

WHAT YOU SAID

Thank you to everyone who completed the Master's Pre-arrival Academic Questionnaire last month. The aim of the questionnaire was twofold. Firstly, it was designed for you to reflect on your previous learning and teaching experiences and your expectations of studying at postgraduate Master's Level. Secondly, your responses have helped identify what academic and non-academic support could be helpful to you and your cohort and this information will be used to enhance your overall Master's student experience. The key basic findings are listed below. Where you have expressed a concern, there is an advice box pointing you to where you can get further support and advice. Your comments reflect the findings in previous surveys illustrating that Master's students share similar worries, concerns and past experiences so do not think that you are alone!

Reasons for undertaking a Master's degree

The top four reasons you cited for undertaking a postgraduate qualification were that you were *'interested in the subject'*, followed by you wanted to *'develop a more specialist set of skills and knowledge'*, then to *'improve your employment prospects'* followed by you wanted to *'develop a broader range of skills and knowledge'*.

ADVICE Improving your career prospects is very important to you! You can get dedicated advice and support on careers and employability from The Edge Student Development Centre which is next to the Library on the Talbot Campus. You can:

- Book an appointment via <http://mycareerhub.bournemouth.ac.uk>
- Visit <http://studentportal.bournemouth.ac.uk/career/>
- Email us at careers@bournemouth.ac.uk
- Telephone the Edge 01202 961663

Reasons for choosing Bournemouth University to do your Master's study

The top four reasons for choosing Bournemouth University for your Master's degree are the *'course content'* followed by *'reputation in the subject area'* then *'location'* followed by *'overall reputation of the university'*.

Fees and funding

For 70% of you, fee levels were a *'very important'* (27%) or *'important'* (43%) factor in your decision making process when deciding where to study. Many of you are funding your studies in a variety of ways. *'Parents and guardians'* are helping 41.5% of you fund your studies, 47% are using *'savings'*, 32% are using a *'salary or personal income'*, 69% of you have a *'loan (government student loan/bank loan)'* and 28% are in receipt of a *'university scholarship'*.

ADVICE If you are concerned about funding issues you can get advice and support on your fees from ASKBU at The Base in Poole House at Talbot Campus or The Library in Bournemouth House at Lansdowne. The opening times are Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 6pm, *Bournemouth House closes at 5pm and Fridays 8.30am - 4.30pm. Please note that Wednesday is closed for staff training between 2pm - 3.30pm. As well as visiting them, you can call them on +44 (0)1202 969696 and email them on askbu@bournemouth.ac.uk. There are also useful online FAQs for students.

You can also get money management advice available from the Students Union. They have a drop-in service 2.00pm to 4.00pm each week day in SC202 or you can book an appointment to talk an Advice Worker by calling +22 (0)1202 965779. You can also email them at: subuadvice@bournemouth.ac.uk. SUBU offer face-to-face appointments as well as phone appointments.

Expectations

Your expectations of studying at Master's level on entry were that you expect to study in a *'more independent way'*, and *'receive more individualised study than you experienced at undergraduate level'*. The skills you hope to obtain through undertaking your programme are to *'gain more specialist knowledge'* (41%) and to *'widen your knowledge'* (41%). In terms of knowing *'what to expect'* when studying at Master's level, 60% of you are *'unsure or do not know what to expect'*.

ADVICE As part of your course, your programme leader will explain to you what to expect at Master's level and importantly how to study effectively to get the most out of your programme. If you are unhappy about any part of your postgraduate experience, talk to your programme leader in the first instance. If you have an academic issue regarding a unit, talk to the unit leader. Most issues can be resolved at this level. You can also ask your Student Representative (the student who represents the views of the programme) to raise any issues at the relevant Faculty Meetings to register your concerns if they are not resolved by your programme or unit leader.

Your main concerns

Starting anything new such as embarking on a programme of study can cause anxiety. Your two main concerns in starting your studies are *'coping with the level of study required at Master's level'* with 93% of you being 'very anxious or anxious' and having a *'lack of confidence about your study ability'* with 81% of you feeling 'very anxious or anxious'.

ADVICE Feeling anxious is very normal. Master's students have busy and complex lives so balancing study and life outside of university can be challenging. It is important that you speak to SOMEONE if you are worried so that you can be effectively supported. This can include your unit or programme leader and the Student Support Team within the Faculty. You can also get support from the Student' Union and other University central support services. Most issues can be effectively addressed if done promptly. A range of university support services are listed at the end of this leaflet where you can obtain advice and support.

Understanding what is meant by the term 'Feedback'

You understand what is meant by the term feedback in relation to your academic work progress and guidance to improvement.

ADVICE 'Feedback' is not just about giving you feedback on your work but you providing us with feedback about your experience. One of the ways we do this at BU for your programme is via the Mid Unit Student Experience Surveys (MUSE). We ask you to give feedback once a semester on each unit. It is essential that we provide you with a satisfactory response to your comments. This approach is embedded in the University's learning strategy. If you do not feel that you have had adequate academic feedback, please raise the issue with the unit or programme leader.

Study and academic feedback preferences

For over 62% of you, your study preference is a *'mix of independent and group study'*. The most popular preferences for receiving feedback on your work are *'ongoing informal conversations with your tutor outside of class'* followed by *'comments on written or assessed work'* then *'ongoing informal feedback during lessons'*.

ADVICE As a postgraduate student, you will be exposed to different learning styles and expected to study in a more independent way. However, group working is a critical activity as it helps students develop and enhance a range of skills such team working to generate ideas, initiatives and solutions and critical thinking. Learning at Master's level is different to studying at undergraduate level because your aim is to 'master' your subject. If there is something you do not understand or agree with, it is important that you ask your unit or programme leader. Do use the feedback, advice and guidance to help you with future assignments.

Your perceived academic strengths and weaknesses

Many of you state that you feel you have 'very strong', 'strong' or 'adequate' academic skills. However, quite a few of you are concerned about some of your study skills with 12% of you feeling that you have a 'very weak or weak' *'knowledge of the subject that you will be studying'* and 34% of you feel that you have 'very weak or weak' *'numeracy skills'*.

ADVICE Your academic skill base will be shaped by where you have previously studied and your previous learning experience. Every student is different and you will have your own preference to how you study. However, it is important to engage with the different learning approaches on your course. If you are concerned about any of your academic skills there is help available so DON'T PANIC!

If you feel you need extra support the **Library and Learning Support** team offer a range of face-to-face Study Skills Workshops and online activities for you to work through at your own pace that you can access via the Study Skills area in Brightspace. Topics include: Literature searching, Reading and notetaking, Essay planning, Critical Thinking, Reflective writing, BU Harvard referencing, Using EndNote, Presentation skills, Time management, Academic writing style, Revision and exam techniques. If you have any questions please email studyskills@bournemouth.ac.uk

You can also visit FMC's widely recognised **Learning Development Team** based in Weymouth House. Here, you will find a welcoming, subject knowledgeable academic community where one-to-one, 50-minute student-centred tutorial support is offered. Informal confidential discussions and guidance on academic conventions such as assignment brief checking, BU Harvard Referencing, essay and report structures, communication skills, positive learning strategies and plagiarism avoidance are some of the specialisms. The LD team can advise you on how to use your academic skills to improve and enhance your work. Students at all levels are welcome. You can request an appointment by either visiting WG08 or email them at FMClearningdevelopment@bournemouth.ac.uk

Create your own study Group As a postgraduate student, studying alone outside of class can be challenging especially if you do not understand something. It can be helpful to create a 'Study Group' of fellow students who are on your course who you can contact outside of the classroom. A study group can be a very supportive learning tool especially if it contains fellow students who have different academic skills.

Skill development and expected impact of your Master's qualification

Over 90% of you expect your Master's degree to develop your '*research and transferable skills*'. For 86%, you think it will enable '*employer networking*' and help you '*present yourself with more confidence*' in your chosen field. Many of you expect your Master's qualification to provide you with the '*practical experience in your chosen subject area*' (92%), '*better prepare you for future employment*' (98%) and '*improve your employment prospects*' (92%). As a cohort, 77% hope to find a '*job appropriate to your level of skills and knowledge*' on completion and 78% of you hope to '*pursue a professional career related to your study area*'.

ADVICE To achieve your expectations, it is important that you harness all your skills when applying for a job after your Master's degree. You must remember that employers do not necessarily see a postgraduate qualification as an indicator of leadership potential or work wisdom and these are two of the key skills employers are looking for in master and doctoral graduates. The Careers and Employability Team based at The Edge by the Library can help you produce a CV and applications that will be of interest to employers so do get in touch with them on the details above.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Route into study

Your entry into study route is diverse with 11% of you coming straight from study and training, 26% from full-time/self-employed paid work, 23% from part-time paid work, 11% from unemployment, 3% from full-time family responsibilities and 1% from voluntary work.

Domiciled status

For 79% of you, your permanent home is either the UK or EU. For 21% of you, home is outside of the UK and EU.

ADVICE If you are an International student and new to the UK, you may require extra assistance in settling into your studies. Visit ASKBU if you have any queries relating to finance, visa issues, accommodation and general well-being.

Age

The majority of respondents studying for a Master's are 25 years old or below (71%), 18% are between 26 and 30 years old, 2% are between 31-35 years of age and 4% between 36 to 56.

ADVICE As a mature student, studying alone outside of class can be challenging especially if you do not understand something. As advised above, it can be helpful to create a 'Study Group' of fellow students who are on your course who you can contact outside of the classroom.

First language

For 67% of you, English is your first language. Of the remaining 33% for whom it is your second language, 15 different languages were reported. This illustrates the diverse environment in which you are studying. 96% of you feel that you are fluent in English.

ADVICE If English is not your first language and you feel that you need extra help, you can get support from Language Support. You can contact them by calling +44 (0)1202 965300 or emailing pbarnes@bournemouth.ac.uk

Other university support services available to support you

Additional Learning Support

T: +44 (0)1202 965663

E: als@bournemouth.ac.uk

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/als

Chaplaincy

T: +44 (0)1202 965383

E: chaplaincy@bournemouth.ac.uk

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/chaplaincy

Equality & Diversity Adviser

T: +44 (0)1202 965327

E: jmpkay@bournemouth.ac.uk

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/diversity

Student Wellbeing

T: +44 (0)1202 965020

E: studentwellbeing@bournemouth.ac.uk

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/student/wellbeing

SUBU Advice

T: +44 (0)1202 965779

E: subuadvice@bournemouth.ac.uk

www.subu.org.uk/advice

