



## The impact of financial support on part-time learners in higher education

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# Background: the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC)



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The LLC is about widening opportunity

We aim to:

- ensure that the University is genuinely open to mature and part-time learners and those of any age from under-represented communities who need focussed support;
- engage with the city and region to support widening participation, develop the local workforce and assist the University to reach diverse communities;
- work in partnership with faculties and services to the benefit of mature, part-time and foundation level students.



- Number of part-time undergraduates on sustained\* courses at the LLC 2015-2016:  
**122 (FTE)**
- 84% taught on bespoke programmes in the LLC;  
16% studying full-time degrees on a part-time basis elsewhere in the University

\*Degree, Foundation Degree, Diploma of Higher Education, Certificate of Higher Education (i.e. excluding CPD and other short courses)



- Declining numbers of part-time learners starting higher education courses
- Focus on retention (TEF)
- Push from OFFA to move financial support away from individual bursaries to group activities
- Lack of knowledge/evidence about the relationship between part-time learners and financial support

= need to know more about the relationship between part-time undergraduates and financial support

# Background: financial support at Leeds



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Means-tested institutional bursary ('Leeds Financial Support') awarded to all part-time undergraduates on sustained courses

- *Pro-rata* of full-time rate (up to £1,670)
- Household income sole criterion
- Paid in cash



- Small scale research project 2015-2016 to investigate impact of Leeds Financial Support on LLC part-time undergraduates
- Online survey winter 2015-2016 (completed)
- Focus groups spring/summer 2016 (ongoing)

# The project: online survey



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- Sent to LLC students who
  - Were on a sustained part-time undergraduate programme
  - Started their course from 2012 onwards
  - Were in at least their second year of study
- 140 students eligible
- 55 respondents (39% response rate)



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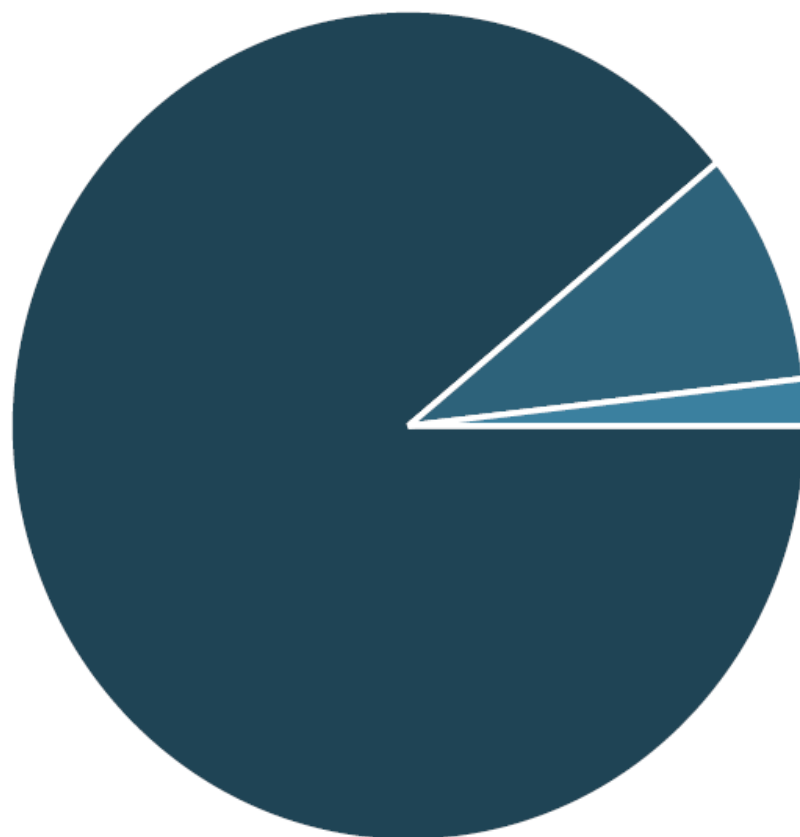
Responses to some of the questions in the online survey



# Q: did you receive Leeds Financial Support (LFS)?



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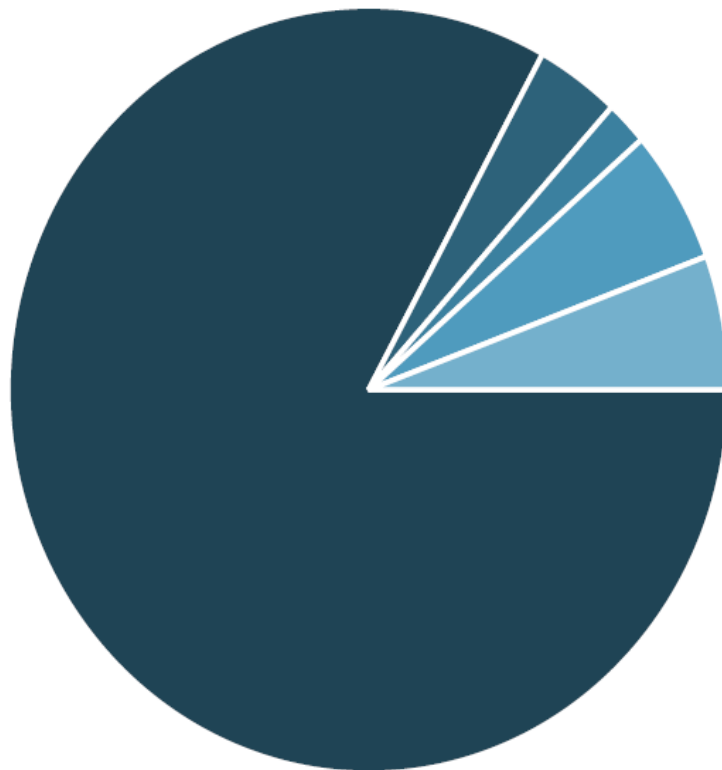


Yes	49	(89.1%)
No	5	(9.1%)
Not sure	1	(1.8%)

# Q: What is your household income?



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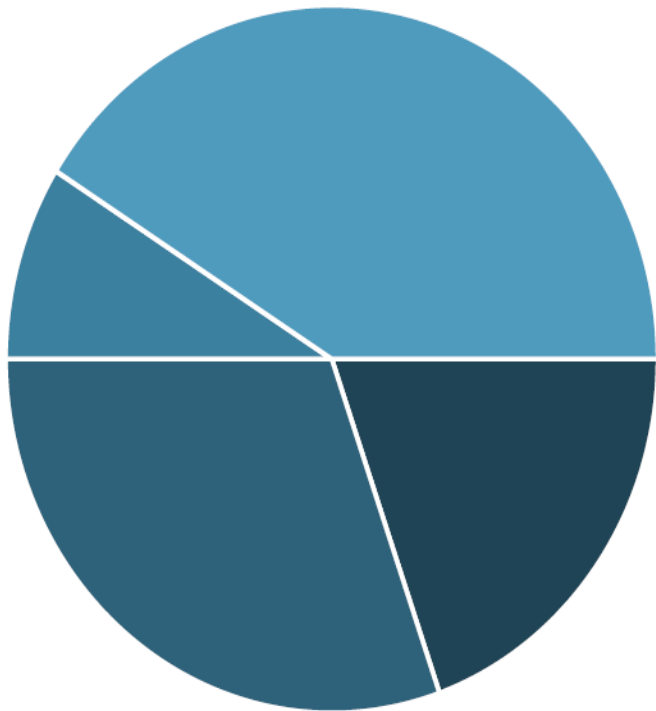


Up to £25,000	44	(83%)
£25,001-£30,000	2	(3.8%)
£30,001-£36,000	1	(1.9%)
£36,001-£42,600	3	(5.7%)
£42,601 or above	3	(5.7%)

# Q: Did the availability of LFS affect your decision to come to Leeds?



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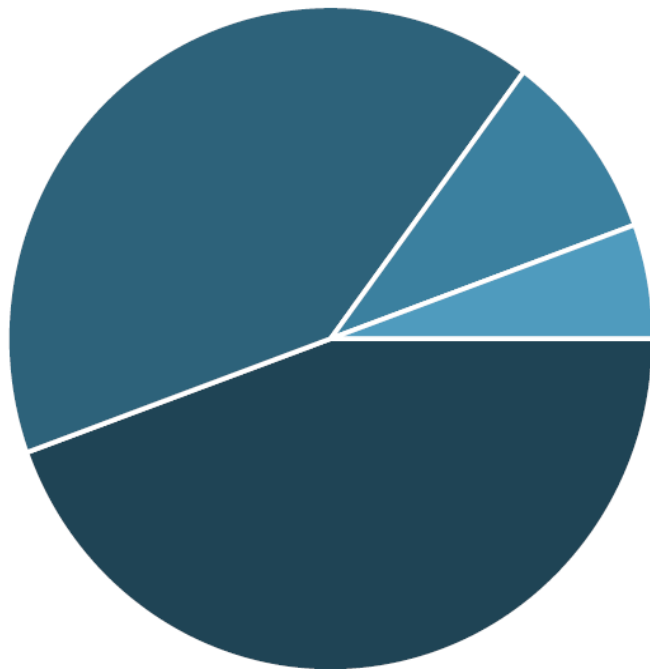


- Yes, it was very important/the deciding factor 11 (19.6%)
- It was important, but not the deciding factor 17 (30.4%)
- It was one factor I considered but wasn't that important 5 (8.9%)
- It didn't affect my decision at all 23 (41.1%)

# Q: How important has LFS been in helping you to remain on your course?



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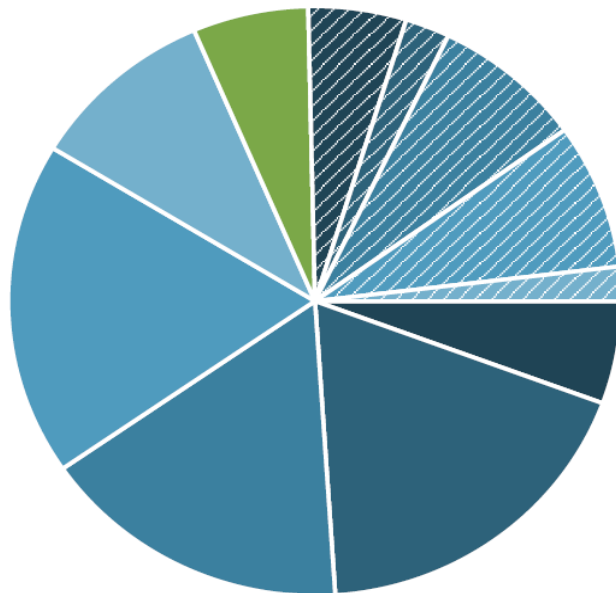


- Very important: I wouldn't still be here without it 24 (44.4%)
- Quite important 22 (40.7%)
- Helpful but not hugely important 5 (9.3%)
- Not important at all 3 (5.6%)

# Q: How have you spent your LFS?



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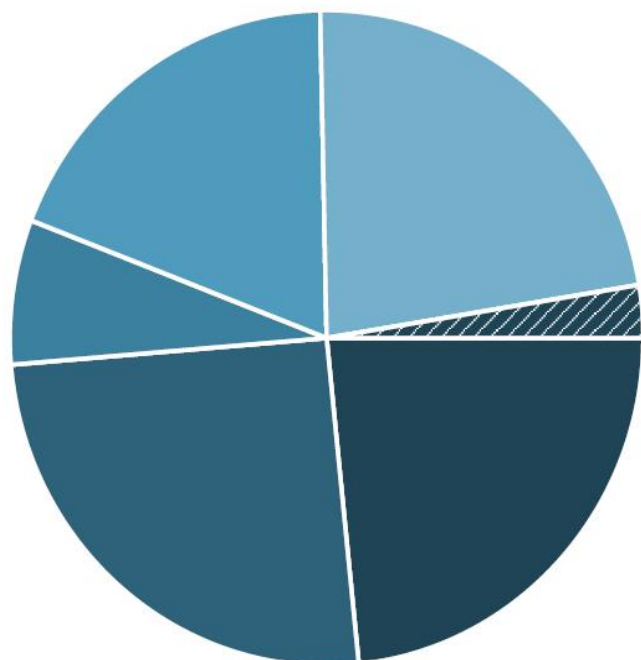


- Child care costs 12 (5.6%)
- Travel costs 39 (18.3%)
- Consumables (e.g. paper, pens, printer ink/printer credits etc.) 35 (16.4%)
- Books 39 (18.3%)
- Hardware (e.g. laptop, iPad, phone etc.) 21 (9.9%)
- Software and/or software upgrades 13 (6.1%)
- As a substitute for wages lost when attending the course 11 (5.2%)
- Council tax 5 (2.3%)
- Utility bills (e.g. phone, electricity, gas etc.) 17 (8%)
- Food & other consumables 17 (8%)
- Other 4 (1.9%)

## Q: If you hadn't received LFS, what do you think the effects might have been?



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- Pressure on household finances 36 (23.4%)
- Pressure on personal finances 39 (25.3%)
- Difficulties in paying for child care 11 (7.1%)
- Difficulties in travelling to university and/or work/voluntary placements 29 (18.8%)
- Difficulties in buying course resources (e.g. consumables, books, hardware, software etc.) 35 (22.7%)
- Other 0
- No effect at all 4 (2.6%)

# Selected comments



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*The loss of earnings from attending the course is made up from the LFS ... without it I could not afford to attend*

*I am able to cut down a few hours at work so I can concentrate on my studies*

*I needed support to put my son in nursery so I could attend uni*

*Financial support has made me feel much better mentally and very positive about my studies*

*Without it I wouldn't be able to afford the laptop and printer I have needed to let me participate in my degree*

*Without it I would financially struggle to buy books*

*This year household income has reduced dramatically ... LFS will be keeping me at university*

- Focus groups to explore issues further, especially:
  - Attitudes towards debt of part-time learners from low-income backgrounds
  - Pre-arrival knowledge of financial support
  - The role of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in supporting decision-making about part-time study
- Sharing of data/intelligence between institutions?
- Collaborative research?



- What financial support does your institution provide for part-time undergraduates?
- Do you know if there is any relationship between this support and (a) the recruitment and (b) the retention of your part-time learners?
- What role does specialist pre-entry Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for adults play in your institution, particularly with regard to financial issues?
- Would you be interested in data-sharing and/or collaborative research?