

## SURVEY FINDINGS

**Overall, how well do you think your school prepared you, academically, for university?**

	Total	State-school	Fee-paying School
<b>TOP 2</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>75%</b>
Very well	23%	14%	33%
Quite well	41%	39%	42%
Neither well nor badly	18%	23%	13%
Quite poorly	14%	19%	9%
Very poorly	4%	5%	2%
<b>BOTTOM 2</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Net Score (Top 2 - Bottom 2)</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>63%</b>

University students who attended a fee-paying school were more likely than those who attended a state school to believe their school prepared them well, academically, for university (75% compared to 53%).

Students who go to Russell Group universities (71%) are more likely than those students who attend post-1992 universities (57%) to think that their school prepared them well, academically, for university.

**What was good about the academic preparation your school gave you for university?**

### Former state school respondents

Many state school students had been given self-directed and independent study, which fitted with the style of learning that they had at university. They were given advice about how to apply through UCAS and guidance on the application process in general, e.g. career days and mock interviews, which helped with their university applications. Essay writing skills were developed at state-schools, with referencing mentioned in particular. Several students from state-schools mentioned how they were held to high standards of assessment, which helped prepare them for the standards expected at university. Some students also found that they were taught beyond the syllabus, with this higher level of content being similar to what they would learn in the first year of university. However, there were a few state-school students who felt that their school hadn't offered adequate preparation for university, if any preparation at all.

*“There were countless university events. The standard of learning and assessing was very high and they also often brought in alumni and representatives from various universities.”*

Female student attending Pre-1992 university, former state school pupil

### **Former fee-paying school respondents**

Fee-paying school students experienced several similar types of academic preparation as state-school students. They felt that their schools had developed the skills that they would need at university, for example essay writing and critical thinking. In some cases, students were given assignments similar to those received at university to help with their preparation. Fee-paying school students also experienced self-directed or independent study, which helped to prepare them for the style of university learning. A high level and standard of education was another positive way that fee-paying schools prepared their students for university, with some students taught similar content to that they encountered in their first year of university. The International Baccalaureate was identified in particular as a qualification that helped prepare them for university, with students seeing it as similar to the style of work they encountered at university.

*“Coursework at school is similar to university and the subjects taught were applicable to my university course”*

Male student attending Post-1992 university, former fee-paying school pupil

## **How could your school have given you a better academic preparation for university?**

### **Former state school respondents**

23% of former state school respondents felt that they had not been well prepared for university by their school. They wanted increased levels of the positive aspects that had been identified by those students who had a more favourable experience i.e. more independent learning, essay writing and note-taking skill development, covering a higher level and wider variety of subjects, and attending university open days and workshops. They wanted a better idea of what university life and teaching would be like, with several students mentioning preparation for non-academic activities as well as academic preparation. Despite this, several students felt that they had been adequately prepared for university by their school or couldn't think of any ways they could have been given a better academic preparation.

*“Take us to open days, give us talks about career paths and options, give us chance to develop independent learning skills, teach us to be more academic in our quality of work, provide qualified teachers”*

Female student at Russell Group university, former state school pupil

### **Former fee-paying school respondents**

Fee-paying students identified similar improvements but, unlike state-school students, a small number felt that they had been too closely supported at school and wanted to be more academically independent.

*A little bit more independent learning would have definitely helped. And also, more coursework based assessment.”*

Male student at Russell Group university, former fee-paying school pupil

## Looking back at your overall time at school, how would you rate the quality of the teaching you received?

	Total	State-school	Fee-paying School
<b>TOP 2</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>89%</b>
Very good	33%	22%	44%
Good	54%	62%	45%
Neither good nor bad	9%	12%	6%
Poor	3%	3%	4%
Very poor	1%	2%	1%
<b>BOTTOM 2</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Net Score (Top 2 - Bottom 2)</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>84%</b>

There is a significant difference in what former state-school and fee-paying school students thought of their time at school. Former fee-paying school students rate their time more positively, with significantly more rating it as very good (44%) compared to state-school respondents (22%). Former state-school respondents are more moderate in their evaluation, with 62% rating it good compared to 45% of fee-paying school respondents.

Respondents currently attending Russell Group universities are more positive about their school teaching; 90% rated it as very good or good. This is significantly higher than students attending post-1992 universities (83%) and other universities (78%). 41% of Russell Group respondents rated it as very good, significantly higher than those attending both pre-1992 (28%) and post-1992 (24%) universities.

**Looking back at your overall time at university, how would you rate the quality of the teaching you have received to date?**

	Total	State-school	Fee-paying School
<b>TOP 2</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>86%</b>
Very good	30%	26%	34%
Good	55%	59%	52%
Neither good nor bad	11%	11%	10%
Poor	4%	4%	3%
Very poor	0%	0%	1%
<b>BOTTOM 2</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Net Score (Top 2 - Bottom 2)</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>82%</b>

More former fee-paying school respondents rate their university teaching as very good (34%) than do former state-school respondents (26%). However there is a difference in males' ratings. Former state-school males (65%) are more likely to rate their university teaching as good than are former fee-paying school males (49%).

It appears that females at pre-1992 universities may be having a different experience to some of the other respondents. 11% of pre-1992 females rated their quality of teaching as poor or very poor, significantly more than males at pre-1992 universities (0%) and both genders at Russell Group universities (males 2%, females 3%).

Significantly more former state-school students are at post-1992 universities (45%), while significantly more former fee-paying school students are at Russell Group universities (43%). However, given the similarities in ratings between former state-school and fee-paying school respondents overall, this is unlikely to have affected the results for this question.

## How would you rate the teaching you received during your time at university compared with the teaching you received at school?

	Total	State-school	Fee-paying School
<b>SUM: Teaching at university was better</b>	36%	45%	27%
The teaching I received at university was much better	19%	23%	15%
The teaching I received at university was a little better	17%	22%	12%
The teaching I received at school and university was of a similar standard	16%	17%	15%
The teaching I received at school was a little better	29%	22%	35%
The teaching I received at school was much better	19%	15%	23%
<b>SUM: Teaching at school was better</b>	48%	37%	58%
<b>Net Score (University - School)</b>	-12%	8%	-31%

Overall, more respondents (48%) thought that the teaching at their school was better than their teaching at university.

Those who have been to state-schools thought that university teaching was better (45%) while those who'd been to fee-paying schools thought that the teaching at school had been better (58%).

### Please explain why you say this.

#### Those who preferred school:

Those who preferred the teaching at their school generally thought so because the teaching at their school had been more personalised and more help was available. They felt that their teachers at school were more approachable than their university lecturers, and that their school teachers cared about their results. Their classes at school were smaller, leading to more interactions with their teacher. This added to the feeling of personalisation and support, in comparison to university. There was also negative feedback about university lecturers, with students feeling that their lecturers were uninformed and disinterested in teaching – they were researchers first and teachers second. These students felt that topics were covered at a better pace and with greater structure at school.

*“The class size at school was much smaller and the teachers provided much more personalised support and feedback”*

Male student attending Russell Group university, former fee-paying school pupil

#### Those who preferred university:

On the other hand, some students preferred their teaching at university because of the increased freedom they had in their self-directed learning. They felt that the lecturers knew their topics in more detail and had higher qualifications, meaning they were taught by experts in the field who were passionate about their subject. They felt challenged by the material and the teaching, rather than spoon-fed. In some cases, students experienced smaller class sizes at university compared to school, in contrast to the experiences of

other students discussed above. In addition, some students had a negative learning environment in school whether due to support available, speed of learning or teachers' control of classes, which meant that their university experience was better in comparison.

*“Lecturers at university are more specialist in their subjects and tend to be more passionate which shows in their teaching”*

Female student attending Post-1992 university, former state school pupil

### How would you describe your level of motivation for learning / achieving at university compared with your level of motivation for learning / achieving at school?

	Total	State-school	Fee-paying School
SUM: More motivated at university	58%	56%	60%
I have been much more motivated to learn / achieve at university than I was at school	30%	31%	29%
I have been slightly more motivated to learn / achieve at university than I was at school	28%	25%	31%
My levels of motivation to learn / achieve have been broadly similar at university and school	21%	22%	20%
I was slightly more motivated to learn / achieve at school than I have been at university	13%	11%	15%
I was much more motivated to learn / achieve at school than I have been at university	8%	11%	6%
SUM: More motivated at school	21%	22%	21%

Approximately 1 in 5 students (21%) have equal levels of motivation at university and school.

There appears to be a split in location of most motivation according to university type. Significantly more students at Russell Group (28%) or pre-1992 universities (28%) were more motivated at school, while those at post-1992 (71%) or Other universities (73%) were more motivated at university.

## How well do you feel your university has prepared you for your post-university career?

	Total	State-school	Fee-paying School
<b>TOP 2</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>62%</b>
Very well	17%	16%	17%
Quite well	47%	49%	44%
Neither well nor badly	23%	21%	25%
Quite poorly	11%	12%	9%
Very poorly	3%	2%	4%
<b>BOTTOM 2</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Net Score (Top 2 - Bottom 2)</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>48%</b>

Students in pre-1992 universities are significantly more likely to think that their university has prepared them poorly for their post-university career (22%). Females at pre-1992 universities have a particularly negative outlook compared to students at Russell Group and post-1992 universities, with 27% thinking they have been prepared poorly.

However, students at Other universities have a much more positive outlook – 80% say that their university has prepared them well, significantly more than students at other universities.

## How happy or unhappy are you with the value for money you have received from your university course?

	Total	State-school	Fee-paying School
<b>TOP 2</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Very happy with the value for money	12%	8%	17%
Fairly happy with the value for money	31%	29%	33%
Neither happy nor unhappy	23%	26%	20%
Fairly unhappy with the value for money	27%	30%	23%
Very unhappy with the value for money	7%	7%	8%
<b>BOTTOM 2</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Net Score (Top 2 - Bottom 2)</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>19%</b>

There is a significant difference between the satisfaction of former state-school and former fee-paying school students. Former fee-paying school students are significantly more happy with their value for money (50%) than former state-school students (37%).

Significantly more students in other universities were happy with the value for money (71%) compared to the other students. This could be because, as discussed earlier, their expectations have been met and exceeded, and in some cases they rate aspects of their university more highly than students in other types of university.

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## **Note to Editor**

The survey was jointly commissioned, from YouthSight, by the Girls' Schools Association (GSA) and the Headmasters' & Headmistresses' Conference (HMC). They surveyed 500 final year undergraduates studying across UK universities, through an online survey that ran between 28th October 2016 and 2nd November 2016. Fifty per cent of those who completed the online survey had attended state-school and 50% had attended fee-paying schools. Extracts of the survey findings (yet to be published) appear below.

Universities have been categorised as Russell Group, Pre-1992, Post-1992 and Other. The Other category includes Small institutions, FE colleges UCAS-affiliated, and FE colleges not UCAS-affiliated.

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