



# Learning and Teaching Transition to University

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# Project



Project started Sept 2007:

- Survey of new entrants
- Interviews of a convenience sample of undergraduates
- Visits to schools and 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges

## Aims:

Investigate learning & teaching transition to university at an institution

- Previous experience; preferences
- Expectations
- Actual experiences
- Identification of issues and areas of concern - recommendations

# Survey



Hard copy and online (online only in second year)

Early Sept (after offer, before start)

1300 responses over 3 years

## Four broad areas:

- School experience
- Reasons for choices about higher education;
- Expectations and preferences about learning;
- Use and expectation of technology to support learning.



# The Students

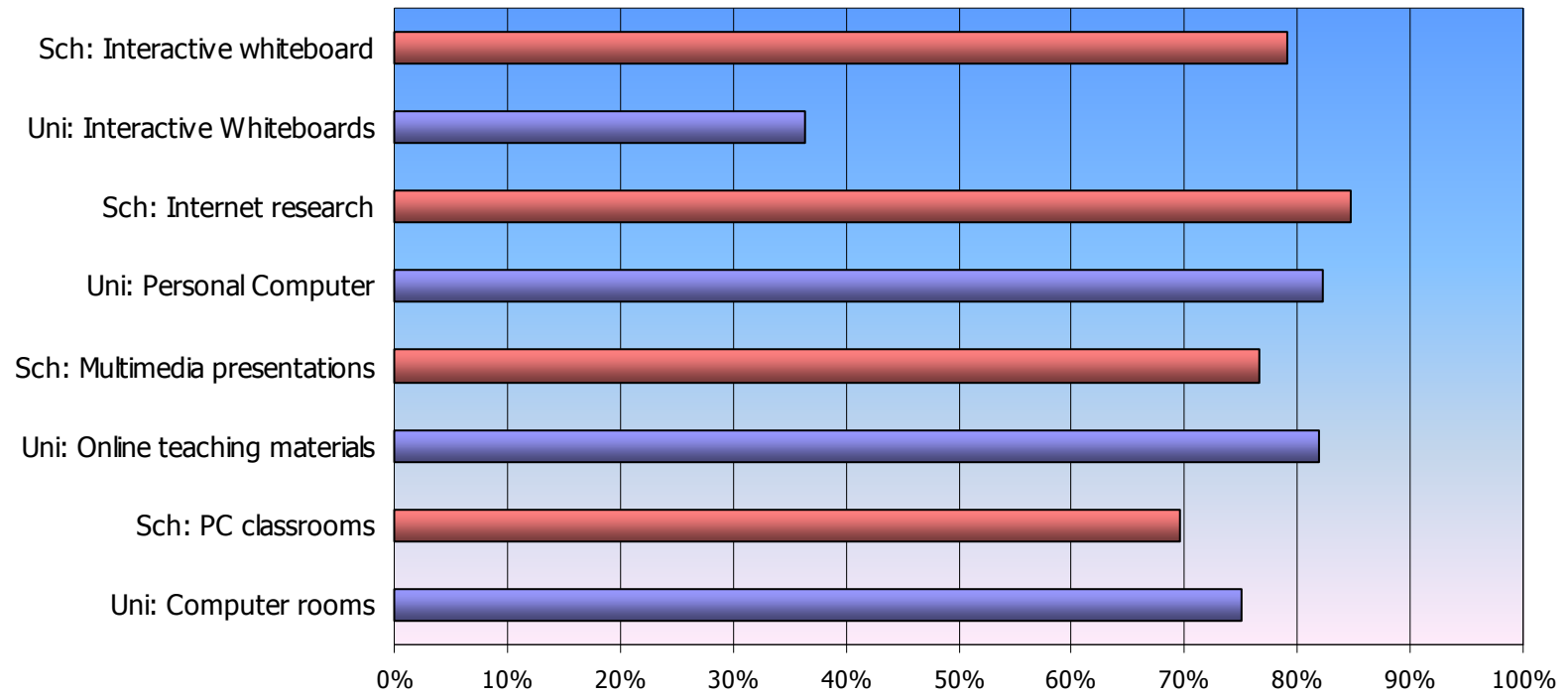


- Young: 65% 18 yrs old, 21% 19 yrs old [Yr 2: 60%, 23%]
- Male: 37% - Female: 61% [Yr 2: 41%, 59%]
- Ethnicity: 38% White, 37% Asian [Yr 2: 43%, 37%]
- Living at home (for 1<sup>st</sup> yr): 49% [Yr 2: 41%]
- Attended 6<sup>th</sup> form college: 52% [Yr 2: 46%]



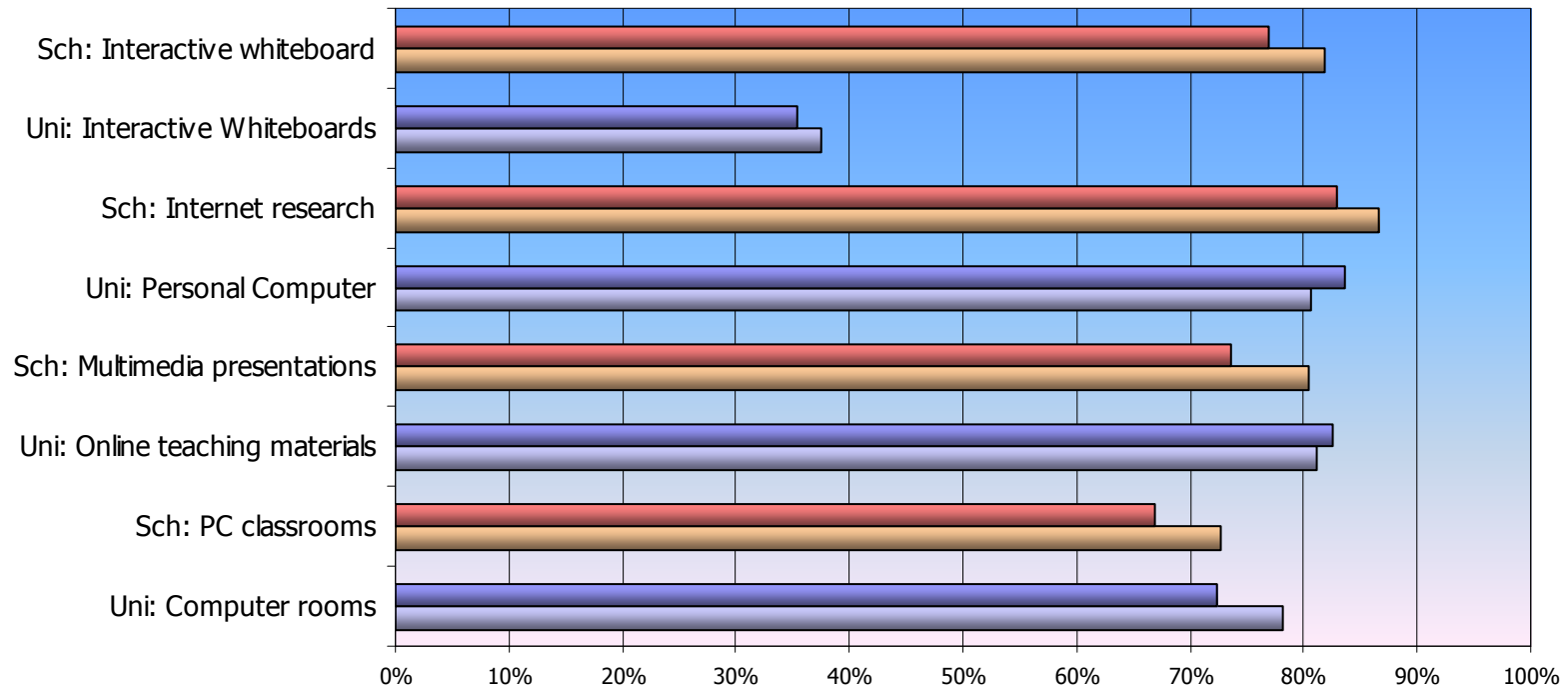


### Technology used at School and expected use at University for Learning Purposes



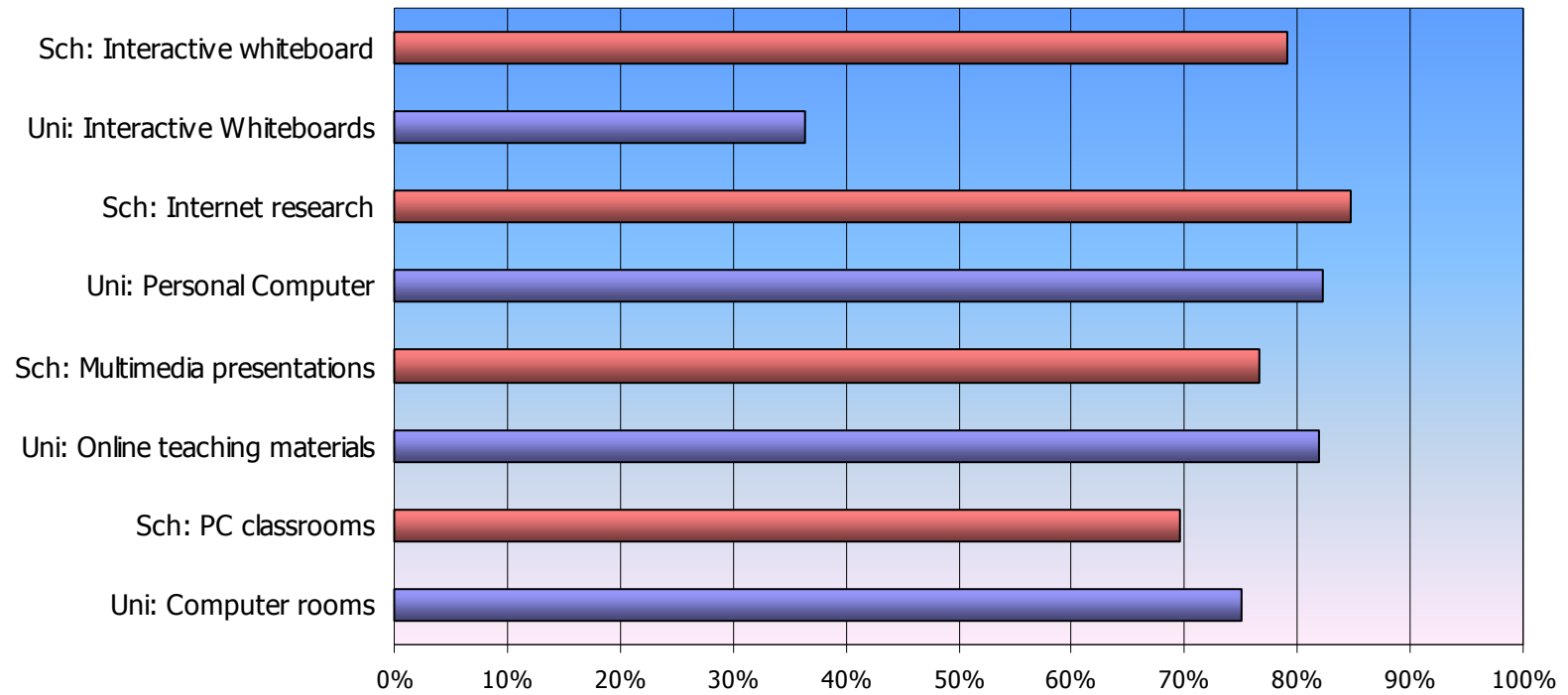


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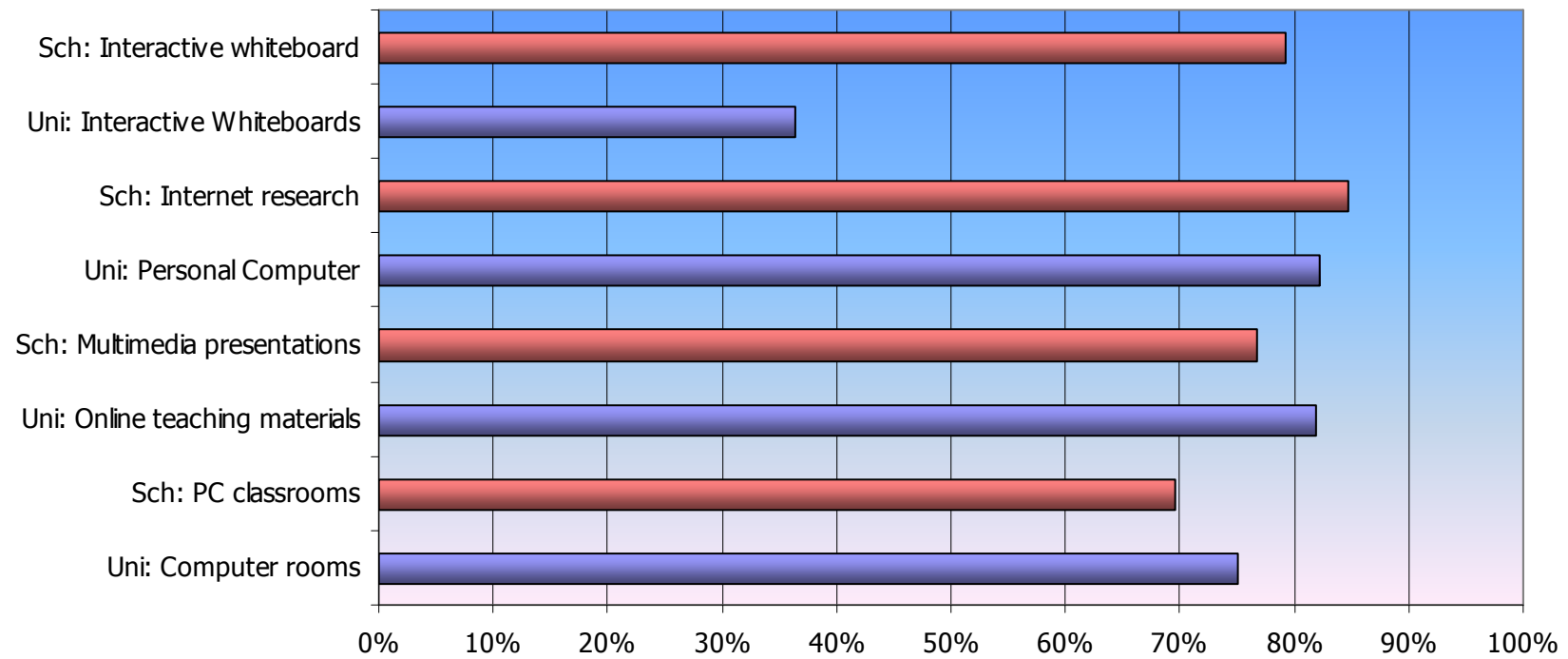


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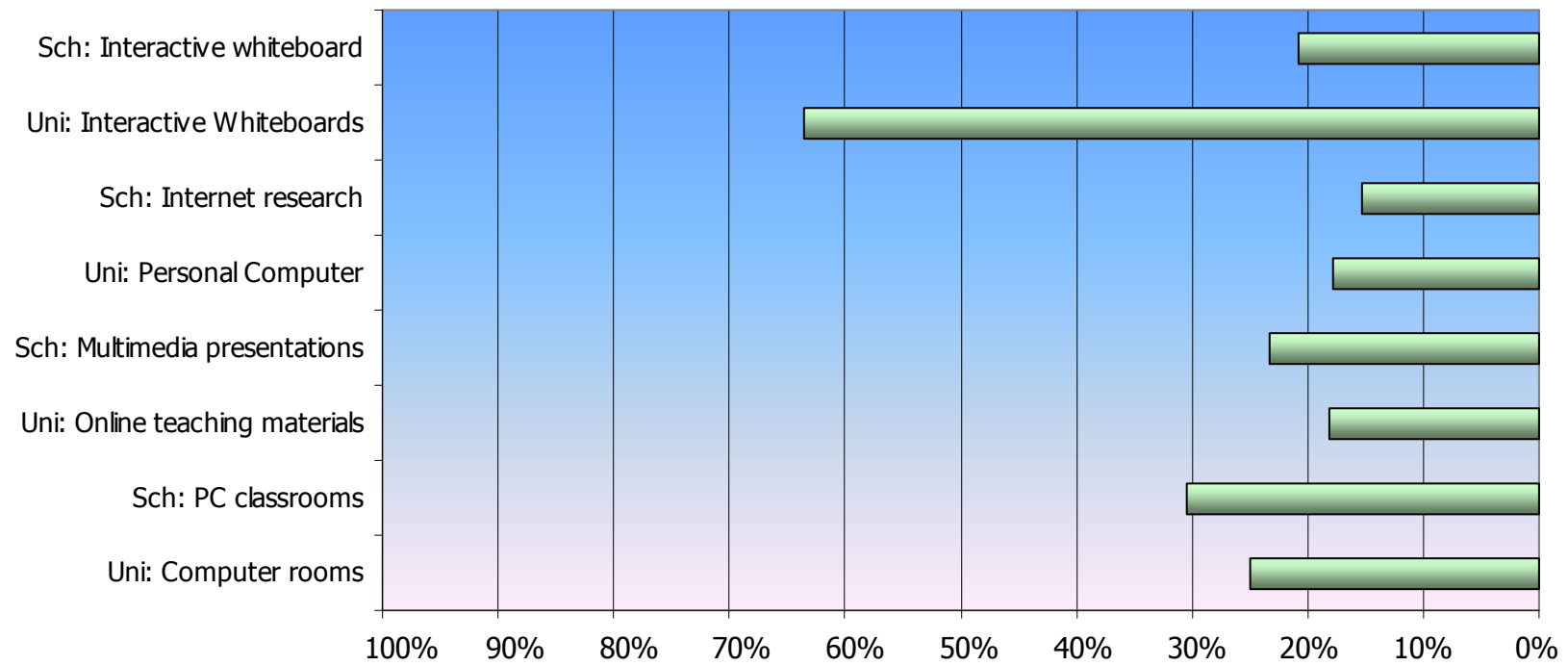


**Technology used at School and expected use at University for Learning Purposes -  
Selected**

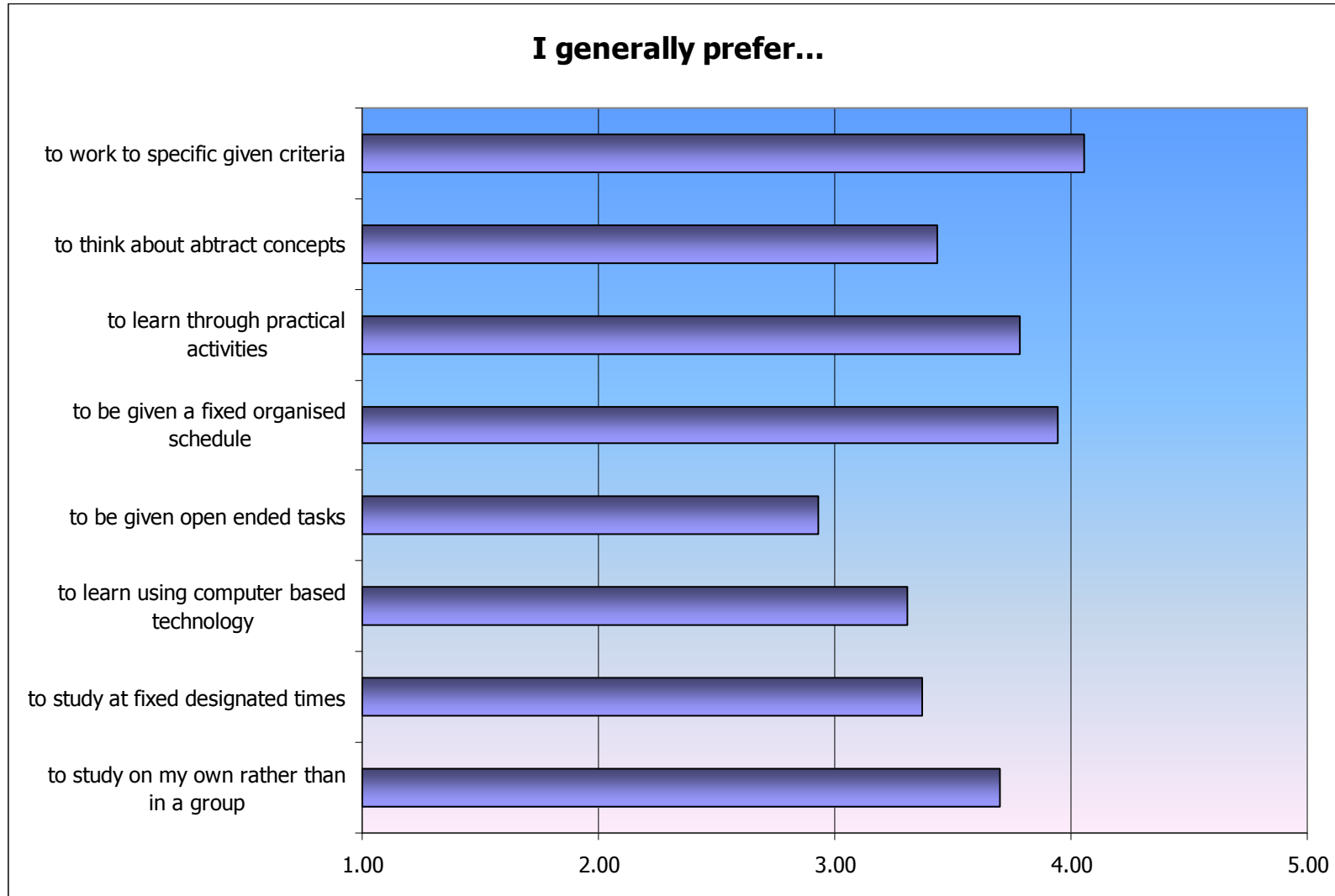




**Technology used at School and expected use at University for Learning Purposes -  
Not Selected**



# Preferences



# Ethnicity (first survey)



Topic	Answer	% Ethnic	
		White	Asian
<b>Reasons for going to Uni</b>	<i>For a chosen career / specific job</i>	<b>48%</b>	<b>77%</b>
	<i>To leave home</i>	<b>24%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Choice of University</b>	<i>Reputation of the College</i>	<b>16%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Location of Learning</b>	<i>Classroom</i>	<b>76%</b>	<b>48%</b>
	<i>At home</i>	<b>18%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Living Location @ Uni</b>	<i>At home</i>	<b>29%</b>	<b>62%</b>

# Living at Home



## “Local Students”?

- More likely to go to Sixth form
- More likely to be Asian
- Less likely to have graduate parents
- PC access and expectation of use lower



# School visits



## Local schools and sixth forms

### Purpose:

- Background: Classroom
- Sixth-formers' expectations
- Staff views

### Example areas of interest:

- Awareness of issues (Staff and Students)
- Students' knowledge of University



# School Visits



## Themes from visits

- Support and interaction at school/college



# School Visits



## Themes from visits

- Support and interaction at school/college
- Difficulty in knowing what it is actually like to learn at university
  - Staff knowledge in both sectors
  - Communications and provision: content, UCAS, careers etc.
  - Independent working

# Independent learning



What does it mean?

“Working on your own”

“Working on your own”

“Just working on your own”

“Working by yourself”

“Working on your own”

“Out of classroom work”...

# School Visits



## Themes from visits

- Support and interaction at school/college
- Difficulty in knowing what it is actually like to learn at university
  - Staff knowledge in both sectors
  - Communications and provision: content, UCAS, careers etc.
  - Independent working
- Core mission for schools/colleges
- Changes to curriculum, teaching and learning

# Interviews



- Initially 25 Students interviewed.
- Three sets of interviews
- First term, second term and after exams
- Most students only attended two out of three
  
- Follow up interviews in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study
  
- 57 interviews in total



# Expectations



- **Assessment**

- Nakul “I think that, I think personally I found that it was quite a jump, I mean I was warned that there was going to be more work etc., etc. but I didn’t really expect for that for example from the first week in, they would give us assessments that would be part of our degree”
- Joanne “I think it will get a little bit more intense”

- **Guidance and feedback**

- Shanthi “I like my tutor and that is the one thing that makes me feel really uneasy, because I’m still curious of what exactly am I supposed to do”

# Expectations



- Teaching

- Amy “I expected that the seminar groups would be a lot smaller and that kind of worried me because I thought it’d be about four people in a room with the lecturer”
- Liam “I was sort of aware that there would be lectures before I came even though I hadn’t grasped how a lecture feels”
- Lorraine “I thought there would be a lot more kind of, I’m doing Drama, so I thought there would still be some big kind of lectures, and we’d all go and sit there and be 60 people in there but there aren’t at all, the largest class I’ve got is about 25, am and it is, they are quite similar to sort of lessons at school.”

- Worries about the course

- Daisy “I did a gap year after my Sixth form and I was worried about settling back in again”
- Michael “I guess it’s the fact that you really just, you got to put yourself out there”

# Experiences of HE



- **Assessment**

- Claire, talking about not knowing what formative assessment is “form[ative] assessment means it’s a mock under exam conditions”
- Drashnika “the whole web CT thing. You just submit your work electronically, that’s quite useful”
- Joanne “The essays, its just a matter of getting used to I think, because again, I wasn’t, I didn’t do that a lot at college, so its just something new to deal with”

# Experiences of HE



- **Adapting to university and the course**
  - Amy 'both of my first essays for each were assessed for the degree, which wasn't so helpful because it was quite nerve wrecking really'
  - Daisy 'Of course I've got to catch up and I haven't actually spent enough time on it. But I guess I just got caught up with the social life here and going out doing this and that, so but obviously I've got exams coming up so I will settle down a lot more and I will start using the facilities here like the library'
  - Joanne 'even with my small Hispanic groups the teacher still doesn't know your name, which to me is a little bit, you know impersonal and whatever but obviously they are dealing with hundreds of students every year'

# Experiences of HE



- Experiences differing from expectations
  - Amy “its been much more laid back then I thought ... you aren’t pestered really, I expected more pestering”
  - Daisy “I thought a semester would last for ages but I only got two weeks left now before I have my first exams”
  - Ganesh “But I did find it kind of difficult because they didn’t explain it very well and it was quite difficult being in lectures and things as well because its not like you can just go to a ask questions whenever you want in the middle of lessons, you just have to listen for the whole way and just understand it later”
  - Michael “I think it’s a lot more on sort of independent thought you’re not just sort of, I think in essays previous to university you were almost just asked to regurgitate someone else’s opinion sort of in your own words”

# Experiences of HE



- Feedback

- Claire “I think the only problems is people not explaining things well. We’ve got an assessment on SF in IT. What is SF, I don’t know what it is.”
- Drashnika “I find it quite supportive here, am, I mean we can always approach our teachers and lecturers”
- Mirek “all the staff and everyone wants to help you”
- Thomas “one essay I had back, I got a middle 2.2 and I didn’t really [understand why], because my feedback was, very good, I [thought I] would have got a high 2.1”
- Amy “These criticisms were very particular to the question ..., asking why I had not expanded on several of my points, despite my restriction of 2000 words, rather than offering general criticisms which would be useful for future work.”

# Experiences of HE



- Induction and settling in

- Daisy “My induction went really badly, because I am went to the law department to find out and the first day when they were giving the induction talks, economics and law clashed so I missed out half law and half of economics”
- Deborah “As far as the actual the administration went, it was terrible. I mean we didn’t get our timetables until about three or four minutes before our first lesson”

# Experiences of HE



- Negative experiences

- Claire “They say sort of ask at the end, so they don’t like you to interrupt and the other thing is, it seems awkward to try and go back but also its kind of like we’ve got a boy in our class who asks after every lecture and it winds everyone up, so that you don’t ask.”
- Joanne “I’m having to go back to my teachers and ask, I don’t understand what this is and I then can’t do the work that you’ve set because it’s not making any sense to me.”
- Louise “one of my classes we are doing, is something called logbook and they didn’t tell us anything about it. It was quite annoying”
- Lorraine “its frustrating more so its like group work so its just like a performance because in our performances we all get the same mark, so obviously there is no way for the lecturers to know whose done the work and who hasn’t done the work”

# Experiences of HE



- Views of staff

- Nakul “I expected the tutor, to be honest, to be much more informal”
- Shanthi “He says he doesn’t do email but he is quite elderly so perhaps he doesn’t like to use modern technology or I don’t know he, he just says I don’t do emails so don’t email me”
- Shereen “he was just so nice and is, I mean the staff is so friendly, there is nothing to worry about”
- Karen “Drama I think it’s different because you engage with the lecturers on a different sort of level after each performance we have a little social gathering we all have drinks and cake and things and you touch upon every day life topics in discussion in class”

# Learning styles



- Changes to previous learning styles
  - Amy “I am being challenged more to think for myself and I’m finding it more difficult”
  - Nakul “I’m more independent no doubt and I’ve become more conscious of my time”
  - Rajeev “I think I’m using quite a lot of my A-level way of learning but I’ve also changed, I’ve just basically done more studying”
  - Karen “I guess I haven’t been as stressed I've relaxed a lot over the year ... I don’t see it as a bad thing, I mean I've become less organised but, I mean I'm still very much a list maker unfortunately and I think I’ll just be that forever.”

# Views of teaching



- **What I like**

- Amy “I prefer having a kind of objective, like if you go into a class or something and they tell you right, this is what we are going to be covering”
- Karen “we can go off in any direction, depending on what happens in the class and [where] everyone is wanting to go”
- Thomas “you get into it straight away and that’s really helpful”
- Daisy “I like lecturers who, who don’t just read off the PowerPoint ... one lecturer ... anything he says will just be on the OHP or on the screen ... whereas [another lecturer] has a printout for us but its not everything’s not on there, so you have to go and you have to make notes and you have to listen to what she’s saying

# Views of teaching



- **What I don't like**

- Amy “I don't really think you get much out of just discussion, the first thing you have to be told something first to react to it”
- Michael “mini problem I had was in an essay I got marked back am, one of the comments was, use double quotation marks but the style sheet told me not to use double quotation marks”
- Shanthi “There is no structure to the lecture sometimes even if she is following her outline”
- Claire “so some of it, yeah, you can understand why we are learning it but they are very like a lot of it, you sort of sit there and you think why am I learning this and ... they are not like, oh you need to know this because, so it has no relevance”

# Ongoing issues



- Length of the transition
- Understanding of 'how things work'
- 'Journey' necessary?
  
- Different interpretations of experiences
- Knowing our students - groups



# Ways to ease transition



- **Managing expectations**
  - Open days
  - Outreach
  - ‘Work’ experience?
- **Smoothing the direct transition**
  - Getting induction right
  - Easing them in?
  - Communication
- **Early support for learning**
  - Recognising and supporting differences
  - Proactivity rather than remediality
  - Stressing positive experiences and skills

# Our best quote!



Claire

“one [of the] like scariest medical ... Professors stood up and this guy walked in late, he was like don’t walk late into my lectures and this phone went off and he threw the phone in a jug of water. And then he made people stand at the front and take their tops off, so he could point at like anatomical parts, we were all like, my god, this guy is crazy, I want to home, and then at the end we were realising it wasn’t real. And this huge argument broke out about like respecting the people in your class, respecting your tutors”