

The Welfare Survey: Academic Advisers

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Introduction and Methodology

This academic year, one of the main priorities for the elected sabbatical officers of the London School of Economics Students' Union (LSESU) is to improve mental health and wellbeing for students studying at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). As well as running the year-long 'Wellbeing Project' the sabbatical officers commissioned research to look into how students feel mental health is treated at LSE and to add to the existing body of research on the various support services that LSE provides.

This report is focused solely on the sections of the survey relating to Academic Advisers and is to be presented to the Academic Adviser Working Group. The purpose of this report is to provide information to feed into the Academic Adviser Review as to how best the School should proceed with improving the pastoral aspect of the role. This research is not intended to be an academic piece of work; its purpose is to create a body of evidence to start a conversation between students and the School about how to improve mental health and wellbeing for LSE students.

Background

Each student at LSE is assigned an Academic Adviser; the Adviser's role is partly to support students on academic issues but also on pastoral issues as well. The Academic Adviser, as the individual within the institution that students have the most face to face interaction with, is likely to be the individual that they approach in the first instance when experiencing mental health issues.

In Michaelmas term of 2015/16 academic year it was announced that an Academic Adviser Review would be undertaken which would look at what the role should cover, and to outline some boundaries and responsibilities for both faculty and students. This Review and its recommendations is due to be completed and its recommendations published by early 2017.

Practice across the sector varies in quality and impact, though most institutions acknowledge the need for Academic Advisers (or Personal Tutors) to act in a pastoral capacity. For example the University of Edinburgh has announced that it is implementing Mental Health First Aid training for all Personal Tutors.¹ This is an extremely important step towards acknowledging the link between Academic Advisers, pastoral care and mental health.

Nationally, the numbers of students declaring mental health issues and accessing support services has risen drastically over the past few years; data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) found that the number of students declaring a mental health issue has increased 132% from 2008 to 2013.² Ruth Caleb, Chair of Universities UK's Mental

¹ <http://www.studentnewspaper.org/all-personal-tutors-at-university-of-edinburgh-to-receive-mental-health-training-by-2018-academic-year/>

² http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE.2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2015/Understanding.provision.for.students.with.mental.health.problems/HEFCE2015_mh.pdf see pg. 44

Well-being Working Group has estimated that counselling services are facing an annual rise in demand of approximately 10% (dependent on the institution).³ Further research published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce) found that institutions felt that the number of students declaring mental health issues and accessing support services has risen.

Methodology

In order to ensure that students were able to speak as openly as possible about their experiences at LSE the Welfare Survey was completely anonymised. There were a range of qualitative and quantitative questions in order to gain as broad a range of views from students as possible.

The survey ran from 11 January 2016 to 8 February 2016 and received a total of 1,100 responses, which is around 10% of the student population. The survey was online only and was promoted via LSESU channels, this included:

- Emails to all students;
- Emails to course reps;
- Promotion on the LSESU social media (facebook and twitter);
- Stalls held outside the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre;
- Promotion by Peer Supporters; and
- An advert in the Beaver.

Findings

This paper gives reference to the findings from the 'Academic Adviser' section of the Welfare Survey, however it will also refer to the 'General Information' and 'LSE Culture' sections. The latter two sections are looked at with the purpose of exploring whether engagement with an Academic Adviser on pastoral issues affects the student experience and the perceptions of students of how mental health and wellbeing is treated at LSE. The findings from these sections are presented in this paper as four themes these are:

- General Information;
- LSE Culture
- The Academic Adviser Experience; and
- Student Non-Engagement.

Overall it seems that students who do approach their Academic Adviser to discuss non-academic issues generally have a positive experience; the majority of students felt that their adviser had been helpful, supportive and was able to signpost them effectively. Therefore it should absolutely be recognised that there are many Academic Advisers who go above and beyond to support student's mental health and wellbeing.

³ <http://www.bacp.co.uk/media/index.php?newsId=3832>

Nevertheless, this report has found that firstly that there are inconsistencies between the different levels of support offered to students by advisers and that there are several barriers for students in accessing pastoral support from their Academic Adviser. Therefore at the end of this report there are recommendations as to how LSESU believes that the non-academic aspect of the Academic Adviser role could be improved to further support students.

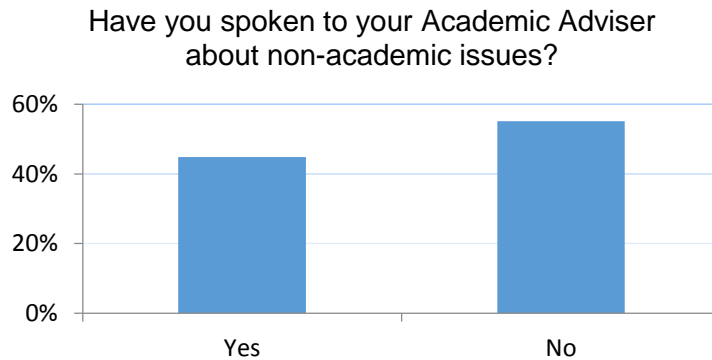
Please note that figures used in this report have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

General Information

This section of the report will first of all look at the data gathered from the 'Academic Adviser' section of the Welfare Survey to see how many students were aware they could approach their Academic Adviser with a non-academic issue and how many students have actually approached their adviser. It will then go on to look at the data gathered in the 'General Information' section of the survey which included questions relating to if students have experienced a period of poor mental health and if they self-define as disabled.

The data from the 'General Information' section of the survey will be explored in more detail in the full Welfare Survey report, for the purposes of this paper the data will be used to compare all students and those that have spoken to their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue to see if there is a difference in opinion.

Responses



The 'Academic Adviser' section of the Welfare Survey attracted 880 responses, which is 80% of the total number of responses to the survey. In this section of the survey students were asked firstly whether they were aware that they could approach their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue with 60% of respondents stating they were aware. These students were then asked if they had approached their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue, with 45% of these students responding that they had. Of the total number of responses to this section of the survey this equates to 27% of students that had approached their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue. These students were 53% undergraduates, 35% were postgraduate taught and 12% were postgraduate research.

General Information

In the initial stages of the Welfare Survey students were asked a series of 'General Information' questions which included questions on if they had experienced a period of poor mental health, if they self-defined as disabled and if they had disclosed a disability to the School. The questions most relevant to Academic Advisers are shown in the table below.

	All Students	Approached AA	-/+ Difference
Have you experienced a period of poor mental health?			
Yes	46%	52%	6%
No	33%	30%	-3%
Maybe	21%	18%	-3%
Do you self-define as disabled?			
Yes	7%	11%	4%
No	93%	89%	-4%
Have you disclosed a disability to LSE?			
Yes	9%	18%	9%
No	40%	32%	-8%
I don't feel I have a disability	51%	50%	-1%

These questions are significant to the issue of Academic Adviser as for example it could show the demographics relating particularly to mental health and students that may or may not be approaching their Academic Adviser about non-academic issues. Interestingly, although the variations are quite small, it seems that as a demographic, students who speak to their Academic Adviser about non-academic issues are slightly more likely to have experienced a period of poor mental health, to self-define as disabled and to have disclosed a disability to the School.

Analysis

It is disappointing that whilst 46% of the total number of students stated that they had experienced a period of poor mental health, that only 27% of students had approached their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue. This could suggest that not all students who experience a period of poor mental health are seeking support from the School, and that as a result that the non-academic aspect of the Academic Adviser role may be being underutilised as a form of support for students. The reasons why students choose not to approach their Academic Adviser are explored with in both the 'LSE Culture' section and the 'Student Non-Engagement' section.

Students approaching their Academic Adviser about non-academic issues were more likely to state that they had experienced a period of poor mental health than compared to all respondents. This could suggest that students who are open and aware of their mental health issues are more likely to seek support from the School and therefore are more likely to approach their adviser. However, this is merely an assertion, another possible explanation may be that those students felt it necessary to have contact with their Academic Adviser on pastoral issues for example in relation to implementing Individual Study Support Agreements or other similar regulator support.

Finally, it is important to note that the variations between these two groups of students were not hugely different and therefore one should be hesitant of drawing firm conclusions from this

data rather this should be used to influence further investigation. In particular it would be interesting for the School to do further work as to the correlation between students experiencing poor mental health, disability and interaction with Academic Advisers.

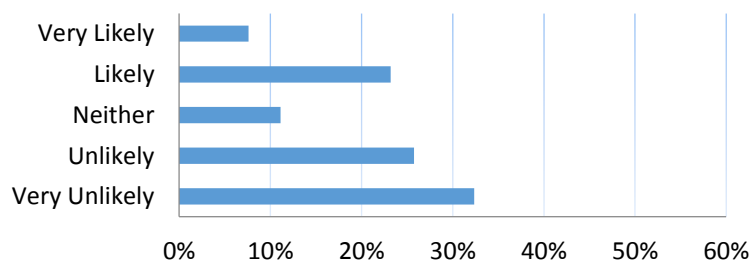
LSE Culture

This section of the full 'Welfare Survey' sought to explore how students feel that the culture of mental health and wellbeing is treated at LSE. It asked students about whether they felt that LSE supports good mental health, who they would be most likely to disclose a mental health issue to and whether they find their workload and exams stressful.

Would disclose mental health issue to...	Total Likely
Friends	81%
Family	76%
Counselling Service	64%
Academic Adviser	31%
Peer Supporter	31%
Class Teacher	15%
Society or Sports Team	14%
Student Representative	10%
Head of Department	2%

Perhaps the most relevant question from this section to Academic Advisers was relating to who students would be most likely to initially approach about a mental health issue; students were asked to rate a list of individuals and services from 'Very Likely' to 'Very Unlikely'. It is perhaps unsurprising that students were most likely to approach their friends and family, however what is disappointing is that only 31% of students said they were either 'Very Likely' or 'Likely' to approach their Academic Adviser. See the above table.

If you were to disclose a mental health issue, who would you feel most comfortable telling initially? - Academic Adviser



When the results specific to Academic Adviser are broken down this creates an even more concerning picture as only 8% of students stated that they were 'Very Likely' to approach their adviser. It was extremely disappointing that over half (58%) of students chose either 'Unlikely' or 'Very Unlikely'.

Mental Health at LSE

Students were also asked in this section as to whether they thought LSE supported good mental health, whether they felt there was a stigma surrounding mental health and whether there were any barriers to disclosing mental health issues to the School.

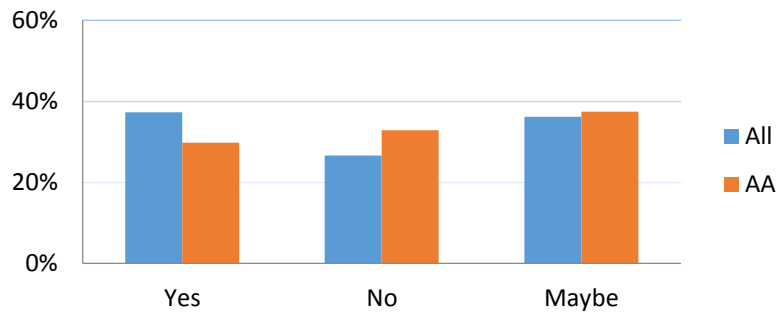
This data will be explored in more depth in the full Welfare Survey report, for the purposes of this paper the data will be used to compare all students and those that have spoken to with their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue to see if there is a difference in experience.

	All	Approached AA	+/- Difference
Generally, do you feel that LSE provides an environment that supports good mental health and wellbeing?			
Strongly Agree	4%	6%	2%
Agree	17%	21%	4%
Neutral	31%	31%	0%
Disagree	35%	30%	-5%
Strongly Disagree	13%	12%	-1%
Do you feel that there is a stigma surrounding mental health at LSE?			
Strongly Agree	7%	8%	1%
Agree	24%	24%	0%
Neutral	44%	38%	-6%
Disagree	19%	22%	3%
Strongly Disagree	6%	8%	2%

Interestingly, when all students are compared with those that have approached their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue students were more likely to feel that LSE supports good mental health and slightly less likely to feel that there is a stigma surrounding mental health. However, this still equates to 42% of students who feel that LSE does not support good mental health and wellbeing.

From the comments left by students to both these questions that specifically referred to Academic Advisers, it seems that students feel that Academic Advisers are not able to properly support their mental health, as they feel that they are not trained properly in dealing with these issues and that they are not able to signpost them effectively. As well as this some students stated that their adviser contributed to them feeling that mental health was stigmatised at LSE by making them feel as if they minimised their mental health issues, for example using inappropriate and trivialising language when students stated that they were experiencing poor mental health. However, it is important to note that some students reported a positive experience with their adviser.

Do you feel there are barriers to disclosing mental health issues whether informally or in crisis to the university?



The next question that students were asked was as to if they feel that there are any barriers in disclosing a mental health issue to the School. The data shows that students who had approached their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue were 7% less likely to feel that there are barriers to disclosure.

From the comments left by students to this question that directly reference Academic Advisers, it seems that some students feel that advisers can actually act as a barrier themselves to disclosure. This is because students experiences with them, for example not having a relationship with the student, the adviser not being able to direct them to other support services and not being trained in how to have conversations surrounding mental health can prevent students from accessing further support from the School.

Course Related Stress

Students were then asked how well they coped with their ongoing workload and with exams. Again this data will focus on the differences between all students and those that have spoken to their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue.

	All	Approached AA	+/- Difference
Do you cope well with the ongoing work that you have?			
Always	9%	9%	0%
Often	36%	41%	5%
Sometimes	45%	39%	-6%
Never	10%	11%	1%
Do you cope well with the stress of exams?			
Always	10%	12%	2%
Often	32%	36%	4%
Sometimes	39%	32%	-7%
Never	19%	20%	1%

Interestingly, students who have spoken with their adviser about pastoral issues were slightly less likely and slightly more likely to state that they were able to cope with their ongoing workload and with exams.

Analysis

What is extremely encouraging is that when asked whether they feel that LSE supports good mental health the students who have approached their adviser about non-academic issues were more likely to answer this question positively. Further, the students who had engaged with their adviser were also more likely to think that there is not a stigma surrounding mental health at LSE. These variations could suggest that advisers who are supportive of their student's pastoral issues have contributed to students feeling more supported and therefore generally viewing their time at LSE more positively.

However, correlation does not imply causation and there may be other factors that lead to students feeling that there is a more positive culture surrounding mental health at LSE. Students are not a homogenous group and the types of students who are likely to seek support from their Academic Adviser may also be the type of student to have in place better coping mechanisms for exam stress and ongoing work. Further to this, the variations between the two groups of students were quite small, so one should be hesitant in drawing strong conclusions from this data. Nevertheless it is important to note the positive impact a good experience with an adviser could have on students' impressions of the LSE environment and of their overall student experience; therefore this should be an area of further investigation by the School.

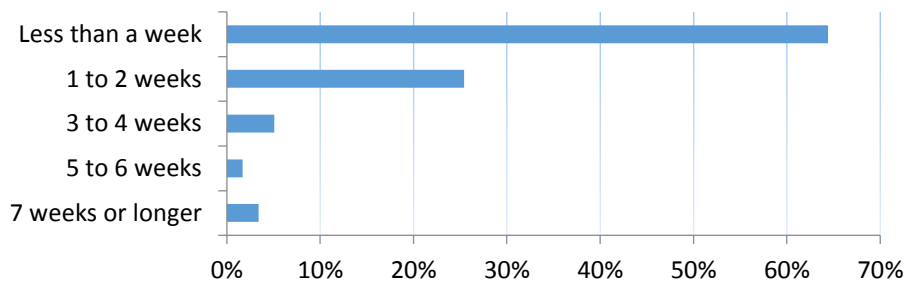
There does also appear to be a slight correlation between students feeling more able to cope with their workload and exams and students approaching their Academic Adviser. Again however, correlation does not imply causation, and it is not clear if this is due to students discussing pastoral or academic issues. Nevertheless it does add weight to the hypothesis that students who have a closer relationship with their adviser have a better student experience and should be explored further.

Given these findings, it is then extremely disappointing that the number of students who said that they were likely to approach their Academic Adviser about a mental health issue were so low. Although this question is quite specific in asking students who they would approach initially respondents were allowed multiple responses and given that 64% of students stated they would approach the Student Counselling Service to disclose a mental health issue, this may very well show that there is a reluctance by students to approach their Academic Adviser about non-academic issues. The reasons why students do not approach their Academic Adviser will be explored in more detail in the 'Student Non-Engagement' section of this report.

The Academic Adviser Experience

As noted earlier in this report, 27% of respondents to the 'Academic Adviser' section of the Welfare Survey stated that they had discussed a non-academic issue with their adviser. The survey then sought to find out from them about their experiences with their adviser. It included questions on how quickly were they able to see their adviser, how supportive they were, were they able to signpost them to other services and if they found them helpful.

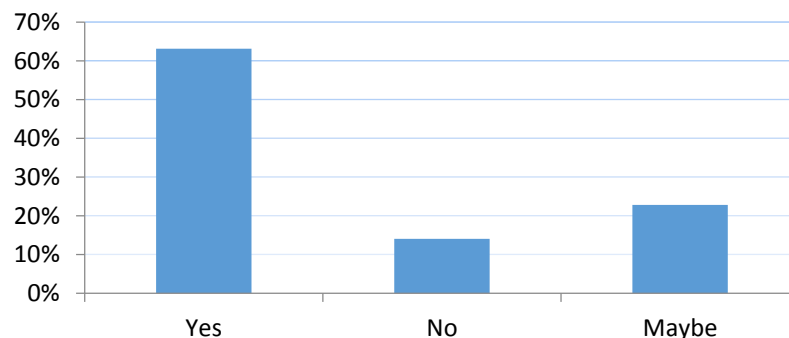
How quickly were you able to meet with your Academic Adviser?



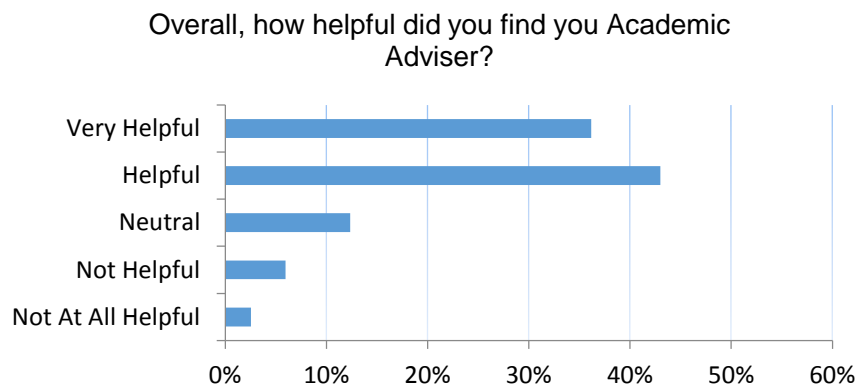
Students were first of all asked how quickly they were able to meet with their adviser and it is extremely encouraging that 64% of students were able to see their Academic Adviser in less than a week and a further 25% in one to two weeks. However this still represents 11% of students who had to wait for three weeks or longer to see their Academic Adviser and it is the view of LSESU that no student should have to wait longer than two weeks to access any LSE support service.

In terms of whether students felt that their Academic Adviser made sufficient time for them and whether they felt their Academic Adviser was supportive these responses were particularly positive; with 82% and 81% of students respectively stating that they either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' to these statements.

Were they able to signpost you to relevant support services?



In total 63% of students stated that they felt that their Academic Adviser was able to signpost them to relevant support services, which is an extremely welcome figure. However this still represents 37% of students, who did not feel that their adviser was able to do so.



Students were then asked as to how helpful they found their Academic Adviser; it is extremely encouraging that in total 79% of students stated that they thought they were either 'Very Helpful' or 'Helpful'. Nevertheless many of the comments left by students highlight that there does appear to be an inconsistency between the levels of support that different Academic Advisers give to their students. In particular students stated that they felt that their Academic Adviser was not trained enough either in being understanding of mental health issues or being able to signpost them to support services, other students simply stated that their adviser had never replied to their emails. It also appears from the comments that where students have multiple advisers over the course of their studies this also diminishes their experience.

Below is a selection of the comments:

"He just wasn't trained and didn't know how to respond to what I was disclosing (just stress and anxiety: the most basic of mental health concerns). While LSE students are definitely under-supported, the staff receive even less support..."

"In my three years at LSE, I have had 6 different academic advisors. There has been no consistency, no dialogue or coherence between my two departments, and varying effort/attention given by each advisor. I feel in my case that the academic advisor system has failed miserably."

"My PhD supervisor has been amazingly supportive. I feel as comfortable talking to her about my mental health issues as I do about my research. That being said, I believe that this kind of relationship is rare. Most of my colleagues would never go to their supervisor for this kind of advice/support. Those who have actually talked about mental health issues with their supervisors have not had positive experiences."

“It is not easy to reach out to them even knowing that they are helpful.”

“my academic adviser didn't reply to my email.”

“My academic advisor last year was very very helpful as he had suffered depression in his teens. He told me about the counselling service (prior to this i had no idea LSE had one) My academic advisor this year seems to be uninterested in wanting to know about my welfare. My meeting was solely about my academic performance. No questions relating to how i was finding the year otherwise”

Analysis

Overall it seems that students generally tend to have a positive experience when approaching their Academic Adviser about non-academic issues. It seems that the majority of students feel that Academic Advisers make time for them, are supportive, able to signpost them and are helpful. This highlights the valuable work undertaken by many Academic Advisers in providing a supportive environment for their students which should rightly be commended.

However it is still important to remember that whilst the number of students citing a negative experience may be small that these experiences are still significant as these negative experiences may have a disproportionately adverse impact on the individual. For example students may not be aware of other LSE support services or simply a negative experience with their adviser may deter them from seeking support elsewhere from the School. Although these assertions could be dismissed as speculation, it is imperative that the School, with leadership provided through DMT, champion the non-academic aspect of the Academic Adviser role to ensure a consistent experience for students as if a student is experiencing a period of poor mental health then they are likely to be particularly vulnerable.

Therefore it is the view of the Students' Union that the School should do more to share best practice from advisers who excel at delivering a pastoral role and that as a bare minimum all advisers should be able to signpost students to other support services. As well as this, LSESU believes that all Academic Advisers should undertake Mental Health First Aid training, so that they are fully equipped if a student presents to them an issue relating to mental health.

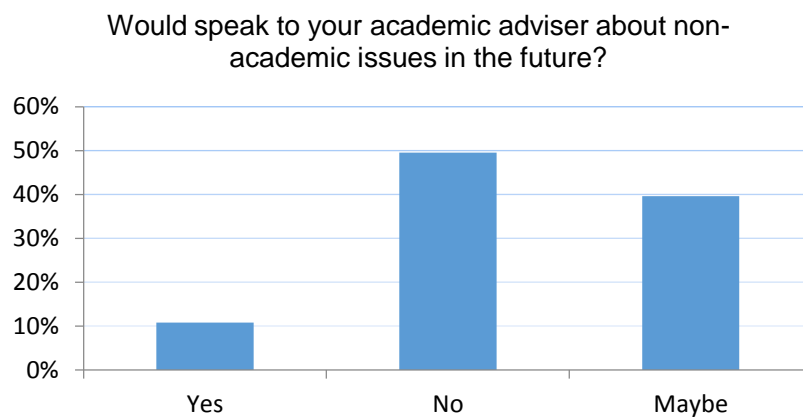
Finally it is important to note that the number of students approaching their Academic Adviser is extremely small; which is a similar number to those students who stated in the 'General Information' section that they would disclose a mental health issue to their adviser. This could suggest that students do not feel that their adviser is approachable when it comes to discussing mental health and wellbeing; this issue is dealt with in more detail in the next section.

Student Non-Engagement

This section of the report will look at the question of why students do not approach their Academic Adviser with non-academic issues. It first of all looks at if students are aware that advisers can deal with non-academic issues, it then goes on to find out whether both students who have not approached their Academic Adviser and those who were previously unaware would now go on to do so.

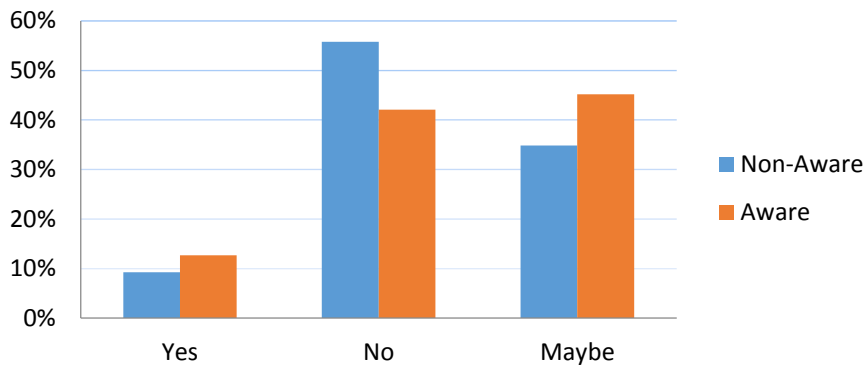
As mentioned previously, at the beginning of the 'Academic Adviser' section of the Welfare Survey students were asked if they were aware that they could approach their Academic Adviser about non-academic issues. In total, 60% of students stated that they were aware, even so this still leaves a significant proportion of students who were not. The survey then sought to find out – now that they were aware – if they would approach their adviser about a non-academic issue in the future and if not, why not.

As well as this, the students who stated they were aware were then asked if they had approached their Academic adviser about a non-academic issue, only 45% of these students stated that they had. The 55% of students who stated they had not were also asked if they would speak to their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue in the future and if not, why not.

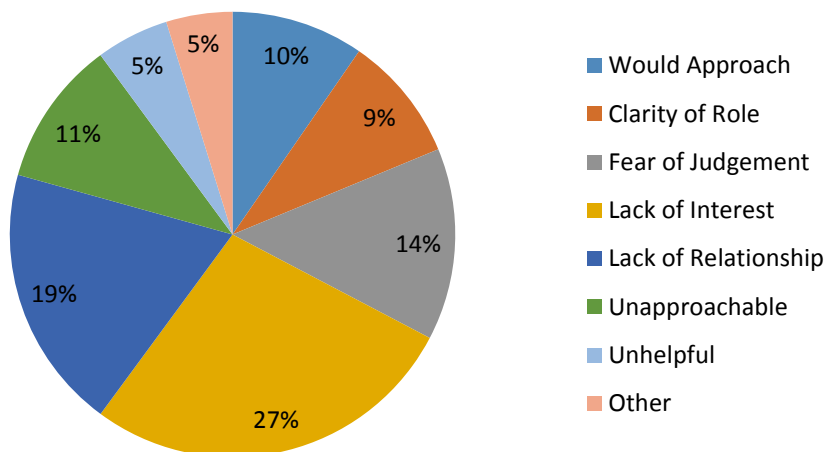


In total, these two groups represent 73% of the students who took part in the Academic Adviser section of the Welfare Survey. Therefore it is extremely disappointing that in total a derisory 11% of students stated that they would approach their academic adviser in the future with nearly half (49%) of students stating that they would. Although it is important to note that 39% of these students stated 'Maybe' it is still enormously concerning that the number of students answering this question to the positive is so low.

Would speak to your academic adviser about non-academic issues in the future?



Interestingly, when the two groups of students, those that were aware but would not approach their Academic Adviser with a non-academic issue and those that were not aware and still would not approach, are compared against each other for this same question the results vary. Students who were not aware were 14% more likely to answer 'No' to this question, 10% less likely to state 'Maybe' and 3% less likely to have stated 'Yes'.



The comments left by all students as to why they would not approach their Academic Adviser with a non-academic issue in the future can broadly be categorised into eight themes. The most common three themes were 'Lack of Interest', 'Lack of Relationship' and 'Fear of Judgement'. Each of the categories can be described as follows:

- Would Approach* – These were the students who stated that they would approach their adviser; however many of these comments were qualified to either only if it was an issue affecting their studies or only if it was such a serious issue that it would for example require an interruption of studies.

- *Clarity of Role* – These comments made reference to the ‘role’ of advisers, specifically that students either felt that or had been informed by their adviser that non-academic issues did not fit within their remit. As well as this some students stated that they had not been aware of the non-academic role due to the title ‘Academic Adviser’.
- *Fear of Judgement* – This category includes students who stated that they would not speak with their adviser about non-academic issues due to a perception that the information would not be kept private or that by disclosing mental health issues that this would influence any future marks or references that they may receive from the adviser.
- *Lack of Interest* – This group of students were those that commented that they felt their Academic Adviser had a lack of interest in their welfare. For example this could include where they felt the Adviser did not make time for them or where there was a perception by the student that the adviser did not value non-academic conversations.
- *Lack of Relationship* – These comments made specific reference to where the student had little or even no contact with their adviser and therefore due to this they would not disclose non-academic issues to them.
- *Unapproachable* – This category included students who stated that they felt their adviser was difficult to approach or unfriendly, or where they expressed that they had a negative relationship with them.
- *Unhelpful* – This is where students stated that they had previously approached the adviser about an academic issue and that due to the student feeling they had not been helpful they would not do so for a non-academic issue, or that the student had a perception that the adviser would not be helpful.
- *Other* – This group of students were those who stated that they were unwilling to go to see their Academic Adviser as they did not feel that they were properly trained to deal with mental health issues or where the student said explicitly that they would seek assistance from a source external to the School.

Analysis

As the individual that students are arguably most likely to interact with at LSE it could be suggested that the Academic Adviser would be the individual within the School who students would be most likely to approach for support if they were experiencing a period of poor mental health. However, the findings from the Welfare Survey show that many students simply do not see their Academic Adviser as a source of pastoral support. This data could also suggest that many students are just simply not aware that they can approach their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue, which is true to significant extent. However, it is particularly stark to see that only 11% of students who have not approached their adviser for non-academic support would do so in the future and this should raise a number of questions for the School.

This assertion is further sustained when the two groups of students who answered this question are separated and compared; although there are some perhaps predictable variations in that students who were previously aware that they could approach their Academic Adviser about a non-academic adviser were less likely to say that they would not approach their adviser in the future. However, this does not translate into student being more likely to approach them by any significant margin. This lack of correlation could suggest that awareness is not the crux of the problem (although it is integrally linked) but that actually students not choosing to engage with their adviser on non-academic issues goes much deeper than this.

The comments left by students throws some light on why it is that students do not approach their Academic Adviser about non-academic issues. They paint a picture of advisers who have little or no relationship with their student, who present this perception of themselves as being detached, an individual with little or no time to spare for their students and that they do not 'value' a student's wellbeing. Of course this is the extreme end of the negative perceptions that students can hold towards their Academic Adviser, however for an individual who may be experiencing a period of poor mental health, or even for a student who is just struggling to cope this can be extremely debilitating. It is also important to note that this is not to suggest that advisers are actively discouraging students from approaching them, although some comments were left that explicitly stated that this was the case, but that more should be done by the School to combat this perception and open up Academic Advisers as a means to supporting students mental health and wellbeing.

It is the view of the Students Union that the Academic Adviser system is an extremely important tool in supporting students at LSE and in ensuring an excellent student experience. Therefore this data should not be read as showing that Academic Advisers should have no involvement student's non-academic lives, as separating pastoral and academic issues is simply a false dichotomy. What is perhaps the most concerning finding from this survey is that it does appear that in some cases it is the advisers themselves that are creating a barrier for students approaching them for support. This is not to suggest that Academic Advisers as a whole are intentionally unapproachable, but rather that more could be done by the School to ensure a consistent experience for students.

Conclusion

The Welfare Survey sought to find out from students whether they feel that LSE sufficiently supports their mental health and wellbeing. It also sought to give a brief overview of their experiences and perceptions of the support services available to them. LSESU received an overwhelming 1,100 responses to this.

This report is specifically focused on Academic Advisers, as the Students' Union believes that this data would be of assistance to the Academic Adviser Review Group, particularly when seeking to improve the pastoral element of their role. This report is not intended to be a comprehensive review of advisers, but rather to assist in building a picture as to where LSE could concentrate its efforts and resources to better support its student's mental health and wellbeing.

The results of the survey relating to Academic Advisers were highly illuminating; it seems that while 46% of students reported that they experience periods of poor mental health only 27% speak to their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue. This could suggest that there is perhaps a culture at LSE where students do not access support from the institution. What is extremely interesting is the comparison between students who have spoken to their adviser about a non-academic issue and all respondents as to if they feel LSE supports good mental health and whether they are able to cope with their workload. What was extremely interesting was the small but significant increase in students who have approached their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue feeling that LSE is supportive of mental health and wellbeing. As to whether this increase is due to the impact of a positive experience with their adviser and how this could translate into improving the student experience more generally is something that LSE should investigate further.

Of the 27% of students who had spoken to their Academic Adviser about a non-academic issue it seems that the majority of students have a positive experience with them. This shows that there is clearly good practice within the School that should be commended and shared. However, it does seem that there are some inconsistencies that should be addressed for example all advisers should be able to signpost students to other services.

Most worryingly, for the students who had not approached their adviser it seems that while awareness is a contributing factor for many this is not the main barrier. The majority of these students felt that their Adviser had no interest in non-academic issues, that they felt they had little or no relationship with them and that they were afraid of judgement. There clearly is a lot more work to be done by the School to ensure a consistent experience for students in accessing support from their Academic Adviser.

The results of the 'Academic Adviser' section of the Welfare Survey have resulted in a number of recommendations which the Students' Union believes should be implemented. We look forward to working in partnership with the School to implement these recommendations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended improve the student experience with Academic Advisers and to feed into the final recommendations of the Academic Adviser Review. They are as follows:

The School should:

- Ensure that all Academic Advisers undertake Mental Health First Aid Training in conjunction with the Disability and Wellbeing Service so that they are able to identify and feel equipped, particularly to deal with students presenting themselves as being in crisis.
- Ensure that all Academic Advisers are given the appropriate training, support, literature and resources in order to understand the School's Support Services and regulations so that they are able to effectively signpost students.
- Review the guidance on Academic Advisers for both students and advisers to make the language used less legalistic and more accessible and welfare focussed. As well as ensuring that there is a single clearly written and accessible student facing document for the entire School.
- Further develop and clarify the Departmental Tutor role of *"To monitor the academic and pastoral care provided by members of his or her department, including the provision of reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities and compliance with the School's Single Equality Scheme."* so that it includes:
 - Recommending professional help services to students.
 - Co-ordination of the student support system within the Department.
 - Acting as a consultant to Academic Advisers and students about non-academic issues.
 - Acting as a liaison point for the Disability and Wellbeing Service and Student Counselling Service.
 - Support students experiencing academic and personal issues.
- Improve the process of students meeting with an Academic Adviser including:
 - Introduce longer time-slots where students state that they wish to discuss a non-academic issue.
 - Introduce half past starting times for appointments so that students do not have to miss class.
 - Ensure all Academic Advisers offer specific office hours for their advisees.
 - Multiple group sessions particularly at the start of each term and in the build up to the exam period to facilitate a greater support network among students.

- Provide students with clear information on the process of changing Academic Advisers where there is a relationship breakdown and ensure that this is properly communicated.
- Explore ways in which the school can introduce a 'Reward and Review' system for Academic Advisers, so that students are able to provide effective feedback to advisers on their experiences and that best practice can be recognised, shared and linked to promotion.
- Ensure that no student has to wait longer than 10 working days for an appointment with their Academic Adviser.
- Undertake further research into the impact and interplay of Academic Advisers on the student experience, student mental health and the disclosure of a disability.

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