

# Staff and Students' Responses to Local Food Sourcing at QUB Food and Drink Outlets

## Introduction

This is a report from the survey project created by QUB students Chelsia Choi and Miguel Gedtal as part of the Environmental Leadership Programme 2019/2020. The aims of this survey were conceived following a meeting with Brian Horgan, QUB Head of Food and Drink: Primarily, to provide QUB food and drink outlets the attitudes and demands on local food sourcing from QUB staff and students. The survey was sent prior to the Covid-19 lockdown to: Green at Queen's Social Media and Instagram; Staff Round-Up on 9/3/2020; EL Student Email; and the Green at Queen's February E-Zine. It was shared among student group chats. The survey received 109 responses: 67 from staff and 42 from students. They purchase food/drink at a range of food/drink outlets: Junction, SU Shops and SU Express, Hope Café, Clements in the MBC and PEC, Speakeasy and from vending machines (Figures 1 and 2).

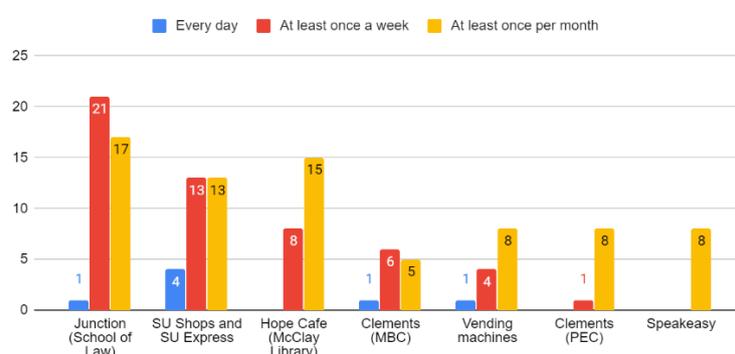


Figure 1. The proportion of staff that purchase food/drink from QUB outlets and the frequency of purchase

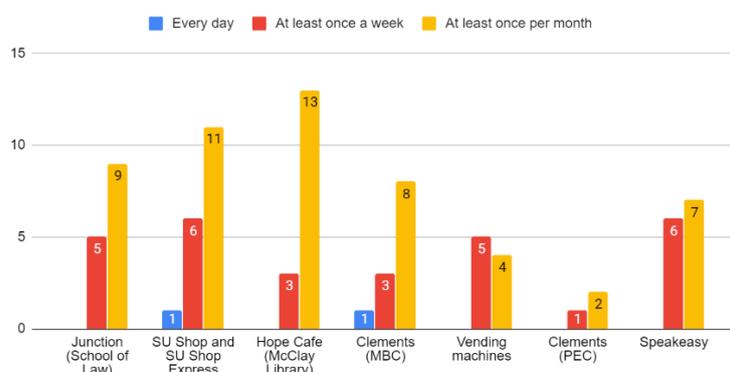


Figure 2. The proportion of students that purchase food/drink from QUB outlets and the frequency of purchase

This report will address three main questions using data from the survey respondents:

1. How important is it to staff and students that food outlets in Queen's are sourced locally?
2. How aware are staff and students of local food sourcing in Queen's?
3. What are the suggestions for local food from staff and students?

## 1. How important is it to staff and students that food outlets in Queen's are sourced locally?

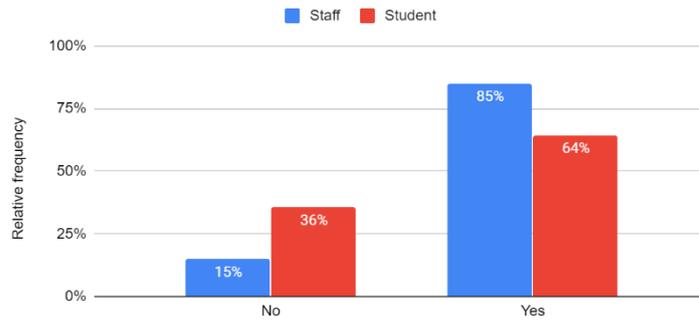


Figure 3. Relative frequency of the importance of food/drinks served to be locally produced for staff and students

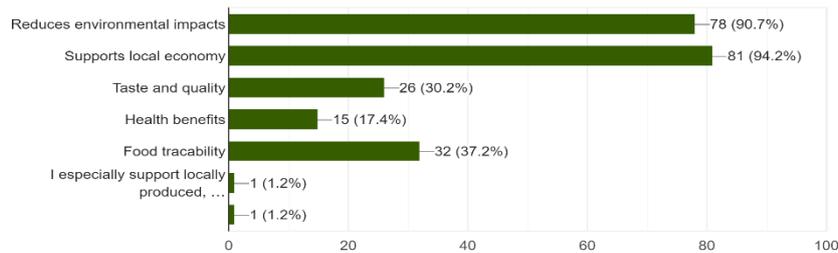


Figure 4. Staff and students' reasons for supporting serving local food at QUB food and drink outlets

Most staff and students agreed on the importance of locally produced food; however, there was a higher percentage of agreement for staff compared to students (85% agreed in comparison to 64%) (Figure 1). When asked about why they supported serving local food at QUB food and drink outlets, the prominent reasons were to support the local economy (94.2%) and reduce environmental impact (90.7%) (Figure 2).

## 2. How aware are staff and students of local food sourcing in Queen's?

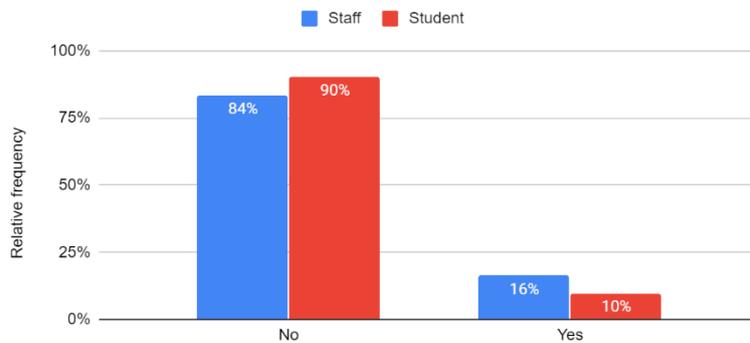


Figure 5. Relative frequency of knowledge on whether cafes and chaplaincies visited serve food sourced locally

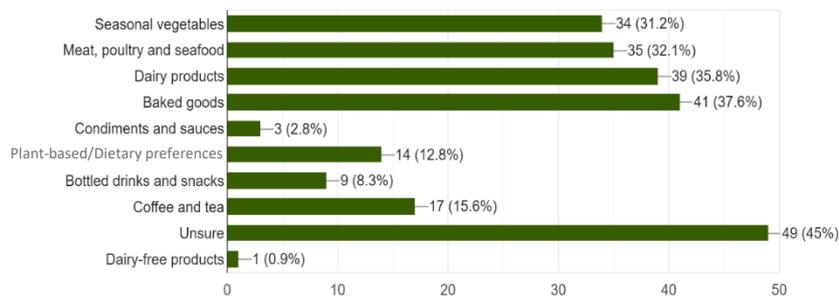


Figure 6. Staff and students' knowledge on food groups sourced locally at campus food and drink outlets

Figure 3 shows an overall lack of awareness on whether cafes and chaplaincies at Queen's serve local foods. Staff and students who knew about local food sourcing at Queen's obtained information

primarily through staff at the food and drink outlets, and displays, menus or posters. Nevertheless, consumers at QUB food/drink outlets lack awareness. The types of foods that were sourced locally were also not communicated clearly, as seen from Figure 4 in which 45% of survey responders were unsure. However, it is encouraging seeing that consumers were aware that seasonal vegetables; meat, poultry and seafood; dairy products; and baked goods were sourced locally for some of the Queen's food and drink outlets.

### 3. What are the suggestions for local food from staff and students?

Table 1. Staff answers for the following survey question: What are some local specialities/products that you would like to buy from campus food and drink outlets? Responses concerning vegetarian or vegan options are shaded in green, baked goods in orange, and seasonal produce and animal products in pink.

Anything vegan - especially vegan junk/comfort foods e.g. vegan sausage rolls, Irish Stews, curries, sandwiches. I do like vegan meat-substitutes rather than the health vegan salad foods!	Breads, Veg	seasonal produce, free range eggs from local farms, all local fruit and veg
More vegan options /snacks	Baked goods - especially GF products	Local Beef, lamb, pork (Bacon, sausages)
More vegan options	soda farls	Seafood e.g. mussels
vegetarian food	bread and snacks	I would like to see all basics (meat/veg) sourced locally but appreciate specialities may not be available locally
Vegan cakes	Vegetables, freshly cooked food (eg fresh vegan sausage rolls), order from local bakers/cooks (eg. Crumbs Vegan Bakery) as standard.	Locally grown and seasonal salads and vegetables; locally milled flour; locally produced milk; local butter; local yoghurts. I think this should also consider animal welfare. Chicken may be locally produced but can still be from caged hens.
Vegan	local artisan breads	Meat
Vegan options	baked goods	Fruit
local vegan and vegetarian foods would be nice	Tayto crisps, Belfast baps/pancakes, cakes and pastries from local bakeries	Goats Milk
Vegetarian	Fresh food options	I use Krem in ECIT - it's not on the list above! It is already quite expensive and therefore I wouldn't expect to pay more for local products. Local meat, yoghurt, bread, dairy, eggs, veg, drinks not in plastic bottles.
Soups, salads	Better fresh food, dinners, a deli counter in the MBC	Ideally all would be locally sourced. Local free range eggs should be a priority.
Sandwiches	Boxed lunches - healthy	As many locally sources products as possible - I would be more likely to buy locally sources goods
Coffee, breakfast foods, sandwiches	Suki tea	Healthy options
I would really like to see a change at Queen's PEC. As much as I like a coffee and a scone now and then, I'm often looking for something more healthy before and after my training. I know that 'Goodness Rocks' which is based at the Inns on the Saintfield Road has opened within DW at Boucher. I think we need something like that here at Queen's.		

Requests for locally produced vegetarian or vegan foods (shaded in green), baked goods (orange) and other meats, dairy and seasonal produce (pink) are highest amongst staff members (Table 1). Seeing as baked goods, sandwiches and staple/seasonal produce e.g. dairy, meat and poultry are already sourced locally for some QUB cafes and chaplaincies, extra promotion is needed to raise awareness for consumers. Local vegetarian, vegan and fresh food options are in demand by some staff.

Table 2. Student answers for survey Question D: What are some local specialities/products that you would like to buy from campus food and drink outlets? Responses related to drinks (E.g. Tea, milk) are shaded in blue, meals in yellow.

Tea, sandwiches	Irish Boxty or Colcannon would be amazing
Local tea	Pasta, Sandwiches
Suki Tea, Helen's Bay Organic (great business, not sure how that would work in a university though, maybe cafes could source ingredients from there?)	Crisps, salads
Kombucha	fried rice, japanese noodles (Ramen)
milk maybe	Pies and pastries
Soy milk	More vegetarian options, dairy alternative milkshakes
Juice	More vegan/vegetarian options
Suki tea	Locally baked bread, fruit and vegetables (Helen's bay for example), sweets and chocolate (e.g. Aunt Sandras)
Local fruit	Organic vegetables
fresh fruit juices, more locally grown fruit and vegetables (e.g. more seasonal stuff), refuge hot chocolate, homemade vegetarian/vegan options. More of the proper chips in the SU shop as appose to the big imported bags from overseas (the proper chips ones are UK based and way nicer).	Mostly the meats.

In comparison to staff members, students are looking for drinks (shaded in blue) and meals (yellow) (Table 2); products that they can consume quickly before or after lectures, for example. A larger variety of local teas can be sold, as well as meals that are comprised of local produce/ made locally.

Table 3. Staff and student answers for survey Question E: What could campus food and drink outlets do to encourage you to buy local food products? Responses related to promotion are shaded in yellow, pricing in pink, and variety of food in green.

Tell customers that they are locally sourced, make their menus more seasonal	lower prices
Promote more on social media	loyalty scheme with points/discounts as rewards
Clear signage and staff indicating if an alternative locally produced product is available.	Source from artisan suppliers, use no plastic, less packaging, offer good price.
Advertise them clearly as locally sourced! I think there is a general lack of awareness.	Competitive pricing
Advertise that it is local, even if it is just stated on menus. Events that showcase source, the people behind the food and samples.	Supply more of it at a reasonable price. Have special promotions. Profile the suppliers and their contribution to the local economy.
Advertise on Comms, hold events with tasters and samples at Queen's venues	Make the price reasonable and make the food look nice to eat, rather than sitting for ages under hot lights and drying out
use of promotions/taster sessions/ samples. Make sure that the customer knows when something is local to allow them to make the choice	Reducing the price so that it is a more affordable option (students will not be keen to buy something unless it is competitive with big brands).
Occasional samples, tell the story (make me care)	decrease the price
extra promotion	Reduce price
clearly display where the food comes from	Cheaper price
make them available and visible ("THIS is locally produced")	Reduce the price or have better meal deals
highlight the benefits and offer samples	Cheaper pricing of course ;)
Showcase what products are sustainable, and the economic and environmental benefits of this.	better vegetarian options
Ensure that the food which is locally sourced is actually locally 'produced' - e.g. with baked goods - where is the flour milled? Also ensure that no chemicals have been used to unseasonally produce the food, or only use seasonal food. Promote local growers/farmers and small producers. Inform me at point of purchase/use that animal welfare and sustainability are considered when identifying suppliers.	Dairy-free products

generate awareness that they are using local providers	Ensure they are vegan as well as locally produced
posters / communication to show how you support local and who the suppliers are. maybe a spotlight on particular suppliers and their products, and how QUB use them each month (ie. a monthly special or something)	More vegan options
Promotions, educate where the best places are to buy which are student friendly	Introduce more hot vegan options
Advertise more, special offers	hot food, vegetarian
Have posters about the benefits of buying locally e.g cuts down emissions	Make it taste great! There's no real incentive to pay more if it all just tastes the same.
Emphasise locality on marketing of products	
More sourcing transparency	
Firstly, offer them as a product! Provide small posters/ information cards with who made their food/ the company's story. Poster with e.g. 5 reasons to buy local, particularly emphasising environmental reasons.	
Provide more information about air miles and how importing lots of products is detrimental to local economy and the planet.	
Increase marketing /advertising on campus describing the local products on offer	
Talk about how buying local products actually help the local economy more	

In total 80 responses were recorded for survey question E which regard incentives or improvements that QUB food and drink outlets can implement to encourage customers to buy local food products. Extensive promotion is required due to the low awareness of both staff and students. Many respondents have specified clear positive impacts to be outlined of purchasing local products. Other methods mentioned by respondents include clearly stating on packaging or menus that the food is locally produced; provide samples to customers; as well as highlight the socio-economic and environmental benefits of local food sourcing specifically. These can be through social media, flyers and posters around campus, and within the food and drink outlets (shaded in yellow).

Pricing should also be considered when marketing local food products as feedback to lower prices for locally produced food was received from both staff and students. In addition, loyalty schemes, discounts such as meal deals, and rewards for buying a certain amount of local food products were also mentioned (pink). Furthermore, a wider range of local food products can be sourced such as vegan, vegetarian and dairy-free products to incentivise the increasing group of customers that have dietary preferences (green). Nonetheless, the taste and quality of food offered should still be a priority (Table 3).

## Conclusion

It is worth noting that the proportion of survey answers from staff was higher than students. In addition, many students who study in QUB live abroad which must be catered with overseas food/drink products. Nonetheless, as demonstrated by survey results, both QUB staff and students strongly value local food sourcing. The perceived positive impacts of local food sourcing include reduced environmental impact and support for the local economy, but the response reveals that these benefits could be elaborated/ specified to the respondents at point of purchase. Promotion requires storytelling to convey the clear benefits that are perceived by the respondents of purchasing local food/drink. This can be especially relevant in the current situation that local businesses face in the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit. Likewise, one of the commitments in Campus Food and Drink Sustainable Food Policy is to “Adopt a marketing and communications strategy to actively promote our sustainable and environmental activities”. At the time the survey was sent out, local food/drink

have already been served at some Queen's food and drink outlets but around half of the respondents are unsure of the types of locally produced food served. In addition, respondents are specifically looking for locally made/sourced vegetarian or vegan products, baked goods, seasonal produce, fresh foods, drinks and quick meals. Again, some of these products may already exist, but respondents lack awareness. Incentives that promote local food/drink choices may be put in place where respondents are shown to most frequently purchase food/drink: Junction, SU Shops and SU Express, Hope Café, Clements in the MBC and PEC, Speakeasy and campus vending machines. Such incentives include food quality and pricing with special offers, discounts etc. There is a demand for local food and drink for the perceived positive impacts but the lack of communication and transparency among QUB food and drink outlets need first to be addressed; otherwise any changes to food/drink products will only increase the disconnect consumers have on the products that are served. Another survey could then be undertaken with a larger reach of respondents to determine whether awareness has improved to local food sourcing, and whether attitudes have changed to local food sourcing.