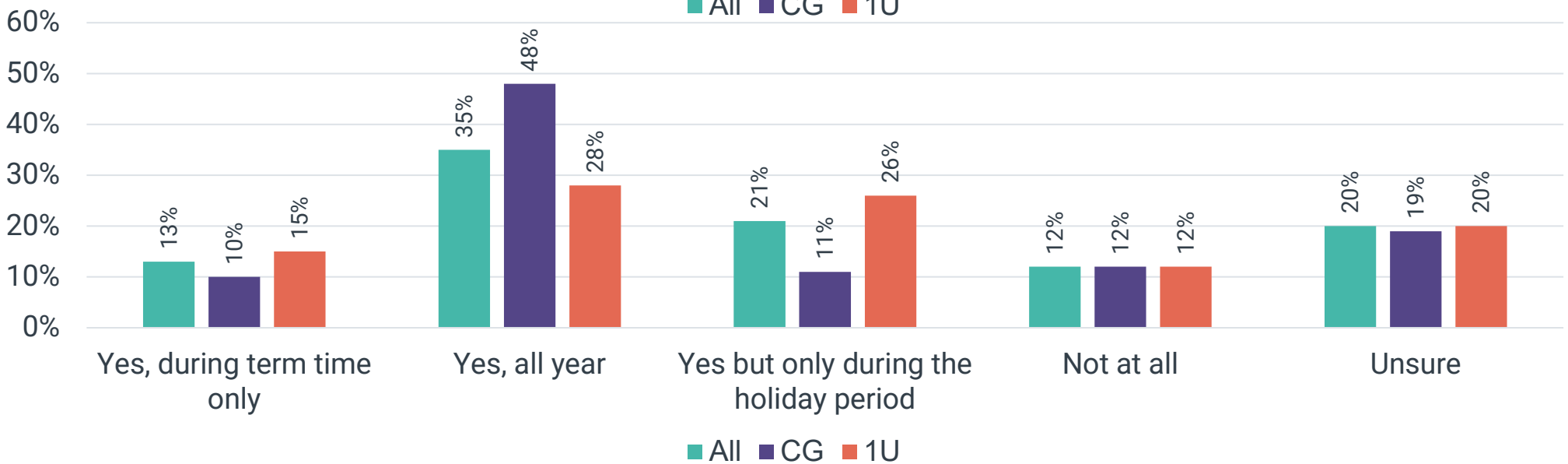
■ All ■ CG ■ 1U

# Paid work intentions are similar for UG and PG

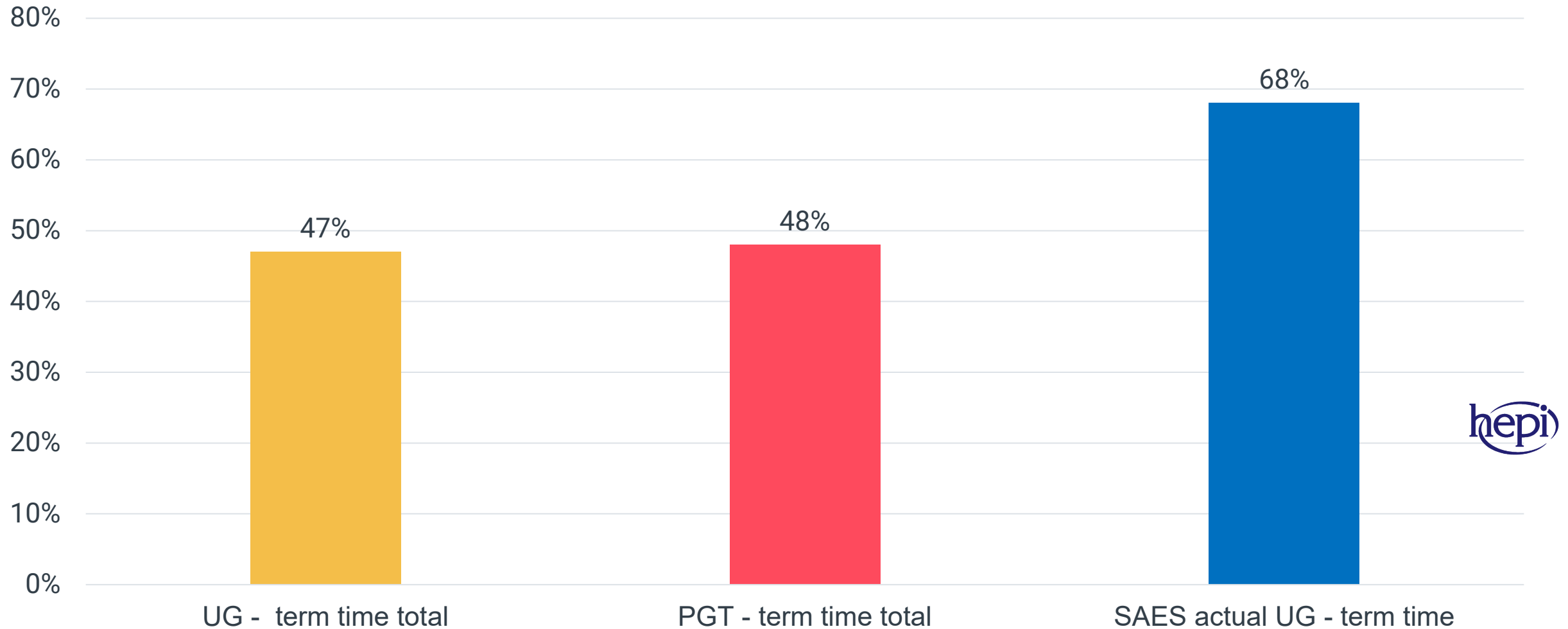
UG



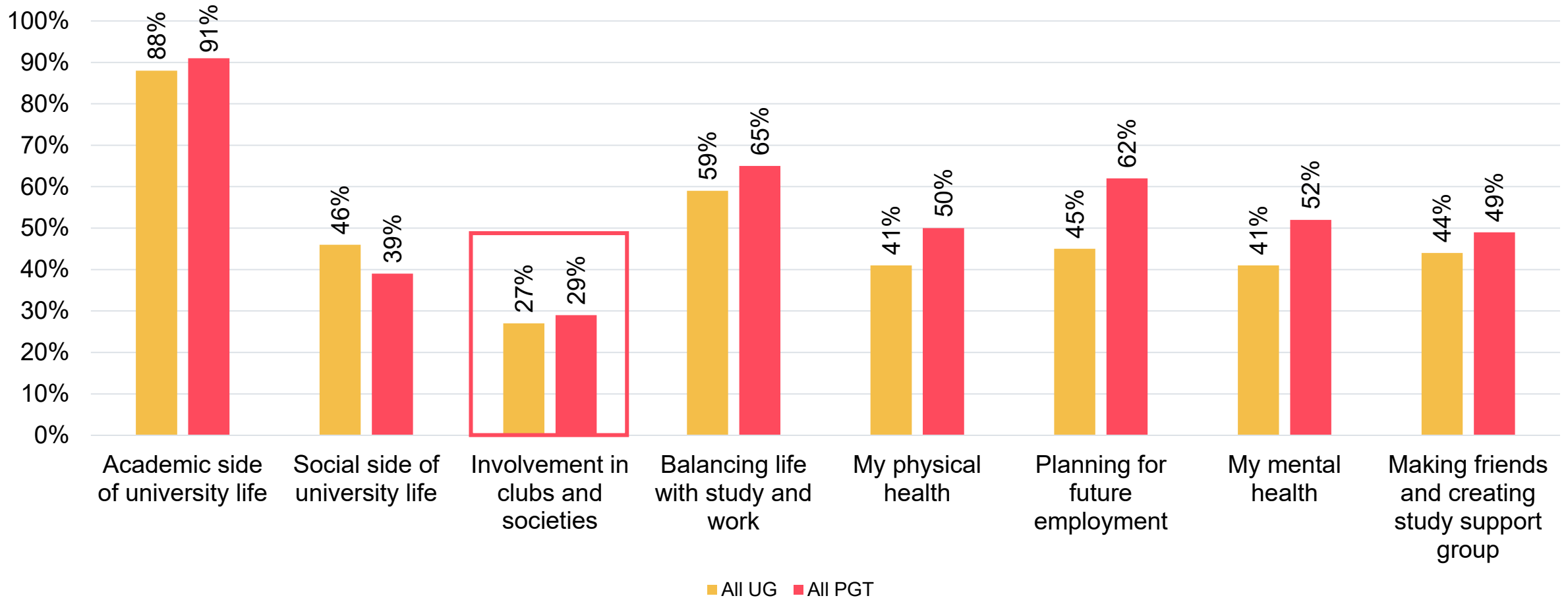
PGT



# Based on data from the Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES), paid work intentions may end up being underestimated

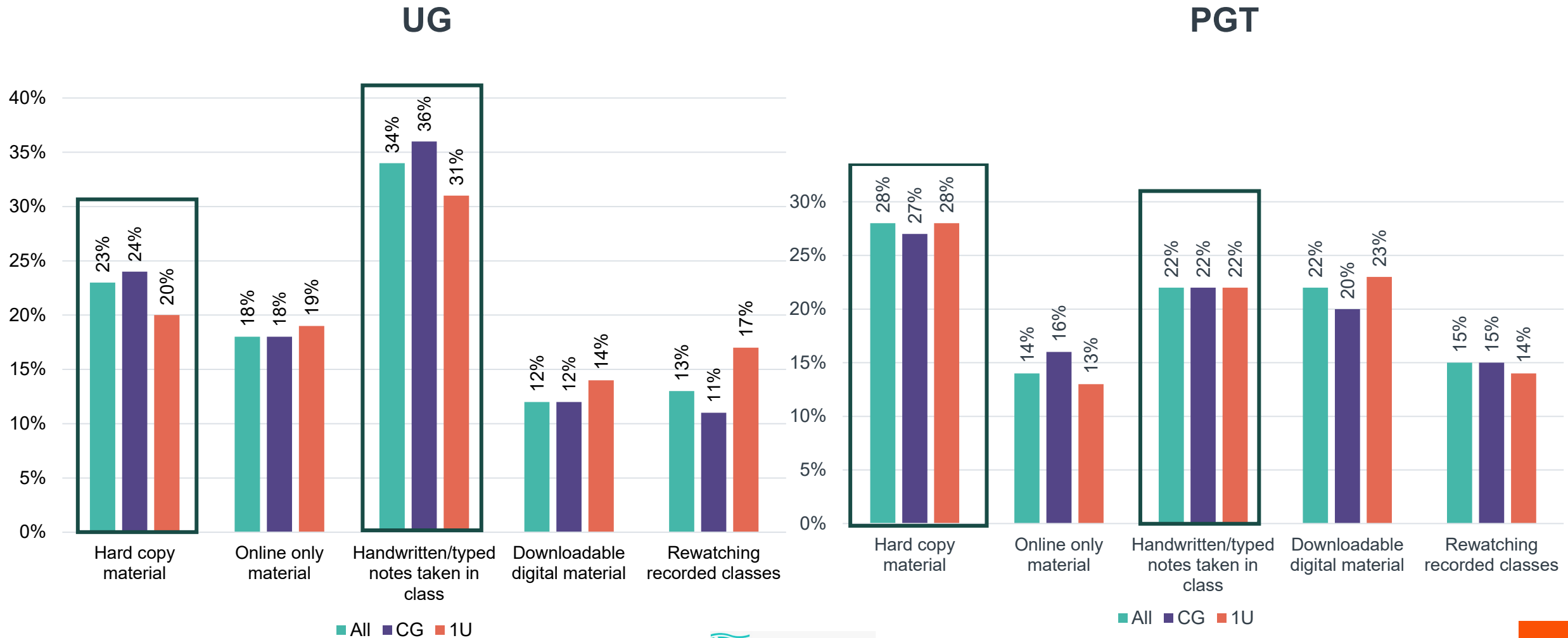


# Priorities for the coming year



# Learning material preference

*Highest is for hard copy and learning notes*



“We were delighted to participate in the PAQ pilot, which has yielded significant insights into the experiences of our latest cohort. While some Data points confirmed our existing assumptions, the findings have also highlighted several nuanced trends we hadn’t previously expected. The resulting report has been exceptionally well-received across the institution, and we are already moving to action these findings to ensure we are continuing to provide the highest-level of support and encouragement for our students”

**Clare Hutton, Data and Visa Manager, Norland**

To request free participation in year 2 please contact:

- [jonathan.neves@advance-he.ac.uk](mailto:jonathan.neves@advance-he.ac.uk)

Or alternatively please fill in the survey form accessible below or scan the QR code

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/advance-he/pre-arrival-questionnaire-paq-national-pilot-wave-2-request>



**Open to Scotland and Wales for phase 2**

# Questions & Discussion