



BUCS PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE REPORT 2023-24

INSPIRING, DEVELOPING AND UNITING STUDENTS THROUGH SPORT

THANKS TO...

The students who competed in the 2023-24 BUCS season and shared their thoughts and feedback through the survey. Staff from member institutions who provided feedback on the direction of the survey and the recommendations that made part of this report.

Colleagues at BUCS and the Sport and Recreation Alliance for their time and expertise throughout the research process.

Sport England, for funding this report.



FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) Student Survey Report 2024, which captures vital insights that help ensure we are focussed on what matters to students as we strive to fulfil our mission to provide exceptional student sporting experiences that inspire, develop, and unite. This report highlights the essential role that sport continues to play in shaping students' university experiences, providing not only physical benefits but also significant social, emotional, and cultural value.

The findings show that overall, students are having a positive experience through their involvement in competitive sport. This participation goes beyond the results on the field—it supports their mental wellbeing, fosters a strong sense of pride in representing their institution, and offers an invaluable sense of belonging. University sport brings students together, creating opportunities for cultural and social exchange with peers from diverse backgrounds, all while forming lasting friendships and networks that extend beyond their sporting lives.

One of the key factors enhancing students' experience, as this report underscores, is the role played by the nearly 20,000 students who are club committee members. This survey highlights that these students not only contribute to the smooth running of their respective sports but also act as leaders and mentors of their peers, helping to create a positive and inclusive environment for all members. Whilst results demonstrate that fellow students recognise the importance of these student volunteer leaders, committee members themselves often report feeling underappreciated by their institutions providing all of us in university sport with a clear call to action.

Students highlighted two factors that detract from their overall experience: the standard of officiating and how universities promote their teams' achievements. Additionally, the BUCS Play system has been flagged as an area where further refinement could positively impact engagement and the ease with which students interact with their sport. For BUCS and our members, these are our areas for improvement of the student sporting experience and are crucial to the integrity and visibility of university sport and satisfaction with that experience.

At BUCS, we are committed to continuously improving the student sport experience and thank all those institutions and students who ensure that we secured a strong response to the survey. This is critical to the ongoing vitality and success of university sport, and we look forward to working with members and students to further the reach and learning potential of the survey in its future iterations.

I hope that this report will spark productive conversations within institutions and help to further enrich the student sport experience across the country. Together, we can continue to create environments that inspire, develop and unite students, both on and off the field.

Will Roberts
Chief Executive Officer
British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS)

SUMMARY

Over 100,00 students participate in BUCS competitive higher education sport each year. We surveyed 1,502 students who competed in the 2023/24 BUCS sporting season to understand the experience they are having competing in their BUCS sport and the impact their involvement in higher education sport is having on their overall higher education experience.

78.2%

of students rated their overall experience in BUCS sport as 'Excellent' or 'Good'.

88.5%

of students agreed that BUCS sport has contributed positively to their higher education experience.

INSPIRE

88.7%

of students agreed that taking part in a BUCS sport has helped support their mental wellbeing.



50.4% of students agreed that being part of a sport team/club has prevented them from dropping out of university.

DEVELOP



64.0% of students agreed that the soft skills they have developed through BUCS have enhanced their ability to study (i.e. through improved discipline)

82.8%

of students agreed that they have been able to develop softer skills (e.g. communication, leadership, time management).

UNITE

93.5%

of students agreed that being involved in sport gave them a sense of belonging to their institution and its community.



84.5% of students agreed that being involved in BUCS sport has allowed them to culturally and socially interact with a wider group of students.

MOST COMMON WORDS STUDENTS USE TO DESCRIBE THEIR BUCS EXPERIENCE

FUN • COMPETITIVE • CHALLENGING • FRIENDS • EXCITING

INTRODUCTION

For many, university sport in the UK is a significant part of the higher education student experience. The motivations to participate in competitive higher education sport range depending on the individual student. Some are aspiring to achieve personal sporting ambitions at an elite level, some to increase their institutional sense of belonging by being part of a team, with others having the desire to gain leadership skills through being a club committee member.

'Delivering exceptional student sporting experiences that inspire, develop and unite' is the ambition statement that runs through the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) organisational strategy. To understand whether this organisational strategic ambition is being achieved, it is critical that we hear from the students themselves on the impact BUCS sport is having on their higher education experience. The experience that students have is a collaborative effort between BUCS as an organisation and BUCS' member institutions. There will be outputs from the student feedback which can be controlled by BUCS and feedback which can only be controlled by BUCS' member institutions. Naturally, there are areas where we are excelling as a sector and areas that will require improvement. Understanding areas of improvement regardless of ownership allows the sector to be aware of challenges being faced and work collectively to improve the experiences being had in competitive higher education sport.

This is the first substantial piece of work we, as BUCS, have completed to understand the type of experience students have engaging with BUCS across the sector. Using the data collected, this report looks to explore the overall experience students have when competing in BUCS sport, engaging with BUCS, as well as the factors that enhance and detract from this experience. We go on to explore the experience that club committee members have in terms of their time investment in the role and the motivators to be part of the club committee. We conclude the report by pulling together the main themes of what the students have told us, highlighting areas in which the offer to our students can be improved. Using the areas identified for improvement, we have worked with BUCS staff and members to create recommendations to increase the experience of students participating in competitive higher education sport.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to understand the experience that students are having competing in competitive higher education BUCS sport. The data collected will also be used to help measure the performance of BUCS against the organisational strategy and allow a benchmark to be set for the coming years within the 2023-2027 BUCS strategic cycle. The survey aimed to gain a well-rounded view of the experience students are having in BUCS sport across different sports, types of university and demographic intersections.

We adopted a quantitative data collection and research approach and distributed a survey to all students that participated in the 2023-24 sporting season, using the information obtained through the BUCS Play platform. This was distributed to students via email and promoted on our social media platforms. The survey was also provided to member institutions and BUCS student officers to gain their assistance in promoting the completion of the survey. The survey was open between May - June 2024 for students that had finished their participation in the BUCS sporting season. The survey remained open through July 2024 to allow those that were still to compete in BUCS fixtures or events to complete once their season had finished.

In total we had 1,502 responses, which is 1.4% of the 104,478 students that were registered in a BUCS team or event during the 2023-24 season. This was a statistically representative sample of the BUCS participants from this season. This number of responses is based on the responder completing at least one of the core student experience questions. One hundred and twenty member institutions had at least one student response, with all nations being represented and the highest response by an institution being 78. Fifty-one BUCS sports had at least one student response, with Rugby Union being the sport with the highest response total of 288. For context, to have a sample size with a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error for Rugby Union, 374 responses would have been required.

The responders to the survey were generally representative of the overall BUCS student population in terms of the gender (men - 50.7%, women - 35.8%). There is a 95% confidence interval for the gender, type of institution and BUCS ranking breakdown demographics. This indicates that the survey sample is broadly representative of the overall participant population in terms of these intersections.

There was a slight over-representation of club committee members responding to the survey (club committee member - 35.2%, non-club committee member - 61.9%). This is perhaps to be expected as these are the cohort of students that are most engaged with BUCS.

There was an appropriate split of responses for those competing in BUCS for the first time (first season in BUCS – 31.3%, BUCS returner – 68.7%), those from a BUCS top 20 ranked institution (BUCS top 20 – 41.1%, outside BUCS top 20 – 58.5%). This shows the breadth of responses and representation of views within the data collected.

A full breakdown of the responders' demographics can be found in Appendix 1.

LEARNING AND LIMITATIONS

SAMPLE SIZES

Despite aiming to obtain suitable representation across all the demographic areas we asked for data on within the survey, we were unable to acquire sufficient sample sizes to be able to robustly analyse and compare the data across a number of different intersections. This included ethnicity groups, BUCS sports, sexuality, type of participation in BUCS i.e. league and knockout or events, disability and mode of student e.g. international student living on campus.

In future iterations of this survey, we will be striving to receive representative samples sizes in these areas so we are able to identify student groups where there may be a difference in the way they are experiencing the BUCS sporting offer.

ENGAGING WITH THE STUDENTS

The breadth, type and timeframe of interaction that a student can have with the BUCS sporting offer can vary depending on the sport. Therefore, we need to be aware of the best times to engage with them to understand their thoughts, based on how they participate through the academic year in BUCS. For example, there will be students who participate in an event at the start of the year, and this will be their only engagement with BUCS for the whole academic year. Conversely, there will be students who are part of the league and knockout offer, competing every Wednesday and engaging with BUCS multiple times through the year. To improve on the volume and representation of responses for next year, we will need to optimise when we ask for this feedback.

TIMING OF THE SURVEY

Due to the number of surveys students are being asked to complete throughout the academic year, they can start to experience 'survey fatigue'. This is something that we heard from our member institutions during the design period of the survey. To maximise the responses we receive, we need to be conscious that this isn't seen by the students as 'another survey to complete'. This means only asking information that is necessary to know and keeping the survey as concise as possible. One aspect implemented this year to reduce the input from the student, was to ask for their email address and student ID number. We used this data to match up their personal information collected on sign up to the BUCS Play platform.

Another complexity of identifying the optimal time to run the survey is the crowded landscape of student surveys being run. The largest impact is likely to be felt by the National Student Survey, which is run between January and April. With the value institutions put on the responses to this survey, there are a number of instances where other surveys are not allowed to be promoted within an institution at the same time. Therefore, to make the promotion of the survey a collaborative venture of both BUCS and the member institutions, this would typically have to fall outside of this timeframe. However, it could be argued that after this point, due to the time of the year with exams and students starting to head off for the summer, this would be too late to survey the students. This will be an ongoing point that BUCS reviews in order to find the best solution for.

FIRST ITERATION OF THE SURVEY

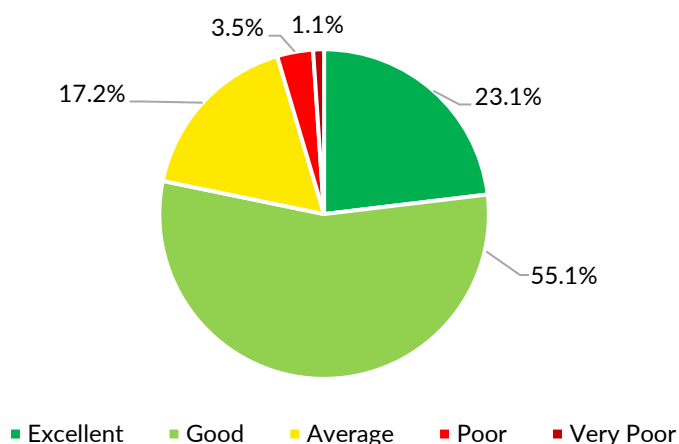
As mentioned during the introduction to the survey, this is the first time we have run a national survey to BUCS participants to understand the experience they are having. The learnings from undertaking this iteration will positively inform us going forward with future iterations.

These learnings provide us with the opportunity to review and refine both what questions being asked, as well as the how the questions are being asked. Now we have a set of data collected, this will only benefit us going forwards as this provides us with a benchmark of how we are serving our students and will allow for year-to-year comparisons to be made, to track progress.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

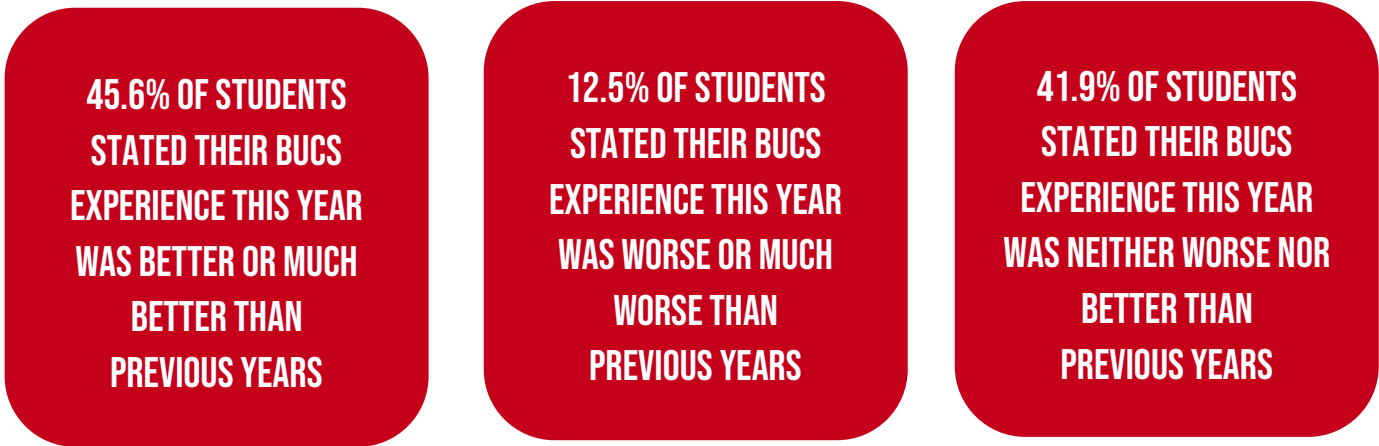
The strategic ambition of BUCS is ‘to deliver exceptional student sporting experiences that inspire, develop and unite’. Through the data collected within the survey we are gaining an understanding of whether this is being achieved. The below graphic illustrates the split of responses when students were asked to rate their BUCS student experience overall.

OVERALL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR BUCS STUDENT EXPERIENCE?



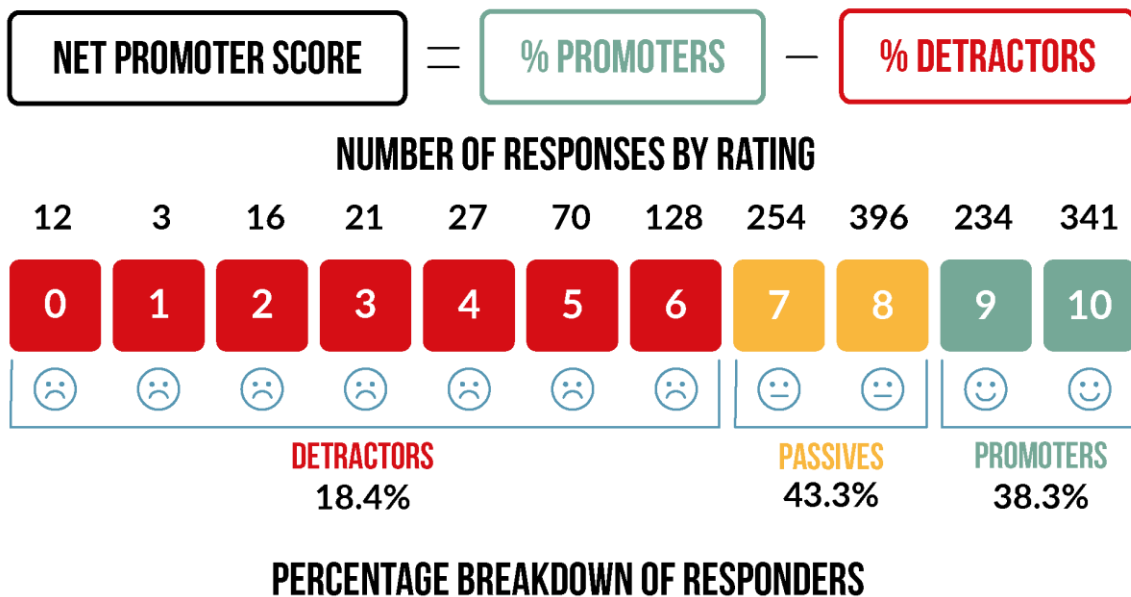
We had over three-quarters of the population of responders rating their experience with a positive sentiment of “Good” or “Excellent” (78.2%), with 17.2% of responders providing a neutral rating of “Average”. Therefore, a minority of the responders (4.6%) returning a negative rating of either “Poor” or “Very Poor”. This is a really pleasing result for both BUCS and member institutions, to have the majority of students returning a positive sentiment in relation to the experience they are having in competitive higher education sport. There is however work to be done to ensure a positive experience is being had across the board with all students engaging in the BUCS offer. This information will form the benchmark of results to improve upon entering the 2024-25 sporting season.

In order to gain a sense of how this experience is moving from year to year, we also asked the responders how their BUCS sport experience this year compared to previous years. Removing those who are in their first season of competing in BUCS and therefore do not have a benchmark, below is the breakdown of the responses.



The highest proportion of respondents reporting that their experience has been better or much better than previous years indicates the improving offer being put forward by institutions and BUCS for students to compete in. This is a testament to those involved, particularly with the ongoing financial pressures felt within the higher education sector and the pressures felt to engage students from the fallout from the cost-of-living crisis.

The responders were also asked the standard customer satisfaction question of ‘how likely is it that you would recommend BUCS to a friend or colleague?’ in order to associate a net promotor score (NPS) with BUCS. Overall, BUCS scored a NPS score of 20. Broadly speaking, this again is a positive result, having more promotors associated than detractors. The graphic outlines the breakdown of responses to this question by categorising the responses into ‘promotors’, ‘passives’ and ‘detractors’ as well as the number of responses to each of the number ratings to provide some context of where these responses fall.



Perhaps the most pleasing result when looking at student experience as a whole is the positive impact that BUCS sport is having on the students' higher education experience. Over 88% percent of responders to the survey strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'BUCS sport has contributed positively to my higher education experience'.

88.5% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT BUCS SPORT HAS CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE.

Having such an overwhelming majority of students agreeing to this statement is a testament to the offer being provided to the students in the higher education sector, hard work of colleagues in this space, and arguably most importantly, the critical role that sport has in heightening a student's higher education experience. This shouldn't be a surprising result as we are aware from the British Active Student Survey from 2019-20 of the multitude of positive effects that being active and engagement in sport has on personal and mental wellbeing, social inclusion, loneliness, perceptions of academic attainment and perceptions of employability¹.

INSPIRING STUDENTS

When looking at how we want to provide an exceptional student sporting experience, we want to do this by inspiring, developing and uniting our students. When inspiring, we want to enable students to perform at their best, to influence others and be a role model to their peers. This research project set to understand in what areas competitive sport in higher education is inspiring students, with the following results:

88.7% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT TAKING PART IN A BUCS SPORT HAS HELPED SUPPORT THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING.

82.5% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT TAKING PART IN A BUCS COMPETITION/EVENT HAS HELPED THEM TO ACHIEVE/CONTINUE TO STRIVE TOWARDS PERSONAL SPORTING AMBITIONS WHILE IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

1. British Active Student Survey 2019-20, *British Active Student Survey: Higher Education 2019/20 Report*, June 2020

72.8% OF STUDENTS AGREED TAKING PART IN A BUCS COMPETITION/EVENT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SETTING PERSONAL AMBITIONS HIGHER THAN THEY WERE ON ENTERING HIGHER EDUCATION.

78.0% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT THEY WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PERFORM TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITY IN THEIR BUCS SPORT.

The statements above each have a majority of student responders returning responses with a positive sentiment (strongly agree or agree). Data from the UK Parliament demonstrates the increase in mental health issues among university students, stating that the proportion of home students that report a mental health condition to their university has rapidly increased since 2010 and was over 5% in 2021/22 ². This is backed up through the 2022 survey conducted by Students Minds, where over half of the respondents self-reported a mental health issue and over a quarter reported having a diagnosed mental health condition ³.

It is clear there are various stresses and challenges while being in higher education, with the need for the students to find ways of coping with this. The data point above illustrates the positive impact that BUCS sport can have on supporting student's mental wellbeing.

Whilst supporting student mental health, competitive sport is allowing them to realise their potential and ambitions in a sporting environment and beyond. Not only are the majority of students reporting that their participation allows them to perform to the best of their abilities and achieve their sporting ambitions, it is also pushing their personal ambitions higher. It appears achieving in one facet of their university life, is driving them on to achieve more outside of this.

50.4% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT BEING PART OF A SPORT TEAM/CLUB HAS PREVENTED THEM FROM DROPPING OUT OF UNIVERSITY.

Another significantly impactful data point is that 50.4% of responders agreed that being part of a sport team/club has prevented them from dropping out of university. Against the backdrop of the current

2. UK Parliament, *Student mental health in England: Statistics, policy, and guidance - House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)*, September 2024

3. Student Minds, *Student Minds Research Briefing, February 2023*

financial pressures that the higher education sector faces, to have the half of the responders reporting that being involved in a sport team/club has contributed to keeping them in university illustrates the important role competitive higher education sport can play on the retention of students.

DEVELOPING STUDENTS

When developing, we want to provide students with the opportunity to grow both in a personal, and sporting, way. We collected data to understand how BUCS sports are contributing towards this.

82.8% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP SOFTER SKILLS (E.G. COMMUNICATION, LEADERSHIP, TIME MANAGEMENT).

64.0% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT THE SOFT SKILLS THEY HAVE DEVELOPED THROUGH BUCS HAVE ENHANCED THEIR ABILITY TO STUDY (I.E. THROUGH IMPROVED DISCIPLINE).

55.4% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT THE SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPED THROUGH BUCS HAVE IMPROVED THEIR ABILITY TO GAIN THE JOB THEY WANT AFTER STUDYING.

Softer skills such as communication, leadership, time management and organisation are crucial to a student when at university but also as they move into their employment after education. These are key skills which are highly valued by employers. Therefore, any experiences where students can improve these skills will only benefit them as they progress through life. In the data points collected above, the majority of students responding to the survey agreed that sport has allowed them to develop their softer skills, which they perceive to have enhanced their ability to study and also improved their ability to gain the job they want after studying.

Using the graduate employability research completed by BUCS in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, it is evident the importance that employers put on graduates' soft skills, with a finding from the employers perspective being 'academic qualifications and subject specific skills were deemed necessary, but the soft skills such as behaviours, qualities and attitudes developed through sport were deemed equally as important by many employers'⁴. The positive sentiment shown by students in this

4. BUCS Graduate Employability Research, *The Impact of Engagement in Sport on Graduate Employability*, June 2013

area demonstrates the impact that competitive higher education sport can have on preparing the student for life after university.

UNITING STUDENTS

When uniting, we want to ensure that all students feel like they belong, and they are connected through participating in sport. We collected the following data to understand the impact BUCS sport is having on uniting students.

93.5% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT BEING INVOLVED IN SPORT GAVE THEM A SENSE OF BELONGING TO THEIR INSTITUTION AND ITS COMMUNITY.

90.4% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT THEY FELT PROUD TO REPRESENT THEIR UNIVERSITY.

84.5% OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT BEING INVOLVED IN BUCS SPORT HAS ALLOWED THEM TO CULTURALLY AND SOCIALLY INTERACT WITH A WIDER GROUP OF STUDENTS.

The statement that had the highest positive sentiment was that over 90% of students that responded to the survey agreed that sport gave them a sense of belonging to their institution and its community. Advance HE reported that “In the higher education sector, fostering a sense of belonging among students has emerged as a crucial element for academic success, student retention and overall wellbeing”⁵. The report goes on to outline the related benefits that a strong sense of belonging has. It means students are more likely to persist in their studies, leading to improved retention rates which in turn has its financial advantages. Students that feel more connected to their institution not only helps their overall wellbeing, but this means students are also more likely to engage with campus, participate in extracurricular activities and be part of an alumni network, which all contribute to the reputation of the institution.

For such a significant majority of students to report that sport provides them with a sense of belonging, this highlights the crucial role that sport can play in this area. This is re-enforced with the other data points collected with a significant majority of students reporting they feel proud to

5. Advance HE *Fostering belonging in higher education: Implications for student retention and wellbeing*, March 2024

represent their university and that being involved in sport has allowed them to culturally and socially interact with a wider group of students, which both feed into an overall sense of belonging.

Using the 2022/23 Higher Education Statistics Agency data, we know that 25.8% of students in higher education were from outside of the UK (using non UK permanent addresses) ⁶ which speaks to the culturally diverse demographic of student that the higher education sector can foster. When looking at our own data from the BUCS Play platform, there is the following ethnic breakdown from the 2023/24 BUCS participants; White – 74.6%, Black, Black British, Caribbean or African – 5.8%, Asian or Asian British – 11.0%, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups – 5.5% and other ethnic groups – 1.4%. Using the data collected in this survey, bringing together students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds is a tool that BUCS sport can significantly support.

6. Higher Education Statistics Agency, *Where do HE students come from?* | HESA, August 2024

DIFFERENCES IN STUDENT EXPERIENCE BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

GENDER

The survey respondents, totalling 1,502 individuals, comprised 50.7% men, 35.8% women, 0.7% non-binary, and a further 12.8% who preferred not to say or there was no information available for. This distribution is representative of the gender breakdown of BUCS participants, where 40% are women (41,833 participants) and 59.2% are men (61,880 participants).

It is important to note that non-binary was not included in the analysis in this section because the sample size was too small to provide meaningful data.

The boxes below highlight two of the strongest differential responses between men and women on the impact of BUCS sport on higher education experience questions.

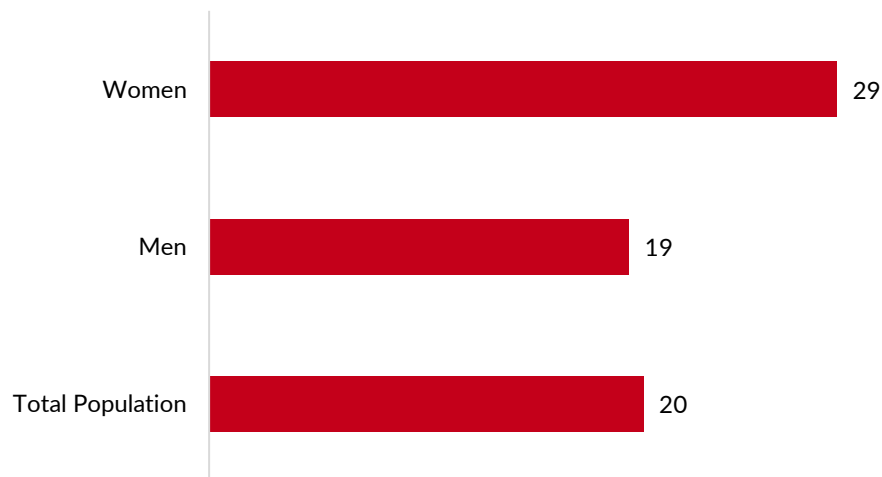
68.2% OF WOMEN AGREED THAT THE SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPED THROUGH BUCS HAVE ENHANCED THEIR ABILITY TO STUDY WHEN COMPARED WITH MEN (62.0%) AND OVERALL POPULATION (64.0%)

57.5% OF WOMEN AGREED THAT BEING PART OF A SPORT TEAM/CLUB HAS PREVENTED THEM FROM DROPPING OUT OF UNIVERSITY WHEN COMPARED WITH MEN (45.7%) AND OVERALL POPULATION (50.4%)

The above statistics indicates the positive impact that BUCS sport can have on women's soft skills in relation to their ability to study and that BUCS is a contributing factor in motivating women to complete their degrees and continue their education.

When looking at BUCS student experience overall, the net promoter score was 19 for men and 29 for women. The breakdown of findings to create this NPS score were that 43.0% of women would recommend BUCS to a friend or colleague (with 42.6% being neutral) compared to 37.1% of men (with 45.1% being neutral).

NPS SCORE - BY GENDER



A point to note is with this graph is that men and women are not only populations that made up the total population. The population of those we do not have gender information on have a lower-than-average NPS score, which impacts on the total population average being closer to the male population. It is unclear what is causing this difference in NPS score between genders, especially given there is limited differences in the overall experience rating of men and women. To understand what is causing this, further exploration is needed. In relation to aspects that enhance and detract from the student experience, there were significant differences reported for the quality of membership perks (e.g. kit, travel, gym) with just 24.2% of women saying this enhanced their experience, compared to 30.6% of men.

However, across several measures, the factors that impact on the experiences of men and women BUCS competitors are very similar. These areas include; the quality of equipment, quality of facilities, support from university staff members and the standard of officiating.

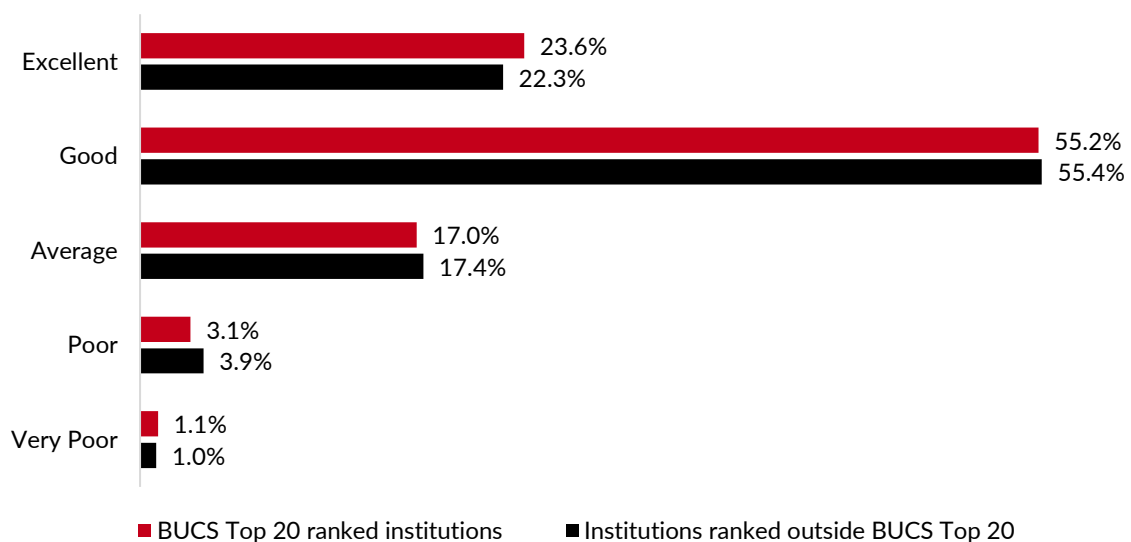
BUCS RANKING

We used the top 20-point scorers in the 2023-24 season as a proxy and looked at the survey responses from students who attended those institutions compared to all other student responses. This is in line with the categorisation used for the Complete Universities Guide Data report BUCS released in 2023 and, in this instance, provided a generally even spread of responses. The respondents were made up of 41.1% of students from the BUCS top 20 and 58.5% of students from institutions outside the BUCS top 20. This is broadly representative of the 2023-24 participants which had a 38.9% to 61.0% split respectively.

55.4% OF STUDENTS FROM INSTITUTIONS RANKED OUTSIDE OF THE BUCS TOP 20 AGREED THAT BEING PART OF A SPORT TEAM/CLUB HAS PREVENTED THEM FROM DROPPING OUT OF UNIVERSITY IN COMPARISON WITH STUDENTS FROM INSTITUTIONS RANKED IN THE BUCS TOP 20 (43.5%)

There were minor differences found in the overall rating of students' BUCS experience between the two groups of institutions. The graph below shows the split of responses.

OVERALL HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR BUCS STUDENT EXPERIENCE

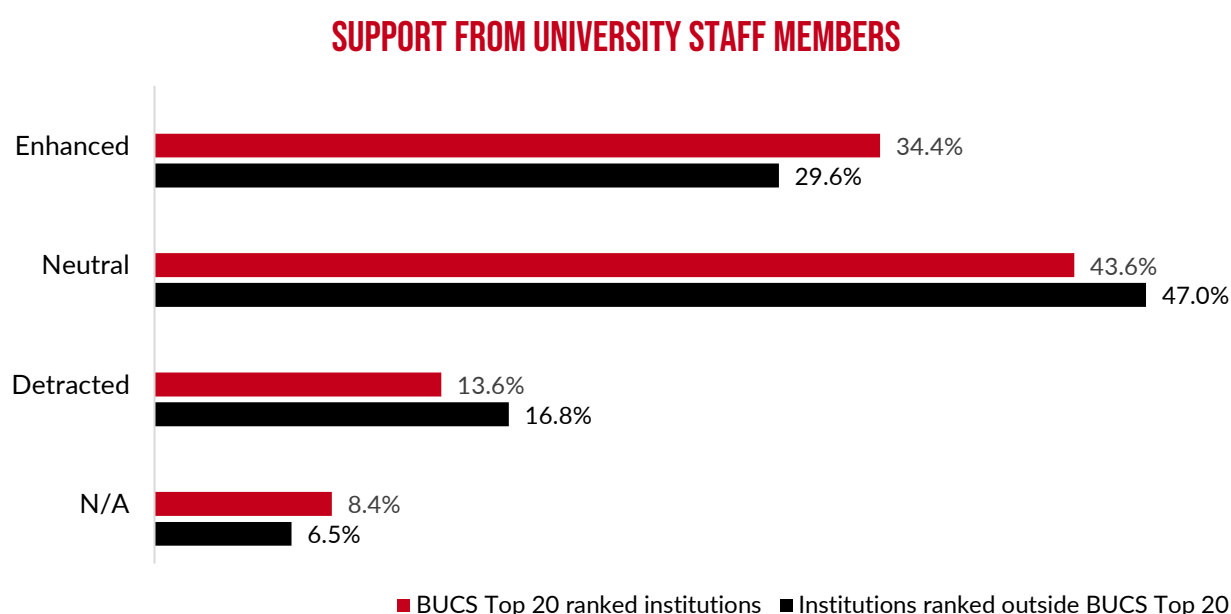


Although there were limited differences in overall experience sentiment, there were differences highlighted in the areas that make up the overall student experience. There is a 13-percentage point difference between students who reported that access to and standard of training facilities enhanced their student experience between top 20 ranked institutions (52.3%) and institutions outside the top 20 (39.3%). Sixteen percent of students from universities outside of the top 20 reported that their training facilities detracted from their student experience, compared to 12% of students from Top 20. These findings align with the BUCS Complete University Guide report, which highlights the following: institutions that ranked in the BUCS top 20 on average tend to have a wider sport offering, provide more varied facilities and invest more in sports and facilities. Therefore, it may not be an unexpected finding and may explain the reason behind this difference in responses. In contrast, those outside the top 20 rankings on average tend to have a narrower sport offering, fewer and less varied facilities and

invest less in sports and facilities meaning the impact that the access and standard of training facilities is having on making up their overall experience is lessened ⁷.

Similar to the student demographics discussed above, when it came to the standard of playing facilities, we found that students from top 20 ranked institutions (49.2%) were in excess of 7 percentage points more likely to say that the playing facilities available to them enhanced their student experience than those from institutions outside of the top 20 (42.0%). The findings here suggest that investment in facilities is a significant factor for student satisfaction in sport and physical activity.

There is a smaller yet significant difference in responses when we asked about support from university staff members as shown in the graph below.



For both types of institutions, the most common response to this statement was ‘neutral’. Although this is minority result, there are still more than 1 in 10 students (15.5%) across the population that are reporting support from university staff members as a detractor. This indicates a need for an understanding of how universities can support students further. Investigating this and increasing the understanding can help to uncover areas where this may be detracting from the student experience.

Overall, minimal difference in overall BUCS student experience was found between the two groups of institutions.

⁷ Complete University Guide 2021-22 Data Report, [Tracking Trends in Higher Education Sport: Insights from the Complete University Guide Data 2021-22](#), November 2023

TYPE OF INSTITUTION

Alongside BUCS ranking, we also looked at type of institution. We split the institutions into three groups; Russell Group universities, other Traditional universities (established before 1992), and institutions that were established post-1992. Russell Group universities account for 40.9% of BUCS participants, followed by post-1992 universities (30.8%), other Traditional universities (27.2%), and 'other institutions' (1.1%). We found that the Russell Group and Traditional universities segmentation produced very similar results, however there was a clear distinction between respondents from these institutions and those from post-1992 institutions. It is worth noting that 14 of the BUCS Top 20 universities are Russell Group, from the total of 24 Russell Group universities.

The most significant difference in institution responses is shown in the student responses to the 'access to and standard of training facilities' enhancing their student experience with approximately 6 percentage points separating post-1992 institutions (40.8%) from traditional and Russell Group institutions (47.2% and 46.1%). Another significant difference is found in the quality/skill level of training and matches question. For students from Russell Group institutions, 59.7% said that this enhanced their student experience, in comparison to 52.8% of students from post-1992 institutions and 55.4% of students from traditional universities.

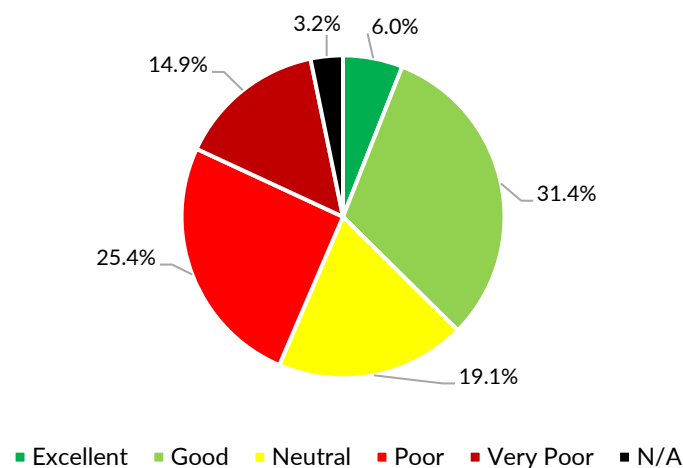
Whilst there are higher enhancers in specific areas for students who attend Russell Group and Traditional universities, the perception of the student experience as reported by the students at these institutions doesn't change significantly and there is limited difference in the overall satisfaction scores between the three types of universities.

WHAT IS AFFECTING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

BUCS PLAY

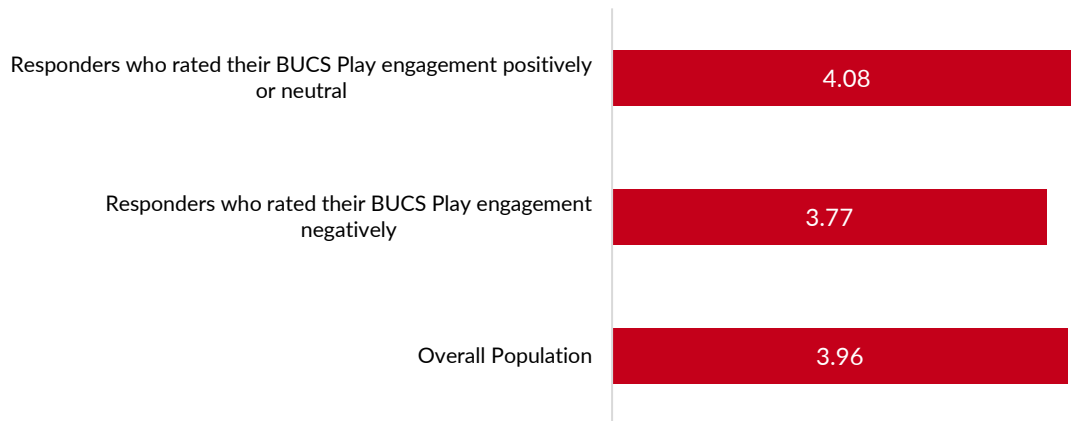
There are many factors affecting the student experience, with the most detracting area identified being engagement with BUCS Play. When asked to rate their experience of engagement with BUCS across a number of areas, the following breakdown of responses were provided for engaging with BUCS Play:

EXPERIENCE OF ENGAGING WITH BUCS PLAY



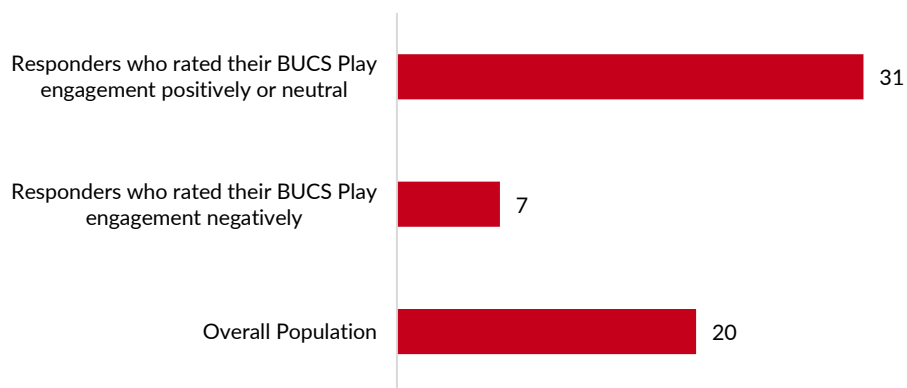
Six percent of respondents rated it as 'Excellent', 31.4% as 'Good' and 40.3% of respondents rated it as 'Poor' (25.4%) or 'Very Poor' (14.9%). Below is a graph showing the impact that BUCS Play is having on the overall BUCS student experience. This graph has separated out those that rated their BUCS Play experience with a positive or neutral sentiment and those that had a negative sentiment and compared their average overall BUCS experience rating against each other and the overall population. This illustrates the type of improvement that could occur if the engagement experience with BUCS Play is improved upon.

OVERALL AVERAGE BUCS EXPERIENCE RATING BY BUCS PLAY ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE



A similar point is demonstrated with the NPS score. The NPS score for BUCS for the overall population is 20, but this falls to 7 for responders who rated BUCS Play engagement negatively. Ultimately this is still a positive NPS score, with there being more promoters than detractors, however this shows the negative impact BUCS Play is playing on students' experience with BUCS. When isolating the responders who rated the app positively, this increases the NPS score to 31. This again reiterates the improvement in overall student satisfaction with an increase of engagement experience with BUCS Play.

NPS SCORE BY SENTIMENT RATING OF BUCS PLAY ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE



To understand what it is about the app that is detracting from their experience, the qualitative data from the survey found that numerous students had issues along the themes of it being slow, 'buggy' and difficult to navigate. The theme of the app's poor functionality also came through in the comments made.

“BUCS PLAY APP IS DIFFICULT TO USE AND NOT EASY TO FIND WHAT I’M LOOKING FOR”

“THE BUCS PLAY APP IS VERY DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH AS A CAPTAIN...”

“THE BUCS PLAY APP LIKES TO CRASH A LOT WHICH SOMETIMES MAKES IT HARD TO ACCESS THE INFORMATION NEEDED”

From feedback in relation to the BUCS Play app over the past academic year, BUCS has committed investment to upgrading areas of the app including the back-end infrastructure and the events section. The infrastructure improvements aim to increase the functional stability by reducing the number of bugs, performance by reducing load times, and reducing necessary maintenance. The events section improvements aim to increase the user experience, reduce the amount of BUCS events team admin and reduce the support time needed from BUCS staff by creating simpler processes for the users. These will be rolled out over the next academic year, with all users feeling the benefit of this and improving the experience when engaging with the BUCS brand through this mode.

DETRACTORS OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Students were asked to state whether certain factors have enhanced or detracted from their experience. The table below shows the most reported factors that detract from the BUCS student experience, with “how my university promoted my team/sport successes” being the most reported at 23.6%, closely followed by “standard of officiating” with 22.7% of students reporting this.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TAKING PART IN BUCS SPORT	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS STATED THIS HAS DETRACTED FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE
How my university promoted my team/sport's successes	23.6%
Standard of officiating	22.7%
Quality of the membership perks (e.g. kit, travel, gym, nutritional and other support)	20.6%
How BUCS promoted my team/sport successes	19.2%
Support from university staff members	15.5%

Specifically looking at how my university promoted my team/sport successes and the standard of officiating, as the top two reported detractors, the following themes have been identified from the qualitative data.

“...OUR TEAM WON AND [WERE] PROMOTED TO 3RD DIVISION, BUT NOT ANY SINGLE APPRECIATION FROM UNIVERSITY AND NOT A SINGLE ACHIEVEMENT CERTIFICATE.”

“I THINK IN MY CASE THERE WAS A LACK OF PROMOTION FROM MY UNIVERSITY'S CLUB WITH REGARDS TO A LOT OF BUCS RELATED CONTENT THIS YEAR WHICH WAS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY.”

The recognition of success within an institution can have a huge impact on the value felt by those competing in higher education sport, with smaller gestures of recognition going a long way to making a student feel recognised in terms of their achievements. Without more information on the types of recognition that students would make them feel recognised and specific themes on sports that may be affected more than others, it is recommended that institutions explore this area in more detail. When looking at standard of officiating, students highlighted inconsistent and poor-quality officiating across various sports which can sometimes affect game outcomes.

“...OFFICIATING IS TOO VARIABLE DEPENDING ON WHO GETS ASSIGNED AT HOME AND IS WORSE THAN THOSE AT AWAY GAMES.”

“THE OFFICIATING IN THE LEAGUE THIS YEAR WAS UNPREDICTABLE... WE WERE MET WITH A LOW STANDARD OF REFEREES WHEN WE WENT TO AWAY MATCHES... THIS MASSIVELY DETRACTED FROM OUR BUCS JOURNEY THIS YEAR AS WELL.”

However, not all responses on the standard of officiating were negative:

“THERE WERE A COUPLE OF [SPORT] GAMES WHERE THE OFFICIATING WAS NOT AT ITS USUAL STANDARD AND THAT TAKES THE FUN AWAY FROM PLAYING - BUT ON THE WHOLE, THE STANDARD WAS GOOD.”

Without officials, fixtures would not be able to be completed. In recent years BUCS has reduced the level of qualification needed to officiate in BUCS fixtures across a number of sports, due to the number and availability of officials that can fill these roles on Wednesday afternoons. Due to this, it is likely that there are now officials who are less experienced and more towards the start of their officiating journey than there has been previously. The likely output of the required actions to reduce the qualification level of officials across several sports is that students may be having a poorer experience in this area across the sector, leading to this being one of the most reported detractors of their experience.

This is not an issue that one party can fix on their own and requires a collaborative effort between BUCS, institutions and national governing bodies to progress positively. In order to action this positive progress, the BUCS executive will start to audit the standard of officiating landscape. This will look to identify the most impacted upon and challenged sports (and where this is occurring), the challenges that are being faced, but also areas of best practise to identify what is working well.

It is important to note on the point of standard of officiating, that we are not able to benchmark this against the wider sporting ecosystem, to understand whether higher education students are having a better or worse experience of standard of officiating that the wider population in their sporting activities. What we are able to report in this space is that standard of officiating is one of the most reported detractors of student experience in BUCS sports.

WHAT ENHANCES THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The table below shows the top five enhancers of student experience. The club committee was the most significant enhancer with 65.2% of respondents reporting that it enhanced their student experience. To have a majority of responders reporting club committee members enhancing their experience is a really positive result and is testament to the work that these students put in. A greater look into those students that take up a position on the club committee and the sentiment they have towards the role is presented below.

The quality/skill level of training and matches was reported to have enhanced the student experience for 57.4% of respondents, which is a positive indication of the standard of BUCS sport. The quality of coaching was also found to be an enhancing factor for almost 50% of students.

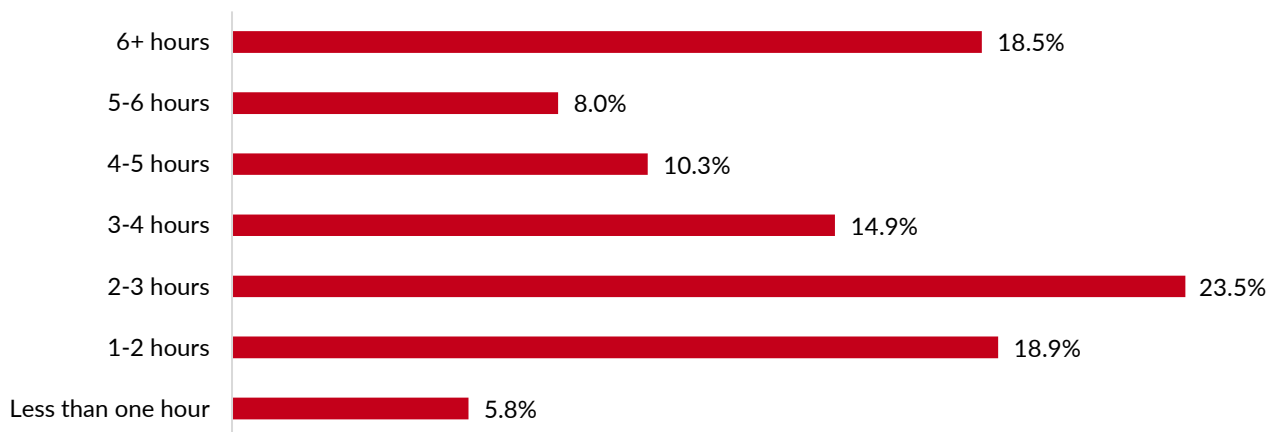
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TAKING PART IN BUCS	% OF STUDENTS STATED THIS HAS ENHANCED THEIR EXPERIENCE
The club committee	65.2%
Quality/skill level of training and matches	56.3%
Quality of coaching	49.3%
Playing facilities (home and away facilities and/or neutral venue)	45.0%
Access to and standard of training facilities used (including gym access)	44.7%

CLUB COMMITTEE LEADERS

Club committees were the biggest enhancer of the student sporting experience with 65.2% of students reporting that they enhanced their student experience. From the 2023/24 season, there are 19,425 club committee members across institutions reported on BUCS Play. Of the 1,502 responders to the survey, 35.2% held a club committee member role. For many club committee members, their role is a significant commitment alongside their academic studies as well as their general participation and training for their BUCS sport. As we heard in the cost-of-living research, students have typically less disposable time than previously, with a number having to take up part time work to help fund their

student life ⁸. Therefore, the willingness for students to take on this additional responsibility shouldn't be taken for granted. From the graph below, we can see the hours club committee members commit to their position weekly.

HOW MUCH TIME PER WEEK DO YOU SPEND FULFILLING THE ROLE ON THE COMMITTEE?



Club committee members give up substantial time to their role. Working with BUCS co-ordinators, BUCS Captains in particular play a vital role in the organisation of fixtures, transport, officials and tournaments. With the hours dedicated to their club committee, it is important that institutions, sabbatical officers and students' unions are supporting the club committee to balance their responsibilities with their academic studies and support them in their roles.

As part of the survey, we attempted to understand what the motivation was behind the students putting themselves forwards for this added responsibility. As you can see below, the overwhelmingly most frequent factor reported was they wanted 'to help build the club of the sport they love'. For this factor to be the most reported factor, above alternatives such as 'to enhance my employment opportunities' and 'the role compliments my study' is again an incredibly positive result and demonstrates the passion that the current university students have for sport. This finding aims to help institutions keep and recruit students into these positions going forward.

87.0% STATED THAT WANTING 'TO HELP BUILD THE CLUB OF THE SPORT THEY LOVE' WAS A MOTIVATOR FOR BEING A CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBER THAT COMPLETELY RELATED TO THEM

⁸ BUCS Cost-of-Living Report, [Resilience Challenged: The Impact of the Cost-of-Living Situation on Student Engagement in Higher Education Sport](#), August 2023

When asked about how appreciated club committee members felt, 79.0% reported that they feel appreciated by students in their club and similarly 70.8% feel supported in their role. 62.3% feel adequately trained to do their role. Despite this positive sentiment, there were 37.7% of responders who were either neutral or disagreed that they felt adequately trained to carry out their role. This is a fair proportion of the responders and should be an area of attention. During club committee training, it is recommended that institutions include training on finances and budgets as standard to help clubs maintain good financial practices as well as training on promoting positive cultures and protecting the welfare of their members. Some institutions have taken up providing training e-modules, which allows club committee members to refresh their knowledge as needed. Further exploration is needed to identify if this statistic about training varies across different committee positions and institutions to identify where additional training is needed.

Whilst training by institutions shows a positive sentiment, institutions need to be working closely with club committees to make sure they feel valued. From the data, 40.7% of club committee members feel appreciated by their institution. It is possible that the cost-of-living crisis has impacted this statistic with the BUCS cost-of-living research reporting an increase in financial hardship for students, but also increasing the financial pressure on institutions to provide support to clubs. It is suggested that further exploration, if not being done already, is conducted by institutions to understand how appreciated they feel.

Given the very positive impact that club committee members are having on the experience of students competing in competitive higher education sport, being the most reported enhancer of experience, it is important that universities maintain positive relationships with their club committees and work with them pro-actively to maintain the positive experiences had by students.

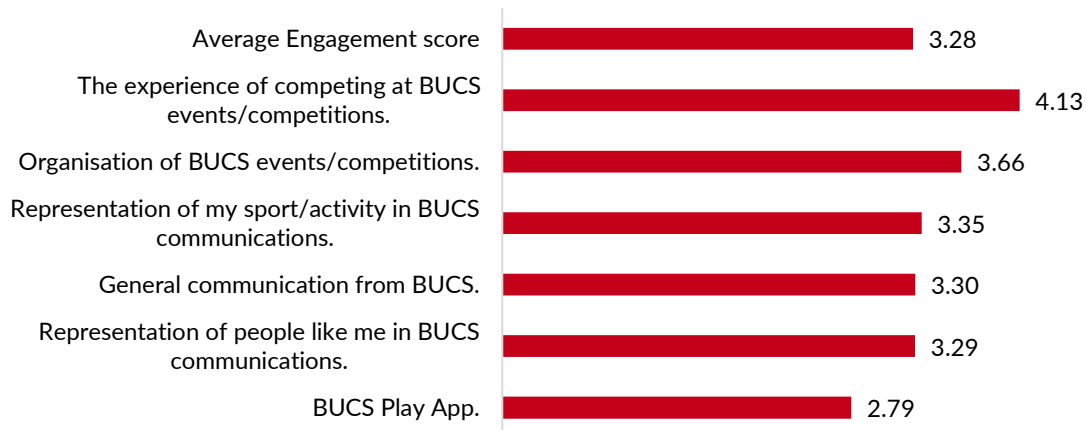
ENGAGEMENT WITH BUCS

The graph below shows the average sentiment score for different areas of engagement with BUCS.

The average engagement score was 3.28. The experience of competing in BUCS events/competitions was rated the highest whilst, as mentioned before, BUCS Play was rated the lowest. It is noteworthy that although this is a student survey, a lot of communication and organisation with BUCS comes from university staff and therefore it may be useful to collect data on staff responses in this area.

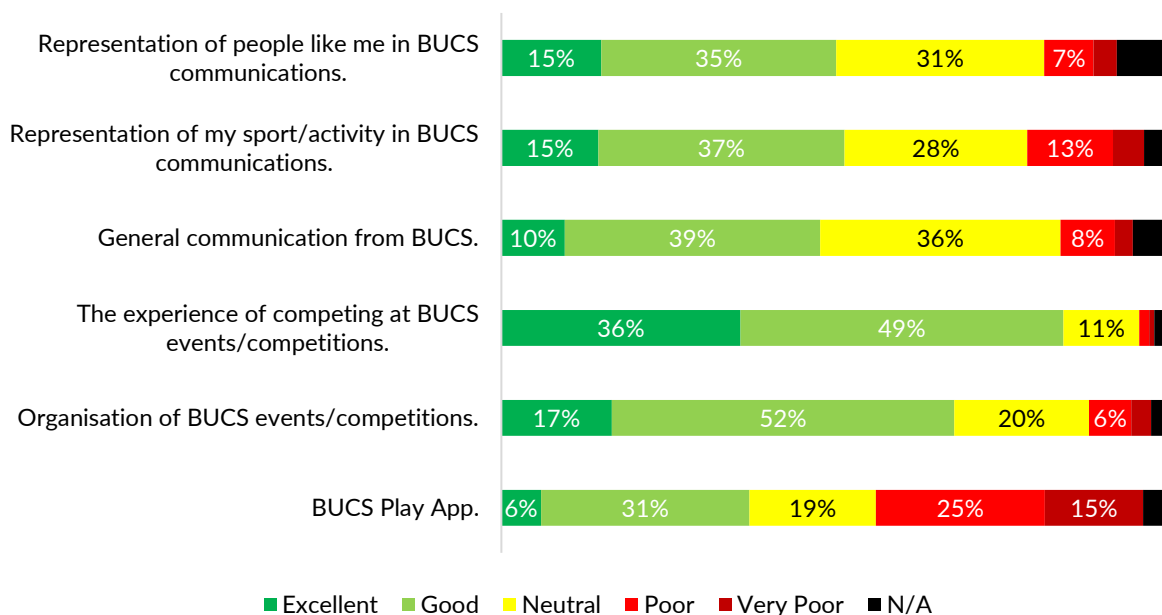
Additionally, students who are on club committees may have more experience communicating with BUCS and greater insight into BUCS organisation.

EXPERIENCE OF ENGAGING WITH BUCS



A useful view of this information is in the following graph which breaks down the responses in terms of the sentiment provided i.e. excellent, good, neutral, poor and very poor, and how these compared against each other.

EXPERIENCE OF ENGAGING WITH BUCS



As you can see from the graph, the general communication from BUCS, representation of my sport/activity communications and representation of people like me in BUCS communications have around half the responses as either 'excellent' or 'good'. There are also a significant proportion of responses as 'neutral', with the highest proportion being 'general communication from BUCS'. This

was expected given some students are exclusively engaged in BUCS through their institution and may not receive a high amount of correspondence from BUCS. We are aware that for many students, much of their experience is through the BUCS Play app and so this is their main association with BUCS.

ORGANISATION OF BUCS COMPETITIONS/MATCHES

The graph in the previous section showing percentage breakdown of experience sentiment when engaging with BUCS, shows a generally positive response in terms of the organisation of BUCS events/competitions with 68.3% of students rating this as either 'excellent' or 'good' and the majority of the other responses being 'neutral'. Comments were made through the qualitative data collected, which highlighted instances when there were negative perceptions of different areas of this organisation, which related to areas such as the information communicated and the timing of this communication. These qualitative points were made regarding certain events which will be taken on by the event leads ahead of the new season. Despite the comments made not reflecting the overall sentiment of students in this area, to improve the experience of all students, it was important to acknowledge these areas. These points will be used alongside the data received as part of the post event feedback received throughout the 2023-24 season.

A theme in the qualitative data was the location of events and travel. Students mentioned the high cost and logistical challenges of travelling long distances for games, as well as the difficulty of balancing academic commitments with sports.

Linked to this, there were mentions of BUCS scheduling clashing with academic studies, especially for postgraduate study and certain institution departments. There is a call for BUCS to advocate for keeping Wednesday afternoons free from academic study for students to be able to participate in weekly Wednesday fixtures. This is not a new challenge, with the National Union for Students highlighting and supporting students on campaigns for Wednesday afternoons to be kept free⁹. BUCS is currently engaging with members on a piece of work to help provide information and support institutions demonstrate the impact of their sport and physical activity programmes on key institutional strategic objectives. The resource created can be used internally to help advocate the benefit of higher education sport and provide justification for the need to create schedules that allow students to participate in these activities.

⁹ National Union of Students UK, [Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free](#), January 2017

“SOME UNIVERSITIES DO NOT HAVE WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS OFF - MAKE IT MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR MATCHES FOR THESE UNIVERSITIES...”

“I HAD CLASSES UNTIL 1 ON A WEDNESDAY AND SOME FIXTURES STARTED AT 11 AWAY WHICH MEANT I WAS UNABLE TO COMPETE”

REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSIVITY IN BUCS

From the graphs in the previous section, we can see that 50.5% of students felt that the representation of people like themselves in BUCS was either 'good' or 'excellent', giving an almost equal split between those students and those who were 'neutral', 'poor' or 'very poor'. In terms of representation of the respondent's sport, this narrowly increased by 1.2% for students who put either 'good' or 'excellent', however this was the second most disagreed statement after the BUCS Play app with 17.6% of responders selecting a negative sentiment. This data indicates a generally encouraging outlook of the representation in terms of student and sports in the BUCS communications, however through the qualitative data there were areas of improvement to be considered within this area.

There were a small number of comments made from student competitors desiring more exposure of their sport on BUCS social media. These comments were typically made in relation to the lower participated sports in the BUCS sporting structure. Similarly, there were a number of comments from student competitors wanting more exposure to their university and other 'smaller' institutions, with it being perceived that BUCS focuses on 'larger' sporting institutions.

BUCS endeavours to cover as wide range of institutions and sports as possible across the sporting season within the current resource and capacity. This is to showcase the wide variety of the sports and institutions that are competing within the BUCS structure, and this is regularly reviewed. These comments act as guidance to ensure that there are as wide variety of sports and institutions being included in the BUCS communications as possible.

Linked to this, there were a very small number of concerns about the lack of representation of minority groups, such as LGBTQ+ and underrepresented ethnic groups in BUCS communications. Due to the number of comments, this does not represent a common theme. However, this does provide BUCS with a check point to ensure that BUCS promote as diverse representation of participants as possible

in the BUCS communications. In this space, BUCS are going through the process of recruiting a Head of Belonging who will help drive the areas of work linked to equity, equality, diversity and inclusion.

Further limited comments regarding inclusivity were raised, in relation to para-athletes. A respondent reported that they felt excluded due to the facilities setup at an event. Although these are minimal reports in this area, inclusive is one of the four core values within the BUCS organisational strategy. Therefore, it is imperative that all student participants feel as though the environments they are competing in are inclusive. The recommendation to BUCS is to strive to ensure and continue to promote and foster inclusive environments for students to compete in.

SUMMARY OF MAIN THEMES

EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SPORT

Broadly speaking, the experience that students are having currently in BUCS competitive higher education sport is a positive one and one that is on the up. This positive experience is one that is being fuelled by the support to their mental wellbeing, the pride felt by representing their institution, the sense of belonging it brings to their institution community and supporting their interaction with a culturally and socially wider group of students.

Although the experience of most students is a positive one, there is progression to be made to ensure that all students are having a sporting experience that inspires, develops and unites.

BUCS PLAY

The survey revealed that engagement with the BUCS Play app was the most detracting factor in the overall student experience with BUCS. The NPS score for BUCS student experience for the overall population is 20, but this falls to 7 for responders who rated BUCS Play engagement negatively. The qualitative data echoes this negative sentiment finding that numerous students had issues along the themes of the app being slow, buggy and difficult to navigate. Improvement to the BUCS Play app in relation to the infrastructure and event section are planned to be rolled out within the 2024-25 sporting season, which aim to improve the user's experience.

ENHANCERS AND DETRACTORS TO THE EXPERIENCE

The BUCS survey identified several key enhancers that significantly improve the student sporting experience. Club committee members were highlighted as the most impactful, with 65.2% of students reporting the club committee enhanced their student experience. These members play a vital role in organising and managing sports clubs which encourages participation in BUCS sport. Additionally, the quality of coaching, facilities, and skill/quality level of training were also noted as important enhancers that contribute to enriching the BUCS student experience.

Below BUCS Play, the most significant detractor was how universities promoted their team or sport successes, with 23.6% of students reporting this as a negative factor. Closely following this, 22.7% of students indicated that the standard of officiating detracted from their experience, citing inconsistencies and poor-quality decisions that affected game outcomes. Other noted detractors

included the quality of membership perks (e.g., kit, travel, gym, nutritional support) at 20.6%, and how BUCS promoted individual team or sport successes, reported by 19.2% of students. Lastly, 15.5% of students felt that the support from university staff members was lacking, which negatively impacted their overall experience.

THE VALUE OF CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Club committee members play a critical role in enhancing the student sporting experience within BUCS. Of the 1,502 responders to the survey, 35.2% held a club committee member role. The club committee were the biggest enhancer of the student sporting experience with 65.2% of students reporting that they enhanced their student experience. These roles require substantial time commitment from the students involved and their commitment reflects the passion and dedication these students have for their clubs. While 79.0% of club committee members feel appreciated by their peers, and 70.8% feel supported in their roles, about 37.7% expressed that they did not feel adequately trained for their responsibilities and only 40.7% felt appreciated by their institution. This indicates a need for better training and support systems for these members to ensure they can perform their roles effectively and feel appreciated by their institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BUCS EXECUTIVE

OPTIMISE THE RIGHT TIMES TO ENGAGE WITH STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN BUCS FOR THEIR FEEDBACK, DEPENDING ON THE TIMING OF THEIR INTERACTION.

The breadth and type of engagement that a student can have with BUCS through an academic year can vary on a number of factors, such as the sport they play and the type of competition they engage in. In order to capture the thoughts and feedback of as many students as possible in an accurate and timely manner, we must engage at the correct times. The BUCS Insight team will review and implement improvements in the timing of survey and explore the best way to collect this data.

REVIEW THE AREAS OF QUESTIONS WITHIN THE SURVEY, AS WELL AS THE TYPE AND MODE OF QUESTIONS BEING ASKED.

This is the first piece of research in this area by BUCS, which has thrown up learnings to be taken going forward into future iterations. From year to year, there is an opportunity to reflect on the data that has been collected and look for topic areas that can be included in the data collection. The BUCS Insight team will review the content present within the survey and make amendments where necessary, to ensure the most pertinent data is being collected.

INCORPORATE A LONGER LEAD IN TIME TO ALLOW BUCS MEMBER INSTITUTIONS TO PROMOTE THE SURVEY TO THEIR OWN STUDENTS

The optimal way to engage with as many students as possible is a collaborative approach between BUCS and their member institutions. The support that member institutions can provide BUCS in engaging students is invaluable and can significantly help BUCS understand the viewpoint of as many students as possible. An increased sample size will allow meaningful data to be able to be shared with individual institutions on their own students, whilst also allowing BUCS to analyse the data from a wider range of intersections e.g. by sport, by institution, which will provide BUCS with a more comprehensive view of the experience being had by participants engaging with BUCS sport.

UNDERTAKE AND IMPLEMENT THE PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BUCS PLAY APP

The BUCS Play app was a significant factor that is detracting from the student experience when engaging with BUCS. Listening to feedback from across the season, BUCS have committed investment to upgrading the app regarding improving the infrastructure and events section of the app which aims to improve the user experience. The impact that this has on the satisfaction of students and members using the app should be monitored and assessed.

ENSURE THAT THE DIVERSITY OF REPRESENTATION OF INSTITUTIONS, SPORTS AND PARTICIPANTS PRESENT WITHIN BUCS MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS IS AS WIDE AS POSSIBLE.

There were a very small number of comments from students around the representation within the BUCS communications of the traditionally 'smaller' institutions and lower participated sports. It is recommended that BUCS ensure they are reflecting as diverse range of sports and institutions as possible. Although there was not a direct theme on the diversity of participants reflected in this media, there were limited comments present. Therefore, the diversity of participant should also be considered as part of this.

STRIVE TO CONTINUE TO PROMOTE AND FACILITATE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENTS TO COMPETE IN.

Although the comments made in this area did not constitute an overall theme, there were limited comments in relation to inclusive environments for para-athletes. For all students to feel like they belong at all BUCS events, the recommendation is to confirm the provisions for fostering inclusive environments are being implemented across the BUCS sporting event offer.

REVIEW AND ACTION WHERE POSSIBLE THE EVENT SPECIFIC QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK RECEIVED.

There were limited comments made through the qualitative data collected, which highlighted instances where students had a negative experience with the areas of the organisation of specific events. The areas raised are recommended to be used by the BUCS event leads, alongside the post event feedback collected through the 2023-24 season, to implement improvements for the 2024-25 season.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

We are aware that our member institutions vary in a number of ways and not all recommendations may be applicable to each member. These recommendations are made by using the overall themes from the data we've collected on the sporting experience of our student participants in higher education competitive BUCS sport. We are aware that the sentiment of students may differ by sports within an institution. However, as mentioned within the report, we have been unable to analyse by sport to specify further within the recommendations. Therefore, these may serve as a check point for institutions to understand further internally the sentiment of students in the highlighted areas and how this may differ by, for example, different sports.

UNDERSTAND WHETHER STUDENTS FEEL SUPPORTED WHEN PARTICIPATING IN HIGHER EDUCATION SPORT

When asked the question, whether support from university staff enhanced or detracted from the student's experience, the majority of the student responses fell into the neutral response, however over 1 in 10 reported this is detracting from the experience. BUCS recommend that member institutions engage with the students participating in BUCS sport to understand how supported they feel and any areas where they could feel more supported.

EXPLORE WHETHER STUDENTS FEEL THEIR SUCCESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS ARE BEING CELEBRATED.

'How my university promoted my team/sport successes' was the most reported factor that is detracting from the competitive higher education sport experience. With this being a general theme across the whole sector, it is recommended that institutions further explore, with their own sport clubs and students, how their successes have been promoted and what promotion they would like to experience. It is likely that this will be different from institution to institution, therefore a targeted internal approach is likely to be the most appropriate.

REVIEW THE COMMITTEE MEMBER TRAINING BEING UNDERTAKEN AT YOUR INSTITUTION AND HOW APPRECIATED YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS FEEL

Given their positive impact on student experience, it is crucial for universities to maintain strong relationships with club committees, providing them with the necessary support and resources to continue their valuable work. Over a third of the club committee member responders to the survey were either neutral or disagreed that they felt adequately trained to carry out their club committee

member role and 40.7% agreeing that they feel appreciated by their institutions. We recommend that our members institutions further explore whether this applies to the club committee members at their institutions and if necessary, review the training being completed and understand ways they their committee members would feel more appreciated. In order to support the collaboration across the sector, BUCS will look to share the case studies of best practise from institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BUCS EXECUTIVE AND MEMBER INSTITUTIONS AS A COLLECTIVE

SUPPORT THE COLLABORATION OF INSTITUTIONS, BUCS AND NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES TO HELP PROGRESS THE STANDARD OF OFFICIATING TO IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS ACROSS THE SECTOR.

Standard of officiating was one of the most reported factors that is detracting for the student's experience competing in higher education sport. The improvement of standard of officiating is not something that one party can improve on their own. What is required is a collaborative effort between institutions, BUCS and sport national governing bodies. To help drive this positive change, BUCS can help support the level of awareness and connecting the conversations of where help is most required. The BUCS executive will also start to audit the standard of officiating landscape. This will look to identify the most impacted upon and challenged sports (and where this is occurring), the challenges that are being faced, but also areas of best practise to identify what is working well.

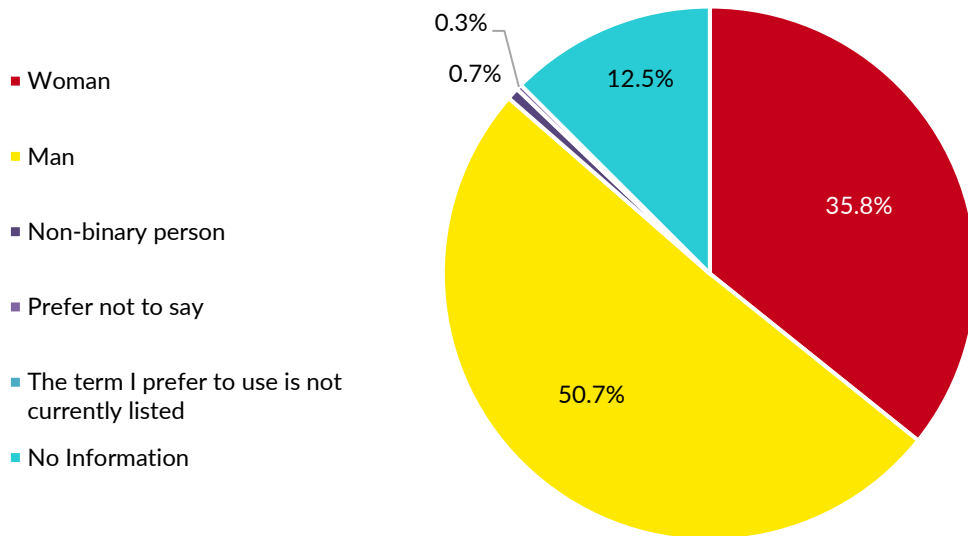
ADVOCATE ALLOWING WEDNESDAYS TO STAY FREE TO ALLOW FOR STUDENTS TO COMPETE IN BUCS SPORT WITHOUT CLASHES.

Comments came through from students on the need to advocate Wednesday afternoons being kept free to enable them to attend and compete in their afternoon sports fixtures, without having to miss their timetabled academic studies. BUCS are currently working on a guidance document which will support member institutions in justifying the impact they are having on the certain aspects of the student journey e.g. student retention, student recruitment, graduate outcomes. This piece of work, once released, can help support institutions demonstrate the value sport brings to the institution and subsequently help support any conversation on advocating this topic, to make it easier for students to attend their fixtures.

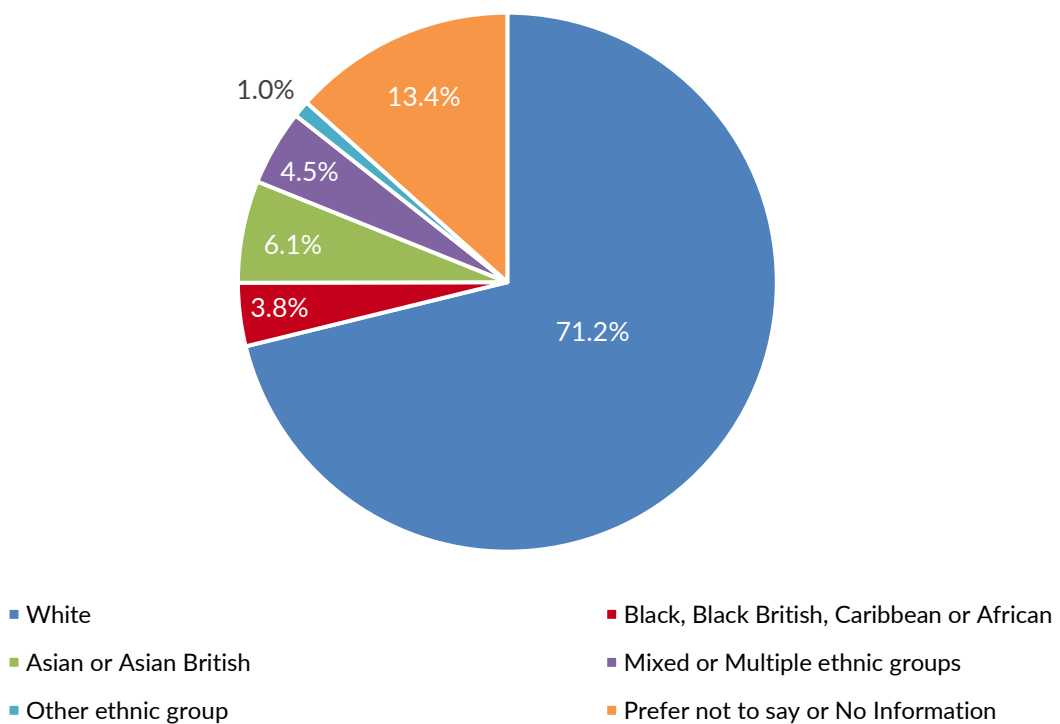
APPENDIX 1

VISUALISATIONS OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF ALL RESPONDERS

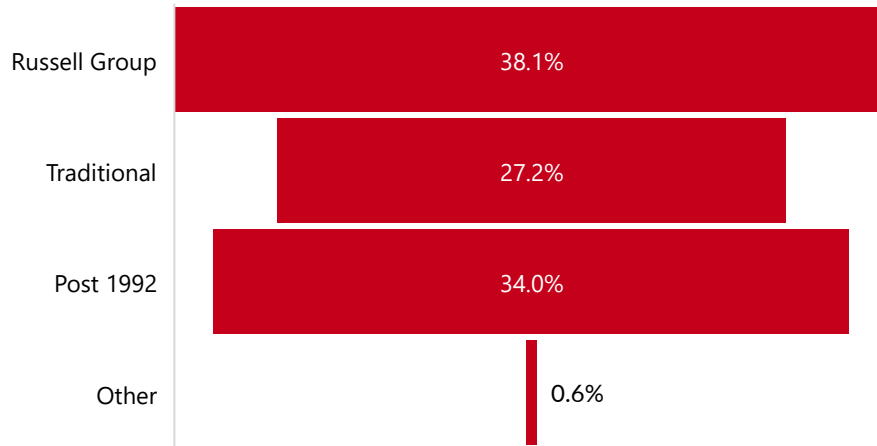
RESPONDERS BY GENDER



RESPONDERS BY ETHNICITY



RESPONDERS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION



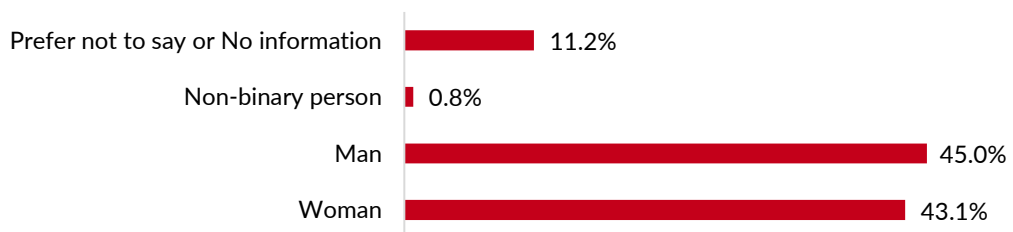
RESPONDERS BY INSTIUTION BUCS RANKING



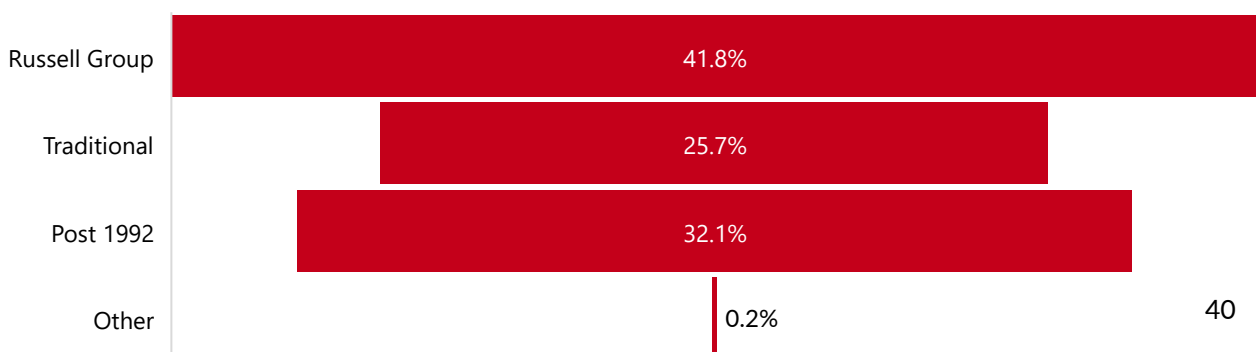
■ BUCS Top 20 ranked institutions ■ Institutions outside BUCS Top 20

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONDERS

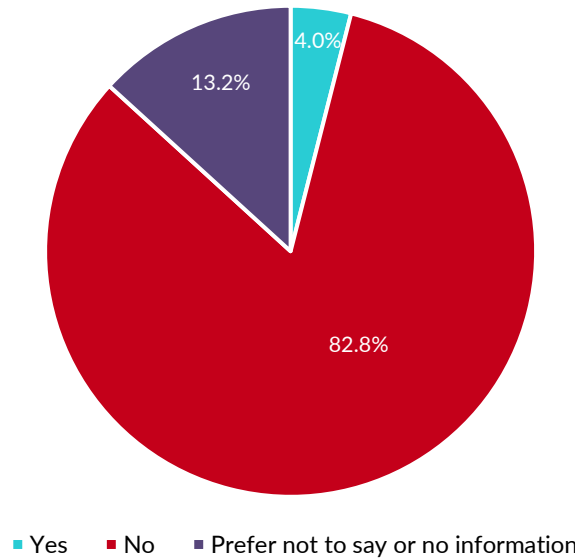
CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBERS BY GENDER



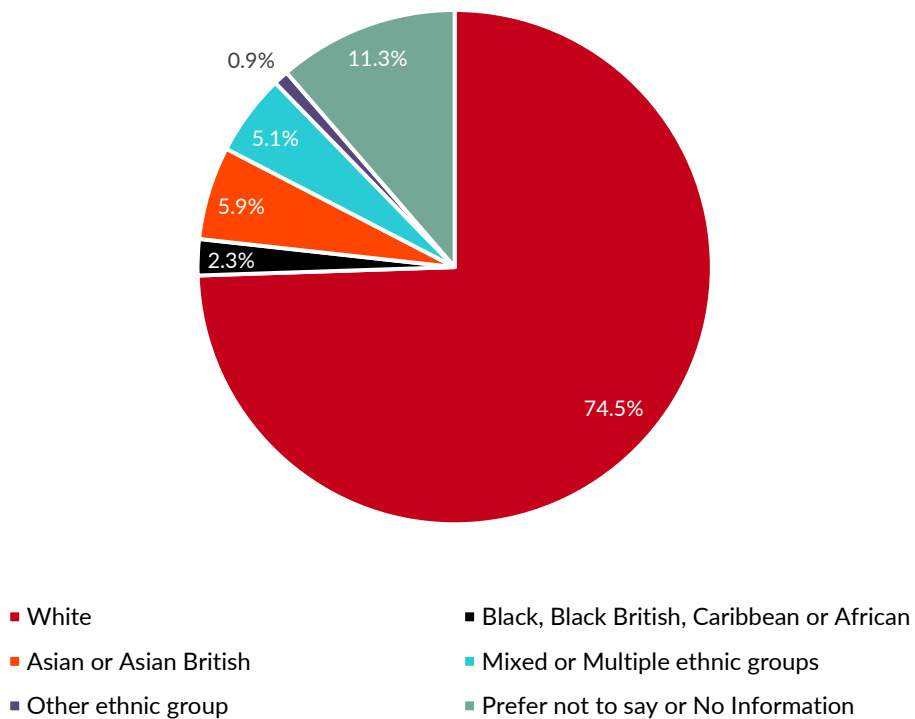
CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONDERS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION



CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONSES BY DISABILITY



CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONDERS BY ETHNICITY



CLUB COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONDERS BY INSTITUTION BUCS RANKING

