



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

**STUDENT WELLBEING  
AND ACCESSIBLE  
LEARNING**

# **STUDENT WELLBEING AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING SUPPORT IMPACT REPORT 23/24**

**FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OCTOBER 2024**

# CONTENTS

## SECTION 1: Introduction

- About Student Wellbeing
- Organisational Chart
- Who's Who For You
- Service Delivery Model

## SECTION 2: A Year in Student Wellbeing 2023 –24

- A Year in Student Wellbeing Infographic
- General Service Initiatives, Campaigns and Developments

## SECTION 3: PG/Faculty Wellbeing Adviser Report

- Data and Trends
- Developments and Collaborations at Faculty level and Impact
- Student Wellbeing Service Feedback

## SECTION 4: Students Supported Through Disability Services

- Service Overview
- A Year in Disability Services
- What's In A Name?
- Working Diagnosis and Supporting Documentation
- Disability Service Feedback
- Funded Support for Students with Disabilities
- Service Achievements

## SECTION 5: Recommendations and Objectives for 2024-25

- Accessible Learning Support Objectives for 24/25
- Student Wellbeing Recommendations for 24/25

# SECTION 1:

## Introduction

It is a pleasure to introduce the Student Disability and Wellbeing Impact Reports 2023-24. Now in their fourth year we trust what follows is a useful overview of the work which has taken place between Schools and central support services to support students.

As well as the data for Student Wellbeing and those external services we work with throughout the year, for 2023-24 we have included more detail on those students supported through Accessible Learning Support (formerly Disability Services).

Our experience is that colleagues find the data relating to their School to be of most benefit but also appreciate seeing the wider Faculty context. We trust that by including more information on Accessible Learning Support this year colleagues find the data even more useful.

The Accessible Learning Support and Student Wellbeing Teams have put considerable effort in the last number of years into working more closely with Schools. It is therefore pleasing to see the increase in staff referring students directly to the Services, as well as more collaborative work with Schools. Both the Accessible Learning Support and the Student Wellbeing Teams very much appreciate the collaboration with School staff and the embedded nature of much of the work in the form of Faculty Drop-Ins, regular Students of Concern meetings and joint wellbeing initiatives to support preventative work.

The figures show that the numbers of students presenting with stress and anxiety continues to be high, with academic pressures and personal issues being the second and third most prevalent reason for accessing support in AHSS and EPS. In MHLS they are academic pressures and disability support. What the figures do not show are the hours that staff in the services, along with colleagues in Schools, can invest in individual students to support their wellbeing. As some of the case studies indicate, students can find themselves in complex scenarios which need multi-disciplinary support. Put simply for many students accessing support can be life changing, and in a handful of cases, life saving. We may never know fully the impact of interventions represented in this report but all of them matter.

I want to finish by thanking colleagues in the Student Wellbeing Team, Accessible Learning Support and Schools for their considerable and dedicated work in the academic year of 2023-24 in supporting a considerable number of students during their time at the University.

**Helen McNeely**  
**Head of Student Affairs**  
**Student and Campus Experience**



# ABOUT STUDENT WELLBEING

## Who is Who for You?

Student Wellbeing and Accessible Learning services are delivered on a Faculty-facing model, with a dedicated staff team working closely with colleagues in Schools, to help deliver support and interventions to students. For the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, there is a dedicated Wellbeing Adviser, Disability Officers and an Assistant Disability and Wellbeing Adviser, who lead on supporting students at Tiers 0, 1, 2 and 3 of the 'Stepped Care Model of Support', offering support and guidance through a triage service. Students presenting at Drop-In or through online staff or student referrals are contacted the same day and are given supportive guidance and signposted to relevant supports. Although all staff members have wider service duties, working with a dedicated cohort of students has helped build positive relationships with key staff contexts and allows for a better understanding of the nature and demands of AHSS programmes.

Our AHSS Faculty-facing team for the 24-25 academic year are:



**Tara Cruickshank**  
Student Wellbeing Adviser



**Tracey O'Donnell**  
Disability Officer (Schools: SSESW – UG (Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology), Queen's Business School and Open Learning)



**Will Daggart**  
Disability Officer (Institute of Professional Legal Studies)



**Louise McQuillan** – HAPP (Politics, IS and Philosophy)  
Disability Officer (Schools: Arts, English, Languages and SSESW (BSW, PGs and Education))

**Janet Boyd**  
Disability Officer (Schools: Institute of Theology, HAPP (History and Anthropology) and Law)

**Orla Cregan**  
Disability Officer (Schools: Arts, English, Languages and SSESW (BSW, PGs & Education))

This Faculty Team are supported by **Wellbeing Assessment Managers Angela Murphy** and **Briege McKee**, and **John Finnegan**, our **Safe and Healthy Relationships Adviser**.

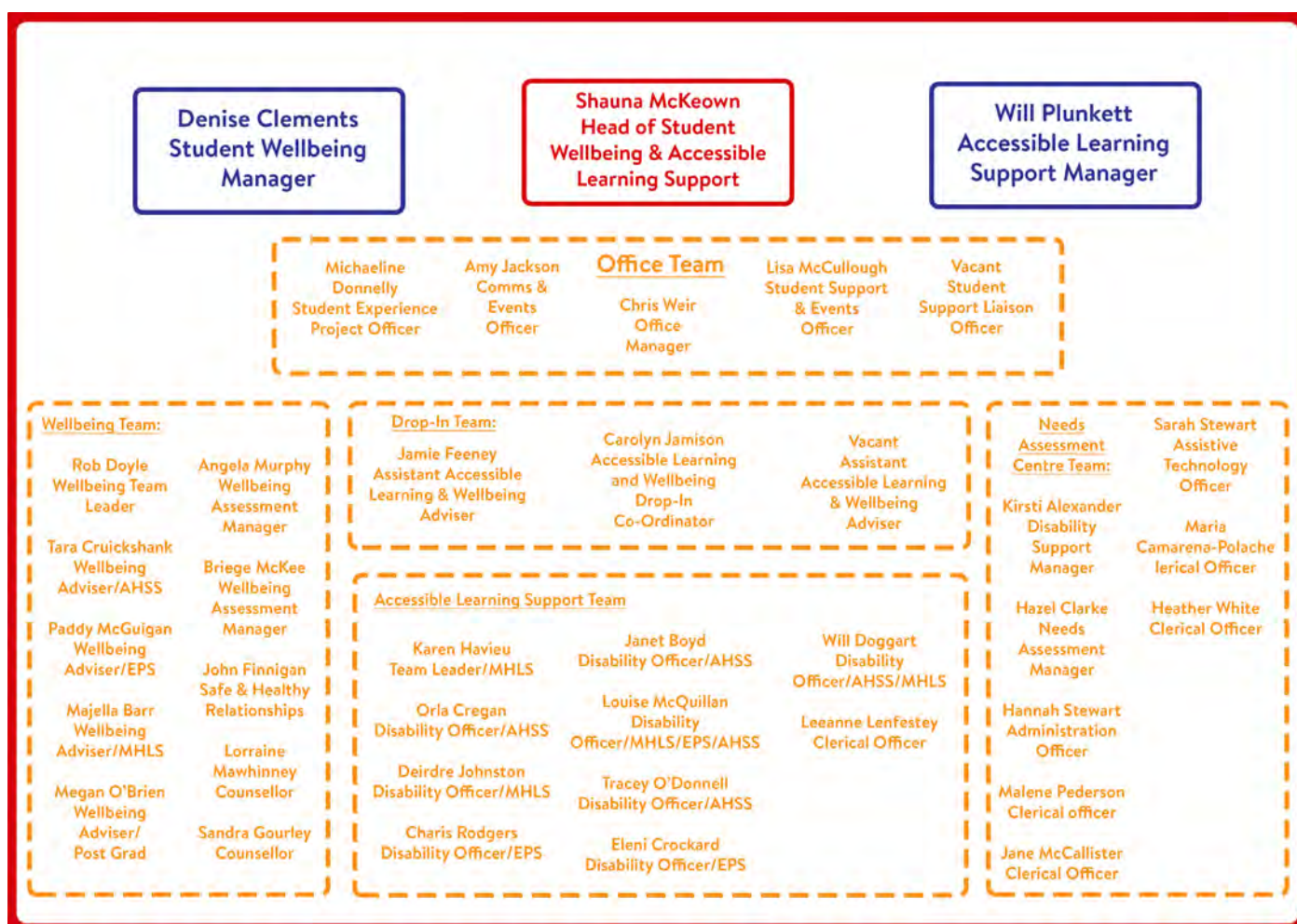


The services are led by **Shauna McKeown**, **Head of Student Wellbeing and Accessible Learning Support**, **Will Plunkett**, **Accessible Learning Support Manager** and **Denise Clements**, **Student Wellbeing Manager**





## Current Service Organisational Chart



## Service Delivery Model

Operating within the wider regional and national landscape of Student Mental Health, wellbeing support is integral to ensuring Queen's students are supported and empowered to be healthy learners who can grow and develop throughout their academic journey.

The Education and Skills strand of [Strategy 2030](#) sets out the University's aspiration to provide a transformative student experience, with a full range of mental health and wellbeing support available and utilised by the student population, supported by a strong policy framework<sup>1</sup>.


The [Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy \(2022-23\)](#) recognises that all members of Queen's, staff and students, play an important role in the success of our community. A whole University approach on health and wellbeing is fundamental to ensuring a culture exists where all members can flourish regardless of their role at the University.

Student Wellbeing Services lead on the delivery of support for students, and staff supporting students, with services delivered around a Stepped Match Care model as shown below ensuring students have access to the most appropriate level of intervention at the right time, to address their presenting issue.

This report gives an overview of Student Wellbeing Service impact in relation to students registered on PG programmes during the academic year 2023-24.

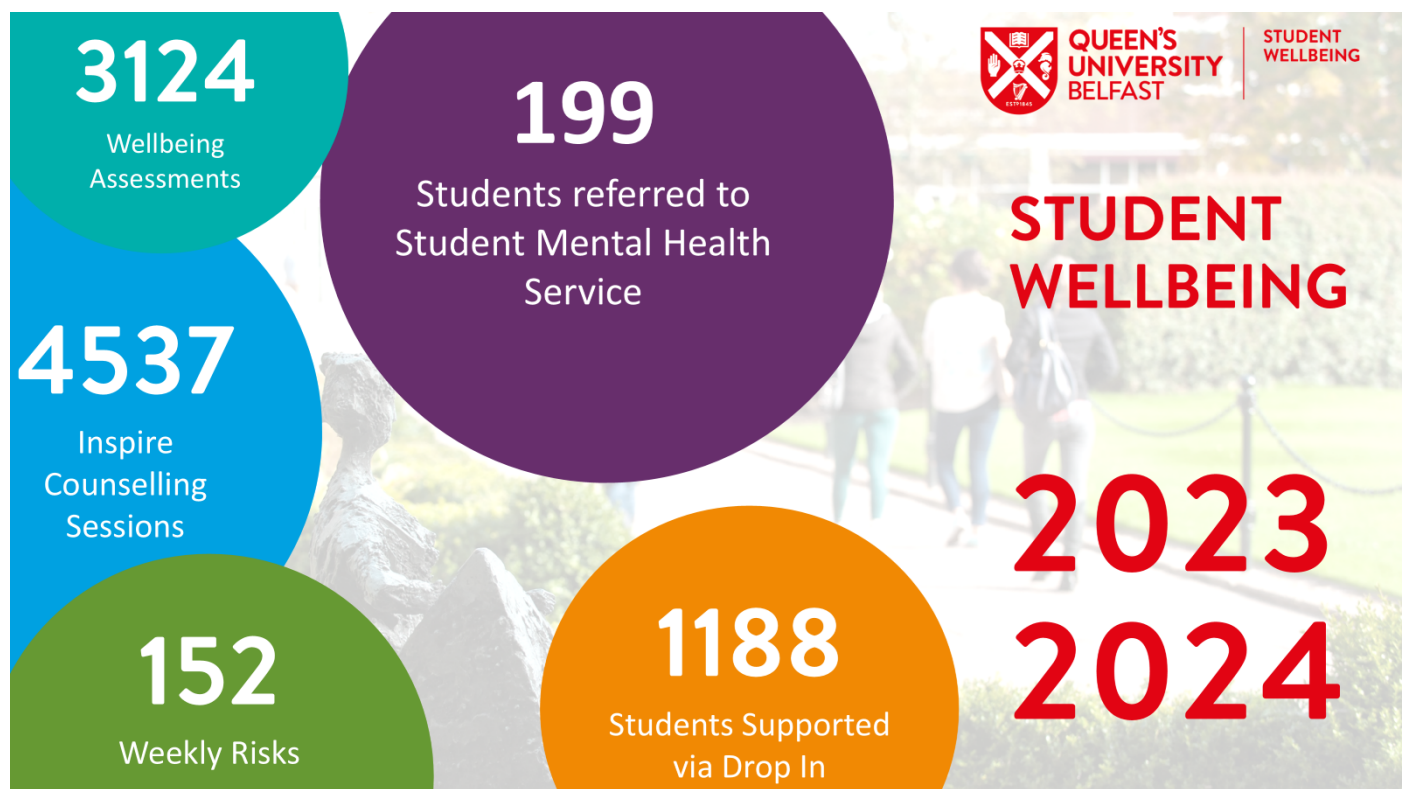
<sup>1</sup> QUBWell Policy Statement [can be found here](#).

[1] Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/QUBeWell/about/policy/>

Tier 0 Preventative and Protective	Tier 1 Supportive Guidance and Signposting	Tier 2 Assessment, Consultation & Therapeutic Interventions	Tier 3 Risk Management, De- escalation and Crisis Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy habit building based on <a href="#">Take 5</a> e.g. move, connect, sleep, eat well.</li> <li>• #QUBWell – Healthy Campus &amp; Flag Days</li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessment Support Hub</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Transitions Skills support</a> for new students</li> <li>• Self-help Resources through <a href="#">Inspire Hub</a> and Student Wellbeing <a href="#">website</a></li> <li>• Peer support groups e.g. ASD, PG Wellbeing Wednesday</li> <li>• Student-led events e.g. Mind Your Mood, International Student Guides, Clubs and Societies</li> <li>• Psycho-education workshops e.g. Look After Your Mate, Active Bystander, Consent, Dealing with Grief</li> <li>• Accommodation events</li> <li>• GP registration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from the team In person and/or online to connect with campus, be a healthy learner and avoid isolation</li> <li>• Drop-in Clinic – One Elmwood and in Faculty (UG/PG)</li> <li>• Walk and Talk sessions</li> <li>• Social Prescribing referral for Active Campus, Jump In volunteering, etc</li> <li>• In School Mental Health Ambassadors</li> <li>• Support to (re)engage with Schools</li> <li>• Report and Support referrals</li> <li>• Other support service referrals e.g. LDS, SU Advice, Accessible Learning, Careers</li> <li>• Accommodation support</li> <li>• "Keep In Touch" contacts</li> <li>• GP appointment support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1:1 Wellbeing consultations</li> <li>• Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and guided self help</li> <li>• Low level CBT</li> <li>• Counselling referral and 24/7 helpline</li> <li>• Support at Student Progress meetings</li> <li>• Support to Participate Fully in Study and University life, meetings and review</li> <li>• Safe and Healthy Relationship guidance</li> <li>• Referrals to external partners</li> <li>• Occupational Health assessment &amp; recommendations</li> <li>• Multi disciplinary Student of Concern support</li> <li>• Reasonable Adjustments with Accessible Learning Support, including working diagnosis</li> <li>• Support for short term impairments</li> <li>• 1:1 Support provider</li> </ul>	<p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Management</li> <li>• De-escalation support</li> <li>• Safety planning</li> <li>• Links with Trusted Contacts</li> <li>• Inspire Support Calls</li> <li>• QUB Accommodation check-ins</li> </ul> <p><b>In liaison with</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Mental Health Service (BHSCT)</li> <li>• Inspire Wellbeing</li> <li>• GP's &amp; CPN's</li> <li>• Mental Health Liaison Teams</li> <li>• Community Mental Health Teams</li> <li>• CAMHS</li> </ul> <p>  <b>QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST</b>   <b>STUDENT GROUPING AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING</b> </p>

## SECTION 2: A Year in Student Wellbeing 2023 –24

### A Year in Student Wellbeing



## GENERAL SERVICE INITIATIVES, CAMPAIGNS AND DEVELOPMENTS

- 3 Grief and Bereavement Group Support for Students Sessions Delivered
- New Student Wellbeing and Accessible Learning Support Staff Induction process and Training Plan created and implemented
- Framework for managing students at risk completed October 2023 and recommendations actioned
- Wellbeing Advisers and Assistant Disability Wellbeing Advisors have completed training in:
  - Mental Health First Aid
  - Drug and Alcohol Awareness and Impact
  - Domestic Violence Training
  - Motivational Interviewing
  - Gambling and Addiction
- Staff Excellence Award – Winners in Best Collaboration Category
- Monthly Student of Concern meetings (Disability Officer, Wellbeing Advisor, Student Support Officer/ key School link) established in 6 Schools across the three Faculties, in AHSS these were AEL and QBS, to maximise early identification of support needs and appropriate interventions and weekly Student of Concern meetings held with Accommodation Team
- Weekly Faculty drop-ins established across all three Faculties and the Graduate School
- Collaborative work with SU to take forward the SOS-UK Drug and Alcohol Charter Mark Accreditation process
- Mental Health Awareness Training delivered to Student Information Point Staff in One Elmwood
- Projects/Collaborations with other internal and external partners:
  - Social Prescribing Referral system established with the SU
  - Healthy Lifestyle Referral system established with Queen's Sport
  - Service CRM Task and Finish Group
  - Service Quality Assurance and Evaluation – Focus Groups, Feedback mechanisms introduced
  - Refinement of processes for joint management of students within Appeals process with colleagues in Academic Affairs and SU Teams
  - Cost-of-Living initiatives in collaboration with SU and the Cost-of-Living Group
  - Academic Campaign – joint SU/Student Wellbeing/LDS collaboration
  - Accommodation Wrap-Around Drop-Ins in Elms BT9, BT1 and BT2
  - Report and Support Campaign
  - Self-Defense Workshops for students in collaboration with SU Tae Kwando Club
  - Safe and Healthy Initiatives Group established
  - 3 members of Staff have completed Leading and Managing at Queens modules
  - Individual PDR Goals embedded into SWEEP process
  - Assessment Support Hub designed and launched
  - Healthy Learners Module launched
- Belfast Trust Student Mental Health Service -review of pilot project with DoH
- Procedure on Support to Participate Fully in Studies and/or University Life reviewed and online and in person training sessions/workshops delivered to staff across the university
- #QUBeWell Action plan developed and rolled out based on University Mental Health Charter programme
- Incorporation of Student Voice – Mind Your Mood and Consent Ambassadors, MYM events, Walky Talky Girls
- All Student Wellbeing Team now trained as Report and Support Advocates
- Consent and Onboarding videos completed for new and returning students
- 3 Successful individual funding Bids through Alumni Fund and service bid through NI DoH/PHA
- E-Learning module rolled out to 2000 QUB staff
- Community of Practice established for staff supporting students in Schools



## SECTION 3: FACULTY WELLBEING ADVISER REPORT

### Progress against 2022-2023 Recommendations:

#### Presence at School Boards

The Disability and Wellbeing Senior Management Team alongside the Faculty Wellbeing Adviser and Disability Officer attended 4 out of the 5 AHSS School boards during the academic year:

- School of Arts, English and Languages
- School of Law
- School of History, Anthropology, Politics and Philosophy
- School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work

The aim of attending the School boards was to provide an overview of our service within the 2022-2023 academic year and advise each School individually on the data relating to students presenting to Student Wellbeing and their presenting issues. This was met with huge gratitude and thanks for the work the Disability and Wellbeing team is doing, and feedback was that there was a major presence from the Disability and Wellbeing team and particular thanks was given for the swift responses of our team in difficult and crisis situations with vulnerable students. We welcome invitations to School Management Meetings in the coming year.

#### Build strong relationships within the AHSS Schools

Integral work was done on building relationships with key contacts within each of the AHSS Schools and identifying key cohort needs and interventions. The AHSS Family Fun Day took place on 27 April in Elmwood Hall for AHSS students and their families. The free event had over 200 attendees and was a collaboration of work from the AHSS Student Staff Partnership Network, of which AHSS Student Wellbeing Adviser, Tara Cruickshank, is also part. The activities provided were Belfast Playbus, Amazon Jungle, Funky Fun face painting, circus performance and treats from Paul's ice cream van. The event was a memorable day for students, allowing them to connect with staff and peers as their children enjoyed fun activities. The Student Staff Partnership Network has already begun planning for the next AHSS Family Fun Day which will take place on 5 April 2025 and further projects throughout the year will be confirmed within the first semester.



#### Wellbeing Drop-ins

The Faculty Wellbeing Adviser held a weekly wellbeing drop-in in the AHSS Social Space. Drop-ins were piloted but did not gather as much traction as we would have hoped. For the incoming academic year 24-25, other initiatives including partnering with events already planned within Schools will also be piloted as well as providing individual drop-ins for Schools around key assessment dates.

The Faculty Wellbeing Adviser was successful in an application for the QUB Annual Fund. This enabled two self-care workshops to take place prior to the assessment period, led by external facilitators.

#### Workshops to Promote Self-Care and Embed Preventative and Protective Strategies

A Breath Workshop was held on 18 April in One Elmwood and was available for all AHSS students. There were 17 attendees, and they left with breathing techniques for improving sleep, managing energy levels and stress, which students stated they benefited from, especially around exam time.



A 'drum circle' workshop was held on 13 March in the AHSS Social Space and was available for all AHSS students. There were 9 attendees, and this gave them a valuable chance to take time away from their studies, connect through sound and meet other students.



### Student of Concern (SOC) Meetings

The introduction of SOC meetings was organised and implemented with great success and provided invaluable, early and regular opportunities to identify and discuss students who may need additional support. These were trialed this year with two Schools:

- School of Arts, English and Languages and in attendance was Tara – UG Faculty Wellbeing Adviser, Orla – Disability Officer, Sally – Student Support Administrator, Caroline – Education Administrator
- Queen's Business School and in attendance was Tara – UG Faculty Wellbeing Adviser, Ciara – Disability Officer and Katie – UG Student Support Administrator

Due to the success of these meetings, we will make them a permanent fixture in the diary for the upcoming academic year. It was great to come together as a collective with different perspectives and to be able to contribute our own specific knowledge and expertise to simultaneously support students academically and in relation to their health and wellbeing.

The SOC meetings were offered to the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, however the School did not feel as though they were needed at this time. For the 2024-25 academic year they will also be offered to the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work.

The Student Liaison Officer worked with Schools in the AHSS faculty to deliver in person and online e-learning training to staff. The 'Supporting Staff to Support Students with Mental Health' module focuses on giving the staff tools on how to support students who present as having some difficulties around emotional wellbeing. In addition, sessions were provided about the Support to Participate Fully in Study and/or University Life process. Extra workshops and bespoke sessions were also created and delivered by the Student Liaison Officer if staff felt there was a need for it, for example, how to support students if they are at risk.



## Numbers attending E-learning module by School:

AHSS			
School/Dept	In-Person	Online	Total
Faculty Office	8	1	9
Queen's Business School	1	8	9
Law	1	10	11
History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics	18	3	21
Social Sciences, Education and Social Work	1	18	19
Arts, English and Languages	15	26	41

## Development of the Transitions Skills Module

In conjunction with our colleagues in Learning Development Services we have launched the transitions module which has wellbeing messaging, tips and signposting embedded throughout with the overarching aim of creating healthy learners across campus. The uptake and referral to these supports has been strong with feedback from students highlighting that they have found this academic support hugely beneficial.



## Referrals to other internal supports and services

Student Wellbeing routinely refer students to the wide range of internal supports available across the university as wellbeing needs generally co-present along with a wider range of concerns including financial and academic difficulties. For example, many students benefited from onward referrals to SU Advice and from signposting to the Learning Development Service or one-to-one appointments.

Although only launched this year, students are utilizing the new Assessment Support Hub, designed to help ensure that they understand assessment procedures and processes, such as Exceptional Circumstances, Fit to Sit, and providing information on and links to additional assessment support materials and resources. The student feedback to date is that they have found the Hub hugely beneficial. To date there have been 55,827 total site visits and 10,205 unique viewers, which is around a third of students and staff in the university.





# DATA AND TRENDS

## Student Wellbeing and Disability Drop In

The number of students using our central drop-in service in One Elmwood has remained consistent over the last two years despite the removal of the drop in phone in November 2023. The drop in phone was removed in November 2023 due to the high numbers of unrelated calls received by the team – this does not appear to have adversely impacted the numbers of students accessing Drop In.

As is to be expected, UG utilisation of the drop-in service decreases over the summer, with the months of June, July and August having the least undergraduate footfall. For this year, the month in which the most assessments were completed at drop in was September, which is likely to be due to an increase in students wanting to engage with or find out about Disability Services, accommodation queries and students coming to drop in to ask about other services. October (156), November (147) and April (106) were the next busiest months for assessments. Students from the Faculty of AHSS use the drop-in service more frequently than students from EPS and MHLS, as is to be expected given the larger population of this Faculty.

International students are over-represented in the drop-in service, accounting for 42% of drop-in cases. Issues affecting international students commonly include isolation, homesickness, family worries and expectations and financial concerns. This year, and more specifically, conflict or instability (including financial implications such as currency crashes) have been cited by increasing numbers of international students along with financial concerns regarding payment of tuition fees.

Alongside their core student-facing work of providing the first point of contact to the Services for students, this year the drop-in team have been involved in a number of projects and collaborations including developing the 'The Drop-in Dialogues' blog series which responds to trends presenting in Drop-in e.g. transitioning, self-care, motivation at exam time and dealing with disappointing results, mobile drop-ins at Elms in partnership with the International Student Guides and DSA specific drop in sessions.

Drop-in Feedback forms were introduced in April 2024 and students have provided very positive feedback on their drop-in interactions including:

'Sarah spent time with me and aside from providing me with concrete next steps that helped me feel grounded and confident to move forward, she was more importantly, extremely attentive, compassionate and engaged with me authentically'

From this and similar feedback, we can see clearly that, when coming to drop-in, students most value, not only the takeaways of practical advice and guidance and signposting received but also, that the experience itself is one that makes them feel comfortable, encouraged, cared for and listened to and we will continue to strive to provide a consistently excellent student experience in Drop-in.

## FACULTY YEARLY COMPARISON

22-23	23-24
1096 (12%)	956 (10.7%)

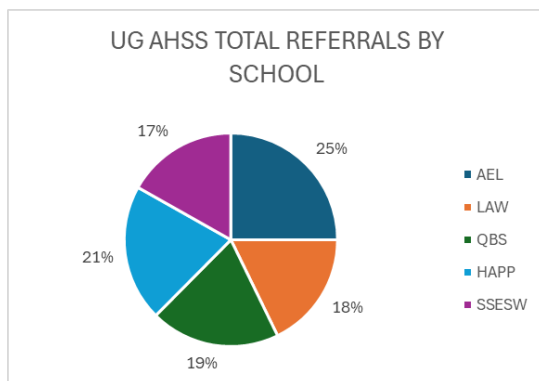
For the period between 01 July 2023 and 30 June 2024 (inclusive) the faculty of AHSS received a total of 956 Undergraduate referrals to the Student Wellbeing Service which equates to 10.7% of the faculty population of 8911. Last year's 1096 referrals equated to 12% of the 2022-2023 faculty population of 9098.

## Overview of Referrals, Gender, Residency and Presenting Issues in the AHSS Faculty

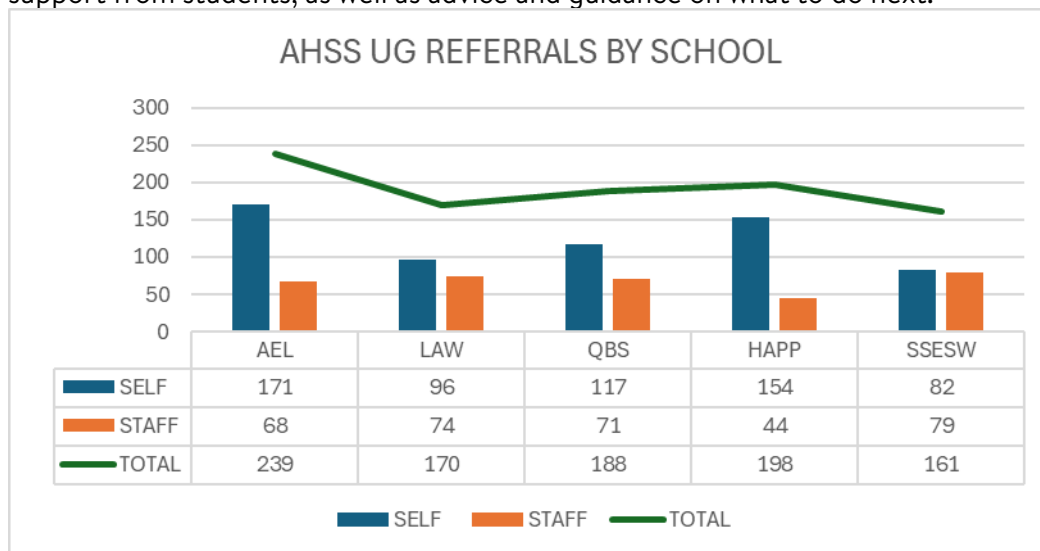
### Undergraduate Referrals by School

In subsequent sections of this report, we will explore the finer detail for all Schools, however, as an overview of referrals from the Faculty by School, we can see as illustrated in the chart below that:

- The School of AEL had 239 referrals this year (25% of total faculty referrals for this year). The figure of 239 is 16.9% of the School's undergraduate population of 1,444
- The School of Law had 170 referrals (17.8% of total faculty referrals for this year). The figure of 170 is 18.7% of the School's undergraduate population of 909
- Queen's Business School had 188 referrals (19.7% of total faculty referrals for this year). The figure of 188 is 8.9% of the School's undergraduate population of 2110
- The School of HAPP had 198 referrals (20.7% of total faculty referrals for this year). The figure of 198 is 19.4% of the School's undergraduate population of 1019
- The School of SSESW had 161 referrals (16.8% of total faculty referrals for this year). The figure of 161 is 25.7% of the School's undergraduate population of 627



There were 336 staff referrals and 620 self-referrals from students. Staff referrals have risen this year in the Faculty to 35% of referrals which is an encouraging development and indicates that staff within the Schools have become more familiar with the referral process and are engaging more with it to seek appropriate support from students, as well as advice and guidance on what to do next.



Research has consistently reported that males seek support for wellbeing and mental health concerns in lower numbers than their female peers. From the figures below, we can see that those students who identify as female in AHSS engaged with Student Wellbeing more than those who identify as male, however we have seen an increase in males presenting this year compared to last year's figures. The overall breakdown of engagement by gender with Student Wellbeing is as follows:

- Females – 635 (66%) which is a decrease from last year (73%)
- Males – 314 (34%) which is an increase from last year (27%)

- Females make up 58.6% of the AHSS UG population and males 41%. Therefore, AHSS UG females are overrepresented while males are underrepresented in engagement with Student Wellbeing, although this imbalance has decreased slightly.

In terms of residency, the distribution of UG students accessing services within the AHSS faculty is:

- Northern Ireland: 607 students or 63% of the 956 AHSS students engaging with Student Wellbeing are local. Local students who make up 69% of the AHSS UG student population accessed Student Wellbeing in greater numbers (607) than any other cohort at all levels of study, and are slightly overrepresented compared to their general population levels within the Faculty.
- International Students: 137 international students, equating to 14.3% of the 956 AHSS referrals, engaged with student wellbeing this year. International students make up 15% of the AHSS UG Student population so overall, on a Faculty basis, present to student wellbeing proportionately.
- Republic of Ireland: 49 ROI students represent 5% of the 956 AHSS UG student population who have engaged with Student Wellbeing this year. ROI students also make up 5% of the AHSS UG population this year.
- GB: From the data we can see that 63 GB students presented to Student Wellbeing, equating to 6.6% of the 956 AHSS students engaging with the service. GB students make up 10% of the Faculty population so are slightly underrepresented on a Faculty basis.

This would suggest that we could explore ways in which to increase GB student engagement with the service moving forwards.

## **AHSS Presenting Issues**

The presenting issues and triggers among students are diverse and often overlap significantly between academic and non-academic concerns, underscoring the deep interconnection between students' personal and academic lives.

Over recent years, the most frequently reported issues have remained consistent: mental health concerns (including stress, anxiety, and depression), academic pressures, and personal issues. This report aims to deepen our understanding of these challenges within Schools and the broader faculty, enabling faculty-facing Wellbeing Staff to collaborate effectively with Schools to develop and deliver preventive wellbeing initiatives that address students' needs and support staff in their academic roles.

It is common for students to present with multiple issues when seeking help from Wellbeing Services. For instance, a student may report mental health challenges worsened by academic stressors such as deadlines, presentations, and group work. While the School level data that follows primarily focuses on the top three presenting issues, we also wish to highlight emerging trends related to financial stress and substance use.

## **Financial and Substance Use Trends**

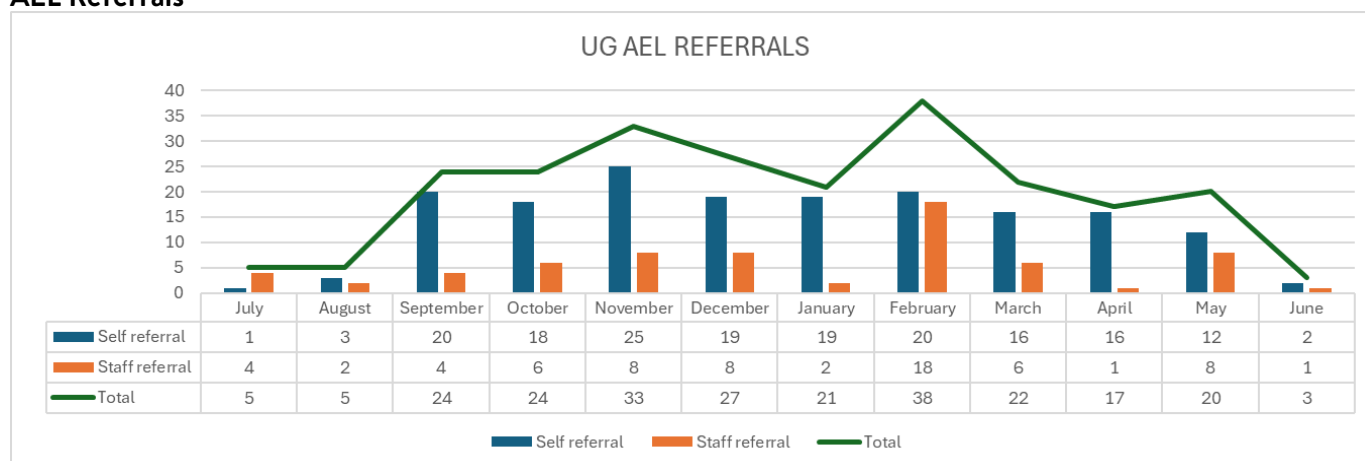
The ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to create financial uncertainty for students, impacting their ability to meet basic living and tuition needs. Consequently, we have observed an increase in students utilising various campus services, such as the Food Pantry within the Students' Union, the Student Support Fund, and access to external food banks and essential item vouchers.

Substance use has also been disclosed more frequently over the past academic year. We anticipate that these numbers will continue to rise as the University engages with the Drugs and Alcohol Impact Accreditation programme, which promotes a harm reduction approach. This initiative is likely to encourage further disclosures as students seek recovery support.



## School of Arts, English and Languages

### AEL Referrals



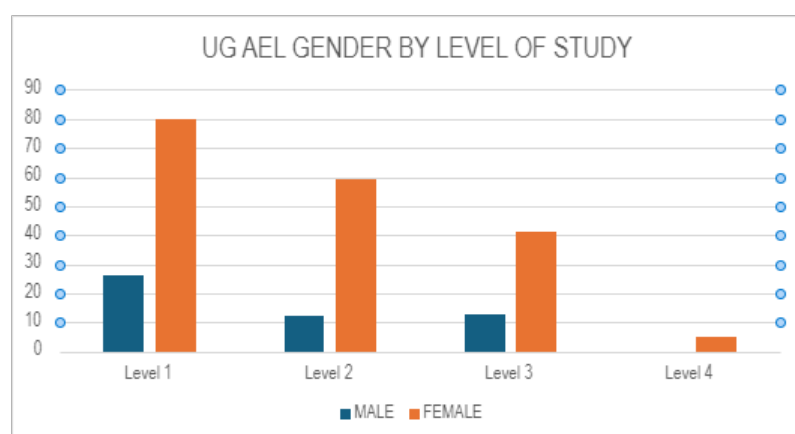
Across the 12 months in the reporting period, there were a total of 239 students referred to Student Wellbeing from AEL (25% of the total Faculty referrals for the year). The figure of 239 is 16.6% of the School's UG population.

The chart above shows the breakdown of these figures across the year in order to allow us to collectively consider where some of the higher demand areas are across the year for our students within the School.

Self-referrals were recorded as higher than all staff referrals, with staff referrals equating to 28.5% of the referrals although this is a healthy balance and has increased gradually over the last two years from 20%. Self-referrals increase significantly in September and remain consistent across most of the academic year until May when they drop off again for the summer. Self-referral figures in September (20), November (25) and February (20) are the highest across the year and this is a common pattern within Schools which suggests increases in referrals could be linked to transitioning to university, returning from a leave of absence or returning from placement and assessment and results windows relating to Semester one. Interestingly, staff referrals were low in September then rose gradually through Semester one, peaking in November and December with 8. January saw a quiet start to Semester 2 in terms of both self and staff referrals with both spiking to their highest numbers in February (self – 20, staff -18) before gradually reducing over the remainder of Semester 2. This notable February spike may be related to the return of semester one marks at this time. Further work will be done this year to increase staff awareness of the referral scheme through overall communication and working closely with the student liaison officer to establish clearer referral mechanisms and identify appropriate supports and interventions for students who may be likely to self-refer in high numbers again in September and November in addition to February.

### AEL Gender

The following graph shows a gender breakdown of AEL UG students by level of study

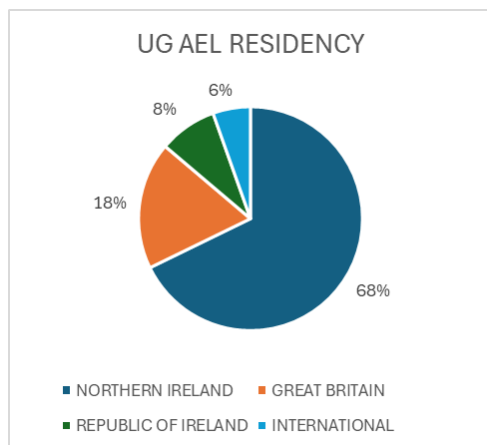


The number of students that identify as female within the School of Arts, English and Languages is 966. There were 186 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 19.2% of the School female population.

Last year it was highlighted that UG males in AHSS were not accessing the service to the same level as females.

For the School of AEL for the academic year 2023-2024 we have identified a total of 186 referrals (77% of School total) for students identifying as female compared to 53 referrals (22% of School total) for students who identify as male. 19.2% of the female population in the school have engaged with student wellbeing whereas 11.3% of the males engaged and mostly in the first undergraduate year. Creating a more accessible pathway for male students in AEL to enable them to access wellbeing services should be a key focus moving forwards, particularly at levels 2 and beyond. This can be done in the form of key events and initiatives that target males and creating essential links within the School to promote more interaction with males.

### AEL Residency



The overall population for the School of AEL is 6,109. The number of students accessing the service from the School is 239.

In the year 2023-24, the residency breakdown for accessing Student Wellbeing is as follows:

- 162 NI students - (15.9% of NI students in the School)
- 13 International students - (6.3% of international students in the School)
- 44 GB students - (34.6% of GB students in the School)
- 20 ROI students- (21.5% of ROI students in the School)

LEVEL OF STUDY	NORTH-ERN IRE-LAND	GREAT BRITAIN	REPUBLIC OF IRELAND	INTERNATION-AL	TOTAL
Level 1	69	15	11	12	107
Level 2	40	24	8	1	73
Level 3	48	5	1	0	54
Level 4	5	0	0	0	5
TOTAL	162	44	20	13	239

Proportionately to the School population data, International students are re-engaging wellbeing services less than would be expected and only mainly in year one of their studies. This may be due to difficulties transitioning initially that settle naturally but when compared with academic data held by the School may give us insight into whether international students could benefit from targeted wellbeing support initiatives in later years also.

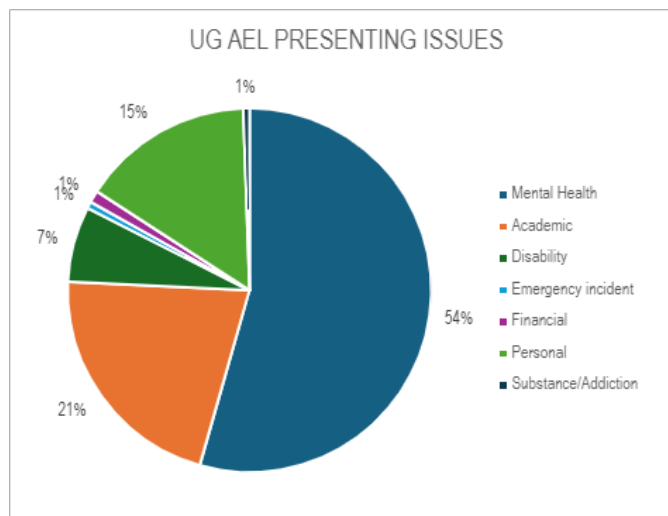
GB students are very significantly overrepresented, with more than a third of the School's GB students accessing the service – in the highest numbers at level one but also in level 2 and level 3 of their studies.

A fifth of the ROI student population in the School have presented to the service mainly during levels one and

two mainly of their studies.

The data suggests that GB students in particular would benefit from targeted early intervention initiatives and opportunities to maximise emotional wellbeing at all levels of studies and ROI students at levels one and two.

### AEL Presenting Issues



### Presenting Issues

When referring to the Student Wellbeing Service both staff and students can identify why they are referring to the service by selecting several reasons from check boxes and can choose multiple presenting issues.

From the chart below it is evident that for AEL students the top 3 presenting issues are:

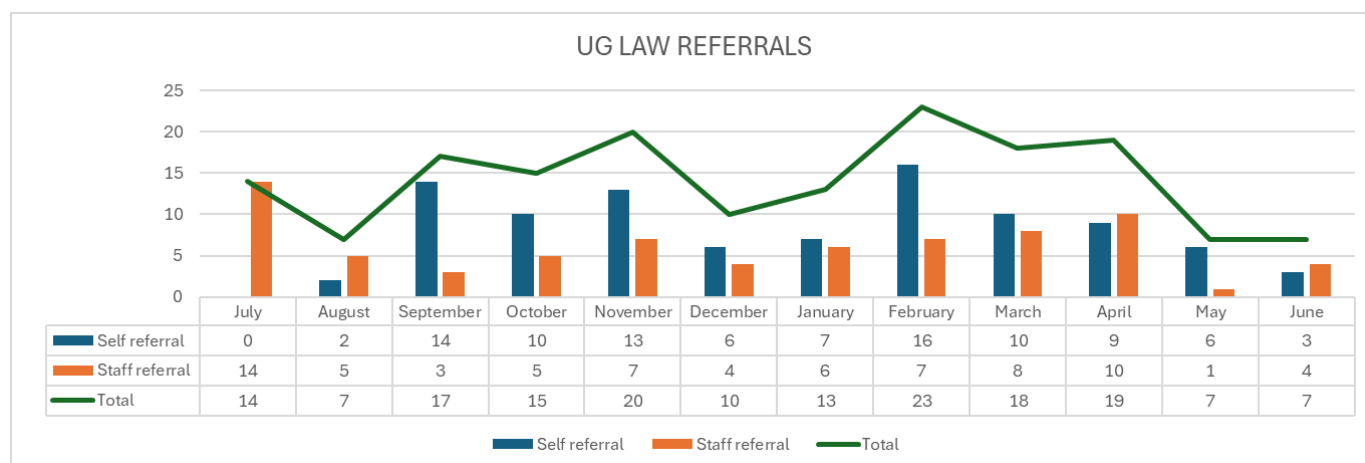
- Mental Health – most commonly stress, anxiety and depression
- Academic – typically exam and assessment-related stress, placement related issues, group work and presentations are commonly cited
- Personal – can be a wide-range of issues including gender identity, home circumstances, relationships, bereavement

There is a significant increase in the number of times mental health issues and personal issues are cited from last year to this year. For Mental Health (cited 714 times) there has been a 35.4% increase from last year, for Personal (cited 201 times) there has been a 28% increase while Academic concerns (cited 280 times) have increased only by 1%. This is indicative that students are dealing with health and other issues outside of their studies that are impacting on their engagement with their studies, but academic concern levels remain consistent with the previous year. This is encouraging and the SSO role within the School and their close working relationship with the Wellbeing Adviser and Disability Officers, particularly in relation to the students of concern who are identified early, will have helped to ensure that the School, Wellbeing and Accessible Learning support have worked together to try to set in place support that will compensate for and reduce, where possible, the impact that mental health and personal factors are having on the students' studies.



## School of Law

### Law Referrals



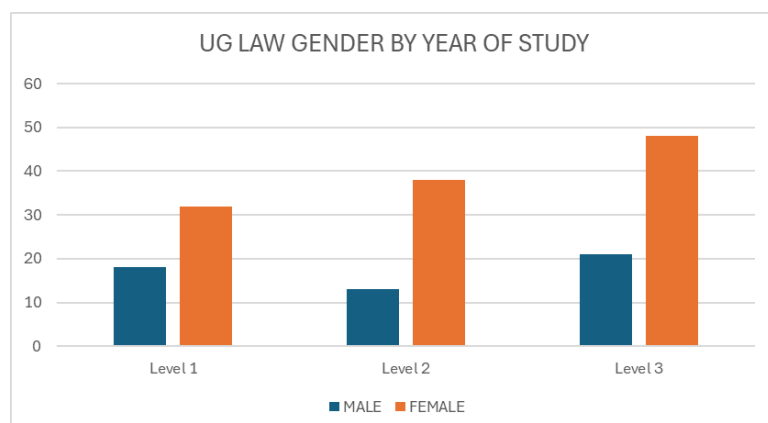
Across the 12 months, there were a total of 170 students referred to Student Wellbeing from Law. Total referrals increased by 15.6% from the previous year (147), which is encouraging as it suggests growing familiarity with and confidence in accessing the service.

Staff referrals equate to 44% of the total referrals to the service, having increased significantly over the previous two years, and this is the highest staff referral percentage rate recorded across the Faculty. From a student wellbeing perspective, this is a highly positive development and evidences strong engagement and relationships with the School, and the Support Staff in particular, and a proactive approach within the School to ensure students receive prompt and timely support.

Staff referrals were at the highest in July and this was likely to have been linked with the School anticipating wellbeing support needs due to either the re-sit and subsequent results period or in preparation for students returning to studies, in some cases from a leave of absence through the Return to Study process, for the UG cohort. Staff referrals came consistently over the year at an average of 6 per month. November (7), February (7), March (8) and April (10) saw small, but predictable increases, given the anticipated pressure points in the academic year, and again this evidences a strong and committed approach within the School to pre-empting and addressing wellbeing concerns.

Self-referrals were at their highest in September (14), November (13) and February (16) and the November and February spike pattern is common across the UG population in all Faculties as it aligns with the Semester One assessment and results windows and the increased staff referrals in these months. Interestingly this year, September self-referral rates have been high in a number of Schools across all Faculties and indicate that there is a potential support need for students transitioning to university or returning to studies, possibly even after placement or a leave of absence.

### Law Gender



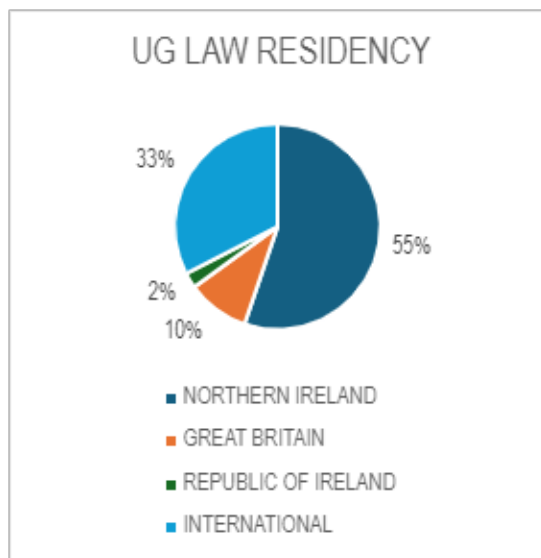
The number of students that identify as female within the School of Law is 609. There were 118 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 19.4% of the School's female population.

The number of students that identify as male within the School of Law is 299. There were 52 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 17.4% of the School's male population.

LEVEL OF STUDY	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL		
Level 1			18			32	50
Level 2			13		38		51
Level 3			21			48	69
TOTAL			52			118	170

Therefore, UG males and females present in fairly equal proportions to Student Wellbeing and from the table above we can also see that they have presented at fairly consistent rates across all levels of students – males present in their lowest numbers in year 1 with increases at Level 2 and 3. In 2023-24, females also presented most often in final year and least often at Level 2.

### Law Residency



The overall population for the School of Law is 909.

The number of students accessing the service from the School is 170

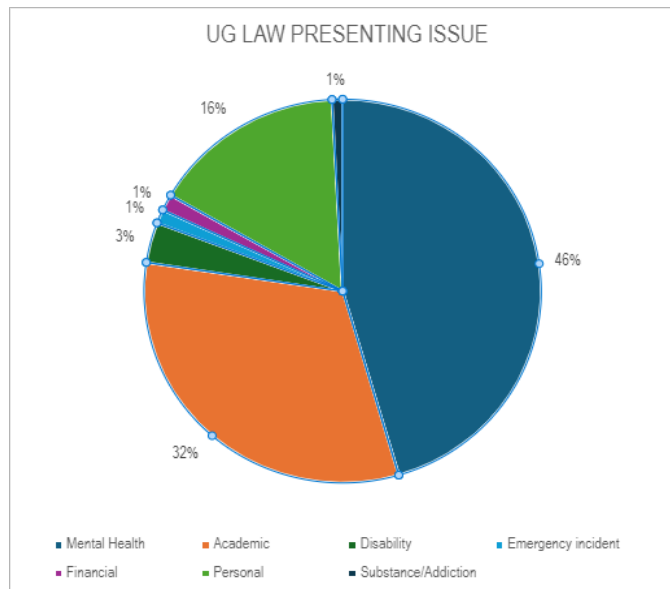
The School of Law breakdown of residency is as follows:

- Northern Ireland – 93 students presented, which is 15.7% of the NI School population.
- Great Britain – 17 students presented, which is 25.8% of the GB School population.
- Republic of Ireland – 4 students presented, which is 7.4% of the ROI School population.
- International – 56 students presented, which is 28.4% of the International School population.

The residency data suggests that both International and GB students are over represented in accessing Student Wellbeing while ROI students, who have only presented at Level 1 this year, are under represented when compared to local students. International students also tend to present significantly more in final year. This suggests that initiatives that encourage our non-local students to prioritise wellbeing could be of benefit and there should be a greater focus on early interventions for International students before final year.

LEVEL OF STUDY	NORTH-ERN IRELAND	GREAT BRIT-AIN	REPUBLIC OF IRE-LAND	INTERNA-TIONAL	TO-TAL
Level 1	26	7	4	13	50
Level 2	33	8	0	10	51
Level 3	34	2	0	33	69
TOTAL	93	17	4	56	170

## Law Presenting Issues



When referring to the Student Wellbeing Service both staff and students can identify why they are referring to the service by selecting several reasons from check boxes and can choose multiple presenting issues.

From the chart above it is evident that for Law students the top 3 presenting issues in 2023-24 are:

- Mental Health – most commonly stress, anxiety and depression
- Academic – exam and assessment-related stress, placement related issues, group work and presentations are commonly cited academic concerns from students
- Personal – can be a wide-range of issues including home circumstances, relationships and this year conflict in countries of origin has impacted some of the students in the School

Similarly to AEL, there is a significant increase in the number of times mental health issues and personal issues are cited from last year to this year. For Mental Health (cited 428 times) there has been a 30% increase from last year, for Personal (cited 149 times) there has been a 24.1% increase while Academic concerns (cited 301 times) have decreased significantly by 22.9%.

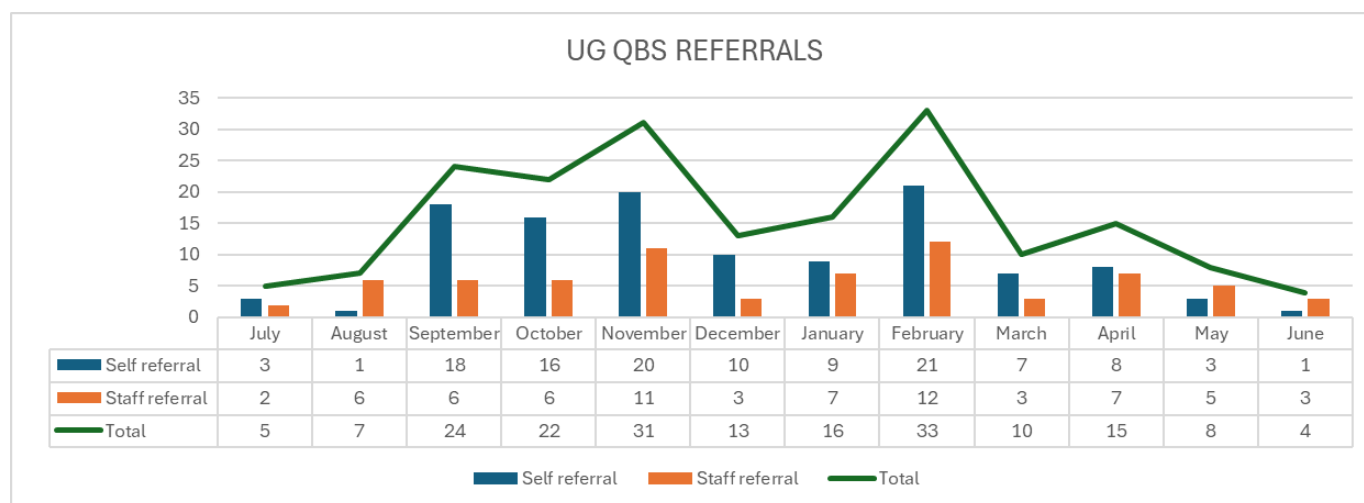
This is indicative that students are dealing with health and other issues outside of their studies that are impacting on their engagement with their studies, which is consistent with what we are seeing across the wider university with increasing complex student needs.

This is very positive and the SSO role within the School and their close working relationship with the Wellbeing Adviser and Disability Officer (s), particularly in relation to the early identification of students of concern is likely to have been one of the contributing factors. This close working relationship and early intervention help to mitigate and reduce the impact of a students personal circumstances on their studies.



## Queen's Business School Referrals

Queen's Business School had 188 referrals this year (19.7% of total Faculty referrals for this year). The figure of 188 is 8.9% of the School's undergraduate population of 2,110 and is an increase of 23.7% in referrals this compared to last year (152).



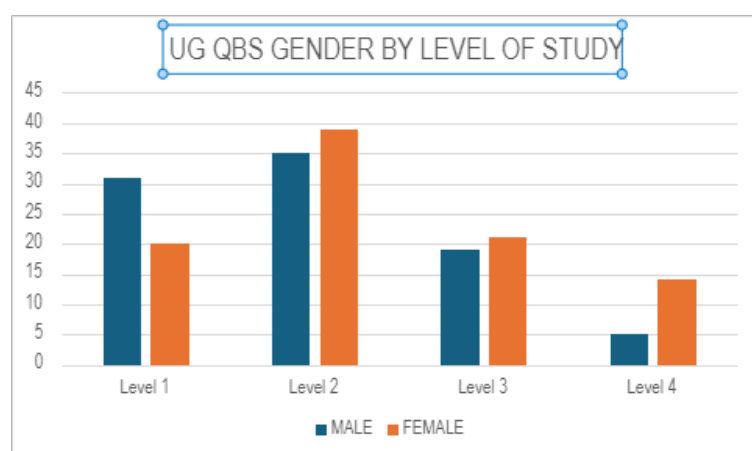
The chart above shows the breakdown of these referrals across the year in order to allow us to collectively consider where some of the higher demand areas are across the year for our students within the School.

Self-referral rates are higher than staff referrals across the year. However, at a rate of 38% of total referrals, QBS staff are referring in high numbers which is very positive in terms of demonstrating an awareness of and confidence in the service and a committed approach to proactively supporting students with wellbeing needs.

Staff made referrals consistently across the year, with peaks in November (11) and February (12) which is a pattern we see often in relation to staff referrals and indicates that staff recognize that the Semester One assessment and results windows can be periods in which students can need additional support around wellbeing. This aligns with self-referrals in that they were also at their highest levels in November (20) and February (21). A number of referrals (6) were also made in August, and these were likely to be for students who were presenting with wellbeing support needs in relation to either re-sits, progression concerns or return to study.

Self-referrals were consistently higher across most of level one, with 18 in September, 16 in October and 20 in November than across Semester two in which fewer self-referrals were received in all months even February (11).

## QBS Gender



Based upon feedback from School Boards, it was identified that a further breakdown on gender data would be appreciated by Schools in order to identify, where existing, any trends in relation to the same.

The number of students that identify as female within Queen's Business School is 924. There were 96 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 10.4% of the School's female population.

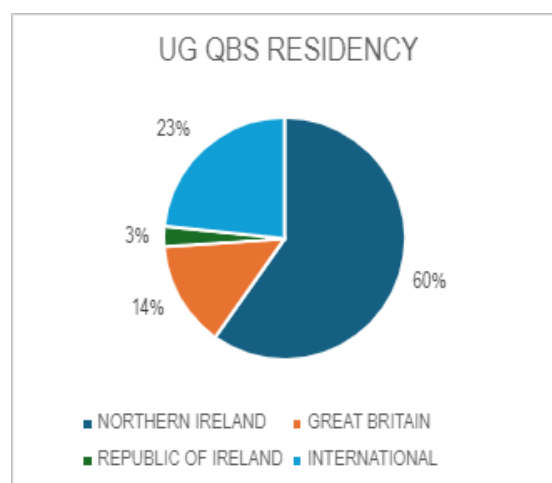
The number of students that identify as male within Queens's Business School is 1186. There were 92 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 7.8% of the School's male population.

From this we can see that females present in general slightly more than their male peers. Interestingly, males are more likely than females to present at level 1 but less likely in all other levels of study. Females present most frequently at level 2.

Both males and females present most often at level 2, and this is worth some consideration, particularly in relation to early intervention initiatives that promote prioritising wellbeing for Level 1 females and any additional academic factors that might impact this cohort specifically.

LEVEL OF STUDY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Level 1	33	21	54
Level 2	35	40	75
Level 3	19	21	40
Level 4	5	14	19
TOTAL	92	96	188

### QBS Residency



The overall population for QBS is 2,110.

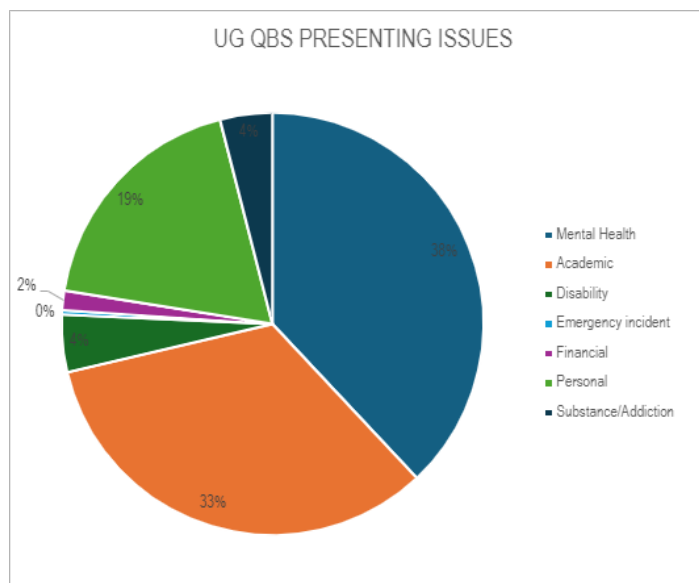
The number of students accessing the service from the School is 188.

The Queen's Business School breakdown of residency for accessing the Wellbeing Service is as follows:

- Northern Ireland – 112 students presented, which is 7.8 % of the NI School population.
- Great Britain – 26 students presented, which is 20.1% of the GB School population.
- Republic of Ireland – 5 students presented, which is 4.6% of the ROI School population.
- International – 45 students presented, which is 10.1% of the International School population.

GB students are presenting in higher and ROI in lower numbers than would be anticipated and considered proportionate to their population data. This should be explored with a view to understanding their specific support needs and developing targeted interventions and initiatives for those cohorts.

## QBS Presenting Issues



When referring to the Student Wellbeing Service both staff and students can identify why they are referring to the service by selecting several reasons from check boxes and can choose multiple presenting issues.

Within Queen's Business School, the top 3 presenting issues for UG students for 2023-24 were:

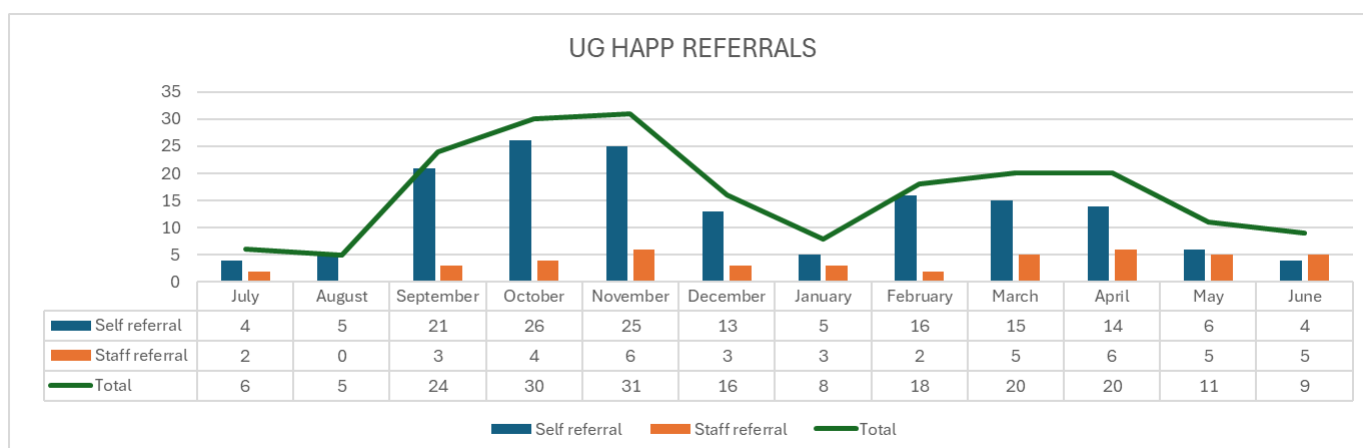
- Mental Health – most commonly stress, anxiety and depression
- Academic – exam and assessment-related stress, placement related issues, group work and presentations are commonly cited academic concerns from students
- Personal – can be a wide-range of issues including home circumstances, relationships and this year financial markets and conflict in countries of origin have impacted some of the students in the School

For Mental Health there has been a 15.8% increase (mental health cited 484 times) from last year, for Personal a marked increase of 55.5% (personal cited 235 times) from last year and a spike of 73% (academic concerns cited 424 times) in Academic concerns. This is indicative that students are dealing increasingly with complex mental health and personal difficulties and is consistent with an increase in complex cases of students presenting with a range of issues which, even at times if unrelated to academic stress, are having a significant impact on their studies and/or ability to fully engage in university life. The spike in academic concerns is also worth further consideration.

## School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics

The School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics had 198 referrals this year (20.7% of the total Faculty referrals for this year). The figure of 198 is 19.4% of the School's undergraduate population of 1,019. This was an increase of 36% in total referrals this year compared to last year (146).

## HAPP Referrals



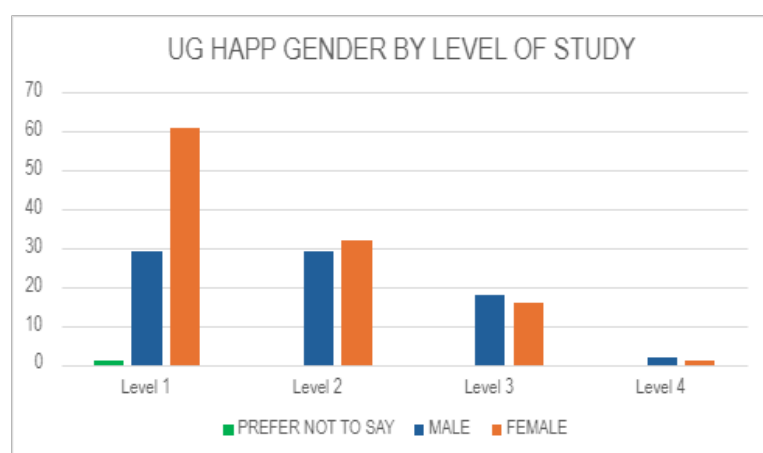


Staff referrals account for 22% of all UG referrals received from the School and this is an increase from previous years, although low in comparison to other Schools within the Faculty. It is hoped that the addition of the SSO role within the School will have a positive impact on referrals and see this increase continue to grow as we have experienced in other Schools across all Faculties through providing a key communication and liaison point which will continue to strengthen the relationship and maximise collaborative working and partnership opportunities between the School and Student Wellbeing and Accessible Learning Support. Further work will also continue this year to increase staff awareness of the referral pathways through overall communication and the service Student Liaison Officer to increase staff awareness of and confidence in the wellbeing service.

Staff referrals came in all months with the exception of August and averaged 4 per month. The highest numbers of staff referrals were received in November and April (6 in both months), which aligns with the beginning of the assessment window in each semester.

Self-referrals came in every month and averaged at 13 per month rising sharply from August (5) to September (21) and peaking in October (26) and November (25) in Semester one. Semester two followed a similar pattern following falling self-referral rates in December and January with a sharp peak to 16 in February and remaining high in March (15) and April (14) before dropping in May (6) and June (4). This suggests that those students are experiencing significant wellbeing concerns outside of the months where we normally expect that they are under increased academic pressure and would be worth exploring to see if there are any initiatives for earlier intervention that could be put in place and/or address support needs outside of the assessment windows for example transition to university.

## HAPP Gender



Based upon feedback from School Boards, it was identified that a further breakdown on gender data would be appreciated by Schools in order to identify, where existing, any trends in relation to the same.

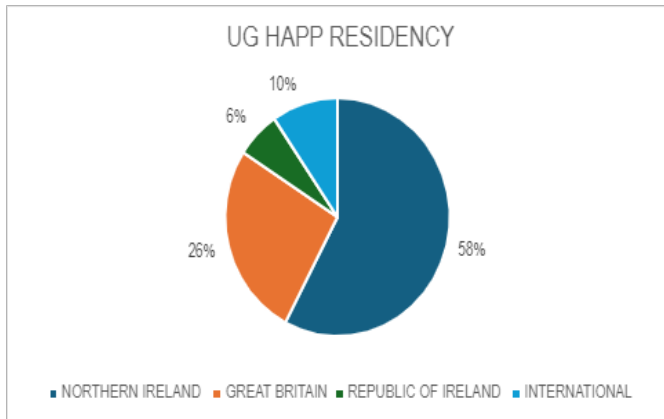
The number of students who identify as female within the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics is 558. There were 114 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 20.4% of the School's female population.

The number of students who identify as male within the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics is 456. There were 82 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 18% of the School's male population.

Only a small number of students (2) chose not to state their gender when referring. Both males and females present most at level 1 and in gradually declining numbers over the subsequent levels of study.

LEVEL OF STUDY	PREFER NOT TO SAY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Level 1	2	32	63	97
Level 2		29	32	61
Level 3		19	18	37
Level 4		2	1	3
TOTAL	2	82	114	198

## HAPP Residency

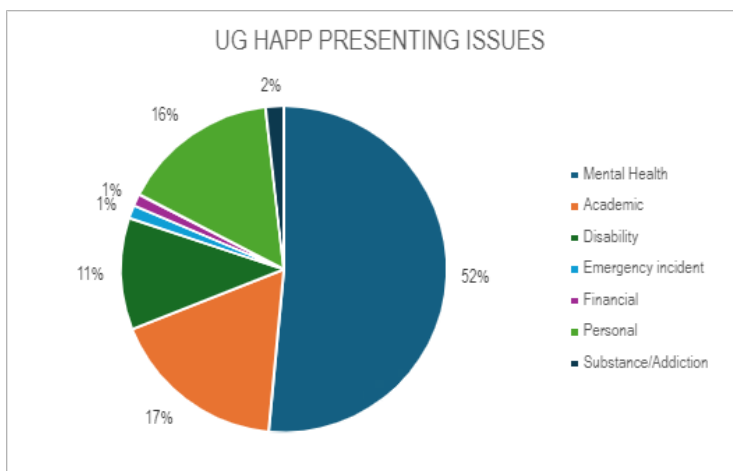


The School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics breakdown of residency is as follows:

- Northern Ireland – 114 students presented, which is 18% of the NI School population.
- Great Britain – 52 students presented, which is 21% of the GB School population.
- Republic of Ireland – 12 students presented, which is 27.2% of the ROI School population.
- International – 20 students presented, which is 21% of the International School population.

The ROI students are the smallest cohort within the total School population, accounting for just 4.3% of the School's undergraduate population yet present in the highest proportion to Student Wellbeing. This suggests that this is a cohort who might benefit from targeted interventions to identify and address their specific support needs.

## HAPP Presenting Issues



When referring to the Student Wellbeing Service both staff and students can identify why they are referring to the service by selecting several reasons from check boxes and can choose multiple presenting issues.

From the chart above it is evident that for HAPP UG students the top 3 presenting issues are:

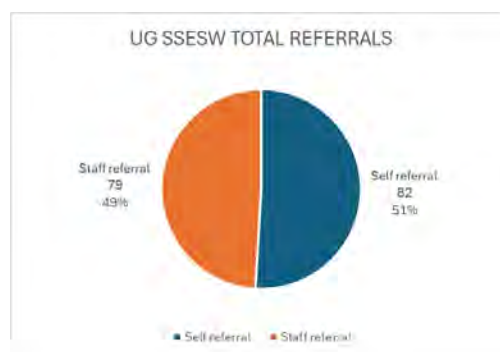
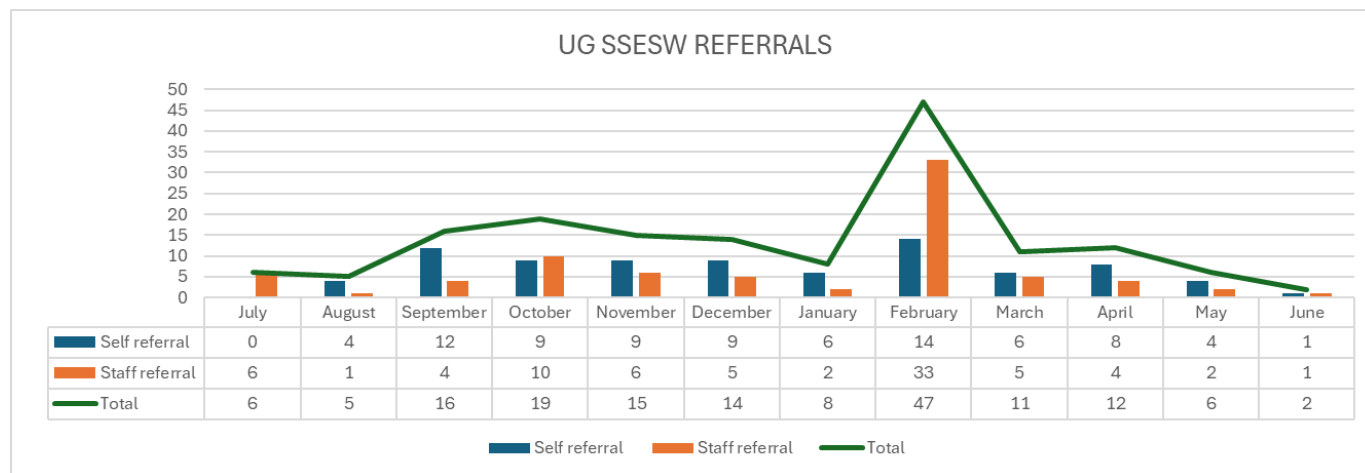
- Mental Health – most commonly stress, anxiety and depression
- Academic – exam and assessment-related stress, placement related issues, group work and presentations are commonly cited academic concerns from students
- Personal – can be a wide-range of issues including home circumstances, relationships, bereavements and this year, world events including conflict in countries of origin have impacted some of the students in the School

For Mental Health there has been only a 0.3% (512 instances of Mental Health being cited) increase from last year, for Personal there has been a 21% increase (155) while Academic concerns (174) have decreased significantly by 34.8%. This is indicative that students continue to deal with mental health and increasingly with other issues outside of their studies that are impacting on their engagement with their studies and is consistent with an increase in complex cases of students presenting with needs across a range of issues unrelated to academic stress. The significant decrease in Academic concerns is encouraging.

## School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work

The School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work had 93 referrals this year (9.7% of total Faculty referrals for the year). The figure of 93 is 14.9% of the School's undergraduate population of 627.

### SSESW Referrals

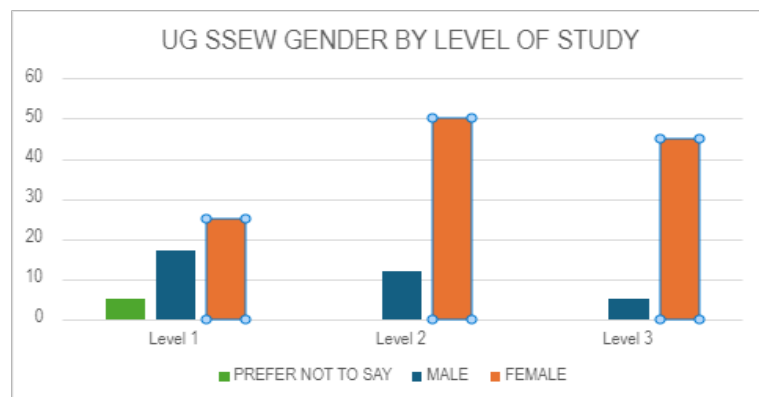


Staff referral rates are extremely high, almost equaling self-referrals and evidence a strong awareness of and confidence in accessing support for students from the service. The School's staff, both the Professional Support Staff and academics, take a strong collaborative approach to working with Student Wellbeing and a proactive approach to identifying and addressing student support needs.

In all 12 months, there were a total of 161 students referred to Student Wellbeing from SSESW. Self-referrals were recorded as higher than all staff referrals, with figures in September (12) and February (14) being the highest across the year. Staff referrals were at their highest in November (10) and February (33).

There was also an increase of 83% in staff and self-referrals this year compared to last year (88). Staff and students within SSESW utilise the referral systems well. Staff and self-referral rates are aligned across the vast majority of the months and both spike in February with 14 self-referrals and 33 staff referrals in this month which is likely to be related to outcomes of assessments for semester one and/or new concerns arising and being identified early in Semester two. Interestingly, September has the second highest number of self-referrals (12) but only a small number of staff referrals (4) suggesting that it may be worth exploring further initiatives that support students when transitioning to university or returning for example from placement or a leave of absence.

## SSESW Gender



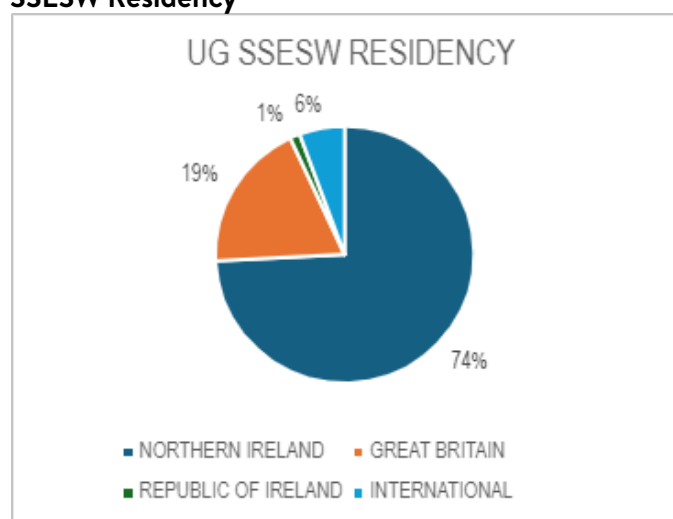
The number of students that identify as female within the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work is 521. There were 121 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 23.2% of the School female population. Only a small number of students, all 5 of whom were in Level 1, chose not to state any gender when referring.

The number of students that identify as male within the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work is 105. There were 35 of those students that presented to Student Wellbeing in 2023-24 which is 33.3% of the School's male population which is both unusual, in comparison to other Schools, and interesting given that research shows that young adult males are less likely to seek wellbeing support than their peers.

LEVEL OF STUDY	PREFER NOT TO SAY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Level 1	5	17	25	47
Level 2		12	50	62
Level 3		6	46	52
TOTAL	5	35	121	161

Interestingly, females present to Student Wellbeing significantly more in Levels 2 and 3 than Level 1 while their male peers present in the highest numbers in Level 1 and in declining numbers at each subsequent level of study. It is worth exploring this pattern relating to the female students to better understand why this is the case and consider if there are any opportunities for earlier intervention at level 1 if required.

## SSESW Residency



The overall UG population for the School of SSESW is 627. The number of students accessing the service is 161.



The School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work residency breakdown for 2023-24 is as follows:

- Northern Ireland – 119 students presented, which is 22% of the NI School population.
- Great Britain – 30 students presented, which is 62.5% of the GB School population.
- Republic of Ireland – 2 students presented, which is 22.2% of the ROI School population.
- International – 10 students presented, which is 50% of the International School population.

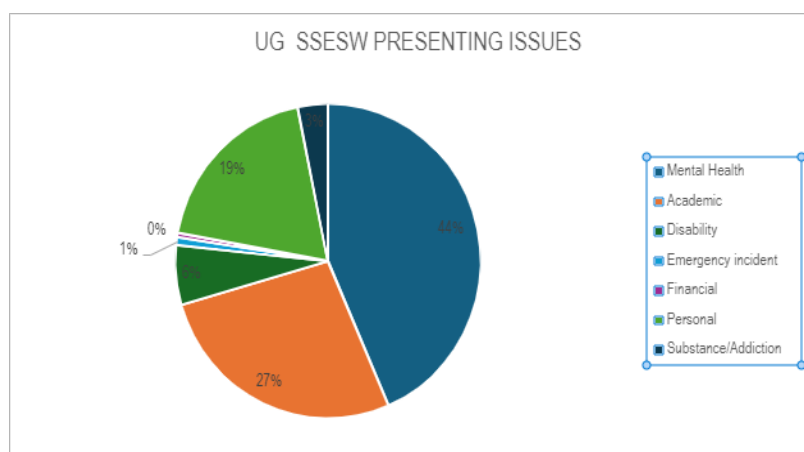
Disproportionate percentages of both GB and International students accessed Student Wellbeing.

LEVEL OF STUDY	NORTHERN IRELAND	GREAT BRITAIN	REPUBLIC OF IRELAND	INTERNATIONAL	TOTAL
Level 1	35	4	1	7	47
Level 2	44	16	1	1	62
Level 3	40	10	0	2	52
TOTAL	119	30	2	10	161

While only very small numbers, it would be worth exploring these two cohort's specific support needs to better understand that pattern.

### SSESW Presenting Issues

When referring to the Student Wellbeing Service both staff and students can identify why they are referring to the service by selecting several reasons from check boxes and can choose multiple presenting issues.



From the chart above it is evident that for SSESW UG students the top 3 presenting issues are:

- Mental Health – most commonly stress, anxiety and depression
- Academic – exam and assessment-related stress, placement related issues, group work and presentations are commonly cited academic concerns from students
- Personal – can be a wide-range of issues including home circumstances, relationships, bereavements for example

For Mental Health (cited 382 times) there has been a significant 76.8% increase from last year, while Personal concerns (cited 166 times) have also increased significantly by 84.4%. This is indicative that students are dealing with mental health and health-related issues outside of their studies that are impacting on their engagement with their studies and is consistent with an increase in complex cases of students presenting with needs across a range of issues unrelated directly to academic stress. Academic concerns (cited 237 times) have also increased by 38.5% and this would be worth exploring further.

### Case Study A

In semester one a student was referred to Student Wellbeing by their Advisor of Studies within the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social work following a student support meeting where they disclosed that they had been experiencing anxiety for a length of time and suspected that they may be neurodivergent. The student was triaged by Faculty Wellbeing Adviser, Tara Cruickshank, and it was apparent that the student needed support implemented and their anxiety was starting to affect their academics. The student was supported by Tara weekly in a 1-2-1 setting to make an appointment with their GP to discuss a potential referral

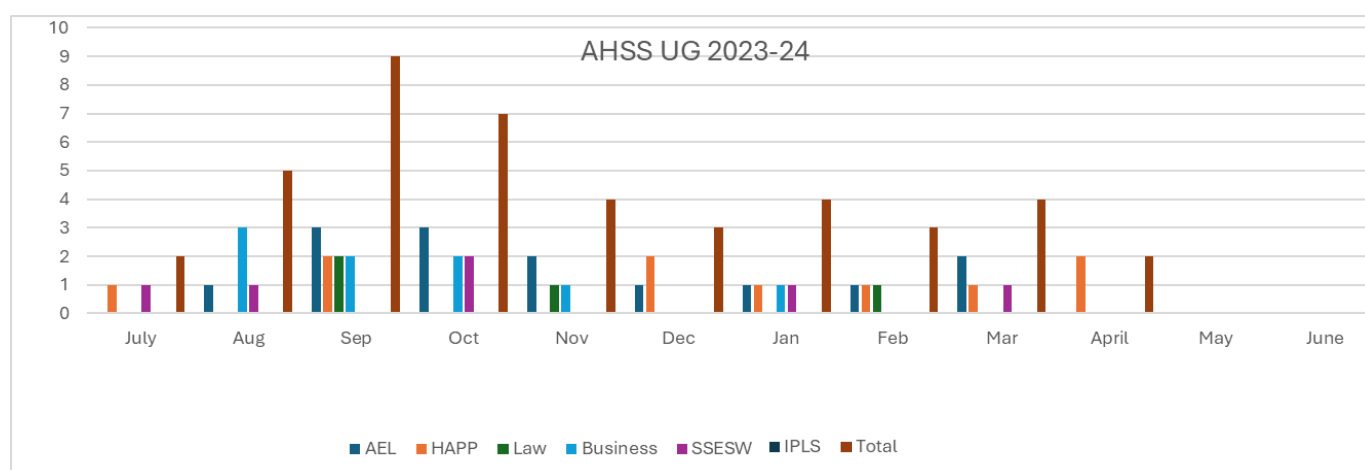
for an autism assessment and anxiety medication. The student was also supported to make a referral to Inspire Wellbeing Services where they were given six sessions and guided to engage with Disability Services to obtain reasonable adjustments. During this time another student support meeting was set up with the School to talk about how their academics had been affected and how they were feeling very overwhelmed with assignments and worried about their future after University. The School were extremely supportive in guiding the student on their final submissions and an appointment with the Careers Services was set up to explore future career aspects. As the student was also feeling socially isolated, Tara also contacted the Student's Union and supported the student to get involved with SU Volunteer. The student continued to have bi-weekly meetings until May when they had submitted their final piece of work and are now graduating in July.

## Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences UG Risk Report July 2023-June 2024

Wellbeing Services Risk Management protocol requires staff to risk assess students at each intervention. When a student presents with medium to high or high risk, staff should consult with a Wellbeing Assessment Manager who will consider and agree to the most appropriate course of action. Students deemed at risk will be added to the Students at Risk List which is reviewed by management and staff on a weekly basis. Wellbeing Services work closely with internal and external services including primary care providers who have responsibility for holding risk until risk has been de-escalated to a point where the student will be removed from the risk list and post-risk management support can commence.

For the purpose of this report, students will only be counted once, on the month they are added to the risk list, although they may remain on the risk list for several weeks or months. They may also require multiple interventions during this period.

The graph below displays the students added to the Students at Risk list who are Undergraduate Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The key provided at the bottom of the graph shows the breakdown by School per month (July 23 to June 24).



A total of 43 students from AHSS presented at risk during the period July 2023 to June 2024.

Last academic year there were 67 students at risk within AHSS, so overall risk levels have decreased as is the case across all Faculties this year.

The graph above shows students from the School of Arts, English and Languages presented at risk for 8 out of 12 months with the highest number of students at risk in September (9) and October (7) across the whole Faculty.

The School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics recorded students at risk for 7 of the 12 months. Queen's Business School and Social Sciences, Education and Social Work both recorded students at risk for 5 out of the 12 months, with QBS showing the highest presentation of risk in August (3) with students stating this was due to both academic and mental health difficulties they experienced during the re-sit period. Students from the School of Law presented at risk during 3 of the 12 months.

It is anticipated that this information will assist Schools to identify the key periods when students appear to be struggling and are most likely to require additional support during the year. More granular information can be made available to Schools about the reason for risk and level of study of the students in each month to help better interpret what mitigations, if any, can be implemented by the School.

## Referrals to External Support

Student Wellbeing work closely with a range of external agencies, for specialised and tailored support to students. This includes the following organisations, with which the University has a formal Service Level Agreement to provide services for our students:

- Student Psychological Therapies (Counselling) through Inspire Wellbeing
- Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners
- Belfast Trust Student Mental Health Project
- Talk Campus

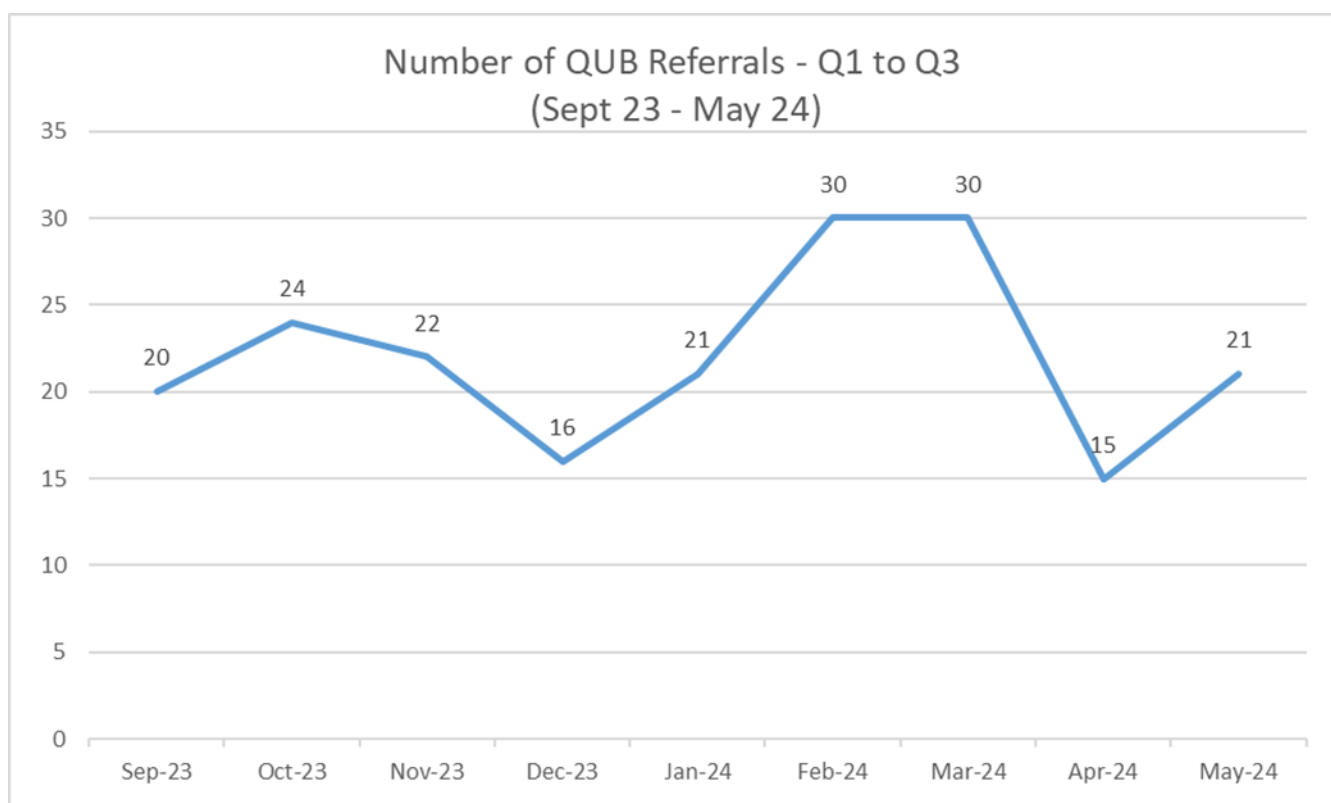
While there is no formal agreement in place, the Wellbeing Service does routinely refer students to the following for very specialist support:

- DAISY - Drug and Alcohol Intervention Service
- CEDAR transition support
- NEXUS - supporting individuals impacted by sexual abuse and abusive relationships

## Student Mental Health Service Referrals – Support for Students with Complex Mental Health Needs

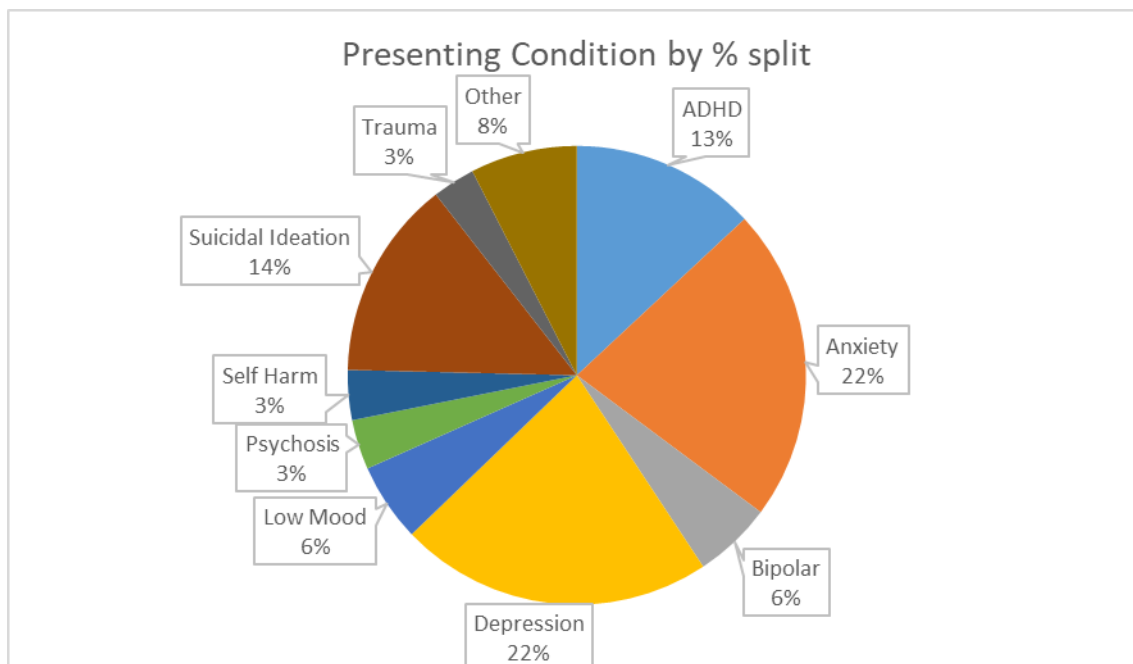
The Student Mental Health Service is a tier 3 service funded by the Belfast Trust, QUB and UU. Students, who must have a Belfast term-time address, and who are experiencing significant or emerging mental health issues can be referred to the service by their GP or Student Wellbeing. The service offers multidisciplinary clinical support to students in liaison with Student Wellbeing and/or the student's GP.

The data that follows relates to the Student Mental Health Services Q1 to Q3 reporting period from September 23 – May 24.



Total QUB Referrals in the Reporting Period: 199

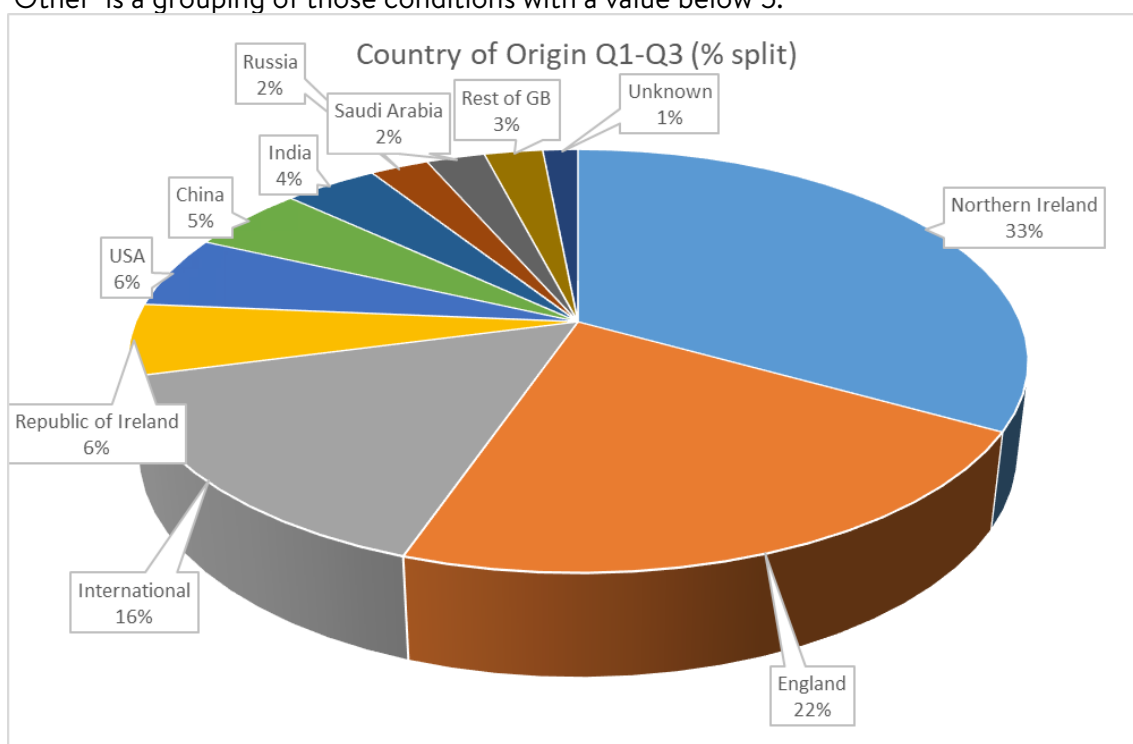
Students accessing the service benefit from prompt access to the Service in comparison to those referred to the Community Mental Health Hub. In the reporting period, the Service made contact with 98% of students within 1 day of receiving and processing their referral and the average wait time between referral date and first appointment was 13.6 working days.



Anxiety, Depression and Suicidal Ideation remain, as with last year, the top three presenting Mental Health conditions at point of triage by SMHS.

A proportion of students (13%) present with ADHD

'Other' is a grouping of those conditions with a value below 5.



A third of the QUB students seen by SMHS are local and 25% are from GB ROI students account for 6% of the students seen by SMHS while the vast majority of the remaining 36% are international students.

In Q1-Q3 (Sep 2023 – May 2024), 94.5% of students who completed the SMHS Evaluation would recommend the service to Friends and Family if they needed care and treatment.

### Case Study – Student at Risk

The student presented to Student Wellbeing early in the summer, having had deferred exams in May due to mental health difficulties and reported difficulties with sleep disruption, low energy and feeling completely consumed by studies. As they presented with some risk, a GP appointment and referral to Inspire were organised. The student received regular check-ins from the Wellbeing Adviser who also requested that the

School arrange a Student Support Meeting to explore any other support needed over the summer. It was agreed that it would be helpful if the student was supported to develop practical strategies, such as breathing



techniques, to help mitigate increased anxiety in the run up to the exam re-sit period and regular check-ins were arranged. However, in the interim between the exams and results, and, particularly as the results release date came closer, there was an increase in concerning behaviours and risk including food restriction, self-harm and ultimately thoughts of immediate end of own life with a plan. The student's GP was alerted and recommended the student attend A&E immediately. The student was released after being triaged through A&E, but the Wellbeing Adviser continued to monitor the student's wellbeing and arranged accommodation team and Inspire check ins. In the following period, the student continued to worry and risk continued to be monitored. The student was at this point having daily meetings with both Student Wellbeing and the Student Mental Health Service and it was agreed jointly between both that receiving the results could significantly heighten risk again. As part of safety planning, it was agreed the Wellbeing Adviser would be there along with the student while they opened the results. Unfortunately, the results when received were not what the student had been hoping for and immediate risk became apparent once again. The Wellbeing Adviser consulted immediately with the Student Mental Health Service who decided that the student should be brought to A&E and the student was subsequently detained under Mental Health Act. The Wellbeing Adviser was in regular contact with the student's family (emergency contact) in their home country through a translator to provide updates and was also in regular contact with the Acute Mental Health inpatient unit Treatment Team to work alongside them to support with the student's discharge and return home. The student continued recovery at home and on return to studies continued to be supported by both the School and the Wellbeing Adviser including exploring and accommodating the student's request that they be allowed to re-sit the failed exam remotely so that they could remain close to their support circle at home. The student has now successfully graduated and progressed to postgraduate studies at a new institution.

## **STUDENTS AT INSPIRE COUNSELLING**

All QUB students have access to short term, solutions-focused counselling support through Inspire, our counselling partner. For this report, two of our counsellors have provided some insight into the challenges that students disclose to them when attending counselling sessions as follows:

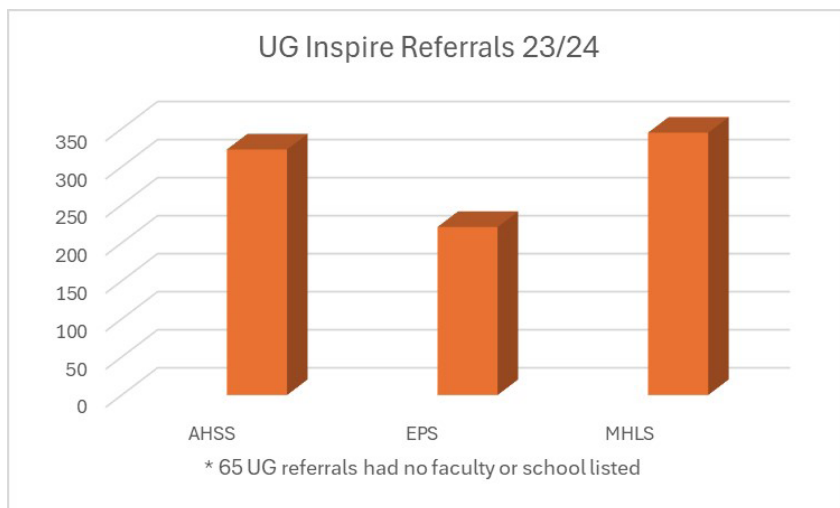
### **Counsellor Feedback:**

*Students often present the same issues when attending counselling sessions. These can vary from academic stressors, personal/university relationships, life and traumatic experiences to physical or mental health diagnosis just to name a few. Social anxiety still exists in students, which increased over the lockdown period. Both counsellors providing feedback are seeing more students coming forward with ADHD (diagnosed and pending diagnosis) which further exacerbates why they are feeling overwhelmed and can't concentrate.*

*Underlying issues have been triggered due to the massive changes involved in University life for example, living on their own, adult relationships, financial issues, family breakdown plus the loss of a secure place at home. Transitioning from a self-regulated place of home and School to University can cause huge unfamiliarity with students and further cause these issues to seem unmanageable.*

*Recommendations for the Schools include regular check-ins for students and creating an optimal class environment for taking in lecture information. Giving students useful wellbeing resources early in the semester, each semester and then leading into exam and assessment period would also be recommended. Also, more revision lecturer, study groups and peer/buddy mentoring scheme are potential solutions often identified by students.*

*It is imperative that correct provisions are put in place for students to overcome stressors they encounter. The feedback is that lots of students are not engaging for Disability Services when they are entitled for certain accommodations relating to their disability. Exploring ways for students to explore self-regulation and co regulation and to help students break down their life and study balance and help them concentrate on certain tasks would be useful. One recommendation is that regular 1-1 academic support should be in place for students to engage to help monitor and problem-solve over the academic year. Also, students are advised to engage in support as soon as possible to allow early intervention.*



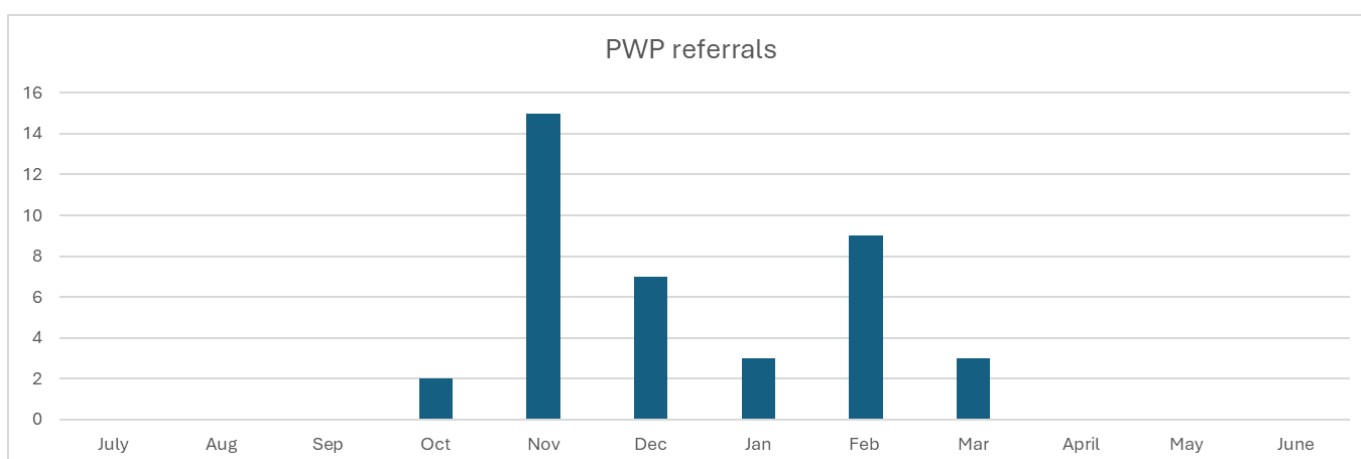
The graph above shows the number of students accessing support through Inspire Counselling, broken down by Faculty. This year has seen a significant increase in demand for counselling and we are seeing unprecedented surges in referrals across all Faculties and levels of studies which may be related to the pressures on NHS and voluntary sector provision. For context, there were 323 students from AHSS this year, which is a 35.7% increase from last year (238).

### Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners Service Referrals

The Wellbeing Service has been involved in a project for the past two years, providing placements for Ulster University Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (PWP) master's students, who provide low level cognitive behavioural therapy for referred students. They carry out an initial assessment followed by up to 6 sessions of therapy, where appropriate. Both Accessible Learning Support (formerly Disability Services) and Wellbeing Service can refer directly into this service where mild to moderate anxiety and/or depression has been disclosed by the student.

This year we were allocated one student who commenced therapeutic interventions in October 2023 ending in June 2024.

The table below shows that a total of 39 referrals were made by Wellbeing Services to the PWP Service during October 2023 to June 2024.



### Feedback from our Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner:

“The most common presenting issue identified was general anxiety disorder, specifically excessive worry around exams and the future. Those who experienced this worry seemed to find the problem-solving aspect of the worry management intervention helpful for managing anxiety around exams. The most popular intervention appeared to be cognitive restructuring. This intervention involves challenging negative thought patterns that the client is experiencing. The concept of rationalising the clients’ unhelpful thoughts through the gathering of evidence for and against the clients’ negative thought proved to work very well and clients were able to dispute this evidence successfully. When reviewing clients’ progress it was evident that the use of cognitive restructuring was helping clients to challenge their negative thoughts more naturally and regularly, which resulted in less feelings associated with depression and anxiety.”

# DEVELOPMENTS AND COLLABORATIONS AT FACULTY LEVEL AND IMPACT

## Handy Helpers at HAPP



The Faculty Wellbeing Adviser has attended various events and meetings within the AHSS faculty across the academic year. These have included:

- Creating a sustainable outdoor space for staff within HAPP and QFT with SU Volunteer
- Stress Management presentation within School of Law
- Student Voice committee within School of Law
- Build-a-bear within AEL
- Personal tutor recognition event within AEL
- Women in Law self-care event within School of Law
- School of Law NSS event
- Preparing for placement within Queen's Business School

The Faculty Wellbeing Adviser has been involved in multiple Level 1 and Level 2 Support to Participate Fully in Study and/or University Life meetings across the faculty. The purpose of having the Wellbeing Adviser present is to support students who are experiencing difficulties regarding their emotional and mental health and to encourage them to engage in the opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns. The Wellbeing Adviser supports the student through this process until it reaches an outcome and then to process the outcome and take forward any actions recommended. Student Wellbeing also provide support and guidance to the School around implementing and completing the process as required.

## **Student Wellbeing Service Feedback** **Feedback from students and colleagues**

### **1<sup>st</sup> year student within Arts, English and Languages:**

"I just wanted to let you know that I am feeling much better and am in a much healthier place. Taking a break from my course was definitely the right decision, and I wanted to offer you my deepest thanks for helping me see the right path for me and to put my wellbeing first. You have been a wonderful influence and I'm not sure where I'd be without you."

### **Student Support Administrator within the School of Law:**

"Having the support of Student Wellbeing in 2023-2024 has been absolutely vital for me in my role as Student Support Administrator at the School of Law. At Undergraduate level at Law, we have been navigating changes to curriculums and policies in the current academic year, as well as dealing with the pressures of post-pandemic education and the surge in mental health issues experienced by our students. Student Wellbeing have gone above and beyond to assist both staff and students at Law, specifically Tara as our UG Faculty Adviser. Tara has attended many Support to Participate Fully in Study and/or University Life Meetings at the School and was always on hand when I had questions or needed to flag a student or situation of concern. I simply couldn't have done my job without Tara's support in 2023-2024. Thank you so much!"

### 2<sup>nd</sup> year student within Social Sciences, Education and Social Work:

“Thank you again for your support Tara, it really does mean the world. I can safely say that without your support I wouldn’t still be enrolled.”

### 1<sup>st</sup> year student within Arts, English and Languages:

“So I finally finished my assignment at 2 in the morning and I am now free! I spent so long worrying about it and just worrying about everything else too that I just couldn’t put anything into perspective. Thank you so much for your help this term, I really am grateful for the support and wouldn’t have been able to do it all without you.”

### 2<sup>nd</sup> year student within Queen’s Business School:

“Thank you for reaching out, it is extremely comforting to have someone to voice my anxiety to. I had my phone call with the GP today and we talked about medication and I do think I will be able to do my exam now. Thank you again.”

## SECTION 4

### STUDENTS SUPPORTED THROUGH DISABILITY SERVICES

#### Overview of Service

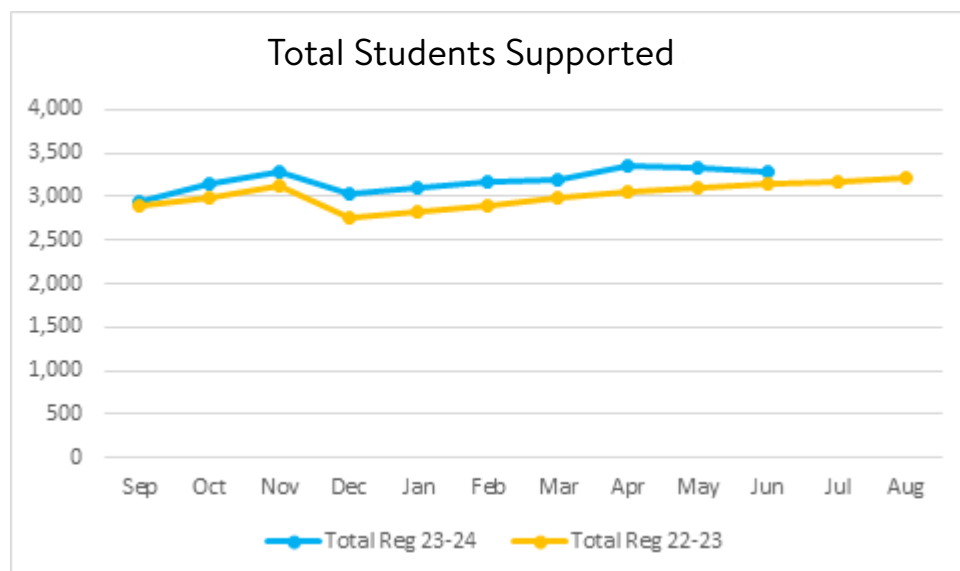
Our university Disability Services are dedicated to supporting and empowering students with disabilities and long-term conditions, including those with a working diagnosis. They provide individual accommodations to foster inclusion, enhance academic success, and ensure a supportive and accessible university environment. They assist students with conditions that have impacted or are likely to impact them for 12 months or more.

Additionally, they support staff in assisting students by offering advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments and effective support strategies for students impacted by various conditions. This includes providing direction on the most appropriate support processes.

#### A Year in Disability Services



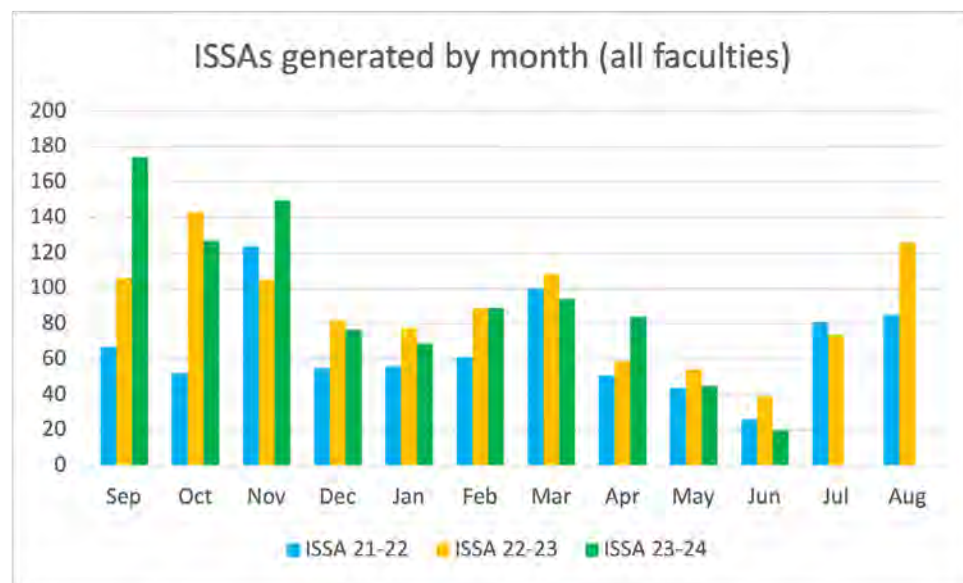
#### Total Students Supported year on year





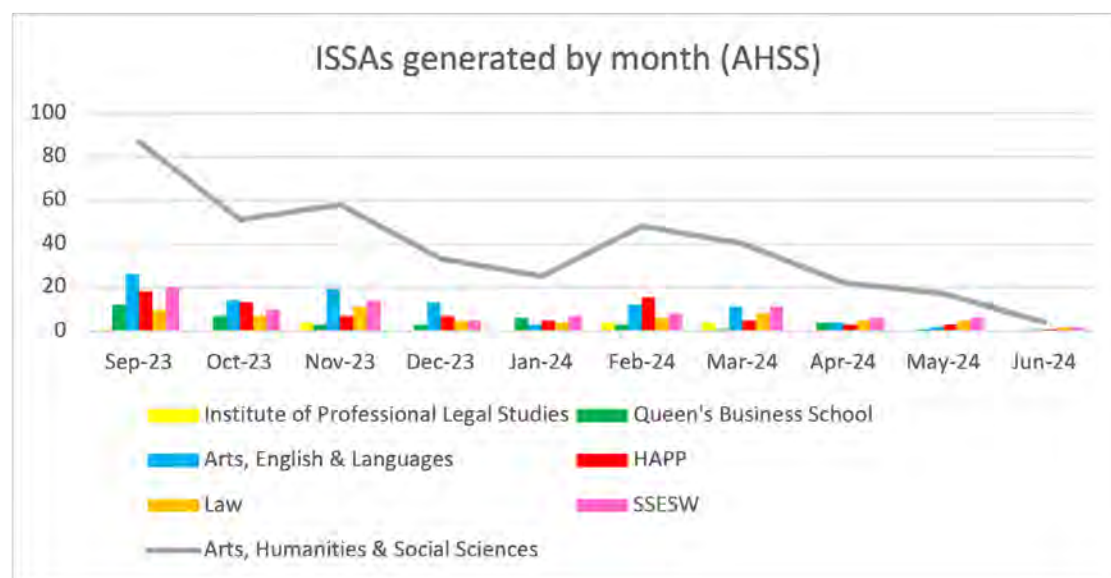
Year on year the service continues to see a significant increase in students seeking support. The majority of students supported by the service are disclosing mental health conditions, closely followed by SpLD (Dyslexia/ ADHD, etc.). Moreover, a notable proportion of students are declaring multiple conditions, highlighting the diverse needs we continue to address.

### Individual Student Support Agreements (ISSAs) generated by month year on year



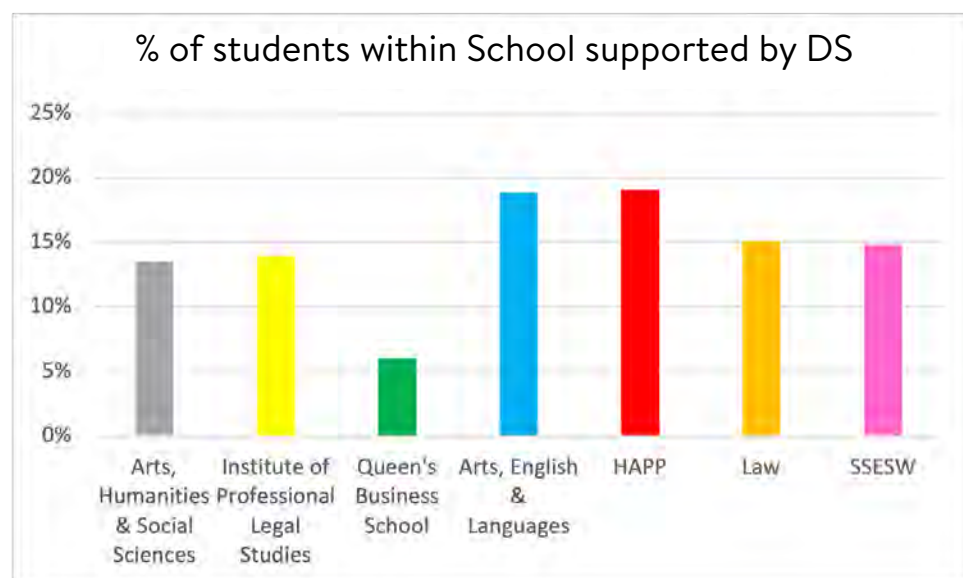
The graph depicts the trend of ISSAs generated for students. The peak period for the service is from August through November. Each year, there is an increase in the number of students disclosing a disability and seeking support. Students continue to engage with Disability Services throughout the year. There is a notable increase in the number of ISSAs generated between February and April, coinciding with students' requests for support during end-of-year examinations. Throughout the year, current students may request a review of their support, which may lead to amendments and updates to their ISSA. These changes reflect updates to a student's condition, new conditions, or changes to support requirements.

### AHSS ISSAs generated by month



The graph shows the trend in generation of ISSAs for students. The busiest time for the service is now August to the end of November. The number of students disclosing a disability and seeking support rises annually. Students continue to engage with Disability Services right up to the end of the academic year. There is a predicted rise in ISSAs generated after the results are published for semester 1 modules. ISSAs generated for students in AEL remains consistently high. HAPP is similarly a busy School with student registrations. During the year students will also have ISSAs amended and updated. This includes new conditions, changes to conditions, changes in support requirements. One student may have 3 or 4 ISSAs generated for a range of reasons. These require interaction with the student by the DO and an admin process completed.

## Students supported by Disability Services as a percentage of School numbers

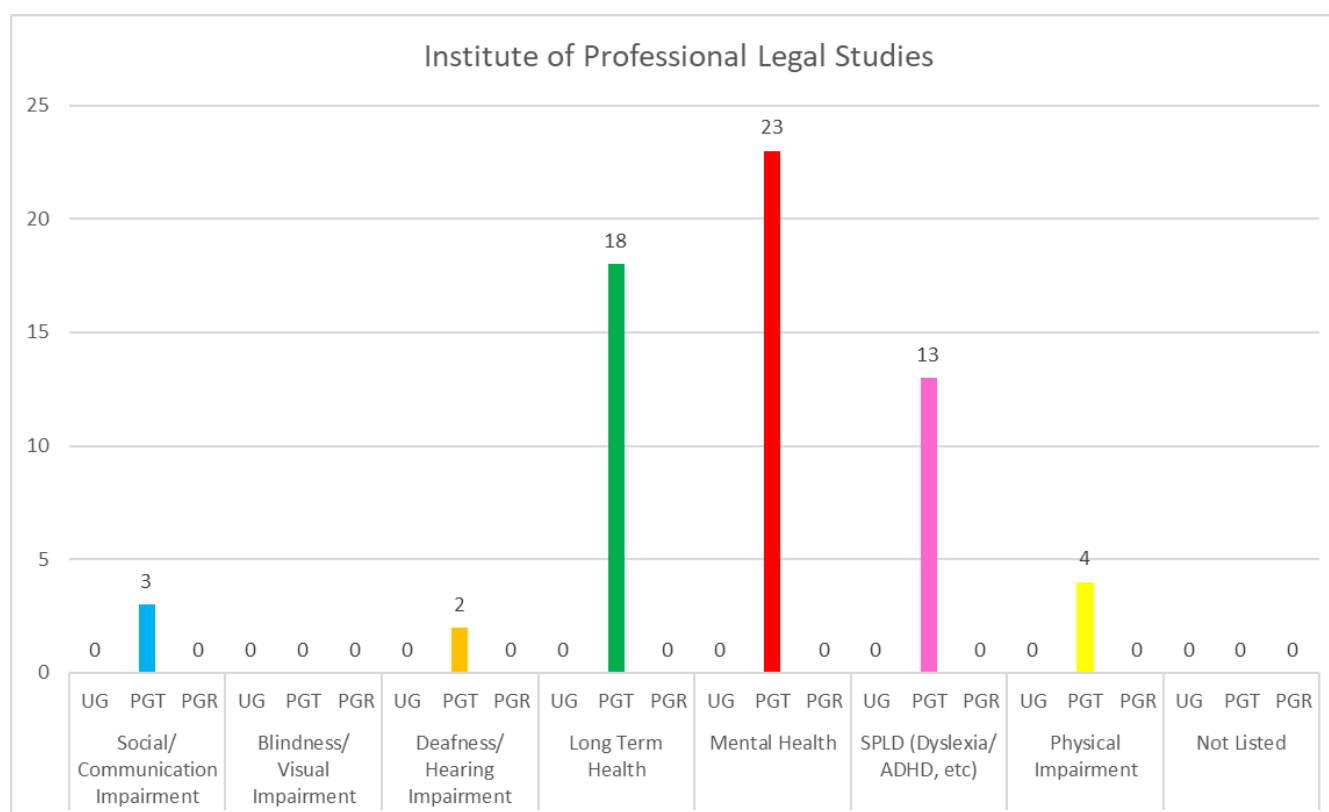


AHSS currently has 807 undergraduate students and 315 PGT and 81 PGR supported by Disability Services. The percentages in relation to total students in the Faculty is highest in HAPP, AEL, Law and HAPP. This mirrors the overall trend of an increase in numbers of students supported by Disability Services.

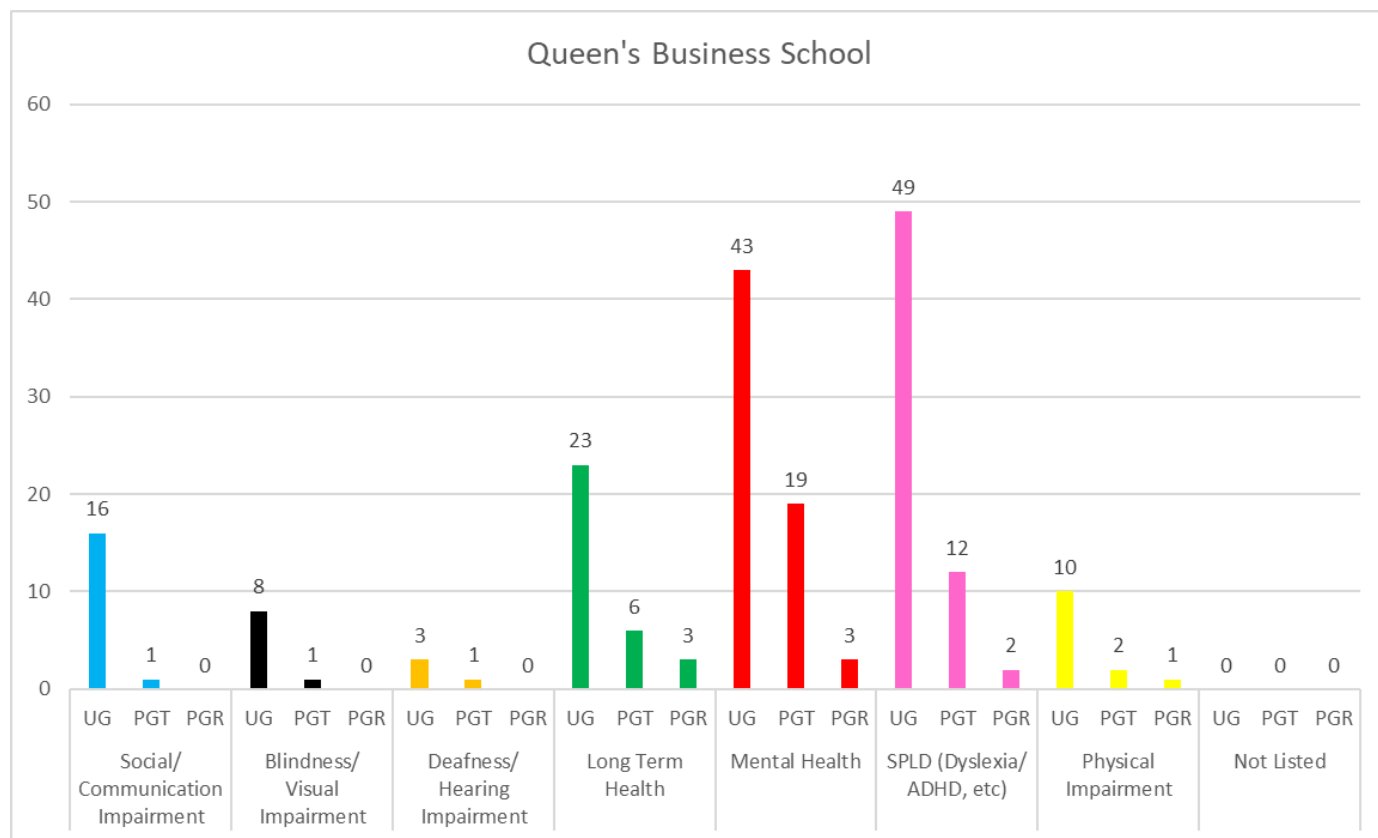
## Students supported by condition

The service has supported an increasing number of students with complex conditions through extensive collaboration with colleagues and departments across the university, including Schools, the Estates Department, Safety Services, and Accommodation.

Continuing to support Schools through a faculty facing model the service has also identified condition-specific focus areas for Disability Officers to drive targeted development and support. Each Disability Officer will have an area of focus from a diverse range of conditions, including neurodiverse conditions, social and communication impairments, mental health issues, specific learning difficulties (SpLD), physical and sensory disabilities, and long-term conditions. A key initiative includes recognising flag days and sector advancements to enhance awareness and inclusivity.



IPLS has only Postgraduate students. The courses are intense, requiring commitment of time and effort from students. There was a change in Disability Advisor during 23-24. Jessica Wolseley was immediately available to work with DO, Orla Cregan. There was excellent communication between Disability Services and the School DA. Exam support processes were streamlined, which helped with the implementation of support for students. 59 students are supported by Disability Services, the majority of whom have disclosed a mental health condition (23), SpLD and long-term health conditions (increase from 15 to 18 students). Students with long-term conditions benefitted from support with flexible deadlines. As the courses are professional, high levels of attendance are required, which can be challenging for students with fluctuating conditions.

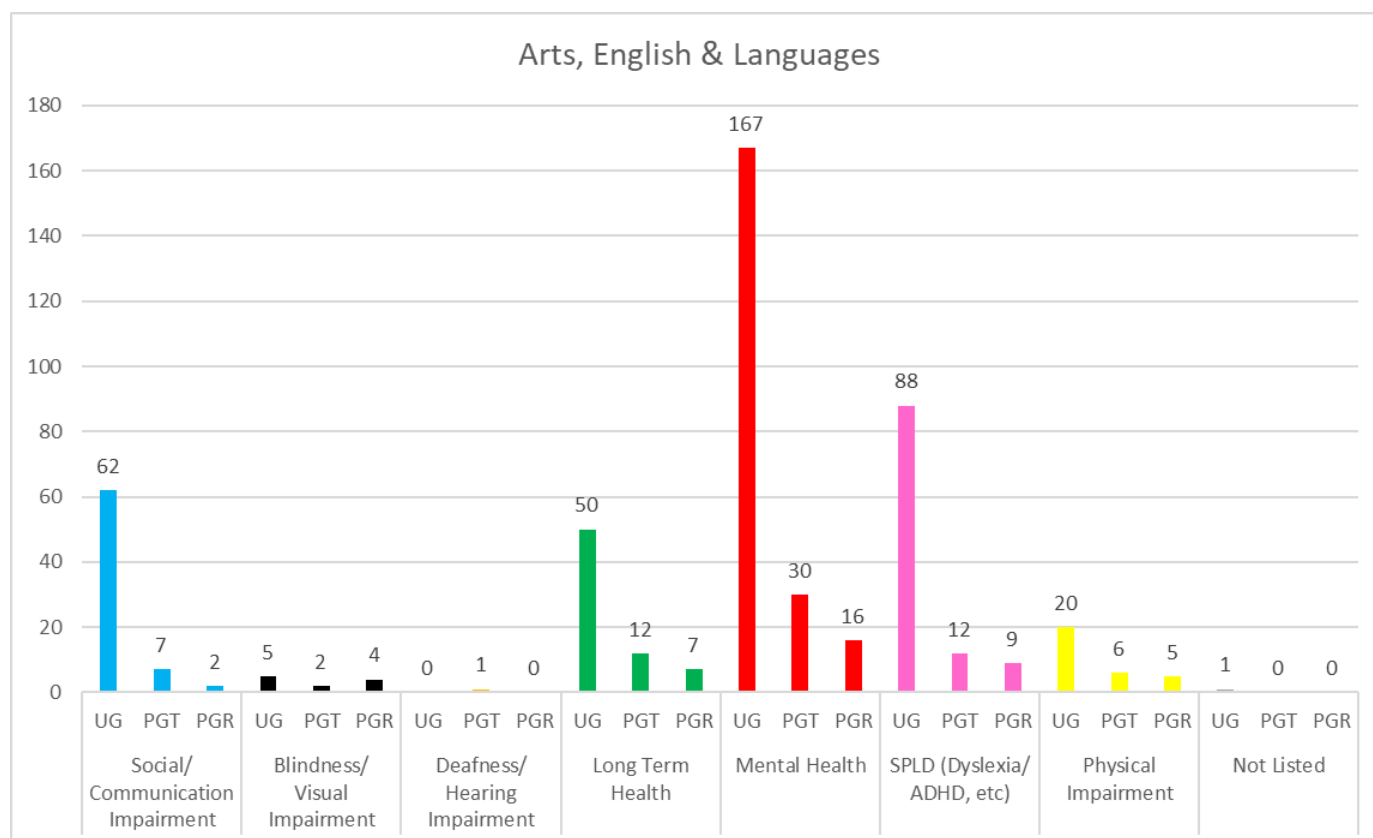


171 students are supported by Disability Services, making up 6% of the School population. There has been a slight increase in supported students since last year (11%). From 171 students supported by Disability Services, 203 conditions were reported, so a relatively low number of students reported having more than one condition.

- There was a 55% increase in students reporting social and communication impairments since last year.
- There was a 23% increase in students reporting long-term health conditions since last year.
- Overall, SpLD and Mental Health conditions were the most commonly reported conditions which is the same trend from the previous year.

However, whilst 6% of the School is supported by Disability Services appears as a small figure, it was commented that there may be a possible lack of disclosure from this cohort as this course attracts more international students who may be worried about disclosing. Also, international students would not be eligible for externally funded support and therefore supporting these students with internal support only can be challenging e.g. only having access to the Disability Services student support fund budget.

## 152 conditions were reported from 131 Undergraduate students



Within AEL a significant number of students, 18% of students studying in AEL, are supported by Disability Services, 346. This includes high numbers of Autism, 71 students, Mental Health, 213 students, Dyslexia, 103 students, long term health, 69 students. This shows an increase in figures from 22-23 of MH 13% SpLD 4%, Autism 28%, long term conditions an increase of 33%.

In real terms, while the numbers in comparison to the percentages are relatively moderate, this does place an additional workload on staff. A regular group meeting was introduced with Orla Cregan, Tara Cruickshank, Sally Bridge, Carmel Mulvenna and Rosie McGookin. Every six weeks we meet to discuss individual students. We could decide a pathway to ensure they engage with Disability Services and who was going to follow up with the student depending on the issue. This meant students were not missed, information was shared, and the student was not being approached by too many staff members at a time. These meetings were invaluable and will continue in 24-25. There were many students requesting multiple deadline extensions. A University wide piece of work is required to manage this and encourage students to look at their time management.

There were 46 postgraduate students with a mental ill health diagnosis in AEL. Several of these students were on the same course. A collaboration between lecturers, support staff and Megan O'Brien and Orla Cregan was required to support this cohort of students. This feedback was received:

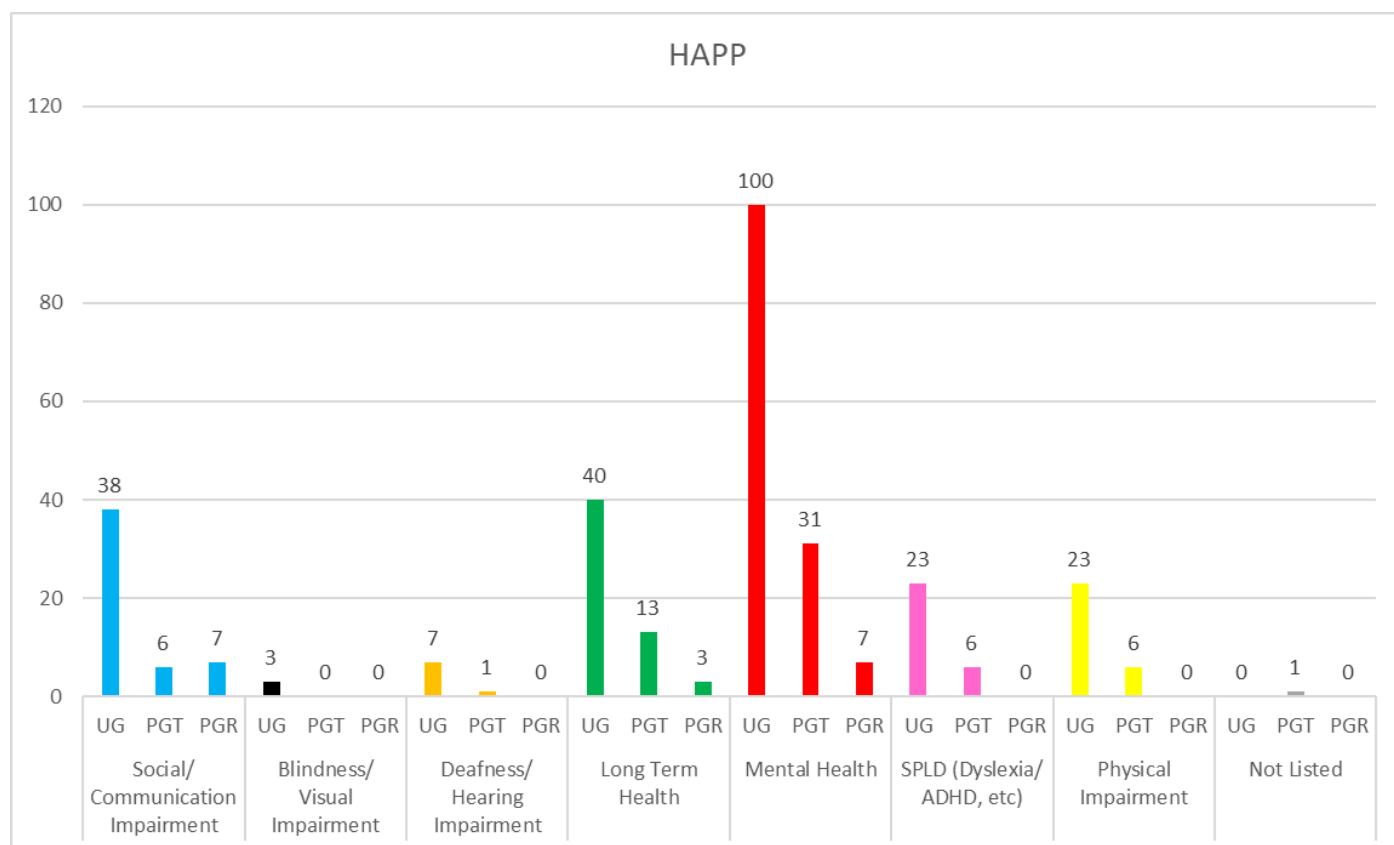
*"The post-Covid period has resulted in a new normal for us here in Arts Management. We have seen an increase in and more severe cases of mental health issues, such as anxiety and mental health issues. Frankly, without the support of Student Wellbeing, in particular Megan O'Brien and Orla Cregan, we would not have been able to handle them as well as we did. The sensitive nature of these issues requires staff that are not actively teaching these students. Additionally given the international nature of our cohorts, the possibility of student isolation increases (as they are far away from family and support networks)." (Rosie McGookin PG Administrator)*

As Rosie states, International students with a mental health diagnosis can be isolated for cultural reasons and do not have immediate family support. Having the Wellbeing Wednesdays hosted by Megan O'Brien was a vital resource and regular contact with Rebecca Burns (MH advisor). International students cannot apply for additional support from the Education Authority. DO Orla Cregan had to assess and apply for funded support for students, particularly Mental Health Tutor Support.

An increase in students with Autism and SpLDs is to be welcomed, as students receive excellent support from the School and Disability Services. Students are attracted to the arts subjects such as English, Drama and Film



Studies. Excellent communication between DO, Orla Cregan and the School is ongoing and any queries/ issues that arise with support are managed quickly. Support meetings, Teams calls and in person meetings occur regularly.

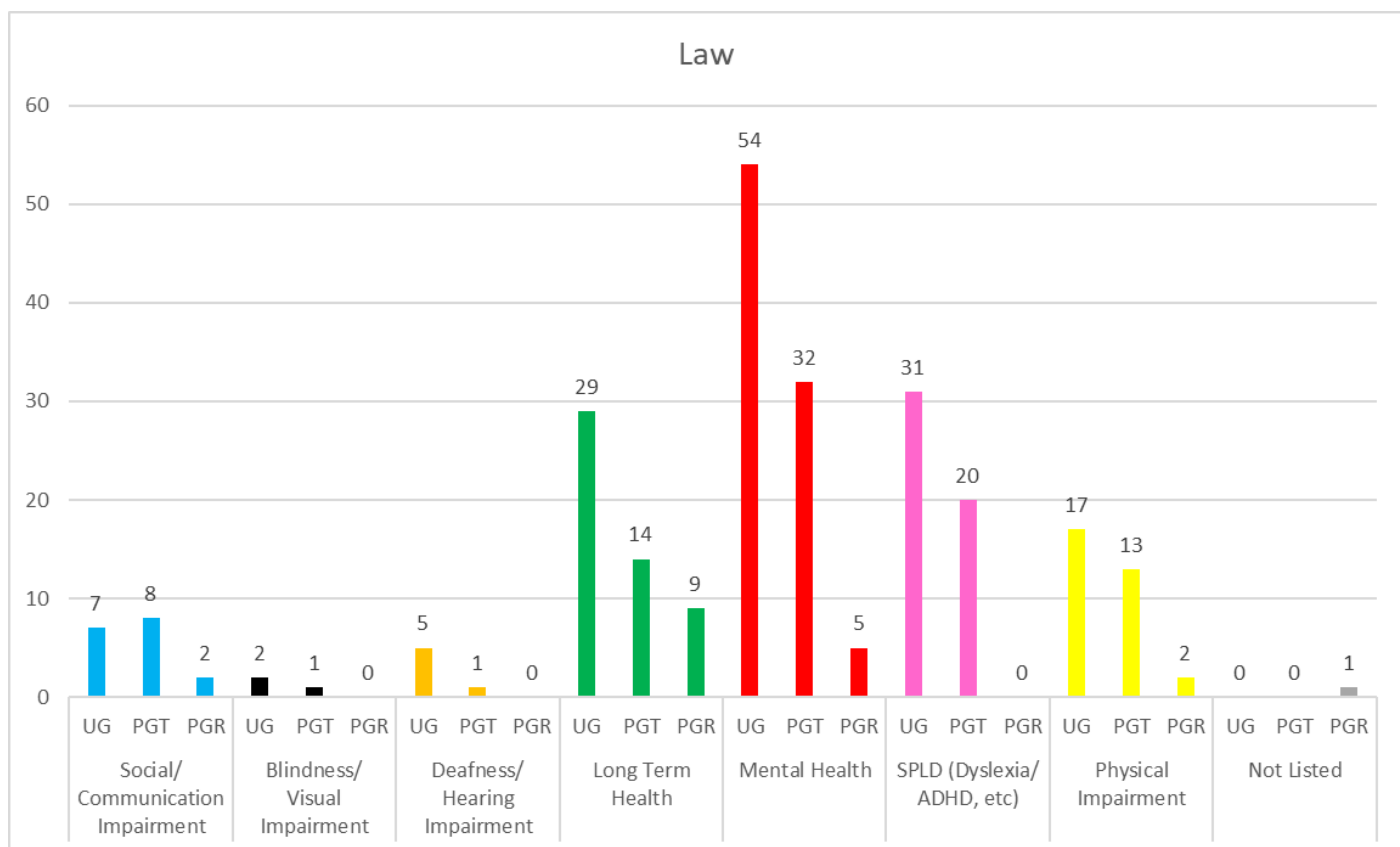


HAPP has supported by Disability Services, 254 students, 191 UG, 47 PGT and 16 PGR. HAPP has 315 recorded conditions supported by Disability Services, 275 UG, 68 PG and 22 PGR. This equates to 19% of the overall School population. There was a 24% increase in students disclosing a Social Communication condition, mainly Autism Spectrum. There was a 38% increase in students with a physical impairment. This has meant collaboration with Disability Services, the School and the Estates team. Janet Boyd has worked tirelessly to ensure the university is complying with their statutory anticipatory duty of access. It is important to remind colleagues that this is a university wide responsibility.

The highest number of students supported by Disability Services is for a Mental Health condition within the School of HAPP. This is reflective of the overall trend in the service generally. There is a good working relationship between the 2 DOs for HAPP and the School. This year there was a move to the Portal for flexibility for deadlines and after an initial transition this has worked well. The Education and Postgraduate Taught Administrator and other professional support staff were in regular contact with Janet Boyd.

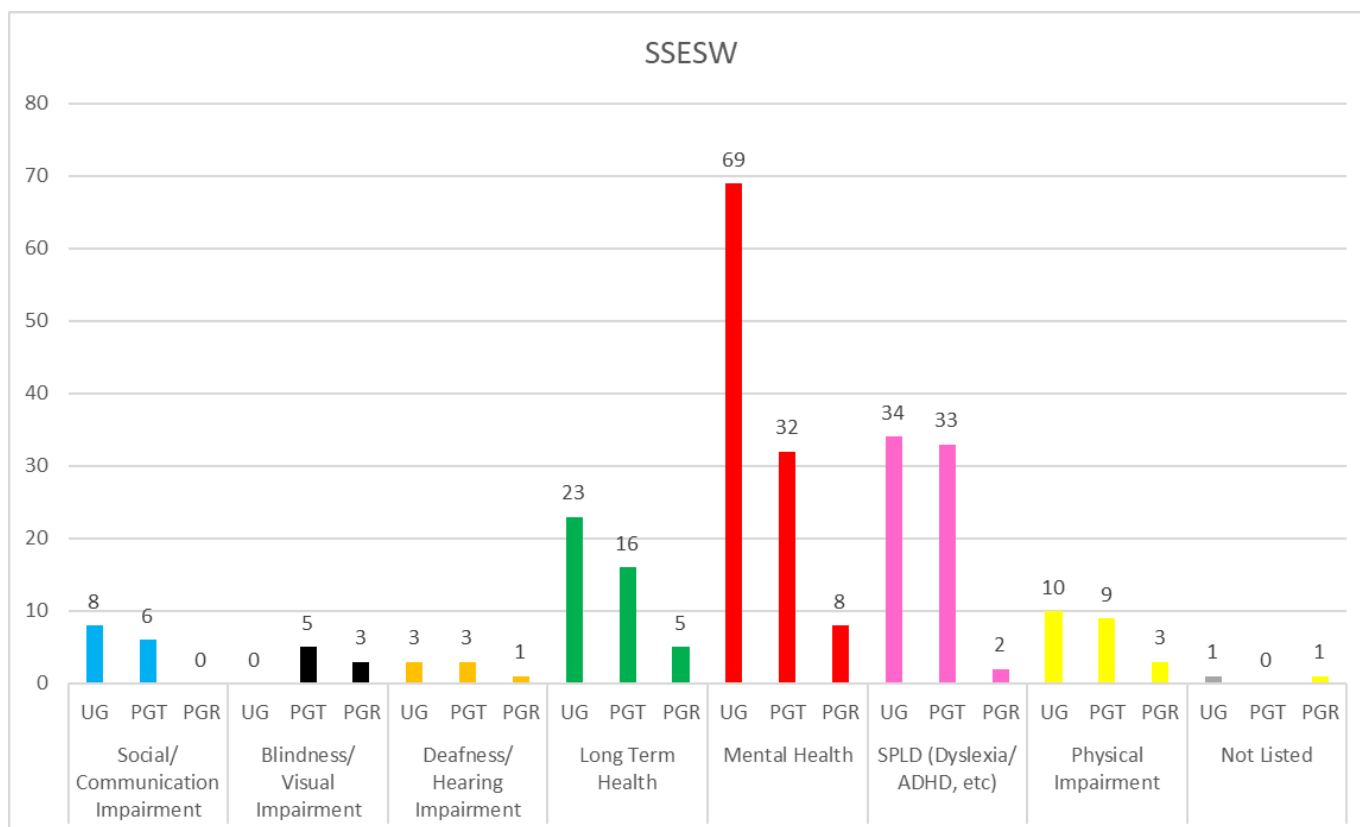
There was a 14% increase in students declaring a long-term health condition, some quite complex. This meant that DOs, Ciara Beattie and Janet Boyd, met with students' multiple times to agree support recommendations. Fluctuating health may affect attendance and deadlines and possible Level 1 meetings and Occupational Health interventions.

The School continues to have a high number of students supported by Disability Services.



Within Law a significant number of students, 15% of students studying in Law, are supported by Disability Services, 174. There are 253 conditions recorded among those students. The highest number of students supported by Disability Services fall under the Mental Health category within the School of Law, 91 students. Some of the PGT students in Law are International, DO had to arrange for funding for academic mental health tutors. The students were also supported by Rebecca Burns, MH specialist in the Disability Services team. There continues to be low numbers of students with a hearing/ visual impairment in the School.

There was an increase of 45% in the number of students reporting a physical impairment, up from 22 in 2022-23 to 32 in 2023-24. This will include students with limited mobility who will require accessible teaching venues and materials provided in a range of materials. This has meant collaboration with Disability Services, the School and the Estates team. Janet Boyd has worked tirelessly to ensure the university is complying with their statutory anticipatory duty of access. It is important to remind colleagues that this is a university wide responsibility. There are 52 students supported by a long-term health condition. Some students with diabetes example may require minimal support to have a full university experience. There have been several students who have declared non- epileptic type seizures. These students may experience a seizure during class or anywhere on campus. DO has worked with the School to raise awareness of support for students who suddenly become unwell. DO, Janet boyd has an excellent long-term relationship with the teaching and support staff in Law. She is in regular contact with the School. The School has excellent processes in place for sharing ISSAs. The use of the new Portal for deadline extension requests has been managed well in the School.



SSESW has a range of students on courses with professional placements such as Social Work and PGCE. DO, Orla Cregan aims to see these students promptly so that recommendations for placement are made as soon as possible. These may need to be amended depending on the condition of the student. Students are advised in their meeting with the DO to disclose so that support is in place for placement. At the end of 23-24 there were 208 students in SSESW supported by Disability Services. There were 109 students with a mental health diagnosis, an increase of 18% from 22-23. An increase was noted in students with a long-term health condition of 13% from last year to this (currently 44 students). There was an increase of 8% in SpLDs (69 students). The numbers of students with a SpLD are evenly divided between UG and PG students. The most interactions Disability Services has with the School was in support of Social Work students. Regular contact between DO Orla Cregan and Karen McLaughlin, Undergraduate Administrator ensured queries/ issues with support for students was managed promptly. DO attended inductions sessions, support meetings and updated and amended support for placements. DO interacted with Estates, Parking, Library and SU to arrange additional support for PhD students with complex medical conditions. Several Occupational Health referrals were completed for Social Work students who required support for placement. Numbers remain low for students with autism in the School.

The Service has supported an increasing number of students with complex conditions through extensive collaboration with colleagues and departments across the university, including Schools, the Estates Department, Safety Services, Library and Accommodation.

Continuing to support Schools through a faculty facing model the service has also identified condition-specific focus areas for Disability Officers to drive targeted development and support. Each Disability Officer will have an area of focus from a diverse range of conditions, including neurodiverse conditions, social and communication impairments, mental health issues, specific learning difficulties (SpLD), physical and sensory disabilities, and long-term conditions. A key initiative includes recognising flag days and sector advancements to enhance awareness and inclusivity.

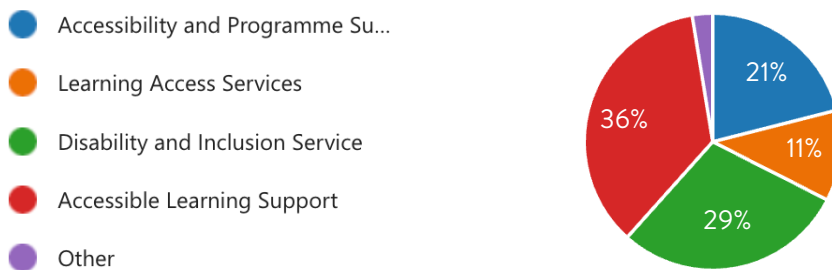
Reflecting the student population, the highest number of students accessing support through Disability Services are undergraduates. Noticeably high numbers of PGT students are accessing support within SSESW and Law. Similarly, there are higher numbers of PGR students in Arts, English and Languages. Some of these students progress through different levels of study and choose to be reassessed by Disability Services for support in their new courses. Additionally, some students enroll in Disability Services later in their academic journey, possibly due to receiving a later diagnosis or deciding to seek support at that point.

## What's in a name?

This year Disability Services have undergone a name change with the primary aim of reaching more students, including those who may have previously been reluctant to come forward. This change responds to feedback indicating some students were hesitant to engage with Disability Services. Following a research and benchmarking exercise, and consultation with various stakeholders, including the Centre for Educational Development, Students' Union, Disability Services and Wellbeing Staff, Disability Forum, pre-applicant students through the Disability Services Offer Holder event, and the current student voice - a graph detailing the results shows that the most popular name was "Accessible Learning Support." This name reflects the ongoing commitment to supporting many students with fantastic services and aims to encourage more students who may have hesitated to seek support.

## Results of the renaming survey

Graph showing percentage of name votes



The name change will be introduced through a rebranding of the service to further promote and reach more students who may benefit from support. As part of this transition, the service is creating a new website dedicated to Accessible Learning Support. During this period, the current website will redirect users to the updated webpage to ensure continuity and ease of access. Additionally, a new email address will be introduced to accompany the name change. During the transition period, emails sent to the existing address will be automatically redirected to the new address to prevent any disruption in communication.

There will be ongoing communication and promotion throughout the year to reach as many students as possible. The service aims to ensure that all students who can benefit from support, including those who may have been unsure about coming forward, feel they can identify with the service and get in contact.



*Gathering the next generation of student voice on the name change*

## Working Diagnosis and Supporting Documentation

This year, the service has witnessed significant challenges for students accessing medical evidence to engage with support, exacerbated by long waiting lists for diagnoses. In response, they have reviewed internal medical evidence requirements to better accommodate students unable to obtain supporting documentation despite being impacted by their disability or condition. Several late registrations were facilitated for exam support following an all-student email, encouraging those in need of assistance to reach out. The email emphasised that students with a working diagnosis are also eligible for support. To prevent medical evidence from being a barrier to accessing valuable support, students are encouraged to contact the service and complete a questionnaire. This allows Disability Officers to consider the information provided and guide students on possible reasonable adjustments and, if necessary, direct them to obtaining additional supporting documentation.

These changes underscore the service's dedication to removing barriers and providing comprehensive support for all students with disabilities.

### What our students say

#### From PhD student in AEL

*I'm very pleased to say that I've passed the viva yesterday. I enjoyed it very much and would not have been able to do so without your help and support. Thank you very much indeed for standing by my needs, I sincerely appreciate it!*

#### From PG student in SSESW

*I just wanted to say a massive thank you for encouraging me to apply for support. I also received my equipment today and it's absolutely fantastic! I wouldn't have even known this was possible if it wasn't for you.*

### Funded Support for student with disabilities

#### The Needs Assessment Centre and Register of Support Providers at Queen's

The Needs Assessment Centre at Queen's assesses the requirements of students with disabilities / long-term conditions who have applied for additional, funded support through schemes such as the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and similar.

The DSA award is a grant available to support students with the additional study-related costs they may incur in higher education as a direct result of their disability. DSA is not-means tested and any of the specialist equipment, software, travel and one-to-one support costs awarded through the grant do not have to be repaid at the end of a student's programme of study.

Typically, female students are more likely than their male counterparts to apply for and access funded reasonable adjustments. Although for many years, submissions based on specific learning difficulties have been the most common, applications from individuals with autism and mental health conditions have continued to increase significantly in recent years, with many students now presenting with multiple disabilities / conditions and support requirements.

Queen's has had its own in-house Register of Support Providers in place for the last 16 years to co-ordinate, deliver and assist students with the one-to-one elements of their support packages. This includes delivering support through a large body of over 200 highly qualified, experienced and professional freelancers who are engaged on a self-employed basis as Needs Assessors and Support Providers.

Recent figures compiled for the annual HESA return indicate that in comparison to 2022-23, the numbers accessing additional, funded support through DSA has increased by 7.2 % from 958 to 1027 students.

#### Needs Assessment Centre at Queen's

Provision	2022/23	2023/24
Assessments	457	422
Reviews	79	89
TOTAL:	536	511



## Register of Support Providers at Queen's

KPI	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Students matched</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>1084</b>
<b>Top 6 support recommendations</b>	<b>1. Academic Mental Health Tutor (322)</b> <b>2. Dyslexia Tutor (315)</b> <b>3. Autistic Spectrum Disorder Tutor (168)</b> <b>4. Note Taker (138)</b> <b>5. Study Skills Tutor (92)</b> <b>6. Proof Reader (73)</b>	<b>1. Academic Mental Health Tutor (375)</b> <b>2. Dyslexia Tutor (329)</b> <b>3. Autistic Spectrum Disorder Tutor (231)</b> <b>4. Note Taker (136)</b> <b>5. Study Skills Tutor (122)</b> <b>6. Campus Assistant General (44)</b>
<b>Total match-ups made in relation to Note Taker Support</b>	<b>873 match-ups to support just 138 students</b>	<b>1142 match-ups to support just 136 students</b>

The number of students referred to the Register of Support Providers for one-to-one support in 2023-24 increased by 14.5% to a total of 1084.

Reflecting the rise in the numbers of individuals presenting for assessment with more complex conditions, the Register of Support Providers at Queen's has, in turn, seen an increase in the numbers of referrals for students with multiple support requirements. As securing Campus Assistance for these students remains challenging, despite an uplift to the hourly rate of pay in September 2023, the Register has continued to work with Schools to engage new Support Providers to offer support in this area, and as STEM (i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) -based Note Takers.

Once more, the numbers of students referred for Academic Mental Health Tutor support exceeded the numbers referred for Dyslexia Tutor support, reflecting the increase in mental health issues being seen across the UK in recent years, particularly amongst young people. The numbers of students with Autism seeking support through the Register has also continued to rise, with 2023-24 seeing a significant 37% increase in this support area.

As the numbers diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) continue to rise, more students with this condition were referred to the Register for general Study Skills Tutor support in 2023-24, reflected in the 30% increase in numbers recommended for the aforementioned in comparison to 2022-23.

## Service Achievements

### Supporting through transition and beyond

The service aims to support students in their transition to higher education while managing the challenges of their individual disabilities and conditions. With several initiatives and areas of focus this year, the service has::

- Supported open days, offer holder days, and induction talks to inform students about available support and encourage early engagement.
- Held a targeted Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Induction Event in September 2023, supporting students with ASC and their parents/guardians. The event provided guidance on what to expect in the move to HE, such as larger class sizes, less structured timetables, group work, and reading lists. Students were encouraged to join university clubs and societies, informed about wellbeing support, and given a campus tour when it was quieter.
- Developed a pilot DSA drop-in to support students in applying for funded Disabled Student Allowance through the Education Authority.
- Created the 'Handy Hints' resource to support students with DSA-funded queries. (see [www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/NeedsAssessmentCentre/HandyHints/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/NeedsAssessmentCentre/HandyHints/))
- Supported the rollout of the QUB portal, including the development of ISSA-related extension requests for deadlines and exam flexibility. An end-of-year review and portal workshops indicated that 58% of staff reported improved processing of ISSAs.

- Maintained ongoing communication and review with the Exams team to facilitate exam support, including updated guidance for invigilators accommodating adjustments.
- Delivered open Assistive Technology sessions in the McClay Library, allowing staff and students to try assistive technology available on campus with the support of Assistive Technology Trainers.
- Celebrated Epilepsy Awareness Day with staff wearing purple and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities through various events. Collaborated with Queen's Sport to facilitate activities where competitive athletes with disabilities shared their experiences and set up pop-up sensory areas at One Elmwood.



Staff celebrate Epilepsy Awareness Day by wearing purple

- Held an in-person Disability Adviser meeting to recognise the work of colleagues in Schools supporting students and implementing reasonable adjustments. This was an opportunity to discuss sector changes and the support available through the service.
- Facilitated a bespoke ASC peer support group throughout the year with events such as table quizzes, board games, pumpkin carving, Christmas crafts, an Ulster Museum trip, and a cinema afternoon, which saw good attendance throughout the year.
- Held an Annual Offer Holder Event in April for students with disabilities and their parents, receiving positive feedback and engagement. Created a 'To Do' list resource for prospective students to help them and their parents with key actions, supporting the transition to university.
- Worked with the Global Opportunities team to offer advice and guidance to students with declared disabilities as they prepare for traveling abroad.
- Linked with CED as they developed useful recourses on the accessibility of AI HUB: <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/digitallearning/ai/ai-in-education/accessibility-and-ai/>
- In collaboration with the Careers and Employability Services and Specialisterne, we introduced the Empower programme for neurodiverse students. 19 students joined the programme, with 6 securing job outcomes to date. Students participated in group sessions on and off campus, both in-person and online, along with substantial one-to-one support. One student had 17 one-on-one sessions, and another attended 35 group sessions. One student said, "It's reassuring to know that there is support for finding work, I have secured a placement and will be starting in a few months."
- Work has started between Occupational Health, Disability Services and faculties, focusing on the early identification and support of students with complex disabilities, particularly those on professional programmes. This process aims to prioritise students with complex needs for Pre-Placement Health Assessments (PPHA), ideally before their course begins, to ensure both the university and the student fully understand the impact of their health condition or disability on their studies. The PPHA Task and Finish Group has been established to enhance data sharing between the University and Occupational Health, ensuring timely referrals and assessments for students requiring early intervention. Key areas of focus include improving clarity of information for applicants and students regarding the PPHA process, mapping data sharing pathways, and identifying process improvements across all Schools.



Disability Services Offer Holder Event 2024

## SECTION 5:

### Accessible Learning Support Objectives for 2024/25

Looking ahead the service has identified several key initiatives and areas of focus to better support students with disabilities and provide guidance to staff. These include:

- Building on the renaming of the service, there will be university-wide promotion to attract and engage a broader student population, including those who may not identify with the term “disability” but could benefit from support services. This will highlight the excellent support available to enhance student wellbeing and academic success.
- Supporting staff and students in identifying the relevant support path for students experiencing challenges, including difficulties in gaining a diagnosis and associated supporting documents. As well as identifying the best support process for students who have a long term or short-term impact from their condition.
- Following the successful pilot, DSA Drop-in sessions will be more widely publicised in 2024/25 and will be extended from once a month to fortnightly. This will allow more students with DSA-related queries to speak with someone in person about their issues.
- The Register of Support Providers at Queen’s will continue to work with Schools to engage more Note Takers and exam support assistants with experience in STEM subjects.
- Supporting the Centre for Educational Development (CED) and Information Services to inform the work on the Video Enhanced Learning and develop a Recording of Teaching Policy. This is a welcomed development in support for students with disabilities to offer an alternative to Note Taker support and provide more accessible teaching.
- Developing bespoke support and initiatives for the increasing number of students presenting with ADHD, including the creation of study skills resources. The Register of Support Providers will offer awareness training on ADHD to its Support Providers. Since individuals with ADHD are typically recommended for generalist Study Skills Tutor support, this training will help Tutors deliver more informed, focused support to students with this condition.
- Understand and respond to the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance to the sector following the recent *Abrahart v’ Bristol University* judgement, in particular the focus on anticipatory duty and reasonable adjustment

### Student Wellbeing Recommendations for 24/25

- The Student Wellbeing Team and Accessible Learning Support teams to continue to work in a multi-disciplinary way with Schools to help support students
- The Student Wellbeing Team and Accessible Learning Support teams to continue to contribute to wider University initiatives including the #QUBeWell Action Plan, the Welcome and the Belonging projects – with a particular aim of supporting Schools to support students at key transitions of their entry to, and progress through the University

- The Student Wellbeing Team and Accessible Learning Support teams to continue to promote the use of tools such as Transition Skills for University and the Assessment Support Hub
- Progress the Drug and Alcohol Impact programme through SOS-UK, working alongside colleagues in Students Union and Queen's Accommodation. This aims to promote healthier student lifestyles, reduce substance-related harms, and create a safer, more supportive campus environment. Student Wellbeing have set up a weekly Drugs and Alcohol specific drop in for students, and a focus has been put on arranging more alcohol-free initiatives for students across campus.
- There continue to be high levels of students presenting with mental health needs as a primary concern, right across all levels of study. Given the continued pressures on students, such as the cost-of-living crisis, it is expected this trend will continue and interventions must be timely and appropriate and address both predicted and emerging trends
- The Student Wellbeing 'Stepped Matched Care' model of support is ensuring that students are matched with the lowest most effective form of support to address individual presenting issues; self-directed support to promote independence and resilience was utilised in all possible circumstances. Continued focus on normalising stress, building effective coping strategies and empowering students by equipping them with independent problem-solving skills will enable students to address concerns early and through lower tier supports
- In terms of top presenting issues, they are consistent with last year in terms of being Mental Health, Academic and Personal. However, there is a large increase in students identifying Mental Health as their main issue in all Schools, with the exception of HAPP. There are also significant increases in students presenting with Personal concerns. A focus on supporting complex students and early identification and intervention will need to continue to be prioritised. This new academic year, a further rollout of the Student of Concern meetings will be implemented with the School of SSESW and Student Wellbeing will continue to support Schools with advice and guidance around and implementation of the Support to Participate in Study and/or University Life.
- Peaks in presenting student numbers, and for those presenting at risk, continue to be evident during all assessment windows, including the supplementary Summer examination period and Academic concerns are a commonly cited stressor at those times. While the Assessment Support Hub should provide some additional support for students in this area, further collaborative work between Student Wellbeing and the Schools should focus on identifying strategies and supports to encouraging proactive wellbeing amongst the student in advance of assessment windows.
- In many Schools across the Faculty, patterns have been identified that indicate students are experiencing wellbeing concerns at times outside of the anticipated key stress points within the academic year. For example, further interventions that support students early or even in advance of the academic year should be considered for Schools which have shown high self-referral rates in September.
- Further exploration is needed to look at specific support needs and interventions for our non-local students in some Schools across the Faculty.
- Student Wellbeing will continue to work closely with our colleagues across the Faculty to identify gaps and pressures for staff supporting students and to develop supports resources and training opportunities to meet identified needs and opportunities, such as the Community of Practice, to share best practice, increase awareness of emerging trends and to foster connections and collaborative working.

## THANK YOU



We would like to extend our sincerest and heartfelt thanks to all our colleagues across the Schools, Faculties, wider university and beyond who have supported our work and been invaluable partners and collaborators on initiatives that support both our students and staff supporting students. We are truly grateful for your support and look forward to working with you in 2024/25!