



STUDENTS' UNIONS' ADVICE SERVICE

# Annual Report

1st JULY 2017 - 30th JUNE 2018



We'll help you **explore** your options.



## FOREWORD

MICHA FRAZER-CARROLL, CUSU-GU WELFARE AND RIGHTS OFFICER 2017-18

Working with the Students' Unions' Advice Service has been a true pleasure. As will be outlined and explored in the contents of this report, this year, as ever, SUAS has played an invaluable role in providing impartial, professional, reliable and robust support to students. From contingencies such as the strikes, to adapting to evolving University provisions and procedures, I've been incredibly impressed by the competence and quality of the service. During the sabbatical year, CUSU and GU officers often remark that they wish they had known about the Service when they were students; and I would certainly echo this sentiment. Nonetheless, the Service has gained even greater popularity this year, notably amongst postgraduate students, who made up over half of the Service's users.

Beyond directly supporting service-users through casework, what sometimes goes unseen is that the Service is integral to the support of both CUSU and GU sabbatical officers. Starting in the post, the training that was most memorable to me was that delivered by SUAS, on the art of delivering training itself; self-care in a busy and demanding first job; and the skills needed to support others. This year I also trained over 500 officers and students in student support, which was based on a combination of SUAS training materials. I also ran training with Lisa, the Advice Service manager, in Michaelmas, and was supported by her in the creation of a new session on supporting students with mental health problems. Despite sabbs no longer doing casework, I chose to go along to the advisors' reflective practice meetings, which were important for informing my own work, as well as continuing and building upon SUAS and the officers' collaborative meetings.

The expertise of the advisors has been crucial for me being able to perform my everyday work supporting students; often students would approach me with complex and novel queries that required consulting an advisor, or referring students directly to the Service (SUAS was undoubtedly the support service I most frequently directed students to throughout the year). Despite juggling a busy schedule, the Service's door has always been open to me to seek guidance in my role on a day-to-day basis. The fact that the Service also continues to provide guidance to college-based welfare and liberations officers is significant – it is my belief that officers need standardised support structurally embedded across the University, and the Service alongside myself undertake a great deal of work towards this.

It's been an honour working as the sabbatical officer lead of the service – and I hope that in the year to come, more students, particularly those who are at risk of falling through the cracks, are aware of SUAS and feel able to access it. Whatever your role in student welfare might be, whilst reading this report I'd ask you to put a moment's thought to how we might all help facilitate this.

Micha Frazer-Carroll  
CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer 2017-18

## LISA DÉRY, ADVICE SERVICE MANAGER

This year, we have continued to experience an increase in the number of service-users accessing the Students' Unions' Advice Service. We supported 473 service-users (48% increase from last year) of which 344 were students (26% increase from last year). This increase was coupled with it being the Service's first full year with a staff-only team of advisors. Despite the increase in demand on the Service, the transition to working without elected sabbatical officer advisors was smooth and no doubt greatly aided by the expansion of the staff team from 2 to 2.6 full-time equivalent advisors helping us to meet the demand. Indeed, with the generosity of the Graduate Union and CUSU, we were able to retain our maternity-cover when our permanent advisor returned from maternity leave and this increased our staff capacity to 2.6 full-time equivalent advisors.

In the spring of 2018, we received the news that the Service's first ever college levy funding submission was successful. This was part of the Unions' transition to receiving funding for pastoral activities through a direct collegiate levy. This has allowed us to maintain our current 2.6 advisors and to increase the team's capacity to 3 full-time equivalent advisors from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 which will go a long way in helping us meet the ever increasing demands on the Service.

This year, we took a more pro-active role in identifying challenges that our service-users experience and raised them directly with the relevant bodies. In most cases, this resulted in interesting discussions and improvements to certain University and inter-collegiate processes.

After years of collecting feedback from service-users regarding their experience of the Advice Service, in January 2018, we launched our first ever impact survey with the aim of identifying what kind of impact using the Service has on how a service-user feels about their situation. Though it is early days, the results look promising with the number of students stating that the issues were still having a severe impact on them after having used the Service drop 75% to 29% (a 49% decrease). In addition to this, 7% of students reported that the issues were no longer impacting on them.

The feedback we received from students continues to be positive and demonstrates our determination to give every service-user a positive experience of the Service despite our resources having been stretched.

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Now in its eighth year, the Students' Unions' Advice Service is a well-established component of the support network in place for students at the Collegiate University. The Service fulfils a vital function within this network - the provision of independent, confidential, impartial, and professional advice to students. Whilst maintaining its clear independence, the Service has strong links with a range of other service providers, and as such is able to make a strong contribution to student support at Cambridge.

In 2017-18, the Service operated with 2.6 full-time equivalent advisors, underpinning the professional aspect of the advice and support we were able to offer. The Service was accessed by 473 service users of which 344 were students. Students from 31 Colleges and 50 different subject areas have come to us for advice. This represents a 107% growth in the number of students we worked with (and a 120% increase in service users) when compared to 2014-15. Our figures this past year are also greater than they were last year with 26% more students having accessed the Service (48% increase in service-users). For the second year since its inception, the Advice Service provided support to more postgraduate students (56%) than undergraduate students (44%).

As the Unions' main pastoral activity, the Students' Unions' Advice Service received approval for funding by a direct college levy in Lent 2018, to begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018. This was part of the Unions' transition away from charging fees to JCRs and MCRs for political affiliation and receiving general purpose funding from the University to having the Unions' pastoral activities funded by a direct college levy, and the Unions' representational activities funded by the University.

This will allow the Service to not only maintain its current 2.6 full-time equivalent staff members but to expand to 3 full-time equivalent staff members. This increase in staff capacity will be crucial in allowing us to continue to provide quality support to students despite the increase in demand on the Service.

This year, the Students' Unions' Advice Service identified areas that have been particularly challenging to our service-users and where we felt processes and/or information could be improved. We then began the process of feeding this back to the relevant bodies. These areas of challenge included: the College Transfer process, intermission and financial hardship, and student complaints. We are pleased that our feedback was considered and that improvements to the College Transfer process are underway, that intermitting students are now eligible to apply for the exceptional hardship fund, and that the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals is supportive of a research project we will be undertaking in relation to student grievances in 2018-19.

With the continued increase in demand on the Service, our main focus this year has been to continue to provide quality support to students; however in addition to this, we were pleased to be able to launch the Service's Impact survey, provide feedback to the Collegiate University on issues and procedures, and to support the development of Sports Societies by providing welfare training to student officers. This work combined with our regular activities resulted in a very busy and interesting year for the Advice Service. With 3 full-time equivalent staff members from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018, we look forward to continuing this work along with new initiatives to enhance student support at Cambridge.

## 2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE STUDENTS' UNIONS' ADVICE SERVICE

In 2017-18, the Students' Unions' Advice Service was composed of three professional advisors (2.6 FTE) who provided individual support to students, and five CUSU-GU elected sabbatical officers who assisted the team of staff with the leadership and development of the Service. To the Service, the sabbatical officers bring their experience as students of the Collegiate University, while staff members bring professional experience, knowledge and institutional memory. These different backgrounds contribute to the overall success and professionalism of the Students' Unions' Advice Service.

### **SUAS Teams 2017-18**

#### **Team of Advisors**

- Lisa Déry (Advice Service Manager)
- Rachel Wilson (Advisor)
- Gemma Douglas (Advisor)

#### **Support and Development Team**

- Lisa Déry (Advice Service Manager)
- Rachel Wilson (Advisor)
- Gemma Douglas (Advisor)
- Micha Frazer-Carroll (CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer and lead Officer of the SUAS)
- Martha Krish (CUSU Education Officer)
- Lola Olufemi (CUSU Women's Officer)
- Florence Ould (CUSU Disabled Students' Officer)
- Nikita Hari (GU Vice-President)

### **SUAS Teams 2018-19**

#### **Team of Advisors**

- Lisa Déry (Advice Service Manager)
- Rachel Wilson (Advisor)
- Gemma Douglas (Advisor)
- Simona Obeng (Administrative Assistant and Entry-level Advisor)

#### **Support and Development Team**

- Lisa Déry (Advice Service Manager)
- Rachel Wilson (Advisor)
- Gemma Douglas (Advisor)
- Simona Obeng (Administrative Assistant and Entry-level Advisor)
- Christine Pungong (CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer and lead officer of the SUAS)
- Evie Aspinall (CUSU President)
- Sofia Ropek Hewson (GU President)
- Matt Kite (CUSU Education Officer)
- Claire Sosienski Smith (CUSU Women's Officer)
- Emrys Travis (CUSU Disabled Students' Officer)
- Shadab Ahmed (CUSU Access and Funding Officer)
- Nikita Hari (GU Vice-President 2018) / Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar (GU Vice-President 2019)

### 3. STUDENTS' UNIONS' ADVICE SERVICE DEFINED

The Students' Unions' Advice Service (SUAS) provides free, confidential, and independent advice, information and representation to all Cambridge University students, undergraduate and graduate, from all 31 Colleges. Students can come to the Service with any issues they might experience during their time at the University of Cambridge. As an impartial service, Advisors don't take sides or make value judgments.

The Advice Service is provided by Cambridge University Students' Union and the Graduate Union and is open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, all year round. Students can make an appointment or come along to a drop-in session on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12pm-2pm. Students can expect to be warmly welcomed by all members of the SUAS team.

The goal of Advisors is to make every person's experience of the Advice Service positive regardless of the complexity or sensitivity of the matter. As such, Advisors work by a Code of Practice which assures students that they will receive free, confidential, impartial, non-directive and non-judgmental advice as well as a prompt response (one-two working days from initial contact).

As generalist advisers, the Students' Unions' Advice Service complements other more specialised University service providers such as the Counselling Service and the Disability Resource Centre which deal with more specific issues such as mental health and disabilities. Advisors can also work closely with tutors, other University or College service providers and departmental staff members if the student feels this would be useful.

## 4. ACTIVITIES

### A. CASEWORK ACTIVITIES

#### CASEWORK DEFINED

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The Students' Unions' Advice Service is open to all students at the University of Cambridge. Individuals can come to the Service with any issues or problems that they might experience as a student - from making friends to working relationships, from exams to intermission, and from welfare concerns to finance. The issues experienced by students using the Service are often complex and regularly involve many inter-related concerns (for example a health issue and exam allowances, or intermission and finances). A student might approach the Service with one particular issue, but others may emerge during the course of subsequent communications.

This means that the Service helps students with a broad range of issues, with a varying degree of involvement in each case. For example, an Advisor may help a student explore their options and navigate University or College procedures over several appointments, and may also attend meetings with a student in their College or the University. Other cases, however, may require less intensive work - for example, talking through a straightforward application to the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee or simply providing a listening ear and referring a student to another service when appropriate. Some case studies are included as an appendix to this report to provide some examples of the role of the Service in different scenarios.

Following the advice sector's framework for defining the types of advice provided, the Service splits cases into three categories - Information, Advice, and Advice with Casework – which are defined as follows:

### **Information**

- Providing general information that is readily available to students (e.g. student clubs and societies etc.)
- Signposting/referring a student to another service/person/agency
- Assisting students to find the information that relates to their enquiry i.e. website addresses, links to relevant guidance and/or regulations etc.

### **Advice**

- All that is included in “Information”
- Conducting our own research to find information that would not be readily available to students (includes contacting third parties anonymously or with consent)
- Exploring options with a student (e.g. discussing in person, by phone, by email or by Skype the possible options with a student and discussing the pros and cons of each)

### **Advice with Casework**

- All that is included in “Information” and “Advice”
- Discussing options over several meetings/phone calls/email exchanges
- Practical help on submissions (proofreading, drafting etc.)
- With their consent, discussing a student's case with a third party (e.g. Tutor, DRC, DoS etc.)
- Attending a meeting with a student
- Representing a student at College or University level

## **OTHER TYPES OF CASEWORK**

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While the Students' Unions' Advice Service is geared towards directly supporting students, we are often approached by users who are not current Cambridge students. For example, non-standard users might include past and prospective students, students on intermission, students who are off the register, and visiting students. The Service continues to consistently record information regarding the status of all service-users.

Furthermore, the Service continues to record information regarding non-student users - for example, a number of parents, relatives or friends of students ask for advice. Though non-student users approach the Service on a regular basis, the aim is always to work with the student directly. Therefore, the advice we provide to non-student users is often limited and is usually focused on helping the non-student user encourage the student to access the Service themselves.

A service is also provided for JCR/MCR, Peer2Peer and Sports Welfare volunteers who specifically want advice that relates to their role or to discuss any concerns they may have about a student they are supporting. More detail is provided later in this report (see Links with other Organisations).

More informally, the Service continues to welcome contact from tutors, other service providers and staff across the Collegiate University who feel that it would be useful to explore with us options that may be available to a student they are supporting.

## MAINTAINING QUALITY STANDARDS

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Maintaining a consistently high quality of service is vital to the continued success of the Students' Unions' Advice Service. The effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms is important in ensuring that every member of the team can provide students with an excellent standard of support. Advisors undergo training throughout the year in order to increase their knowledge in relevant areas. The Service also utilises a peer observation scheme throughout the year, where all Advisors are observed by another team member and offered constructive feedback on how they might improve their skills.

In addition, each week, all Advisors meet for reflective practice – this provides an opportunity to share best practice, discuss challenging cases and explore options together, and reflect on how Advisors might improve the level of support they offer to individual students. This is coupled with a session for “business-related” items which can contain anything from relevant committee updates to planning the activities of the Advice Service for the coming weeks, or identification and discussion of upcoming issues students might bring to the Service e.g. exam warnings and allowances, or first year reports. The Advice Service Manager leads the team in maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of training and professional standards and may therefore use this time to discuss possible changes to current practice in line with this understanding.

The professional development of permanent staff is also central to the Service's quality enhancement. To this end, the Advice Service Manager receives supervision sessions at the Counselling Service, where she has the opportunity to confidentially reflect on her work. Advisors also receive supervision from the Advice Service Manager bi-monthly during the course of the year.

## INTERNAL PROCEDURES

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The Advice Service's internal policies include the following:

- Confidentiality Policy
- Code of Practice
- Authorisation to Act
- Peer Observation
- Independent File Review
- Complaints Procedure
- Privacy Notice
- CUSU Internal Policy (e.g. Safeguarding, Data Protection)

The Advice Service was compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations by the deadline of the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Due to the Advice Service's good practice in this area, the main focus was on creating a privacy notice, updating the registration and monitoring forms, creating an authorisation to act form (formal written permission for contacting third parties), and giving students the option to agree or decline to receive the Advice Service's feedback and impact surveys.

## B. TRAINING

### ADVISORS

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The Advice Service Manager and Advisors have received training and/or attended workshops in the following areas:

- General Data Protection Regulations (Advice UK)
- Supporting Survivors of Rape and Sexual Violence (OSCCA)
- Examination Review Procedure Workshop (OSCCA)
- Student Complaints Workshop (OSCCA)
- Strategic Development (Lynda)
- Working with Disabled Students (DRC)
- Employment Law Workshop (Careers Service)
- Breaking the Silence Launch
- NUS Membership Conference
- Annual visits to College and University service providers and key staff members

In addition to this, we had meetings and were in regular contact with our equivalents at Anglia Ruskin University and University of East Anglia to discuss general data protection regulations implementation as well as other relevant areas.

### CUSU-GU SABBATICAL OFFICERS AND STAFF MEMBERS

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The SUAS provides a welfare training programme to incoming elected sabbatical officers every year to allow them to offer initial support and signposting to students when approached. These sessions included:

- Introduction to the Students' Unions' Advice Service
- Essential Skills for Supporting Students (active listening, confidentiality, boundaries, non-directive advice, signposting)
- Working with Disabled Students (provided by DRC)
- Communication Skills
- Train the Trainer
- Meeting and visiting University and College service providers and key staff members

### TUTORS

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For the fourth year running, the Students' Unions' Advice Service participated in the tutor training programme by delivering a session on the Students' Unions' Advice Service. We look forward to continuing to be involved in this programme, as it not only informs tutors about the existence of the Advice Service and the important role we have to play, but it also helps to build relationships with colleagues with whom we are likely to have contact in the future.

### STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

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The Students' Unions' Advice Service took part in a trial with University of Cambridge Sport and provided two 'Essential Skills for Supporting Students' training sessions to Sports Welfare Officers. The trial was a

success and the feedback from students extremely positive. The Advice Service will continue to provide these training sessions to Sports Welfare Officers in the future.

The Advice Service continued to deliver or assist in providing training to JCR/MCR Officers and Liberation Campaigns as well as to Peer2Peer Volunteers.

## INDUCTIONS FOR NEW UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE STAFF MEMBERS

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We continued to provide inductions to new staff members from the University Counselling Service, Disability Resource Centre and College nurses which includes an introduction to the Students' Unions' Advice Service and a general overview of the Collegiate University.

## C. PUBLICITY AND EVENTS

The increase of 107% in the number of students accessing the Service over the last three years is an indication that more students know about the Service. A major contribution to students' increased awareness of the existence of Students' Unions' Advice Service is the inclusion of information about the Service in University guidance and procedures such as student complaints, examination reviews, fitness to study etc.

Another important aspect is staff who work with students. Of the students who disclosed how they found out about the Advice Service, 26% were referred to the Service by a University service provider or staff member, such as the Disability Resource Centre, Counselling Service, OSCCA, or departmental administrator; and 14 % were referred by a College service-provider such as a Tutor, Senior Tutor, nurse or chaplain (see Table 1). This mirrors the results from our feedback survey where 21% of students indicated they found out by the Service from a University service and 13% from their College. We continue our formal visits to service providers every year, and we also attended several tutorial lunches where we had the opportunity to speak to Senior Tutors and their teams about the work we do and how the Advice Service complements the tutorial system.

Though students' awareness of the Service seems to have improved, we continue to receive feedback from students, our service-users, and colleagues within the Colleges and the University who tell us they did not know about the Advice Service. Feedback from students includes the following:

*"More targeted promotion – the service is fantastic but not well known which is such a shame!"*

*"Make yourselves slightly more known around the uni. Otherwise you are brilliant"*

This is something we need to continue to work on improving, and we recognise the importance of doing so in partnership with the Collegiate University.

The Service continues to utilise a wide range of publicity routes, from posters and leaflets in Colleges and departments, to the CUSU and GU's annual and weekly publications and the student press. The Service also has a visible presence at many events throughout the year – such as the CUSU Freshers' Fair, the Disability Resource Centre "Transitional Events", the Childcare Office's welcome event for student parents, and the Graduate Union/International Student Office welcome events for students who begin their studies in the Lent and Easter terms.

We continue our publicity through social media, advertising the Service by linking in with national awareness events such as National Student Money Week and Mental Health Awareness week, as well as with more local themes such as preparing for exams. This also provides an opportunity to distribute self-help resources and raise awareness of other relevant support services throughout the year. Our Facebook post on Movember (raising awareness about Men’s Health) proved to be one of the most popular reaching 3482 students while our promotion of the Time Management workshops offered by the Counselling Service reached 4469 students.

This year we offered three Pop-Up Advice sessions to further increase awareness of the Service as well as provide an opportunity for students to simply pop by and get advice on the spot. This is where we set up a stall at an academic site (e.g. Downing, Sidgwick and West Cambridge) and where possible offer hot drinks and biscuits to students on their way into or out of lectures, in exchange for an opportunity to briefly chat to them about what the Service can offer.



For a second year, cards which contained information about the Students’ Unions’ Advice Service and Nightline were distributed to Colleges to be posted on the notice boards of freshers’ bedrooms. Though the project was supported by the Welfare and Finance committee, it is not clear to what extent the Colleges engaged with this promotion.



The **Students' Unions' Advice Service** offers confidential, impartial and independent advice and representation for Cambridge students.  
*9am-5pm weekdays all year round*

 [studentadvice.cam.ac.uk](http://studentadvice.cam.ac.uk)

 01223 746999

 [advice@studentadvice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:advice@studentadvice.cam.ac.uk)

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 instant messenger via website

## D. WINTER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND GUIDE

To reduce isolation and loneliness for students who remained in Cambridge over the winter holiday period, the Students' Unions Advice Service supported the Graduate Union in creating a Winter Holiday Activity Guide of events open to everyone in Cambridge throughout the holiday period. In addition to this, we recruited and supported about 10 student-volunteers who offered activities every day between the 24<sup>th</sup> December and the 2<sup>nd</sup> January. These activities included group discussions, knitting, poetry readings, book club, movie nights, yoga, Secret Santa and a visit to the North Pole on Parker's Piece. The overall attendance for all of the activities offered was 91, and the majority of those who attended were international postgraduate students. About 20% of the participants were undergraduate students. There were also some post-doctoral staff members and their guests who participated in some events. Many participants will have attended several activities offered.

Many of these activities took place at St-Edmund's, the "Christmas College", and for a third year running they hosted a potluck Christmas day meal in the College which was open to all Cambridge University students. About 25 students attended this event making it the most popular of the events.

## E. COLLECTING FEEDBACK

All students who access the Students' Unions' Advice Service are invited to provide feedback on their first interactions with the Service. In-line with the general data protection regulations, from May 2018, we only sent the survey out to students who actively agreed to receive it. As such, for the academic year 2017-18, we were able to send the survey to 243 students (of the 344 students who accessed the Service). Of these, 24 students completed the survey which is a response rate of 10%. The feedback was received through a confidential and anonymous on-line survey which is sent out to students around two weeks after their initial contact with the Service. Though satisfaction rates with different aspects of the Service this year were good, the overall satisfaction with the Service dropped. However, we noticed that the highest satisfaction rates are among students who sought support regarding intermission, examination appeals, student complaints, and changing college; all of which are issues with clear processes attached to them. Though it may be too early to draw any meaningful conclusions from this, it could be that certain students feel they have received higher quality support when the Advisor has been able to guide them through a University or College process. Of all the students who responded, only two indicated they disagreed with the positive statements about the Service however no conclusion could be drawn from this as the issues raised were different in both cases, and the students did not indicate why they were dissatisfied.

Though in 2016-17, the staff capacity within the Service increased by 0.6 FTE (60%), the number of service-users increased by 48% as did the number of complex cases that required over 5, 10, 20, 50, 70 and even 100 hours of Advisors' time. As such, the increase in staff capacity allowed us to manage the heavier and more complex caseload adequately but with ever increasing workloads and the Service's core value of providing quality and up to date advice and information, some students may have received the advice they required later than they would have liked. This would include helping students draft representations for examination allowances and reviews, formal complaints, reviews of decisions, disciplinary processes etc. It is also a core value of the Service to empower students to take charge of their issues and be actively involved in resolving them thus hopefully contributing to their overall development as individuals; that being said,

writing representations can be challenging for many students and the quality of their draft representations varies considerably. In some cases, in addition to providing extensive feedback, Advisors may have to completely rewrite a representation if despite receiving feedback a student is still unable to articulate clearly their issue or grievance.

We will continue to work towards providing an excellent experience for all those who interact with the Service. This will no doubt be facilitated by the further increase in staff capacity from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 from 2.6 full-time equivalent staff members to 3.

When asked what they liked about the Service, students mentioned the promptness of the service; that they felt listened to by the Advisor; the research undertaken and information provided; and the helpfulness of the Advisors.

*“Very prompt, impartial and independent service. I felt that I was heard, my concerns taken onto account and grievances addressed”*

*“Very helpful, listened well, able to see someone very quickly”*

*“They hear what you have to say with no judgement. Additionally provide excellent research and information”*

When asked what students felt we could do to improve the Service, suggestions included making more students aware of the Service particularly amongst postgraduate students; respond faster to students’ queries; and increase postgraduate specific knowledge and support.

*“More targeted promotion – the service is fantastic but not well known which is such a shame!”*

*“Make yourselves slightly more known around the uni. Otherwise you are brilliant”*

*“Send responses within promised time frames without being chased”*

*“More postgraduate-specific support and knowledge”*

To the question “What I feel you could do to improve the service for students is...”, similarly to previous year, the majority of responses related to the promotion of the Service. Below are some of the comments:

- *“Might get more students to know about the service.”*
- *“Perhaps make it more visible, including the actual location of the service.”*
- *“Possibly increase awareness of the service and what it has to offer as I feel I would have benefited from knowing of it earlier and being encouraged to make contact.”*

## F. MEASURING IMPACT

The Students’ Unions’ Advice Service Impact Survey was designed and set up in January 2018 to capture the impact using the Advice Service has on how students feel about their situation. The survey is emailed to students around three months after their initial contact with the Service and runs in line with our reporting year which is from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June.

In 2017-18, the Impact Survey was emailed out to 183 students of the 344 students who accessed the Service. The survey was not emailed out to every student due to them either not providing us with an email address or more recently (from May 2018) the changes in the data protection laws which has required us to seek permission from a student before we can send them one of our surveys. Of the 183 students, 16 completed the survey – a response rate of 8.7%.

As this is the first year we have run the impact survey we do not have results from previous years with which to compare. Though we were slightly disappointed that the response rate was less than 10%, we feel that the data for this year still has some validity and can help us begin to identify whether using the Advice Service has an impact on those who use it.

The two key questions in the survey are Q3 (Prior to seeking support from the Students' Unions' Advice Service, how much impact was the issue(s) having on you?) and Q9 (After receiving support from the Students' Unions' Advice Service, how much impact was the issue(s) still having on you?); the purpose of these questions was to measure the impact the issue(s) were having on the student before and after using the Service. The results showed that the number of students stating that 'the issue(s) were still having a severe impact on them after using the Service' had dropped from 75% to 29% - a 41% decrease. In addition to this, 7% of students reported that 'the issue/s were no longer impacting on them'. This result shows that using the Students' Unions' Advice Service can help reduce the amount of impact an issue(s) may be having on a student. Although moving forward we would like to continue to see a decrease in the number of students reporting that the issue(s) is still having a severe impact after coming to the Advice Service, it has to be noted that it is likely to be impossible for this to change for all students due to the nature of some of the issue(s) students raise with the Service; for example they may be satisfied with the support they have received from the Service yet still feel their situation is having a severe impact on them, especially if the matter has not been resolved to their satisfaction, has not been resolved in any way or cannot be resolved. Having analysed the responses in relation to the information we were hoping to capture, we decided to amend some of the questions for the survey next year. Instead of asking students what impact using the Service has had on how they feel about their situation, we will be asking what impact using the Service has had on how they feel about *dealing* with their situation. We will also introduce a question on what impact using the Service has had on their studies.

Another key question in the survey is the extent to which the Service has helped a student make an informed decision about the issue(s) they were experiencing. All but two students surveyed stated that the Service had helped them make an informed decision. This data provides evidence that the Service plays an important role in providing students with a place to discuss their situation, explore their options and help them work out what is the best way forward for themselves.

## 5. STATISTICS AND TRENDS

The Students' Unions' Advice Service obtains information about service-users by asking them to complete registration and monitoring forms when they access the Service – either via email, phone, in person or Skype. All service-users who have received advice in person will have completed these forms however those with whom we have corresponded mainly by email will not necessarily have completed these forms. This means that we do not have a complete set of personal data for every service-user. Also some service-users

who do complete the forms may choose to not disclose certain details such as ethnicity, language, gender or whether they consider themselves to be disabled. As it is at the Advisor's discretion to indicate the enquiry type (the type of issue a student has sought support with), every student and case will have an enquiry type attached to it which allows us to reliably report on the types of issues students are seeking support with.

Data, such as the number of students, user demographics and issue areas act as indicators which form the Service's development in terms of the quality and comprehensiveness of the advice it can provide. This information also helps the Service to identify trends in student welfare needs, respond efficiently to enquiries and direct students to relevant resources. Through its monthly meetings with CUSU-GU elected sabbatical officers, the Service regularly updates the Cambridge University Students' Union and Graduate Union as to its activities and trends in student welfare issues, which, in turn, facilitates their wider political work in supporting students.

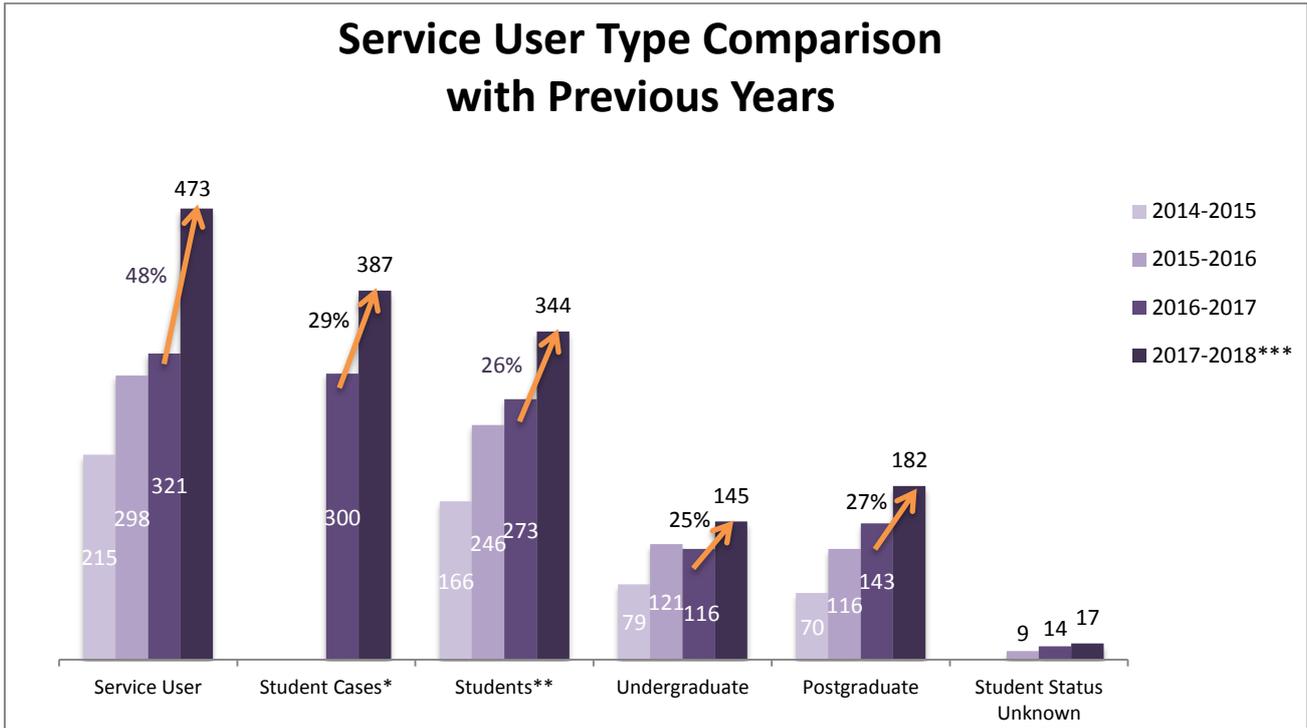
Since the Service is non-judgmental and is committed to providing support to all students, regardless of identity, College or issue, we do not measure success by the number of appeals or complaints that our users have had upheld. The Service's approach to assisting students is to ensure individuals feel able to make their own decisions given the resources and options available to them. The Service's knowledge and experience with the processes, rules and regulations of the Collegiate University allows Advisors to manage expectations as to the possible outcomes of a complaint or review procedure.

The following measures of data were taken from the time period 1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018. Noting trends in the types of issues students raise ensures the Service is well-equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to help the students who approach us. It allows the Service to adapt and evolve, and to develop its sources of support in line with student demand and need.

## A. SERVICE-USERS

Throughout 2017-18, the Service worked with a total of 473 service-users of which 344 were students (students = current, intermitting, off the register, past, visiting, exchange, JBS and matriculated ICE students). We had 27 students who came to us twice for different issues, 6 students who came to us three times for different issues, and 1 student who came to us with five different issues over the course of the year. This highlights that in some cases, students may experience a range of different issues during their time at Cambridge. It also demonstrates that some of the work we do with certain students can be intensive and over a long period. It also highlights that some students who have accessed the Service have been willing to return for additional support.

There is a marked increase from last year's cycle where the Service worked with 321 service-users (48% increase) of which 273 were students (26% increase). Since 2014-15, this represents a growth of 120% in the number of service-users, and 107% in the number of students accessing the Service.



Graph 1 – Comparison of Service User Type from 2014-2015 to 2017-2018

\* When students use the Service more than once, each time they use the Service for a different issue, this is recorded as a new case

\*\* 15 students continued to access support from the previous reporting period 2016-17

\*\*\* New reporting period from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June. The 2016-2017 reporting year ran from 11<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017 which included an extra 20 days of reporting. The reporting years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 ran from 11<sup>th</sup> June to 10<sup>th</sup> June.

Various factors may be responsible for the growth in the number of students accessing the Service. In particular, the inclusion of information about the Advice Service in University and College guidance and procedures such as exam reviews and complaints, and changing college has no doubt had an impact. Of course by this point, students have begun engaging with formal procedures which in some cases, had the student accessed support earlier, they may have avoided having to engage in formal processes.

Of the students who disclosed how they found out about the Advice Service, 26% were referred to the Service by a University service provider or staff member, such as the Disability Resource Centre, Counselling Service, OSCCA, or departmental administrator; and 14 % were referred by a College service provider such as a Tutor, Senior Tutor, nurse or chaplain.

| Found out about the Service by                       | Number     | Percentage  |
|--|------------|-------------|
| College Chaplain/Nurse/Counsellor/Welfare Advisor    | 7          | 5%          |
| College JCR/MCR Officer                              | 2          | 1%          |
| College Tutor/Senior Tutor                           | 13         | 9%          |
| College Tutorial Office                              | 2          | 1%          |
| CUSU/GU Bulletin                                     | 6          | 4%          |
| CUSU/GU Officer                                      | 19         | 12%         |
| CUSU/GU Staff  | 9          | 6%          |
| Friend/s   | 22         | 14%         |
| SUAS Publicity material                              | 8          | 5%          |
| SUAS Publicity Event - Advice Pop-up /Freshers' Fair | 3          | 2%          |
| University Careers Service                           | 1          | 1%          |
| University Counselling Service                       | 8          | 5%          |
| University Disability Resource Centre                | 16         | 10%         |
| University Harassment & Sexual Assault Advisor       | 1          | 1%          |
| University International Student Office              | 1          | 1%          |
| University Regulations                               | 1          | 1%          |
| University Administrator                             | 4          | 3%          |
| University Induction Talk                            | 2          | 1%          |
| Office for Student Complaints, Conduct & Appeals     | 4          | 3%          |
| Student Registry/Board of Graduate Studies           | 3          | 2%          |
| Supervisor   | 2          | 1%          |
| University Website                                   | 1          | 1%          |
| Web search   | 14         | 9%          |
| Other External Agency                                | 2          | 1%          |
| Citizens Advice                                      | 2          | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>153</b> | <b>100%</b> |

*Table 2 – Breakdown of how students found out about the Advice Service where this information is known*

For 79 students, their first contact with the Advice Service was in person (45 students came to a drop-in session while 34 dropped by outside of the drop-in sessions). This is compared to 47 in 2016-17 and 49 in 2015-16. This year's figures represent a 68% increase in the number of students accessing the Service in this way. For 222 cases (out of 387), service-users made contact with the Advice Service by email or webform while 82 made contact by phone.

For the second year since its inception, the Advice Service provided support to more postgraduate students than undergraduate students. Of the students who accessed the Advice Service for whom the course was known, 207 were postgraduate students and 163 were undergraduate students. This represents a 56%/44% split in favour of postgraduate students. This is comparable to 2016-17 where the split was 55%/45% in favour of postgraduate students. In the years prior to 2016-17, the split was about 50%/50%.

Something that may account for the higher proportion of postgraduate students accessing the Service is the fact that they are more likely to engage with formal procedures and as indicated earlier, information about the Advice Service has been included in a significant number of these processes.

## SERVICE USER STATUS

The Service works with users across a range of profiles (*Table 2*). Current students, non-standard student users (including past and prospective students, or intermitted students), and non-students (such as relatives or friends of students) may all access the Service. Advice is also provided to JCR/MCR Officers, Liberation Campaign Officers, Peer2Peer Supporters, and more recently to Sports Welfare Officers who may use the Service to discuss their specific role or any concerns they may have about a student in their community.

| Client Status                       | Number     | Percentage  |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Current student                     | 329        | 69%         |
| Past Student                        | 25         | 6%          |
| Intermitted student                 | 22         | 5%          |
| Off the register                    | 3          | 1%          |
| Visiting student                    | 7          | 1%          |
| ICE Student                         | 1          | -           |
| Offer holder                        | 17         | 4%          |
| Prospective Student                 | 14         | 3%          |
| Relative of a student               | 16         | 3%          |
| Friend of a student                 | 3          | 1%          |
| Other person known to student       | 2          | -           |
| Support Officer (JCR/MCR/Peer2Peer) | 8          | 2%          |
| College staff/ Tutorial Office      | 6          | 1%          |
| University staff                    | 14         | 3%          |
| Unknown                             | 6          | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>473</b> | <b>100%</b> |

*Table 2 – Status of Service User*

69% of service-users this year were current students, with past student as the next largest group, followed by intermitted students, offer holders, and prospective students. Relatives and friends of students made up 4% of service-users. As an independent service, the Advice Service is well placed to talk parents and friends through options available where the student themselves is hesitant to access support. College and University staff made up 4% of service-users. It is also interesting to note that we provided support to many individuals who were not eligible to access any of the other University service providers (these included intermitted students, students off the register, past students, and visiting students). Though we were glad to be able to support these individuals, this highlights a gap in the support available from the Collegiate University, and that the Advice Service may not always have the capacity to fill, thus potentially leaving these individuals isolated.

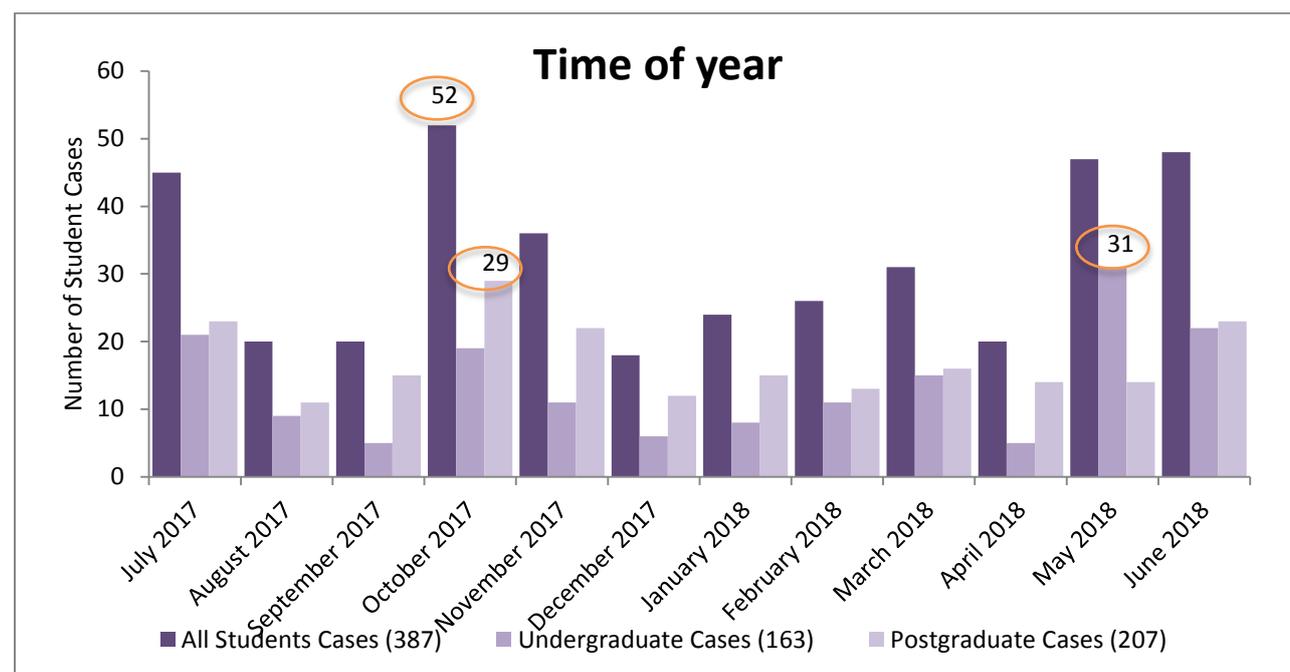
**B. CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

**TIMES OF YEAR AND HOURS SPENT**

The Students’ Unions’ Advice Service is open throughout the year including outside of academic term time. There are, however, certain trends that can be identified by analysing at what point in the year students access the Service.

Graph 2 demonstrates what may be described as peaks and troughs throughout the year. As in previous years, the Advice Service continued to be busy during the academic term-times but we have seen an increase in the number of students accessing the Service outside of term-time, in particular the months of July 2017 and June 2018 were very busy; we supported an almost equal number of postgraduate and undergraduate students during these two months.

The busiest periods during term-time were October 2017 and May 2018. A greater number of postgraduate students accessed the Service in October 2017, of whom over half were first year PhD students with a variety of issues, while May 2018 was especially busy with undergraduate students enquiring about examination allowances, examination reviews, or advice on what options were available in light of their results.



Graph 2 – Number of student cases by month of reporting year

We estimate that the average amount of hours spent on casework was about 3.5 hours per service-user. The highest number of hours spent on a single student’s case was 80 hours and the lowest was 5 minutes. The highest number of hours spent on a single student with multiple cases was 120 hours.

Many students can find making representations challenging; our data on the number of hours spent working with each service-user tells us that students with Specific Learning Difficulties and/or Autism Spectrum Disorders in particular may require additional support. Students for whom English is not their first language required the most additional time and support.

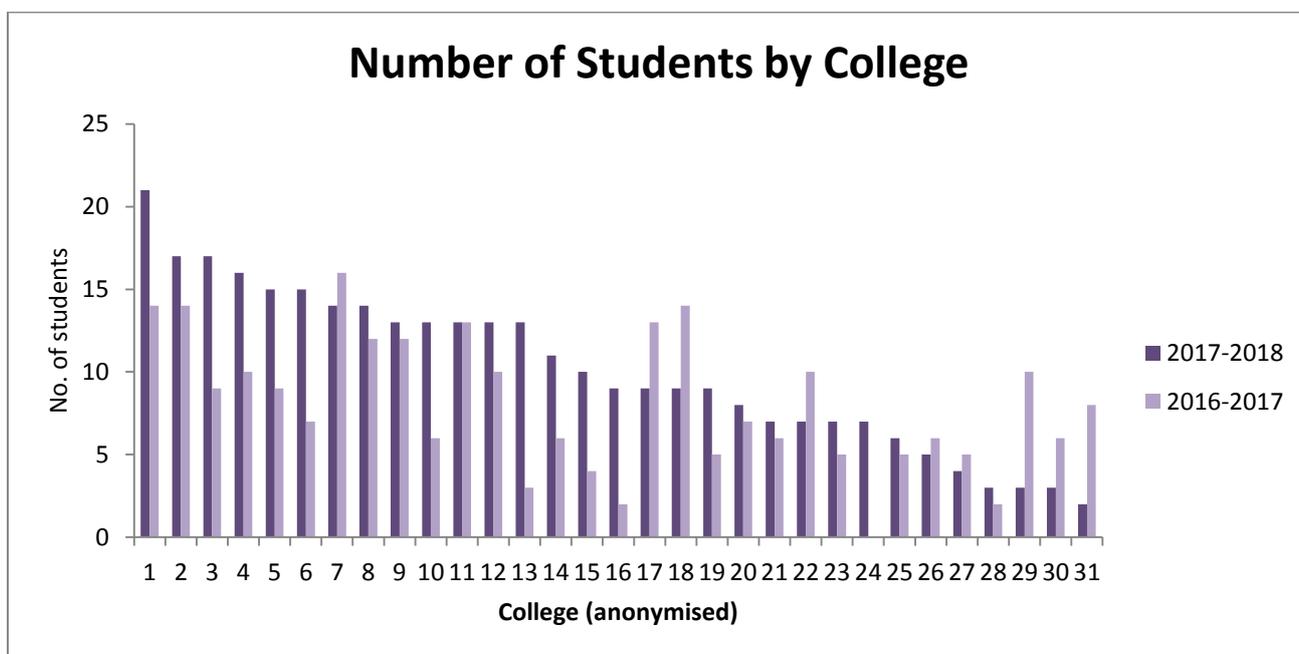
COLLEGE

In the 2017-18 cycle, the Advice Service supported students from 31 Colleges (*Graph 3*). As with every year, the number of students accessing the Service from each College varies and does not necessarily seem to be linked to the size of the College or its proximity to the Advice Service.

As in most years, the Colleges of the CUSU-GU elected sabbatical officers were fairly well represented, no doubt in part due to the relationships maintained between officers and their student body.

Bearing in mind that 14% of service-users were signposted to the Advice Service by College staff such as tutors, senior tutors, nurses etc, there are clearly some colleges that are particularly strong at raising the awareness of their students of the services available to them.

In 2017-18, the Advice Service supported 1-5 students from 3 colleges, 5-10 students from 12 colleges, 11-15 students from 7 colleges, 16-20 students from 7 colleges, and over 20 students from 2 colleges. The mature/postgraduate colleges feature in the top 5 colleges represented which is likely to be in part due to the higher number of postgraduate students accessing the Service.



*Graph 3 –Number of students accessing SUAS by College*

The variability of students approaching the Service within a given year, as well as over several years, should not be taken as an indication of effectiveness or quality of support offered within different Colleges. It is important to note that CUSU and the Graduate Union consider it to be good practice for colleges to inform their students of the existence of the Advice Service.

GENDER

In 2017-18, we have gender data for just over half of the students who accessed the Service. The large number of students whose gender is undisclosed (155 for the 2017-18 cycle) arises from the fact that data is recorded based on how students declare their gender. If a monitoring form is not received, for example, or if

the case is short-lived (such as some of those under the ‘Information’ category), or if communication with a service-user is entirely by e-mail, then a gender may not be registered. The Service does not assume a user’s gender if it has not been explicitly declared. In addition to this, in line with the new general data protection regulations, we separated out the Advice Service registration forms into two - a registration form and a monitoring form. It is made clear to students that though the information on the monitoring form helps us with anonymous statistical reporting, they are not required to complete the form if they wish not to. This has resulted in fewer students completing all sections of the form or the form altogether. As a result of the service-user’s disclosure of this data being optional, the factual reporting on gender usage of the Service has become more difficult.

What we know is of the students who disclosed their gender, more of these were female students compared to male and other students. Our data does not actually allow us to confirm that more female students than other genders accessed the Service though based on the information we do have, this is likely to be the case. Having fewer male service-users would correspond to wider sector trends which signal lower engagement in pastoral and academic support services by male students, which in turn reflects social norms and expectations. Less than 1% of our service-users identified their gender as “other”.

| All Students | Number     | Percentage  |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Female       | 116        | 34%         |
| Male         | 72         | 21%         |
| Other        | 1          | -           |
| Undisclosed  | 155        | 45%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>344</b> | <b>100%</b> |

*Table 3 – Students accessing the Service by gender*

## DISABILITY

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Of the 344 students who accessed the Service this year, 58 disclosed a disability via the registration or monitoring form (*Table 4*). This represents 17% of the students who accessed the Service as compared to 14% of the student population who disclosed a disability by the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2018 as highlighted in the Disability Resource Centre annual report 2017-18. An additional 74 students mentioned a possible disability to the Advisor during the discussion of their case. We can therefore conclude that as many as 132 students who accessed the Service may have had a disability. Even taking into account that some of these students may not have had official diagnoses, it is likely that the Advice Service has provided support to a disproportionately high number of disabled students.

Despite there being a larger number of postgraduate students using the Service, more undergraduate students declared having a disability (of the 17% of students having disclosed a disability, 60% were undergraduate students and 40% were postgraduate students). The percentage of students who disclosed a disability to the Advice Service decreased slightly as compared to 2016-17 when 22% of students disclosed a disability.

Of those students who disclosed themselves as being disabled mental health came up for 31% of them, whilst 14% of students mentioned mental health alongside another disability; we cannot confirm whether all of the mental health issues have been officially diagnosed.

The Students' Unions' Advice Service has close links with the Disability Resource Centre, and has taken part in several transitional events for students. The Disability Resource Centre was responsible for the largest number of referrals to the Students' Unions' Advice Service by a service-provider.

| All Students | Number     | Percentage  |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Yes          | 58         | 17%         |
| No*          | 286        | 83%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>344</b> | <b>100%</b> |

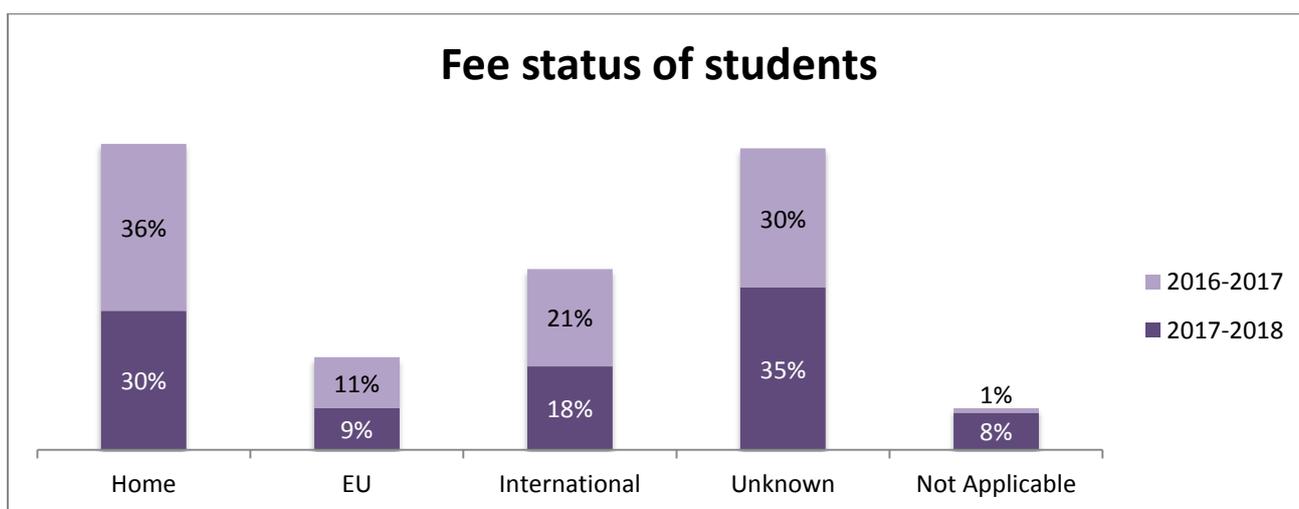
Table 4 – Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

\* In the Service's case management system, if 'Yes' was not selected to the question 'do you consider yourself to be disabled', the system defaulted to 'No' so we are unable to separate those students who actively informed us that they did not have a disability and those for whom the information is unknown. The facility to record this has now been developed in our case management system for next year.

### FEE STATUS

In line with the increased number of students who accessed the Service in 2017-18, there was a corresponding increase in the number of Home, EU and International students (*Graph 4*). The proportions have remained fairly stable as compared to last year with Home students representing the largest proportion of students accessing the Service followed closely by International and finally EU students.

The majority of EU and International students at the University are postgraduates, and 45% of Advice Service postgraduate service-users were EU or International students; this highlights that we are reaching these demographics in the postgraduate student population.



Graph 4 – Fee status of students (n=344)

## STUDENT STATUS

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The Service continues to support students across a wide range of subjects and degrees (*Table 5*). As last year, there was a greater number of postgraduate students who accessed the Service (182 postgraduates as compared to 145 undergraduates) which equates to a 56%/44% split for those students whose status is known (*Table 6*). This year, the category of ‘postgraduate’ encapsulates PhD students, MPhil, MFin, MBA, MRes, MSt, MEd, LLM and PGCE students. Within these sub-categories, usage of the Service varies.

The proportions are similar to last year with the largest number of students coming from Tripos courses, followed by PhD students, followed by MPhil students and other postgraduate students. It is the combined figure for postgraduate students that exceeds the number of undergraduate students. With the increase in the number of students accessing the Service, most categories of students have grown proportionally except for Masters students where the proportion of students this year has exceeded last year’s proportions (from 13% to 22%).

| Student Status               | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Undergraduate</b>         | 145    | 42%        |
| <b>PhD</b>                   | 107    | 31%        |
| <b>MPhil</b>                 | 47     | 14%        |
| <b>Other Masters Degrees</b> | 26     | 8%         |
| <b>PGCE</b>                  | 2      | 1%         |
| <b>Other</b>                 | 3      | 1%         |
| <b>Unknown</b>               | 11     | 3%         |
| <b>Not Applicable</b>        | 3      | 1%         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 344    | 100%       |

*Table 5 – Student users by their student status*

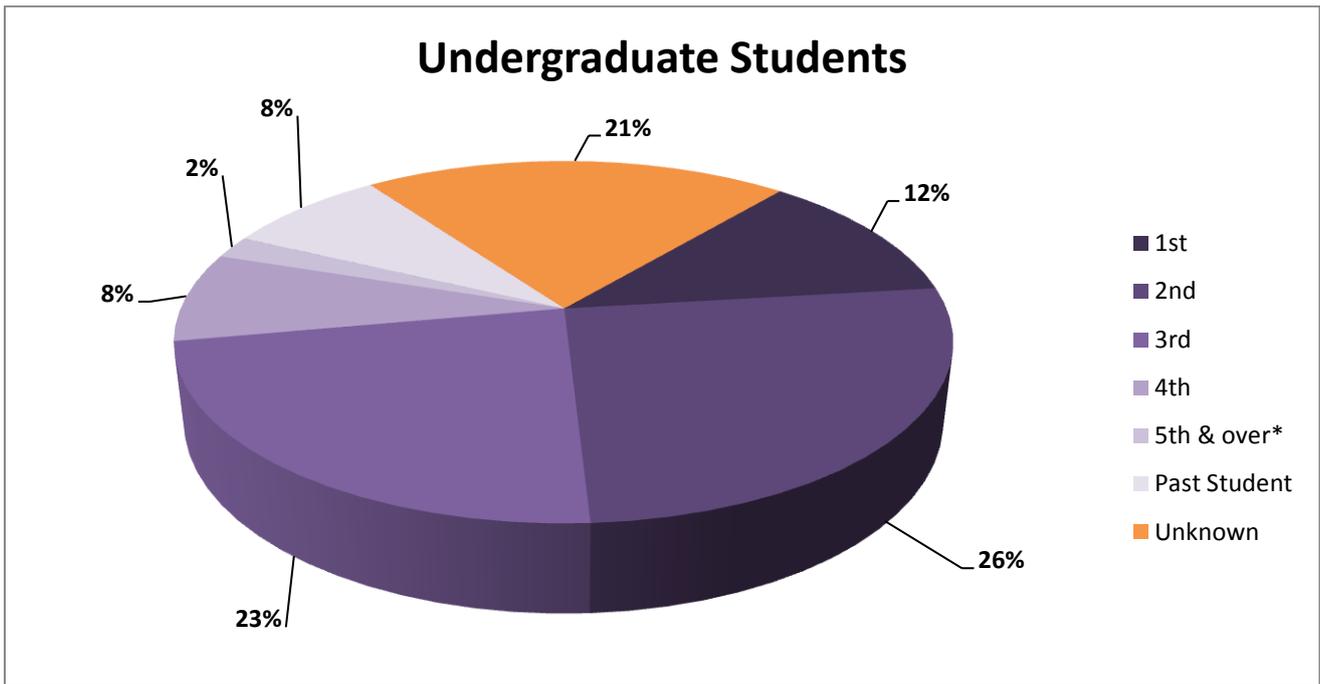
| Student Status   | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| <b>Undergraduate</b>   | 145    | 44%        |
| <b>Postgraduate (PhD, MPhil, Other Masters Degrees &amp; PGCE)</b> | 182    | 56%        |
| <b>Total</b>   | 327    | 100%       |

*Table 6 – Student users by their student status where this information is known*

## YEAR OF STUDY

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This year the majority of undergraduate service-users were in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study (26%), closely followed by those in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study (23%). The proportion of students accessing the Service in their first year dropped from 22% to 12% as compared to last year. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate students mainly sought advice on exam-related issues and intermission. In addition to this, 2<sup>nd</sup> year students sought advice on changing college while 3<sup>rd</sup> year students were more likely to raise issues relating to mental health.

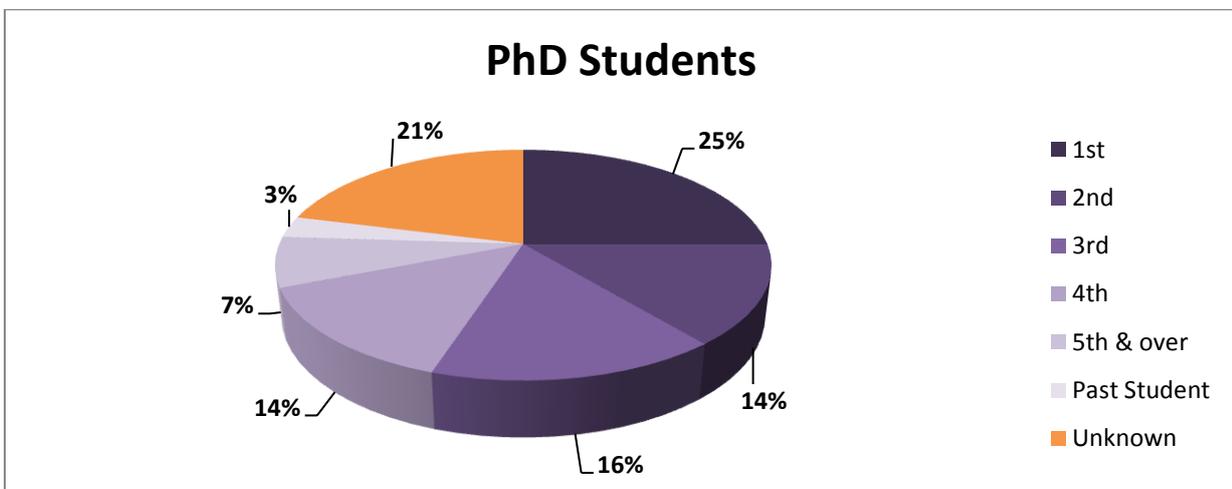


Graph 5– Undergraduate student users by year of study (n=145)

*\*some of these undergraduate students were on an Extension to Period of Study programme*

Among PhD students, those in their first year of study were most likely to approach the Service (25%), followed by 3<sup>rd</sup> year (16%) and 2<sup>nd</sup> year (14%). The main issues of concern for 1<sup>st</sup> year PhD students were difficulties with their relationship with their supervisor, passing their PhD registration, and mental health issues.

MPhil students accessed the Service during their first and only year of study and mainly sought advice on examination-related issues and complaints about the University. Students on other Masters courses also sought advice mainly on these same two issues.



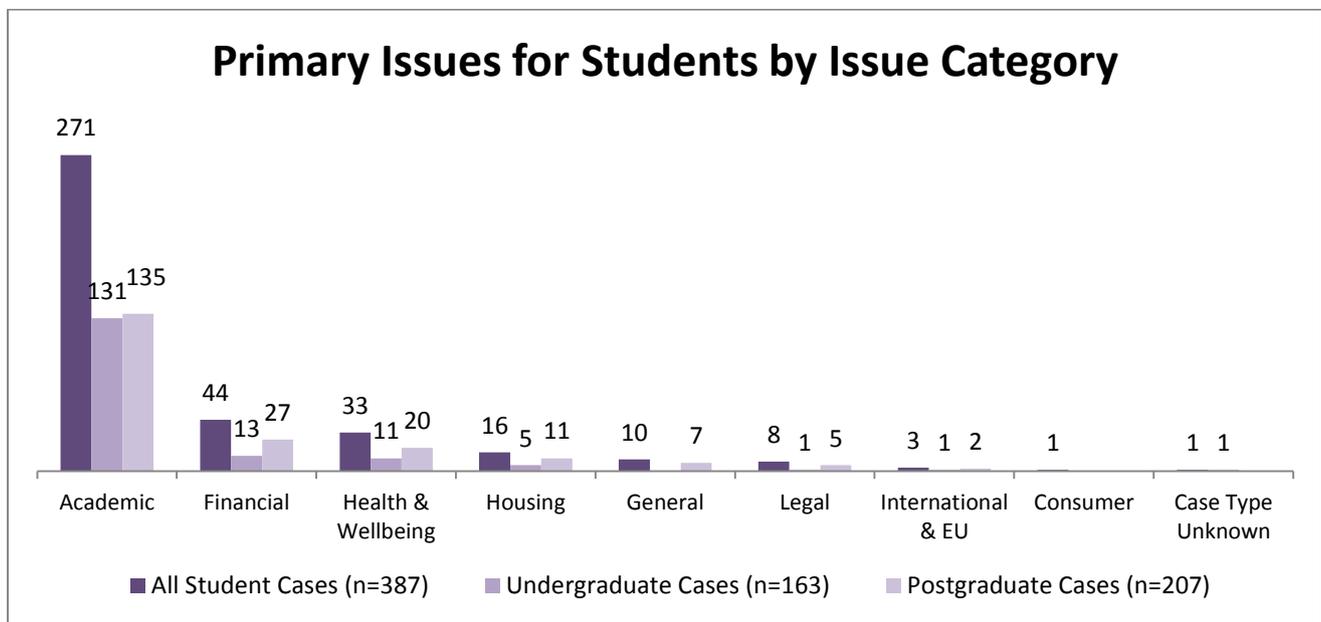
Graph 6 – PhD student users by year of study (n=107)

### C. TYPES OF ISSUES

The Service has assisted students on a number of issues this year, ranging from exam concerns to financial difficulties to issues regarding student-supervisor relations. Students will often come to the Service for advice on a specific issue (e.g. exam failure); it may then transpire during the discussion with the Advisor that other issues are linked to the primary issue raised. For example, though few students access the Service specifically for advice on mental health, many students raise mental health as a factor contributing to the issue for which they require support.

As such, when recording information about issues students have discussed with us, we record a primary issue followed by secondary issues. Issues are divided into categories. Below are the primary issues by issue category in order of importance (measured as the percentage of cases where students who accessed the Service experienced an issue in that particular area):

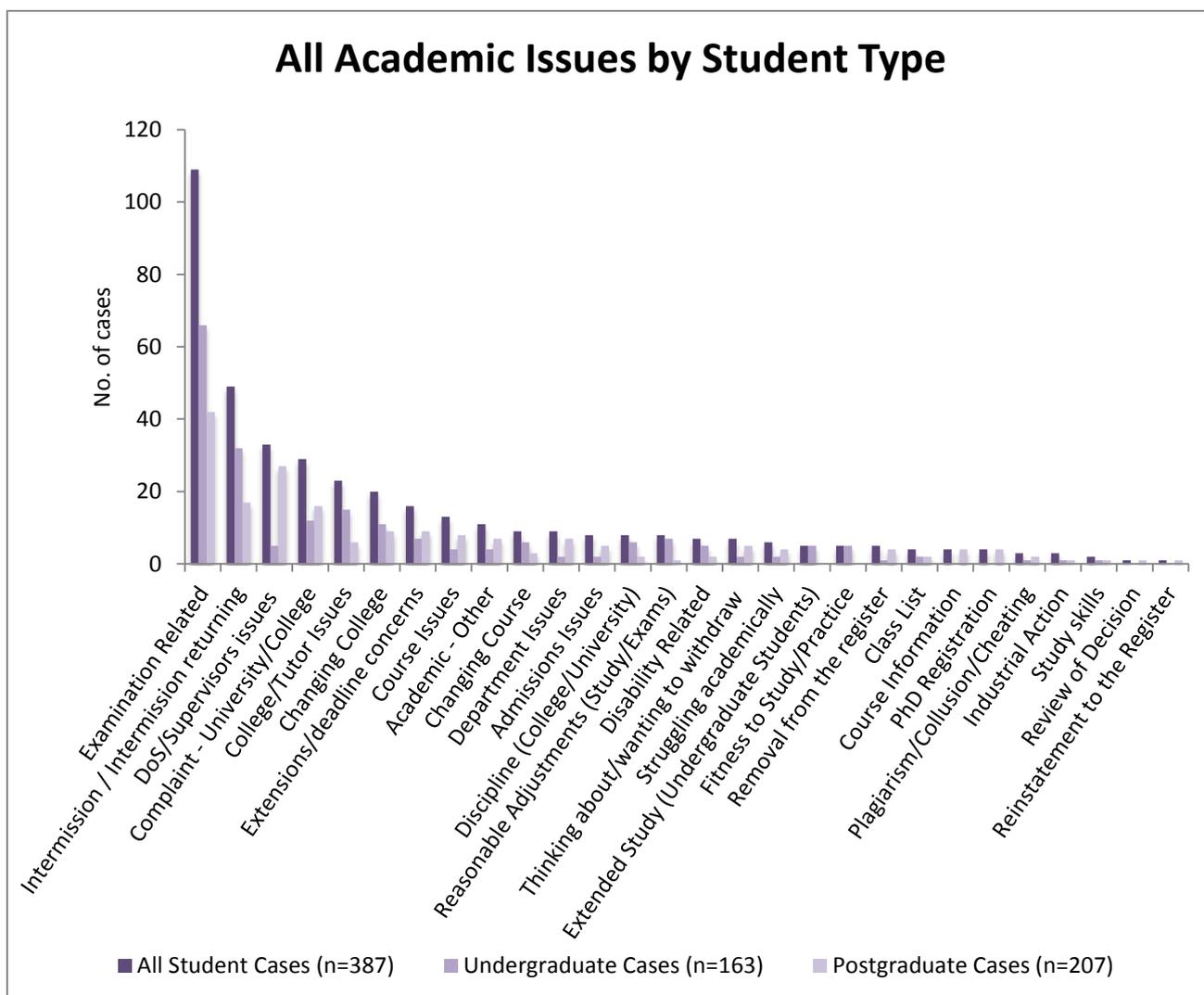
1. Academic (70%)
2. Financial (11%)
3. Health and Wellbeing (9%)
4. Housing (4%)
5. General (3%)
6. Legal (2%)
7. International & EU (1%)
8. Consumer (0.3%)
9. Case Type Unknown (0.3%)



Graph 7 - Primary issues by Category for students during the 2017-2018 cycle

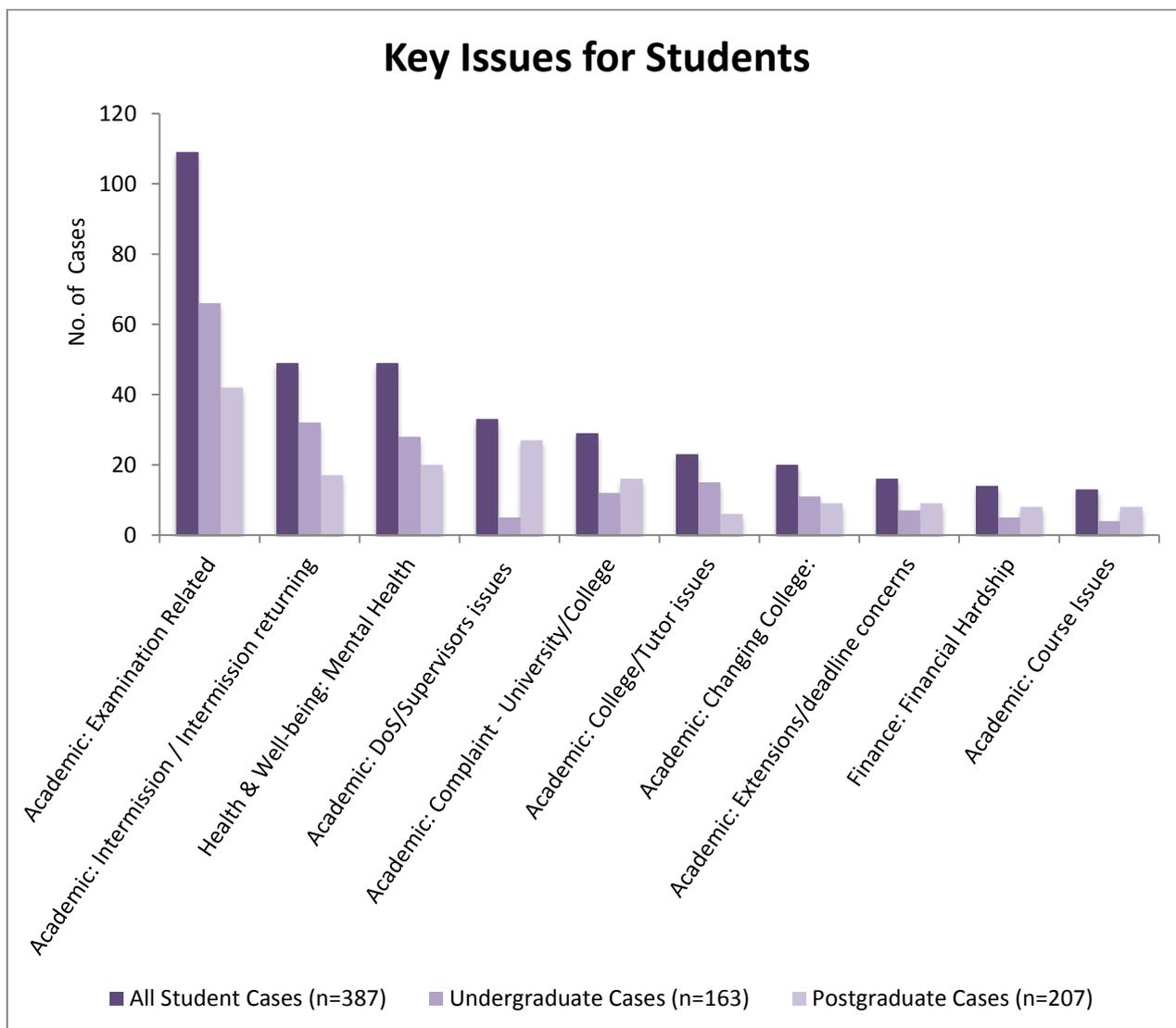
As 'Academic' is the main category of advice students requested support with, we have broken this category down into the most common issues recorded in this area during this period (measured as the percentage of cases where students who accessed the Service experienced that particular issue):

1. Examination-related (28%)
2. Intermission/Intermission Returning (13%)
3. DoS/Supervisor Issues (9%)
4. Complaint University/College (8%)
5. College/Tutor Issues (6%)
6. Changing College (5%)
7. Extensions/Deadline Concerns (4%)
8. Course Issues (3%)
9. Academic – Other (3%)
10. Changing Course (2%)



Graph 8 – All Academic Issues by Student Type

‘Examination-related’ was the biggest area of advice for both undergraduate students (n=66) and postgraduate students (n=42). The second largest area of advice for undergraduate students was ‘Intermission/Intermission Returning’ (n=32), whilst for postgraduate students it was ‘Issues with their Supervisor’ (n=27). The third main area of advice for postgraduate students was ‘Intermission/Intermission Returning’ (n=17). The third main academic-related issue for undergraduates was related to their College (n=15).



Graph 9 – Key Issues for students by Student Type

The number of issues will be higher than the number of students who accessed the Service as the majority of students raised more than one issue with the Service.

‘Mental Health Issues’ for both undergraduate students (n=28) and postgraduate students (n=20) was the largest areas of advice within the ‘Health & Wellbeing’ category. ‘Financial Hardship’ (n=8) and ‘Funding Information’ (n=8) were the main areas of advice for postgraduate students who came to the Service with financial issues whilst for undergraduates it was issues with ‘Student Finance’ (n=6) and ‘Financial Hardship’ (n=5).

Although student cases may fall into a distinct category, it should also be noted that a single case may include multiple issues. For example, a student approaching the Service to discuss exam concerns may also seek advice on an issue such as intermission or disability or academic support.

The most frequently occurring issues this year are broadly similar to those encountered during the 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 academic years with all areas having seen increases. 'Exam-related' (28% of cases - 8% increase from last year), 'Finance-related' (16% of cases - 5% increase from last year), 'Intermission/Intermission Returning (13% of cases – 8% increase from last year),' Mental Health' (13% of cases - 5% increase from last year), 'DoS/Supervisor relations' (9% of cases - 1% increase from last year), 'Student Complaint' (8% of cases - 3% increase from last year).

It should be noted that 'Health and Wellbeing' can include mental health and though some students may be experiencing stress and anxiety, they may not declare these as mental health issues. For many students, resolving the matter they are experiencing such as difficult supervisor relations or financial issues can sometimes result in a considerable reduction in their stress and anxiety levels.

There are similarities and differences in the issues graduate and undergraduate students raise with the Service (*Graph 9*). The most common issues brought by both undergraduate and postgraduate students this year were 'examination-related'. For undergraduate students, this was followed by 'intermission/intermission returning' and 'mental health issues'; though a high number of postgraduate students also sought support on 'intermission/intermission returning' and 'mental health issues', they were more likely to seek support on financial-related issues and 'student-supervisor relationship' issues. A similar number of undergraduate and postgraduate students sought advice on complaints whereas in previous years, advice in this area was mainly sought by postgraduate students.

#### D. ISSUE SPOTLIGHTS

One of the advantages of having sabbatical officers strongly engaged with the Advice Service is that, by meeting regularly with Advisors, the officers gain knowledge of the issues that affect students who seek support from the Advice Service.

Though the Advice Service is an impartial service that does not make value judgements, CUSU and the Graduate Union Officers can use the knowledge they've gained working with the Advice Service to inform their campaigns, activities and committee work.

The following spotlights represent some of the issues where officers have been able to use the knowledge they've gained working with the Advice Service to inform the work they have undertaken in their capacity as elected student representatives.

#### SPOTLIGHT ON...INTERMISSION – BY DAISY EYRE (CUSU PRESIDENT 2017-18)

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This year, 49 student cases related to intermission or intermission-related questions – 13% of the total number of cases. More precisely, the biggest concerns for these students were either mental health or examination-related. By its nature, intermission can be a very difficult time, often involving students in crisis. SUAS can play a really key role here in helping students negotiate the process.

This year, CUSU has continued to campaign on the subject of intermission, trying to continue working with the University to improve students' experiences. Firstly, we have recognised that intermission can be a lonely time, and started "Intermitting Students' Socials" at the beginning and end of each term. These have been attended by a small group of students each time, allowing them to access mutual support and meet people who are going through or have been through something similar.

We have also held the first ever Intermission Forum with Senior Tutors. Using data collected through a survey of intermitting students (answered by over 100 students), we discussed the difficulties involved in the topic and shared best practice. We had a very productive discussion and I very much hope the format can be repeated for other student-facing issues.

### SPOTLIGHT ON...STRIKES – BY MICHA FRAZER-CARROLL (CUSU-GU WELFARE AND RIGHTS OFFICER 2017-18)

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This year the Students' Unions faced a unique challenge in the form of threats to University workers' pensions. This threat led to industrial action from a great number of staff at the University, which was also supported by a strong contingent of students, and CUSU.

As Welfare and Rights Officer for both CUSU and the GU, I noted three prominent challenges facing students during industrial action; the first, the cancellation of lectures and supervisions at little notice; the second, that many students in support of the strike might be adversely affected by choosing not to cross 'picket lines' onto University property; and the third, that there was a general lack of information available to students on what would happen next. The state of affairs was unprecedented and the first of its kind and scale in recent history – this meant that the SUAS Advisors had to demonstrate remarkable creativity with the procedural information they work with day-to-day, to adapt it to a brand new situation. It was also essential that the respective expertise of SUAS Advisors, and the CUSU and GU Sabbs, was shared through constant feedback between us in our regular meetings.

I produced strike welfare flyers and a series of website pages which were heavily informed by SUAS knowledge of University policy and procedures. They also contributed information on study skills, and support services. From managing contentions between staff and students, to creative methods of study, to the potential for examinations allowances, the information provided by SUAS ensured that students had the most accurate and reliable guidance. This was invaluable, particularly during a time of instability where there was a considerable amount of speculative and false information circulating by word of mouth.

SUAS, as always, also acted as a clear place to signpost students to if they were still unsure about what to do after receiving our guidance. Only 3 students did subsequently access the Service on the topic, and we see this as indicative of the clarity of the information we were able to communicate to students en masse. Overall, the speed and strength of the Unions' response to the strikes was heavily informed by the work and expertise of SUAS' Advisors.

### SPOTLIGHT ON...ASSESSMENT BY MARTHA KRISH (CUSU EDUCATION OFFICER 2017-18)

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One of the main things that students come to SUAS for every year is issues around exams, whether this is exam-related stress, issues with getting exam arrangements put in place, or wanting to submit an Exam Review to appeal their results. Over the last year I have had many discussions about how the landscape of examination across the University may be changing. In September 2017 the Board of Examinations

published an Examinations Review Report which, among many other recommendations, proposed that 'each Part of a Tripos should include at least one elective option for assessment by a method other than the traditional unseen examination (e.g. dissertation, portfolio, coursework, exercises)'. This is part of an ongoing trend within the University encouraging more innovative and diverse modes of assessment. This trend is encouraging for a number of reasons. Firstly it has to some extent been catalysed by an acknowledgement that the current system of rigid, linear exams is resulting in an ever increasing number of students needing exam arrangements or even alternative modes of assessment. This highlights the need to not just paper over the cracks but to more holistically reform the system and make it workable for all students. Additionally, having a greater range and variety in modes of assessment would very likely result in less concentration of assessment at the end of the year and therefore relieve some of the stress on key pressure points, spreading important pieces of work across the year. It is my hope that CUSU, with the valuable support of SUAS, will continue to work with the University in helping to bring about these changes which will help students experience less exam-related stresses and issues.

#### SPOTLIGHT ON...GRADUATE-SPECIFIC ISSUES BY NIKITA HARI (GU VICE-PRESIDENT 2017-18)

This year, of the 182 postgraduates who accessed the SUAS, 107 of them were PhD students with mostly academic-related difficulties. One of the alarming issues students grapple with is supervisor-student relationship dynamics and related side effects that can stem from this such as mental wellbeing and financial instabilities. Addressing PhD supervisor-student issues by improving the 'Code of Practice for Research Students' and working towards changing the existing PhD supervision culture will be a key priority for the Vice-President this year. The GU council passed a motion in support of a 'contract system for PhDs' with the council having a productive discussion with the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Education (PVC Education) and the Board of Graduate Studies secretary (BGS). The President has been lobbying for this with the Education and Student Policy Office and has been successful in including a signature page in the Code of Practice (CoP). As a start, we hope this will ensure good working practices, accountability from supervisors and the departments in ensuring a fair and healthy working environment. As the Vice- President, I've worked with the Board of Graduate Studies, Education and Student Policy Office and PVC-Education in reviewing the existing CoP. We are working on revising information on working hours, conflict resolution, intermission & extension, maternity and paternity leave, data ethics, fieldwork practices, vacation and sick leave. We are also developing a flowchart of the PhD journey with appropriate service provider links to help students navigate and have a productive and enjoyable time here at the University.

As the Vice-President, I have introduced themed bulletins for disseminating targeted information for our PhD membership regarding e-thesis, service providers, CoP etc. I also established working relationships with peers in MCRs to better understand specific issues. We work closely with the SUAS in getting a clearer picture of graduate student issues, have been actively advertising and signposting the SUAS so that more of our students can access the Service. We will continue working with senior colleagues, various service providers in the University in ensuring a healthy, stable and safe working environment for PhD students.

### SPOTLIGHT ON...DISABLED STUDENTS CAMPAIGN BY FLORENCE OULD (DISABLED STUDENTS' OFFICER 2017-18)

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SUAS is a consistent source of support and advice for disabled students, and it's a great comfort knowing that when a disabled student comes to me with an issue that I can signpost them to a service that cares about the problems they face and can genuinely help them.

Through regular meetings with SUAS, the Disabled Students' Campaign (DSC) has been able to consult with the Service on issues faced by disabled students, and this has informed the work of the campaign over the past year.

This year the DSC launched its first annual Healthcare & Services Survey, with the aim of collecting data on student opinion and usage of services related to disability, health, and wellbeing in Cambridge. SUAS was one of the services covered by the survey, and questions asked of students about the survey included if they knew where it was and what it did, if they had used it, how their experience of the service was, and what they believe could improve the service. Aspects highlighted as good were the website, quick response time, non-judgemental advice, removing stress from navigating the University and decision making, and a reassuring presence in meetings. All comments on how to improve the service focused on more awareness and publicity in order to promote a greater access to the survey.

Speaking to the newly elected DSC committee for 2018-19, it's really great to hear all about their projects and campaigns for the year ahead which involve working with and promoting SUAS. Watch this space!

### SPOTLIGHT ON...HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY LOLA OLUFEMI (CUSU WOMEN'S OFFICER 2017-18)

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From 1st July 2017 to the 30th June 2018, there were 8 cases relating to bullying, sexual violence and/or harassment. Improving the University's new campaign to tackle sexual misconduct has been a key priority for the women's campaign this year. We wrote an open letter calling on the University to change the standard of proof used in disciplinary cases from beyond reasonable doubt to the balance of probabilities which was signed by over 800 students. The letter called on the University to reform the procedure to make it more accessible for students wanting to bring cases relating to sexual violence forward. We called for a Senate House discussion on this matter where over 60 students and academics gathered to add their voices of support to this change. As Women's Officer, I wrote for The Guardian about how the fight against sexual violence in institutions must continue and does not stop with the launch of University-wide campaigns. We also questioned the Vice-Chancellor on his commitment to ensuring in-house support services for all survivors of sexual violence at Cambridge. As Women's Officer, I met with the University Advocate to talk about ways to make reporting procedures less cold and analytical and more personable, including embedding feedback forms and training into the reporting process where students can talk about their experiences with formal reporting. We've worked alongside the new University Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor to advertise her services to students in need and pushed for the more funding for similar university wide initiatives.

## 6. LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

### A. WORDS FROM OUR PARTNERS

#### CUSU - PARENT ORGANISATION

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In the complicated and often stressful landscape of the University of Cambridge, the Students' Unions' Advice Service provides a vital support service for students. SUAS provides dedicated, sensitive and expert support, whether dealing with financial, academic or welfare issues (among others). We are so proud of the Service; the personalised support it offers is really at the core of our work.

Students and staff from across the Collegiate University access the Service, which fulfils a crucial role in the network of support in Cambridge. This year, colleges have agreed to fund the Service, which is available to all students, through a levy. We'd like to thank everyone involved in organising this levy as it makes such a difference. It seems very appropriate that the Advice Service will be funded this way, alongside other welfare services available to students.

Although officers no longer take part in casework, we work with SUAS through project meetings. These meetings have worked really well as a way of sharing information and feeding into the development of the Service. In this way, we can insure that lines of communication between the SUAS, the University and students remain open.

The caseload in the Advice Service continues to grow, and I would like to express my admiration for our three advisors; Lisa, Gemma and Rachel, who keep up such excellent service despite their workload.

*Daisy Eyre (CUSU President 2017-18)*

#### GRADUATE UNION - PARENT ORGANISATION

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The work of the Students' Unions' Advice Service is crucial to the Graduate Union's mission. We are proud of their excellent work, and proud that we share this important service with our partner, CUSU, proving the importance of collaboration between the Unions for the benefit of students. The number of service-users continues to increase and postgraduates continue to use SUAS disproportionately, which we are monitoring, and which is of interest to the GU. Users of the service remain very satisfied, and SUAS's supportive work is one of the GU's most important contributions to the University.

It has been helpful to receive data and feedback from the Service, which we use in signposting students and forming policy. Crucially, SUAS provides both short-term and long-term support for the Graduate Union. The Graduate Union can direct students to the Service when they are in immediate need, but SUAS can also provide longer-term policy advice, drawing on their wealth of casework experience. The GU continues to meet regularly with SUAS, ensuring that student involvement and leadership are central to the Service's work. We will ensure that this mutually beneficial relationship continues, in which the GU contributes to the Service's development and the Service contributes to our representational work. The GU would like to thank Lisa, Rachel, and Gemma for their work: we are extremely grateful for SUAS.

*Sofia Ropek Hewson (Graduate Union President 2018-19)*

## SECRETARY OF THE SENIOR TUTORS' COMMITTEE

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In the eight years it's been running, SUAS has become an essential part of the support the Collegiate University offers its students. The numbers of those accessing the service tell their own stories: of the increasing demand from students in every College for the free, impartial, non-directive non-judgmental advice they can rely on receiving from its team of trained advisors; and of the rightly higher prominence of the service as its resources become better known to prospective users. But students in search of information or guidance at moments of confusion or difficulty aren't the only people who have benefited from SUAS.

For the past four years, newly appointed Tutors from every Cambridge College have learned about the work of SUAS as the final part of their own training from the Secretaries of the Senior Tutors' Committee. So in every College, Tutors know the real value of SUAS as a complement to their own work. Individual Senior Tutors, too, appreciate the professionalism and discreet courtesy with which SUAS represents their own students in moments of distress or crisis. And the closeness with which SUAS works with CUSU and GU sabbatical officers, all the more effective since recent redefinition of the officers' roles and responsibilities, to inform the Unions' representative and campaigning work has made a real and positive contribution to the development and review of student-facing policies too. In 2017-18, SUAS made a terrifically valuable contribution to the forum on issues surrounding intermission that Daisy Eyre describes; wise comments on the College Transfer Procedure have been invaluable too. SUAS is truly a trusted partner, a critical friend when one is needed. The team deserves immense credit for all it does.

*Mark Wormald (Secretary of the Senior Tutors' Committee)*

### B. CUSU AND THE GRADUATE UNION

The Students' Unions' Advice Service is provided by CUSU and the Graduate Union. The Students' Unions' Advice Service remains one of the key services provided to members by either Union and as such is central to their strategic development.

### C. OTHER STUDENT SERVICES

Working effectively with other University services is key to the way the Students' Unions' Advice Service operates, and the team works closely with other services throughout the year, whether in making or receiving referrals, seeking advice and information, or working alongside various support services when supporting a student through a difficulty.

The Service prides itself on its expertise in what services are available to Cambridge students. The team's knowledge of the services on offer to students in the Collegiate University, locally and nationally, allows us to see students with any issue. Advisors recognise the limits of what they are able to offer a student, and as such we are experts at signposting and referrals. Cases often involve discussing multiple referral options with the student to help them identify what might be most appropriate for them. To support this aspect of the Service, every year, the Advice Service team meets other key service-providers in the Collegiate University such as the Counselling Service, Mental Health Advisors, Disability Resource Centre, Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor, College Nurses, Careers Service, Childcare Office, International Students Office, Accommodation Service, Language Centre, Research Ethics Office, and Student Registry.

#### D. EXAM ACCESS AND MITIGATION COMMITTEE (FORMERLY KNOWN AS APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE)

The Students' Unions' Advice Service usually meets with members of the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee meetings once a year. These meetings allow Advisors to discuss with the committee members some of the challenges that students face when navigating the University procedures as well as some of the challenges that the Service faces in advising students.

Members of the Advice Service team are also in regular contact with the Secretary of the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee to ensure that we have a clear understanding of the procedures and regulations that are relevant to our service-users, and that we were up to date with any changes that might affect students.

#### E. OSCCA

The Advice Service continues to cement its strong working relationship with the team of the Student, Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA). Termly meetings are organised between our teams to ensure that we are sharing information. OSCCA also sought feedback from the Advice Service team on the University disciplinary procedure prior to the wider consultation being launched. We were very grateful to be able to use our first-hand experience of working with students to provide feedback and ideas.

In addition, Advisors are in regular contact with OSCCA staff to discuss complex cases (with students' permission) and what options and processes would be most suitable for those students, therefore always ensuring any information we provide to students is correct and up to date.

#### F. COLLEGES

The Students' Unions' Advice Service is always keen to further develop and cement its relationship with the Colleges. In September 2017, the Service contributed for a fourth time to the Tutor training programme. This is a great opportunity to build relationships with College tutorial teams, and to raise awareness of the Service amongst tutors. We look forward to our continued involvement in tutor training.

Furthermore, the Advice Service Manager has continued visiting Colleges to meet Senior Tutors and their pastoral support teams, and the hope is to increase the number of Colleges visited in the next academic year now that Advice Service team's capacity has increased. It is felt that these visits are successful both in building relationships and finding out more about specific support systems and services available in each College. This allows Advisors to more effectively support students, especially in terms of helping them access the support that is available to them in their College. The Service is also keen to maintain links with other College services, e.g. attending meetings of the College Nurses Association during the year.

## G. NATIONAL ADVICE COMMUNITY

The Students' Unions' Advice Service remains a member of Advice UK (the UK's largest support network for free, independent advice centres), which allows the Service access to their training and resources, as well as their professional liability insurance. The Service is also a member of AMOSSHE (Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education), RAWs (Research and Welfare Staff in Student Unions), and NASMA (National Association of Student Money Advisers) and has benefitted from the access to training, resources and advice that membership of these organisations afford.

The Service continues to foster strong relationships with other advice services locally and nationally, including Anglia Ruskin University, the University of East Anglia, and Oxford University.

## H. STUDENT-LED WELFARE INITIATIVES

Strong peer support networks are a feature of the Collegiate University and something which the Students' Unions' Advice Service plays a vital role in supporting. In turn, volunteers in these networks are a vital source of referrals and awareness-raising for the Service.

This year, the CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer provided an extensive training programme for JCR and MCR committee members with support-related roles, Liberation Campaigns, and other welfare-related initiatives. As with every year, the Advice Service took a lead role in supporting the training by providing material, resources, and feedback.

We have also continued to work closely with Nightline this year, collaborating on projects such as, the Students' Unions' Advice Service and Nightline card containing information about SUAS and Nightline. The cards were distributed to colleges with the goal of them being posted on the bedroom notice boards of every fresher.

The Service further supports these student networks by providing a confidential source of advice and support for volunteers who are concerned about a particular student or situation. Issues such as rape and sexual assault, concern for a friend or relative, intermission, fitness to study, extensions, class lists and equal opportunities were raised in these instances. The Service can support officers in providing information about what support is available, how to manage the situation, and help them think about when it may or may not be appropriate to breach confidentiality. This support offering is a separate but parallel service to that offered to the general student population. The separate service allows the Advice Service team to be slightly more directive, for example in setting clear boundaries about the volunteer's role and advising when situations are inappropriate for them to be dealing with.

## 7. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

### A. NEW FUNDING MODEL AND INCREASED STAFFING RESOURCE

As part of the Unions transition away from receiving general-purpose funding from the central University, alongside fees charged to JCRs and MCRs for political affiliation to receiving funding for representational activity from the University, and pastoral activities through a direct Collegiate levy; as the Unions main pastoral activity, the Students' Unions' Advice Service will be funded by a direct college levy from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018. This will allow the Service to not only maintain its current 2.6 full-time equivalent staff members but to expand to 3 full-time equivalent staff members. This increase in staff capacity will be crucial in allowing us to continue to provide quality support to students despite the increase in demand on the Service.

### B. MEASURING IMPACT

The SUAS Impact Survey was launched in January 2018 to capture the impact using the Advice Service has had on how students feel about their situation. The survey is emailed out to students around three months after their initial contact with the Service and runs in line with our reporting year which is from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June; more details are provided in the Activities section of this report.

### C. CONTRIBUTION TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Advice Service Manager is a member of the Health and Wellbeing committee and the committee on Student Parents and Childcare.

This year, the Students' Unions' Advice Service identified areas that have been particularly challenging to our service-users and where we felt processes and/or information could be improved. We then began the process of feeding this back to the relevant bodies. One of the areas identified was the College Transfer Process; the Advice Service Manager presented a paper on the challenges with this process to the Senior Tutors' Welfare and Finance committee. As a result of discussions prompted by this paper, substantial improvements will soon be made to the procedure.

Another area identified was intermitting students and financial hardship. By feeding back to the University the experiences of some of our intermitting service-users (via the elected sabbatical officers of the CUSU-GU), the University became aware of this issue and ensured that intermitting students would be eligible to apply to the Exceptional Hardship fund.

We also identified student complaints as a challenging area for our service-users which we feedback to the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA) who are supportive of a research project we will be undertaking in relation to student grievances in 2018-19.

We also provided extensive feedback to OSCCA regarding the University's disciplinary procedure.

The Advice Service Manager provided feedback in relation to the postgraduate reporting and feedback project as part of the CamSIS Improvement Programme. We also have strong links with the Board of Graduate Studies, the Exam Access and Mitigation committee, and the Office of Student, Conduct, Complaints and Appeals, who approach us from time to time for feedback on processes and procedures.

## D. STAFF-ONLY TEAM OF ADVISORS

For the first six years of its existence, elected sabbatical officers had been part of the Advice Service team and undertook casework however this completely ceased in 2017-18 which was the first full year without elected sabbatical officer advisors. This was as a result of a decision taken by the elected sabbatical officers in 2016-17 to permanently cease to undertake casework. This decision was made with the view of reducing risk, further professionalising the Service, and allowing officers to dedicate more time to aspects of their roles that were likely to benefit a larger number of students as opposed to individual casework.

The transition to a staff-only team of Advisors was very smooth and no doubt aided by the increase in staffing from 2 full-time equivalent Advisors to 2.6 full-time equivalent Advisors.

This change has meant that the elected sabbatical officers are able to dedicate more time to their committee and campaign work and other projects, the risks to the Service have been reduced and the Service has been further professionalised.

By working closely with the elected sabbatical officers and meeting regularly, the Service has retained the benefits of their involvement in the Advice Service, such as their in-depth understanding and experience of student life, knowledge of the informal processes at work within the institution, and also their knowledge of the background to any changes that are made to relevant procedures and processes relevant to student cases. We have also retained the student-led nature of the Advice Service by engaging elected sabbatical officers in the development and strategic planning of the Advice Service.

Elected sabbatical officers also continue play an important role in advertising and promoting the Service. This includes ensuring information about the Advice Service is presented at any induction and training events they host as well as including information about SUAS in any resources they develop (e.g. intermission guide) and social media groups and forums in which they participate. Sabbatical officers also play an important role in making their friends and those they work with aware of the Service. This year the sabbatical officer team as a whole has worked to develop the publicity and awareness of the Service, particularly by attending and emphasising the existence and utility of the Service in their interactions with other students. This has the benefits of making sure students are aware that the Advice Service is provided to them by CUSU and the Graduate Union, and provides further opportunity for sabbatical officers to interact with students on an informal basis.

## 8. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### A. STUDENT AWARENESS

The annual reports in the three previous years cited student awareness of the Service as one of our main challenges. Though we continue to make good progress in this area as has been demonstrated by the considerable increase in the number of students accessing the Service over the last three years, we still receive feedback from students who indicate that more needs to be done to raise awareness about the Service.

No doubt the inclusion of Advice Service information in a high proportion of University guidance and procedures will continue to reach students who are actively looking for this type of information however when students access this information, the situation they find themselves in has often escalated, and the options available to them may be fewer than had they accessed advice earlier. Reaching students at an early point when the matter can still be resolved is crucial yet so many of our service-users access the Service when they have already failed their examination or course or the relationship with the supervisor is irretrievably broken.

We plan to continue with our established promotional activities and to consider whether any new initiatives should be undertaken to allow us to reach students earlier.

## B. WORKSHOPS

One of the areas we are hoping to develop is the design and delivery of workshops for students in the areas of mitigating circumstances, and examination reviews. We feel confident that with the additional staffing resource taking the team from 2.6 full-time equivalent Advisors to 3 full-time equivalent Advisors that we will be able to develop these workshops and deliver them during the Easter term 2019 after results have been published. In addition to providing students with helpful and relevant information, another objective of the workshops is to provide to many students in a couple of hours information that we otherwise may have had to have provided to many students individually thus requiring a larger investment of hours from the Advisors at one of our busiest times of the year. We hope this will allow our individual support at this time of year to be focused on students who have grounds for an examination review or allowance.

We recognise there is a chance that the workshops could result in more students seeking individual support on these matters as opposed to fewer and we hope this trial will help inform how best to manage the team's capacity.

## C. NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

The majority of the objectives in the Advice Service strategic plan from 2014 related to the quality and promotion of the Service. Most of these objectives have now been achieved, while others are no longer relevant. As such, we would like to start the process of creating a new strategic plan that will allow us to reflect on where we are now, and where we would like to be in the future.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The past year has been our busiest yet in terms of the number of students we have supported; we are proud that despite our heavy caseloads, we were able to also work on other projects such as launching the Service's Measuring Impact survey, working closely with the elected sabbatical officers to convert service-users' issues into campaign and committee work, providing feedback to the Collegiate University on policies and processes, providing training to Sports Welfare Officers, supporting the development of welfare information regarding the impacts of industrial action, further developing our case management system, complying with general data protection regulations, helping the Unions make the case for funding by a direct college levy, fostering our relationships with service-providers and our key contacts across the Collegiate University, and much more. Above all we are proud to have continued to deliver high quality support to our service-users which is at the heart of all we do.

*Micha Frazer-Carroll*

*CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer (2017-18)*

*Lisa Déry*

*Advice Service Manager*

*Rachel Wilson*

*Advisor*

*Gemma Douglas*

*Advisor*

## 10. APPENDIX – CASE STUDIES

### CASE STUDY 1

A final year undergraduate student emailed the Students' Unions' Advice Service to discuss the outcome of a departmental meeting on suspected plagiarism. The student is concerned about what will happen next as the department has decided to forward the case to the University Advocate for them to consider. The student states that the uncertainty about their future and degree status have caused them to be low and stressed.

Role of the Advisor:

- Listen
- Explain the process and procedure being used
- Explore the possible outcomes i.e. referred to the Discipline Committee, meeting with the Advocate etc.
- Look at the University's policy on Plagiarism with the student.
- Discuss with the student what they feel has happened; e.g. if there were any extenuating circumstances or disability elements involved.
- Identify if the student has spoken to their College Tutor or engaged with other College support.
- Explore with the student where the student can seek additional support for the stress and low mood they have been experiencing during this process e.g. the University Counselling Service.
- Highlight to the student the ways in which the Students' Unions' Advice Service can support them if their case was to be put before the Discipline Committee – assistance in preparing for the hearing, working with other sources of support e.g. DRC, representative from the Law Faculty, and attending the hearing with the student.

### CASE STUDY 2

An MPhil student has made an appointment with the Students' Unions' Advice Service due to having failed their MPhil. The student explains that they felt they did not receive sufficient support from their supervisors and this has impacted on their result. The student would like to know what their options are.

Role of the Advisor:

- Listen
- Look at the University's Examination Review Procedure with the student and explain the process
- Look at the University's Student Complaint Procedure with the student and explain the process
- Read through the guidance notes on the role of the Supervisor in the Code of Practice for the MPhil Degree
- Discuss with the student which is the most appropriate procedure to use in their situation
- Assist the student in preparing their application form and statement for whichever process they choose to pursue
- Discuss with the student options for a review should the outcome of the process not be what they are hoping for. Look through the Review of University Body Decisions Procedure and the OIA (Office of the Independent Adjudicator) Complaint Process
- Provide the student with details of the Careers Service