



PGT Decision Survey: Results Report

Two-Level Analysis: General & Faculty-Specific Insights

How to Read This Report

This report presents findings from the PGT Decision Survey, which examines the factors associated with prospective students' decisions to accept or decline postgraduate taught (PGT) offers at the University of Sheffield.

Key Metrics

Metric	Definition	Interpretation Guide
Rate Difference (pp)	Change in acceptance rate when a factor is present	+10pp = 10 percentage points higher acceptance rate among respondents with that factor
Net Importance	(% of acceptors citing factor) minus (% of decliners citing factor)	Positive values indicate the factor is cited more frequently by acceptors; negative values indicate it is cited more frequently by decliners
Cramér's V	Effect size measuring practical significance	0.10–0.20 = Small; 0.20–0.30 = Medium; >0.30 = Large
Confidence Interval	Range within which the true population value is likely to fall	Wider intervals indicate greater uncertainty

Statistical Notes

- **FDR-corrected** results control for multiple testing across the full set of comparisons
- **Faculty-level** findings are exploratory due to smaller sample sizes and use raw (uncorrected) p-values
- Emphasis is placed on **effect sizes and direction** alongside statistical significance

Overview

Metric	Value
Total Respondents	872 (completed responses only)
Overall Acceptance Rate	74.5%
Faculties Analysed	5 (those with $n \geq 50$)

Summary of Key Observations

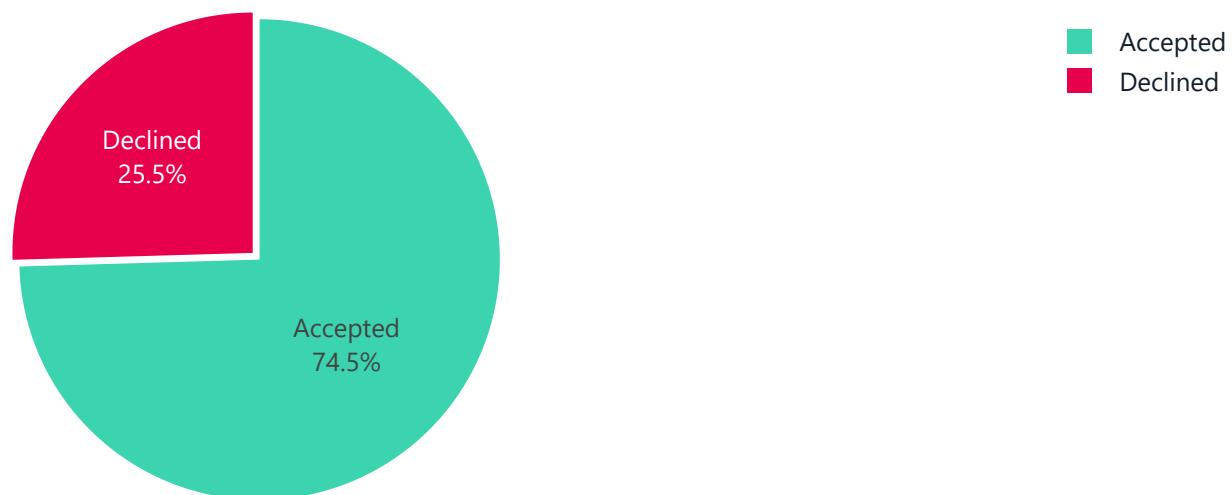
Level	Observation
General	Attendance at in-person events is associated with a higher acceptance rate (+11pp)
Faculty	Engineering and Arts & Humanities show the most pronounced event-related associations
Personas	Respondents classified as "Rankings Researchers" show a lower conversion rate of 68% (-8pp vs overall)
Home vs Overseas	Home students: 78.9% acceptance rate; Overseas students: 73.1%

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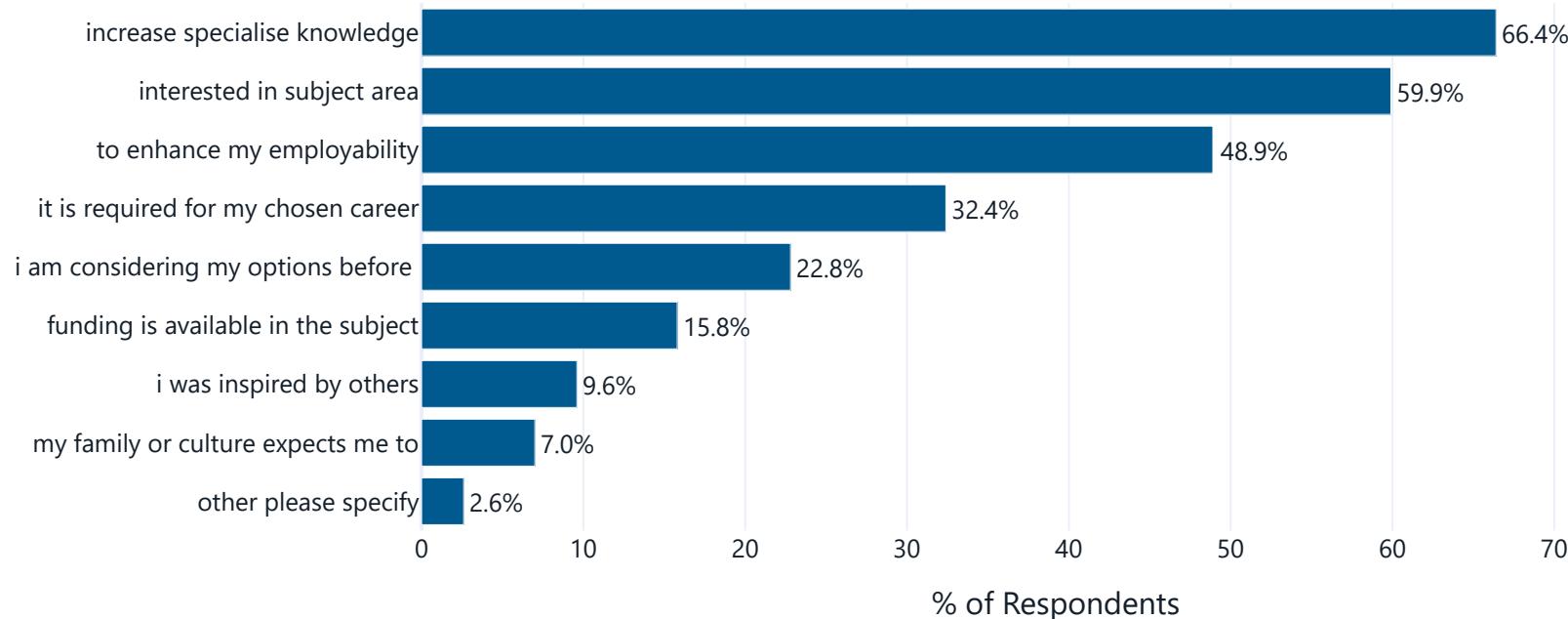
Descriptive Overview

This section provides a descriptive summary of the survey responses before the statistical driver analysis. It covers the respondent profile, stated motivations, information sources used, and key demographic breakdowns.

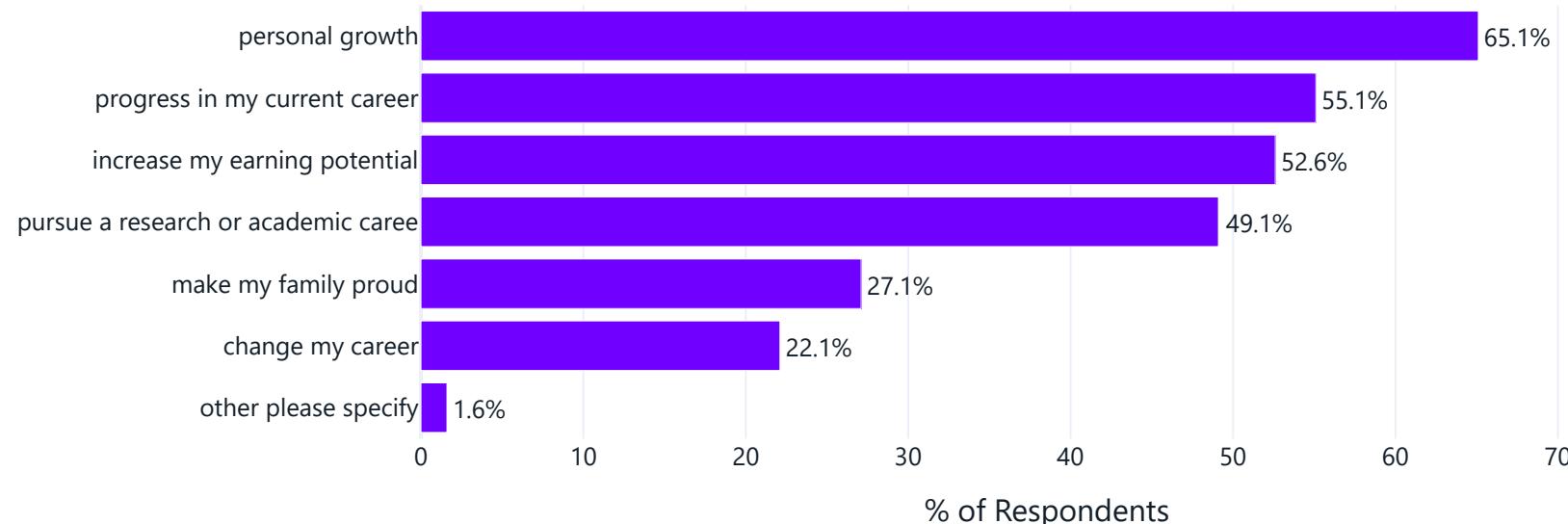
Response Summary — 872 Respondents | Acceptance Rate: 74.5%



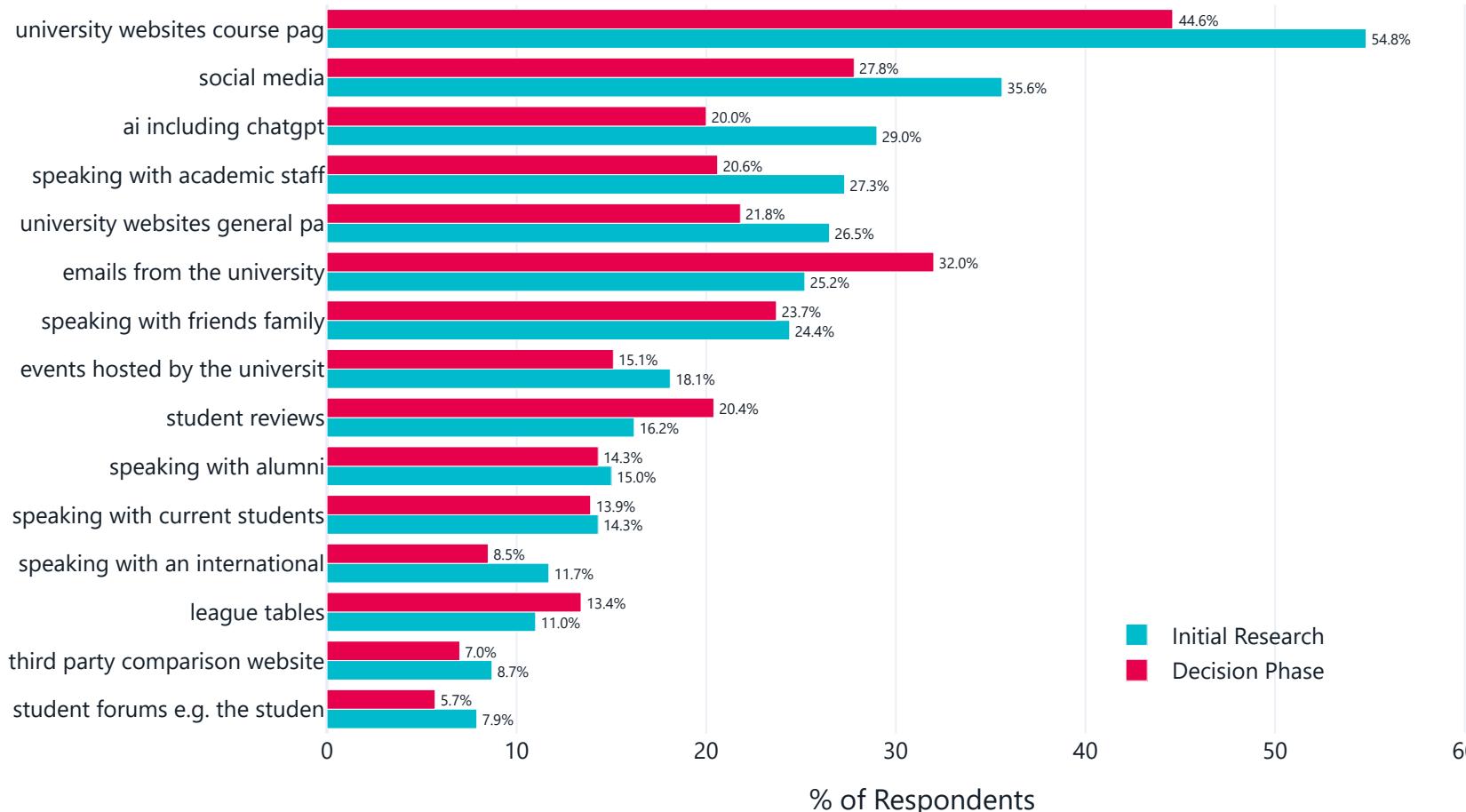
Motivations for Pursuing Postgraduate Study



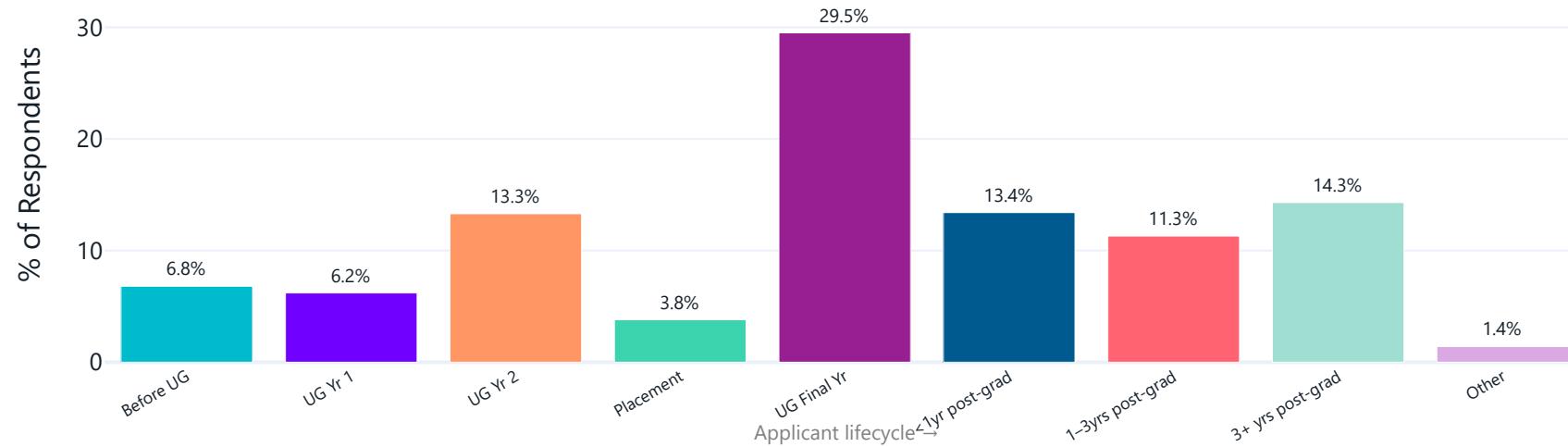
What Respondents Hope to Achieve from Postgraduate Study



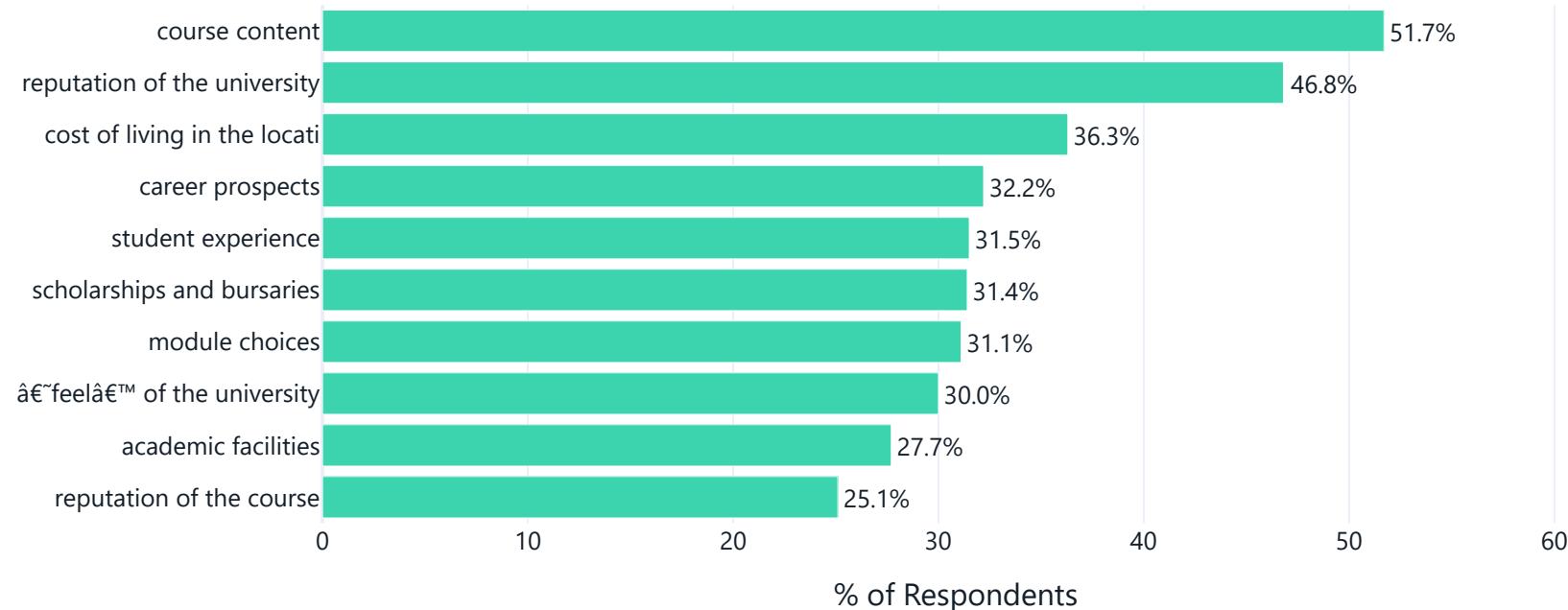
Information Sources: Initial Research vs Decision Phase



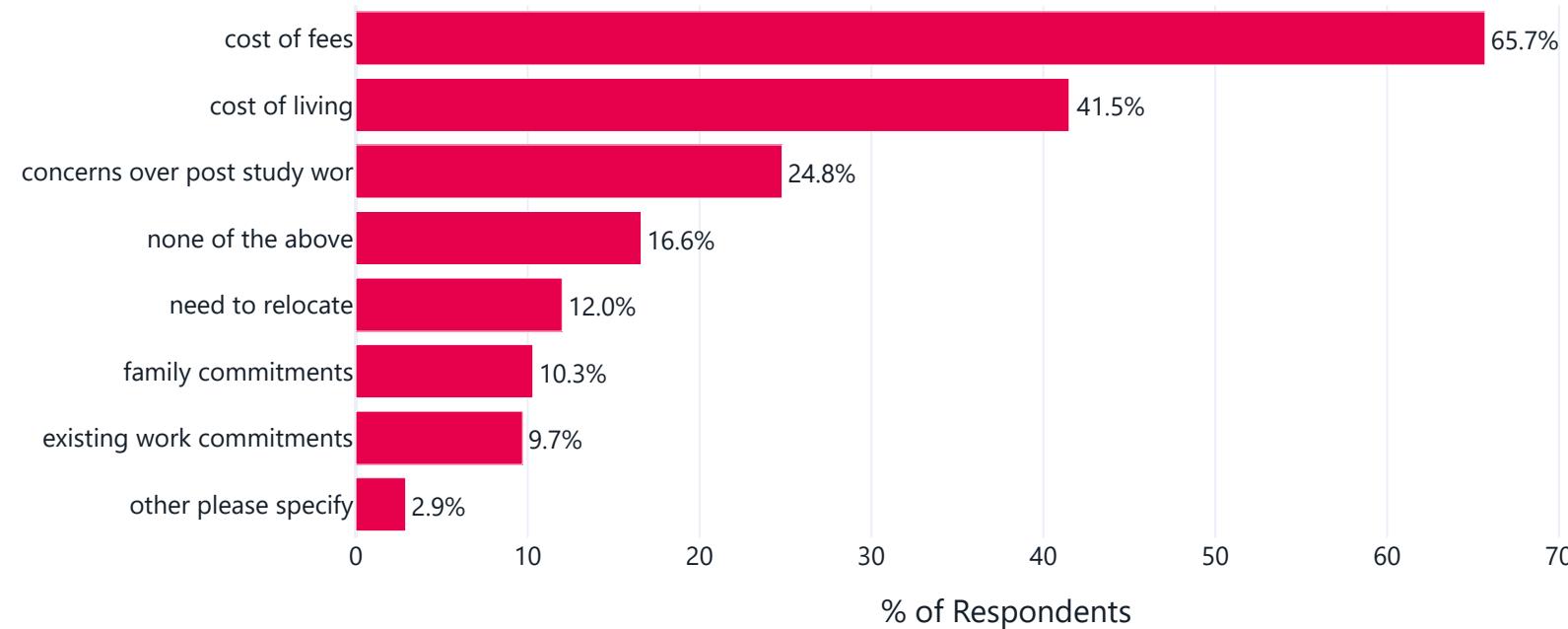
When Did Respondents Begin Researching Postgraduate Study?



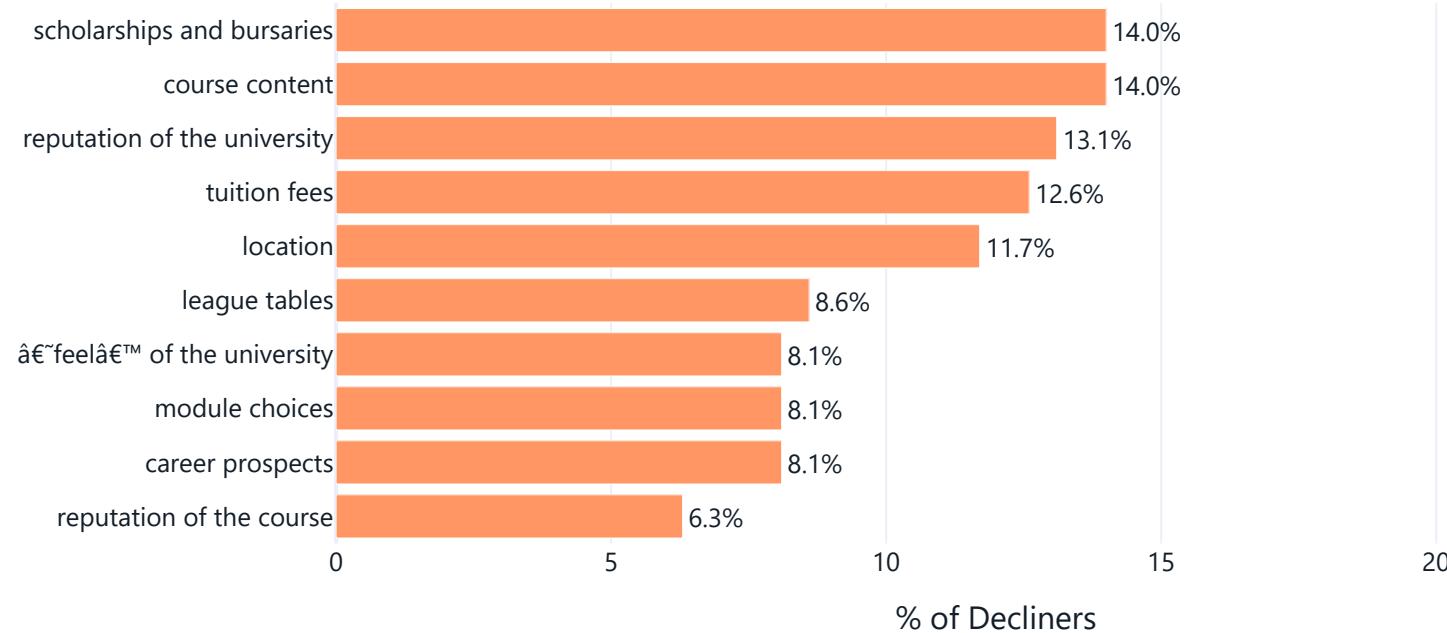
Factors Cited by Acceptors



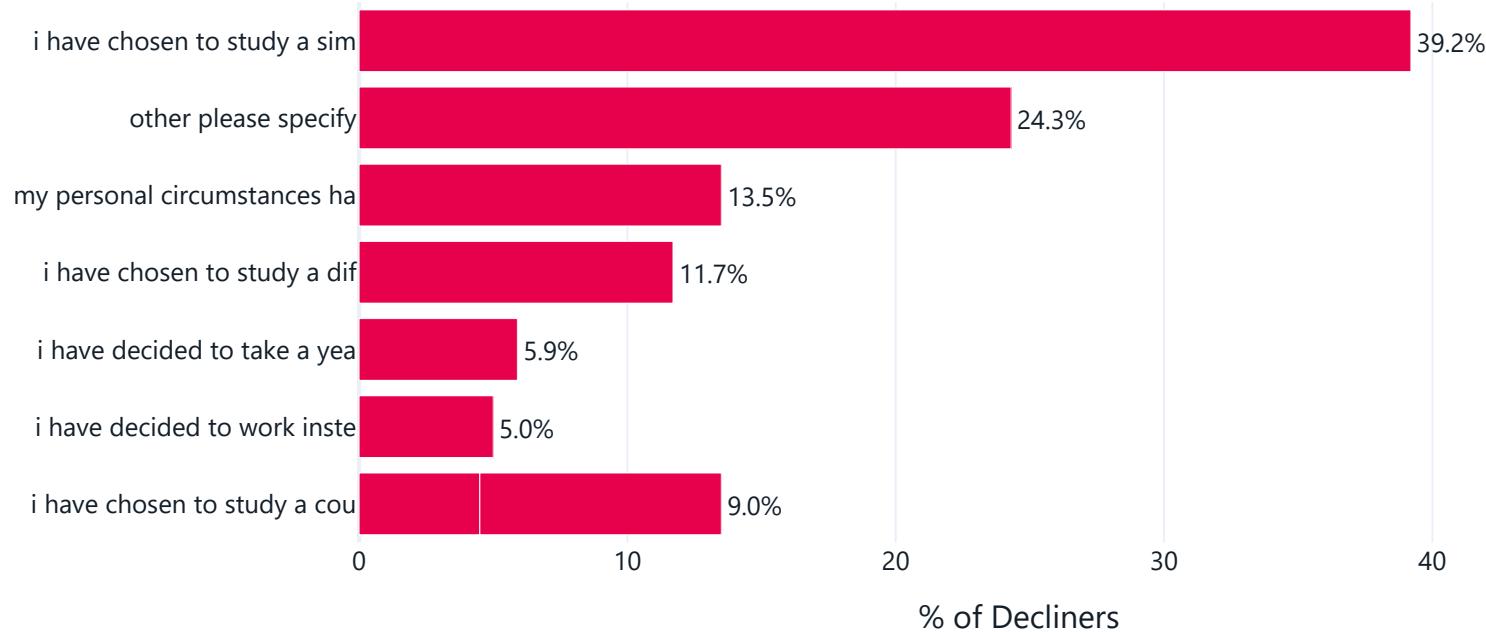
Barriers to Postgraduate Study



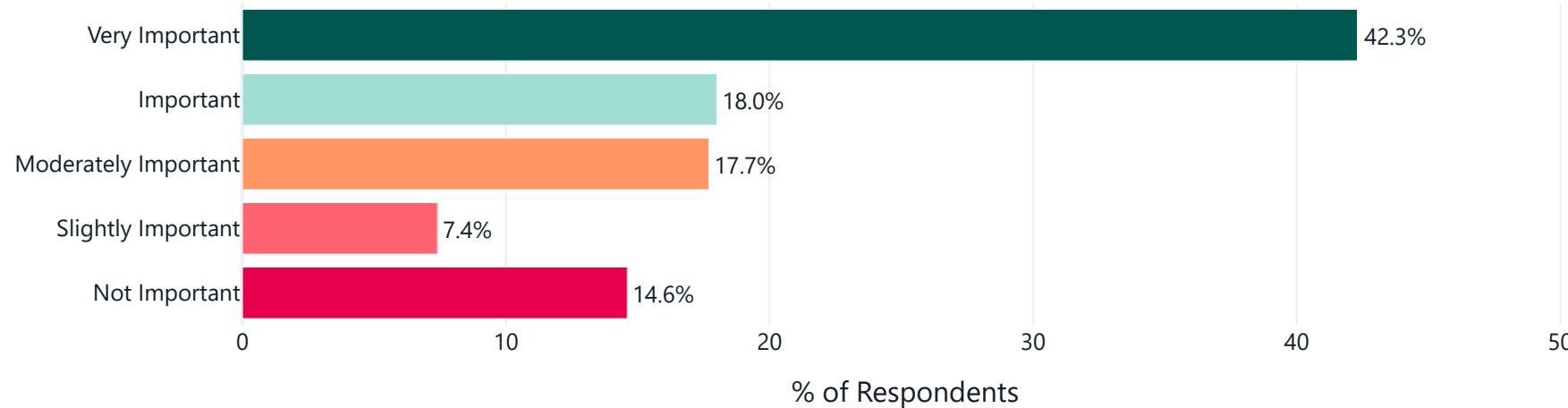
Factors Cited by Decliners



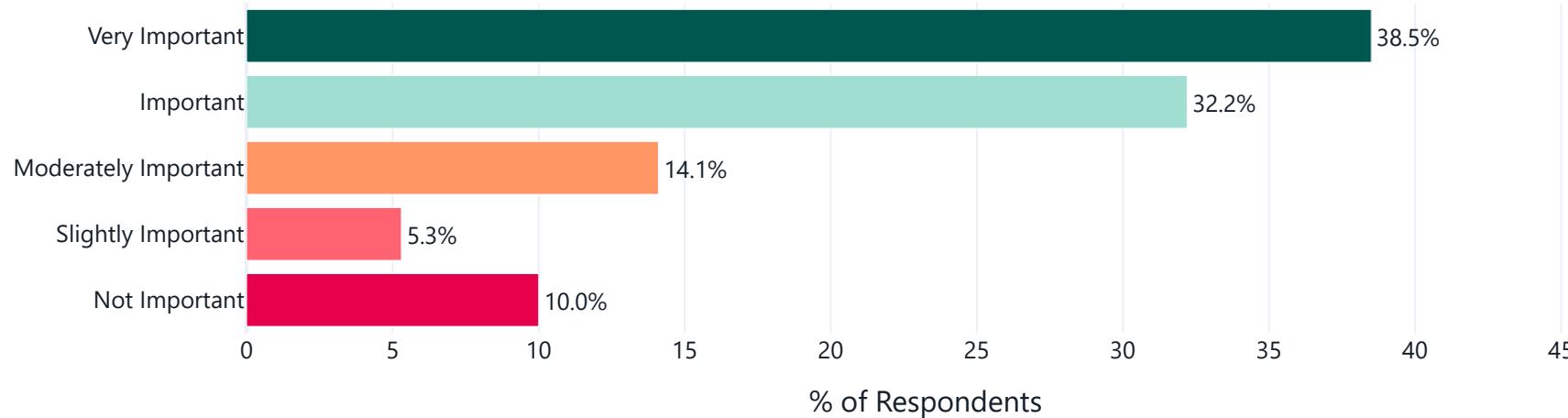
Reasons for Declining



Importance of Scholarships/Bursaries



Importance of Optional Module Choices



Descriptive Findings Summary

Category	Observations
Response Overview	872 complete responses with an overall acceptance rate of approximately 74.5%
Motivations	The most frequently cited motivations include increasing knowledge, interest in the subject, and improving employability
Information Sources	University websites are the most widely used source in both phases; AI tools (including ChatGPT) were cited by approximately 29% of respondents during initial research
Acceptance Factors	Course content, university reputation, and cost of living are among the most frequently cited factors by those who accepted
Barriers	Cost of tuition fees and cost of living are the most commonly cited barriers overall
Decline Factors	Among those who declined, scholarship availability, course content preferences, and the reputation of alternative institutions feature prominently

These are descriptive statistics reflecting what respondents reported. The following sections examine which factors are statistically associated with acceptance decisions after controlling for multiple comparisons.

Level 1: General Analysis (University-Wide)

These findings are based on the full set of respondents regardless of faculty.

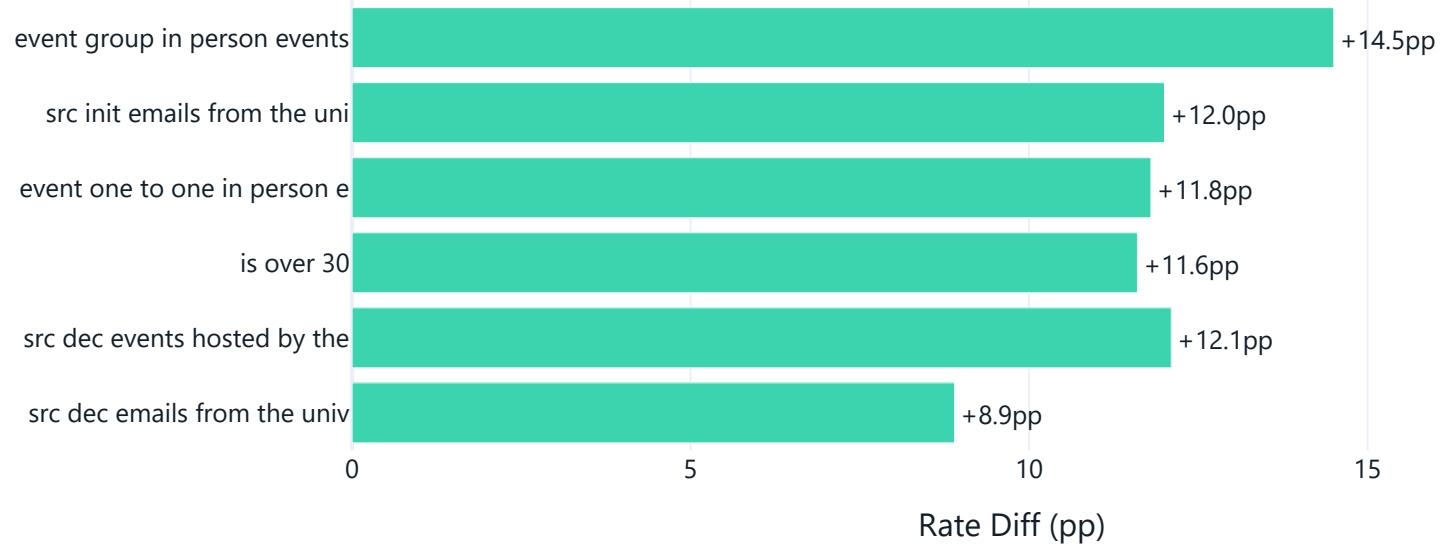
1.1 Key Drivers of Acceptance

Question: Which factors are statistically associated with the decision to accept or decline an offer?

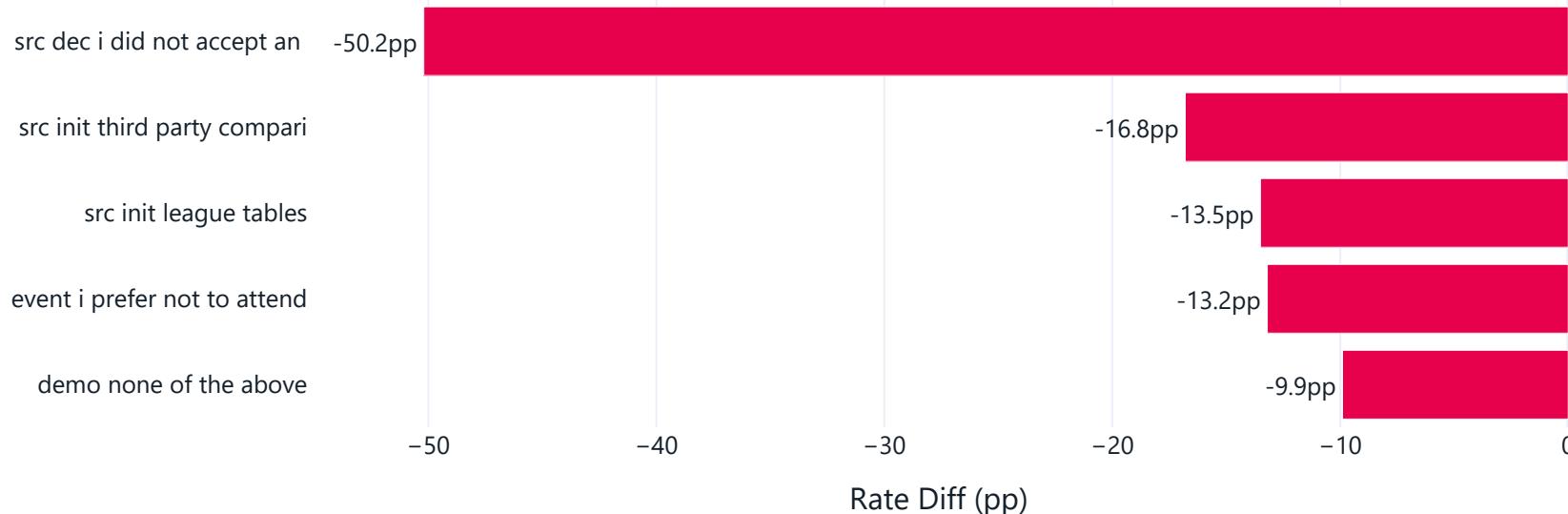
Methodology: - Chi-square tests for binary variables - FDR (false discovery rate) correction applied across all comparisons - Practical significance measured by Cramér's V

Interpretation guide: - These findings survived FDR correction, meaning they are unlikely to be artefacts of multiple testing - Effect sizes and direction of association should be prioritised for practical interpretation

Factors Associated with Higher Acceptance (FDR-Corrected)



Factors Associated with Lower Acceptance (FDR-Corrected)



Observations: Key Drivers of Acceptance

The charts above show factors that reached statistical significance after FDR correction. Green bars indicate factors associated with higher acceptance rates; red bars indicate factors associated with lower acceptance rates.

Factors Associated with Higher Acceptance

Factor	Rate Difference	Note
In-person event attendance	+11pp	Respondents who reported attending a campus event had an acceptance rate 11 percentage points higher than those who did not
Over 30 age group	Positive	Older respondents showed a higher acceptance rate
Email communication engagement	Positive	Respondents who engaged with email communications showed a higher acceptance rate

Factors Associated with Lower Acceptance

Factor	Rate Difference	Note
Preference not to attend events	-15pp	Respondents who indicated a preference not to attend events had a 15pp lower acceptance rate
Comparison site usage	Negative	Respondents who reported using comparison sites showed a lower acceptance rate

Important caveat: These findings are observational associations and do not establish causation. For example, respondents with stronger pre-existing intent may be more likely both to attend events and to accept an offer. The event attendance itself may not be the causal factor.

1.2 Relative Importance: Comparative Positioning

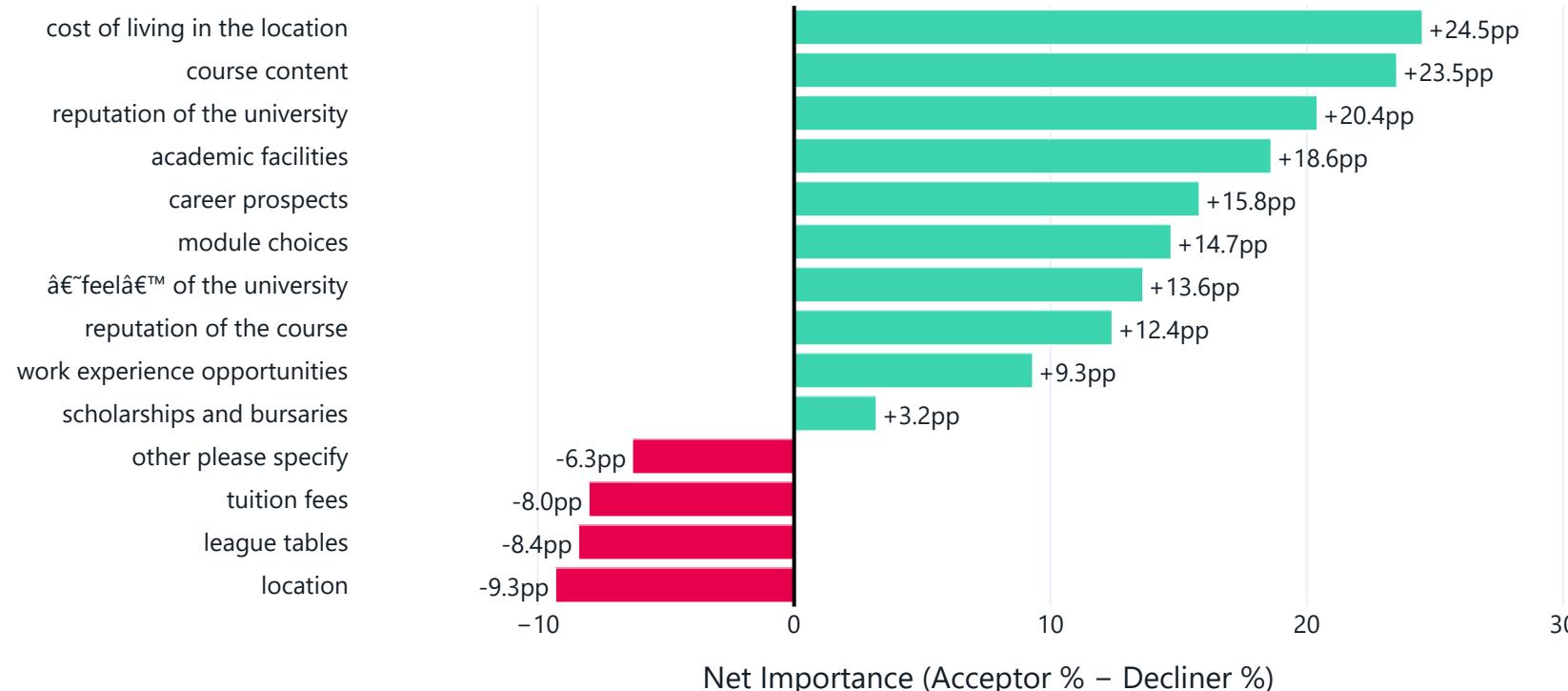
Question: Which factors do acceptors cite more frequently than decliners, and vice versa? This comparison provides an indication of the institution's relative positioning on different attributes.

Methodology: - For each factor, compute: (% of acceptors citing factor) minus (% of decliners citing factor) - Positive values indicate the factor is cited more often by acceptors - Negative values indicate the factor is cited more often by decliners

Note: Only the 110 decliners who were routed to the decline factors question (those who chose a UK university alternative) are included in the denominator for the decliner percentages.

Net Importance: Acceptor % minus Decliner %

Corrected: decline % based on 110 routed decliners only



Chi-square Association Tests — Sample: 650 acceptors + 110 routed decliners = 761 respondents

	Factor	Net_Importance	Chi2	p_value	Cramers_V	Significant
0	Cost Of Living In The Location	+24.5pp	24.51	0.0000	0.180	Yes
1	Course Content	+23.5pp	19.89	0.0000	0.162	Yes
2	Academic Facilities	+18.6pp	16.38	0.0001	0.147	Yes
3	Reputation Of The University	+20.4pp	15.09	0.0001	0.141	Yes
4	Career Prospects	+15.8pp	10.46	0.0012	0.117	Yes
5	Module Choices	+14.7pp	9.20	0.0024	0.110	Yes
6	Other Please Specify	-6.3pp	8.89	0.0029	0.108	Yes
7	â€˜Feelâ€™ Of The University	+13.6pp	8.01	0.0047	0.103	Yes
8	Reputation Of The Course	+12.4pp	7.35	0.0067	0.098	Yes
9	League Tables	-8.4pp	6.32	0.0120	0.091	Yes
10	Location	-9.3pp	5.51	0.0189	0.085	Yes
11	Work Experience Opportunities	+9.3pp	4.52	0.0334	0.077	Yes
12	Tuition Fees	-8.0pp	3.38	0.0661	0.067	
13	Scholarships And Bursaries	+3.2pp	0.31	0.5751	0.020	

Observations: Comparative Positioning

Methodological note: Only 110 of the 222 decliners were routed to the decline factors question (those who chose a UK university alternative). The remaining 112 declined for non-university reasons and were not presented with these options. All percentages and statistical tests in this section use the corrected sample of 650 acceptors and 110 routed decliners (n = 760).

The chart compares the percentage of acceptors citing each factor against the percentage of routed decliners citing it. The difference (Net Importance) indicates the relative frequency of citation between the two groups.

- Positive values (green) = factor cited more frequently by acceptors
- Negative values (red) = factor cited more frequently by decliners

Factors Cited More Frequently by Acceptors

Factor	Net Importance	Detail
Cost of living	High positive	Cited substantially more often by acceptors than by decliners
Course content	Positive	Cited more often by acceptors, though decliners also reference it at approximately 28%
Academic facilities	Positive	More frequently mentioned by those who accepted
Career prospects	Positive	Acceptors reference career-related factors more often

Factors Cited More Frequently by Decliners

Factor	Net Importance	Detail
Location	Negative	More frequently cited by decliners, suggesting geographic considerations play a role for some
League table rankings	Negative	More frequently cited by decliners, suggesting rankings may be a differentiating factor for this group
Tuition fees	Negative	More frequently cited by decliners, indicating fee-related concerns feature in the decision for some respondents

Note on correction impact: Before adjusting for survey routing, tuition fees, location, and league tables appeared neutral or mildly positive in net importance. With the corrected denominator (110 routed decliners rather than 222 total decliners), these factors emerge as being cited meaningfully more often by decliners.

1.3 Four-Group Chi-Square: Accept/Decline Factors by Fee Status

Question: Do factor citation patterns differ across the four segments formed by decision (accept/decline) and fee status (home/overseas)?

Methodology: - 4×2 chi-square test per factor (4 respondent segments × cited/not cited) - Corrected sample: only routed decliners included (36 Home + 73 Overseas = 109, excluding 1 with unknown fee status) - Total sample: 650 acceptors + 109 routed decliners = 759 (excluding fee_status = 'Q') - Effect size: Cramér's V

This analysis tests whether citation patterns for each factor vary systematically across the four segments, which may reveal segment-specific associations not visible in the overall analysis.

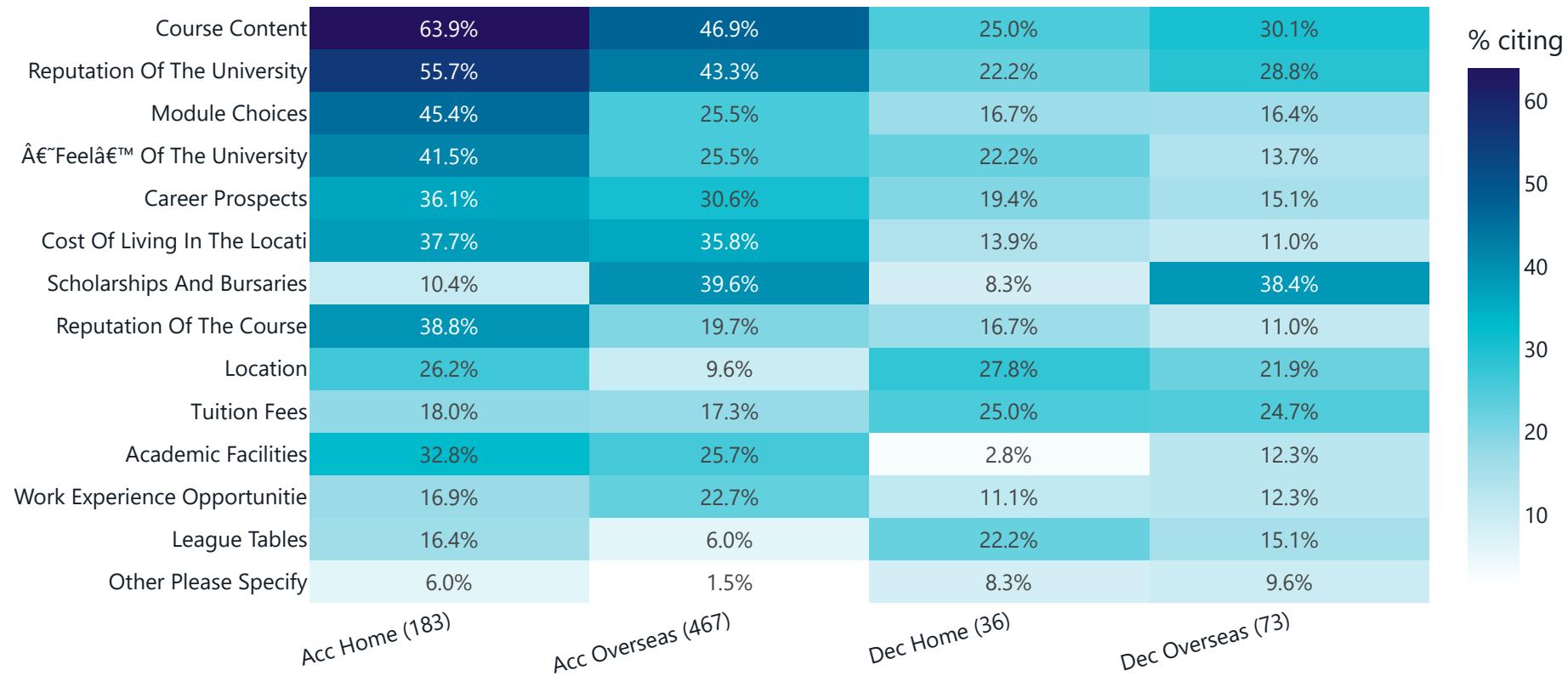
4-Group Chi-Square: Factor Citation Rates by Segment (Acceptor_Home: 183, Acceptor_Overseas: 467, Decliner_Home: 36, Decliner_Overseas: 73)

	Factor	Acc_Home_%	Acc_Overseas_%	Dec_Home_%	Dec_Overseas_%	Chi2	p_value	Cramers_V	Significant
0	Scholarships And Bursaries	10.4%	39.6%	8.3%	38.4%	63.11	0.0000	0.288	Yes
1	Course Content	63.9%	46.9%	25.0%	30.1%	35.75	0.0000	0.217	Yes
2	Reputation Of The Course	38.8%	19.7%	16.7%	11.0%	35.07	0.0000	0.215	Yes
3	Module Choices	45.4%	25.5%	16.7%	16.4%	34.85	0.0000	0.214	Yes
4	Location	26.2%	9.6%	27.8%	21.9%	34.44	0.0000	0.213	Yes
5	Feel Of The University	41.5%	25.5%	22.2%	13.7%	26.05	0.0000	0.185	Yes
6	Cost Of Living In The Location	37.7%	35.8%	13.9%	11.0%	25.49	0.0000	0.183	Yes
7	League Tables	16.4%	6.0%	22.2%	15.1%	24.36	0.0000	0.179	Yes
8	Reputation Of The University	55.7%	43.3%	22.2%	28.8%	24.15	0.0000	0.178	Yes
9	Academic Facilities	32.8%	25.7%	2.8%	12.3%	21.75	0.0001	0.169	Yes
10	Other Please Specify	6.0%	1.5%	8.3%	9.6%	18.42	0.0004	0.156	Yes
11	Career Prospects	36.1%	30.6%	19.4%	15.1%	12.97	0.0047	0.131	Yes
12	Work Experience Opportunities	16.9%	22.7%	11.1%	12.3%	7.70	0.0526	0.101	
13	Tuition Fees	18.0%	17.3%	25.0%	24.7%	3.27	0.3517	0.066	

12/14 factors show significant variation across the 4 groups ($p < 0.05$)

Factor Citation Rates (%) by Segment

Corrected: routed decliners only | * = statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)



Observations: Four-Group Factor Analysis

12 of the 14 factors tested show statistically significant variation across the four segments. The patterns observed can be grouped as follows.

Scholarships and Bursaries — largest segment effect ($V = 0.288$)

- Overseas respondents cite this factor at much higher rates (~39%) regardless of whether they accepted or declined
- Home respondents cite it infrequently (~10%)
- The variation is primarily a home-versus-overseas distinction rather than an accept-versus-decline one

Course Content and Module Choices — home acceptors distinct

- Home acceptors cite course content (63.9%) and module choices (45.4%) at notably higher rates than other segments
- Overseas acceptors also cite these factors, but at lower rates
- Both decliner groups cite them at approximately 25–30% and ~16% respectively

Location — more pronounced among overseas decliners

- Home decliners (27.8%) and home acceptors (26.2%) cite location at similar rates
- Among overseas respondents, decliners (21.9%) cite location at more than twice the rate of acceptors (9.6%), a 12pp gap
- This suggests location may be a more salient differentiator within the overseas segment

League Tables — cited more frequently by decliners in both segments

- Home decliners (22.2%) and overseas decliners (15.1%) cite league tables at higher rates than their respective acceptor groups (16.4% and 6.0%)
- Home respondents engage with league tables more than overseas respondents overall

Tuition Fees — no significant segment variation ($p = 0.35$)

- Citation rates are broadly similar (17–25%) across all four segments
- This suggests tuition fee concerns are not concentrated in any particular segment

Cost of Living — consistent acceptor-versus-decliner pattern

- Approximately 36–38% of acceptors cite this factor regardless of fee status
- Only 11–14% of decliners cite it
- The pattern is an accept/decline differentiator rather than a home/overseas one

Summary: The most notable segment-specific pattern relates to scholarships and bursaries, which is predominantly an overseas concern. Most other factors divide primarily along accept/decline lines, with the exceptions of location (a more pronounced differentiator within the overseas segment) and course content/module choices (particularly associated with home acceptors).

1.4 Accept/Decline Factors by Faculty

Question: Do factor citation patterns vary across faculties for acceptors and decliners?

Methodology: - 10-group chi-square per factor (5 faculties × accept/decline, cited/not cited) - Corrected sample: only routed decliners included (per faculty: Arts & Humanities 26, Engineering 11, Health 19, Science 16, Social Sciences 38) - Effect size: Cramér's V

Caution: Some faculty-level decliner cells have very small sample sizes (particularly Engineering decliners, n = 11). These results should be considered exploratory and interpreted with appropriate caution.

Faculty × Decision Sample Sizes (routed decliners only)

accept_decline	Acceptor	Decliner
faculty		
Arts & Humanities	71	26
Engineering	102	11
Health	99	19
Science	78	16
Social Sciences	299	38

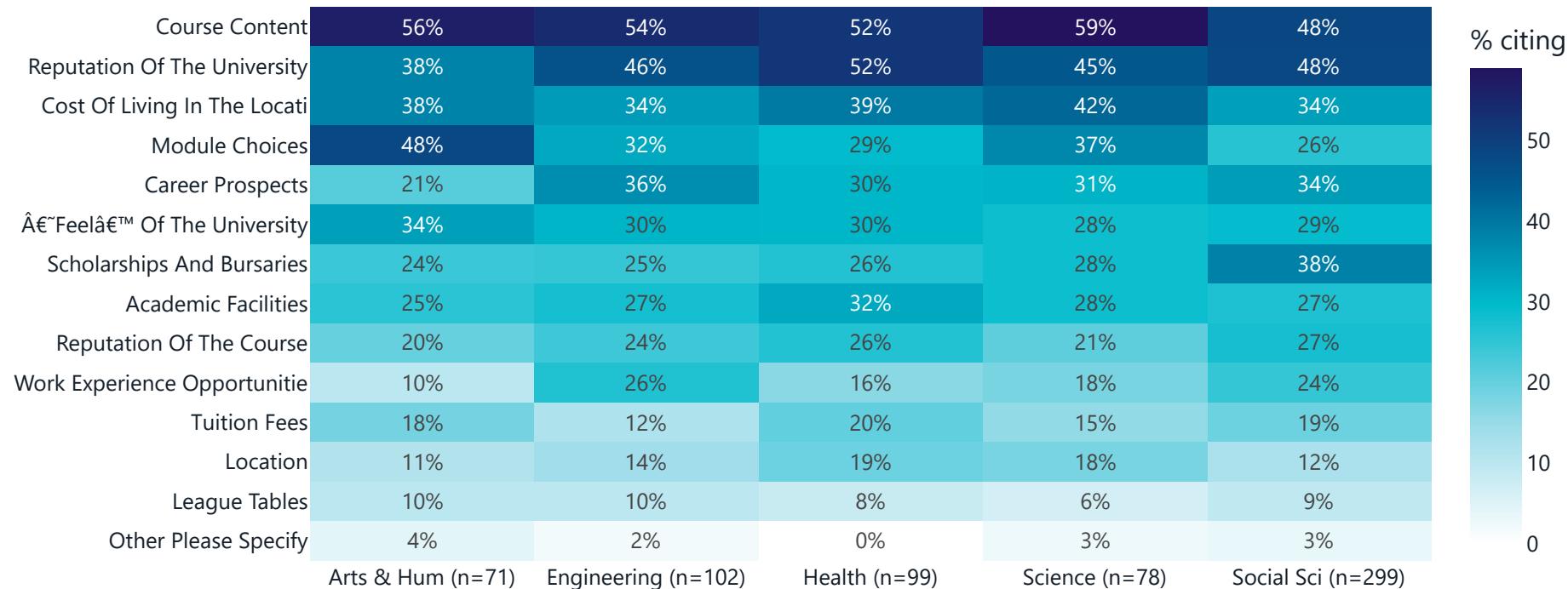
10-Group Chi-Square: Factor Citation Rates by Faculty × Decision

	Factor	Chi2	p_value	Cramers_V	Significant
0	Cost Of Living In The Location	32.75	0.0001	0.208	Yes
1	Course Content	31.08	0.0003	0.202	Yes
2	Module Choices	26.99	0.0014	0.189	Yes
3	Reputation Of The University	21.92	0.0091	0.170	Yes
4	Other Please Specify	21.81	0.0095	0.170	Yes
5	Academic Facilities	19.63	0.0203	0.161	Yes
6	Work Experience Opportunities	18.67	0.0281	0.157	Yes
7	Career Prospects	17.86	0.0368	0.153	Yes
8	Location	17.37	0.0432	0.151	Yes
9	Scholarships And Bursaries	16.34	0.0602	0.147	
10	Tuition Fees	14.87	0.0946	0.140	
11	Feel™ Of The University	14.50	0.1055	0.138	
12	League Tables	13.58	0.1379	0.134	
13	Reputation Of The Course	11.90	0.2189	0.125	

9/14 factors show significant variation across faculty × decision groups ($p < 0.05$)

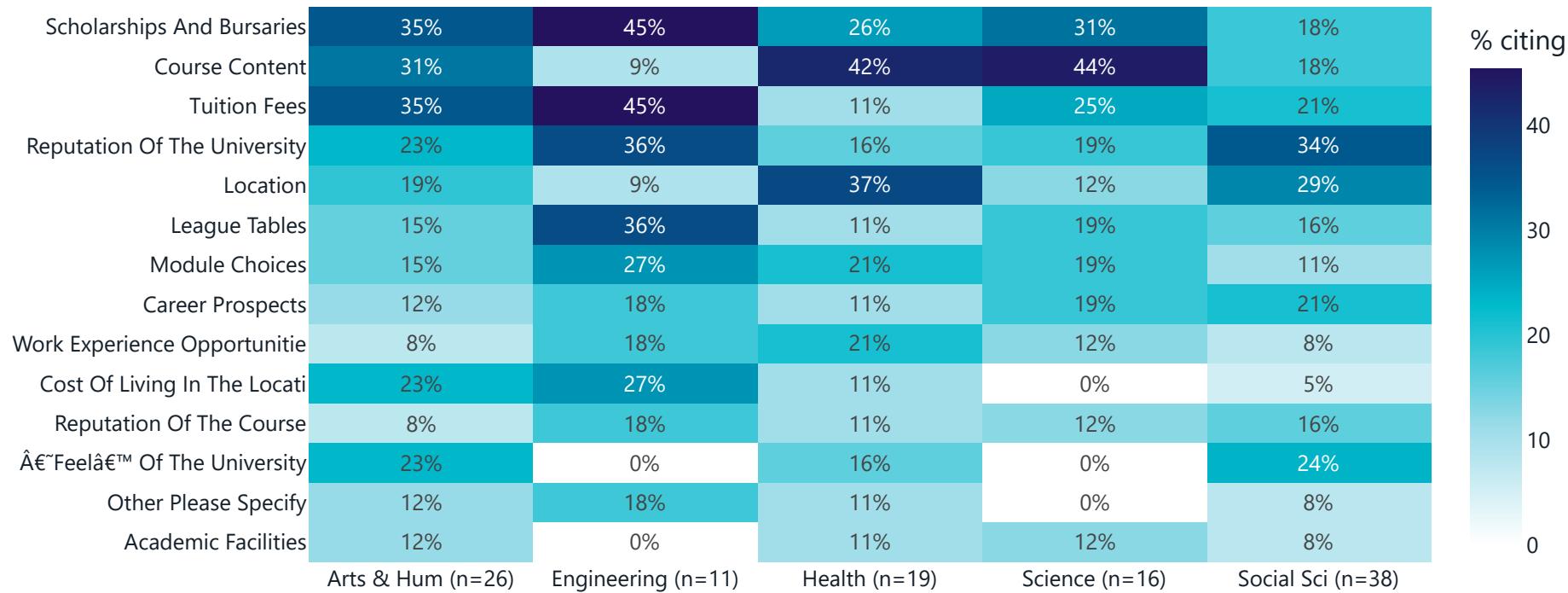
Acceptor Factor Citation Rates by Faculty

Corrected: routed decliners only



Decliner Factor Citation Rates by Faculty

Corrected: routed decliners only



Observations: Accept/Decline Factors by Faculty

9 of the 14 factors tested show statistically significant variation across the 10 faculty × decision groups. The heatmaps reveal both consistent and faculty-specific patterns.

Patterns consistent across faculties (acceptor side)

- Course content is the most frequently cited factor for acceptors across all faculties (48–59%)
- Reputation of the university is cited at consistently high rates by acceptors (38–52%)

- Cost of living is cited by acceptors at broadly similar rates across faculties (34–42%)

Notable faculty-level divergences among decliners

Factor	Spread	Pattern
Tuition fees	~35pp	Cited most by Engineering decliners (45%), least by Health decliners (11%)
Course content	~35pp	Cited most by Science decliners (44%), least by Engineering decliners (9%)
Location	~28pp	Cited most by Health decliners (37%), least by Engineering decliners (9%)
Scholarships	~27pp	Cited most by Engineering decliners (45%), least by Social Sciences decliners (18%)
Cost of living	~27pp	Engineering decliners 27%, Science decliners 0%
League tables	~26pp	Cited most by Engineering decliners (36%), least by Health decliners (11%)

Engineering decliners — distinct profile

Engineering decliners (n = 11; interpret cautiously given the small sample) show notably high citation of financial and prestige-related factors: - Tuition fees (45%) and scholarships (45%) - League tables (36%) and university reputation (36%) - Conversely low citation of course content (9%) and location (9%)

Health decliners — location-related pattern

- Location (37%) is the most frequently cited factor among Health decliners
- Financial factors are cited at relatively lower rates: tuition fees (11%), league tables (11%)

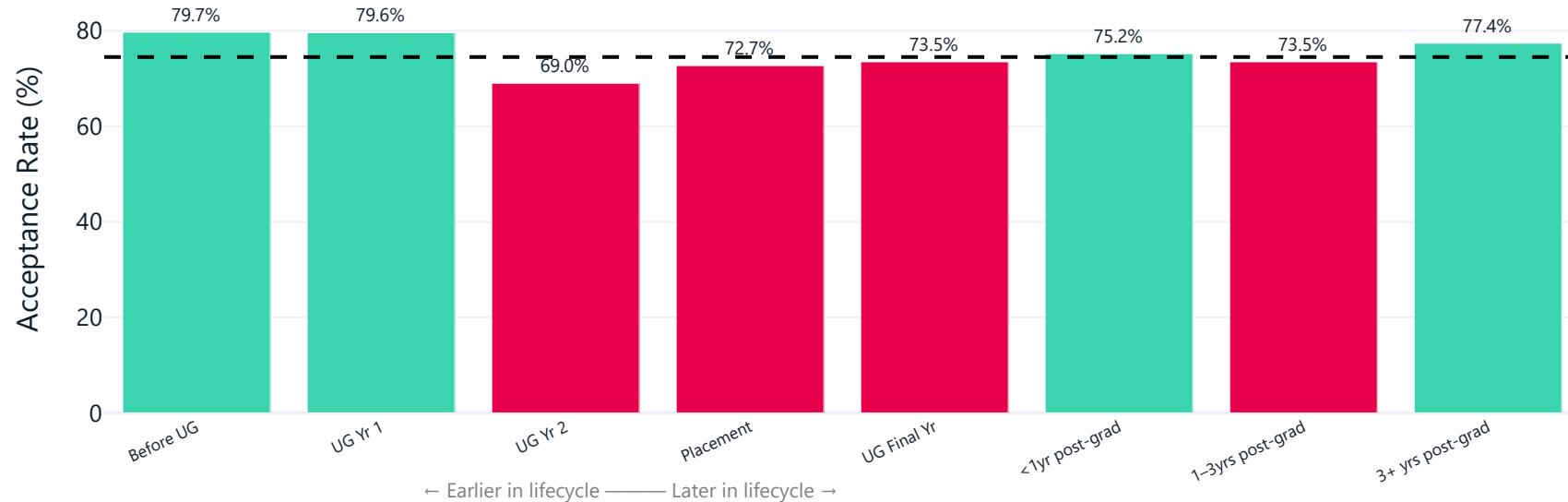
Caveat: Decliner cell sizes are small (Engineering n = 11, Science n = 16). These observations are exploratory and should be treated as hypotheses for further investigation rather than definitive conclusions.

1.5 Decision Journey: When Do Applicants Begin Researching?

Understanding when applicants first begin researching postgraduate study can help contextualise the role of timing in the decision process.

The chart below shows the acceptance rate for each research start time, ordered chronologically across the applicant lifecycle.

Acceptance Rate by When Applicants First Researched Postgraduate Study



Observations: Research Timing and Acceptance

The data suggest some variation in acceptance rate by when respondents reported first beginning their postgraduate research.

When Research Began	N	Acceptance Rate	vs Overall	Note
Before starting UG	59	79.7%	+5.2pp	Above average
UG Year 1	53	81.1%	+6.6pp	Highest observed rate
UG Year 2	116	69.0%	-5.5pp	Below average
Placement year	33	72.7%	-1.8pp	Small sample; close to average
UG Final year	257	73.5%	-1.0pp	Largest group; close to average
Within 1yr post-grad	117	75.2%	+0.7pp	Broadly average
1-3yrs post-grad	98	73.5%	-1.0pp	Close to average
3+ yrs post-grad	124	77.4%	+2.9pp	Above average

Observations: - Respondents who reported beginning their research during UG Year 1 or earlier show the highest acceptance rates (79–81%), although sample sizes for these groups are relatively small ($n = 53\text{--}59$) - Those who began in UG Year 2 show a notably lower rate (69.0%), which may reflect a group still broadly exploring options - Post-graduation returners (3+ years after graduating) show an above-average rate (77.4%), which may reflect clearer professional motivations - The overall spread between the highest and lowest groups is 12.2 percentage points

Caveats: These rates are descriptive and unadjusted. The observed patterns may reflect pre-existing differences in motivation or circumstances across timing groups rather than an effect of timing itself.

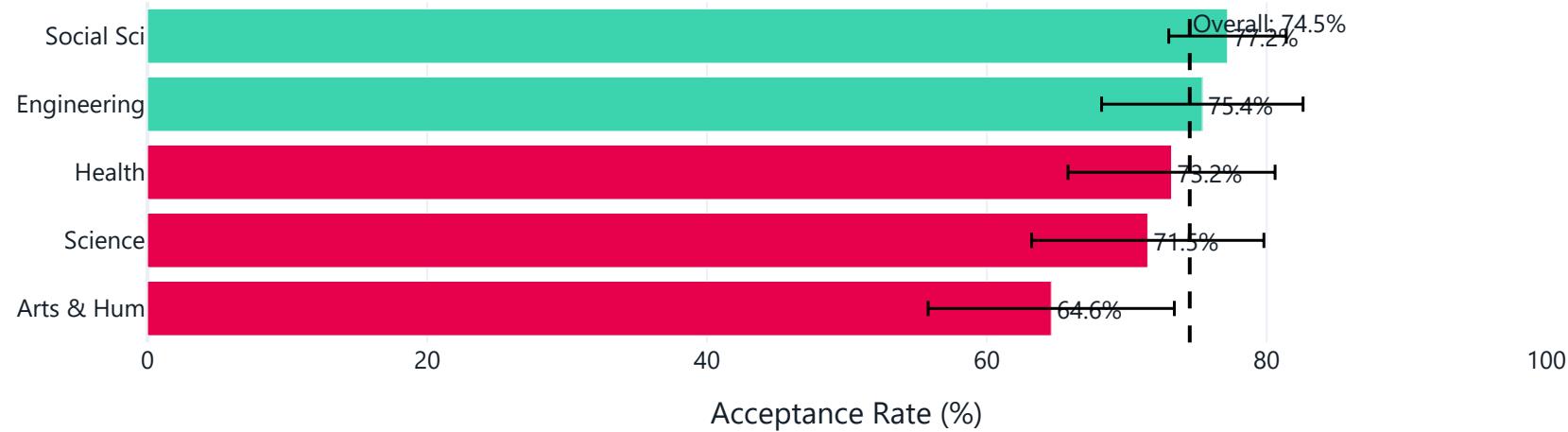
Level 2: Faculty Analysis

These findings are stratified by faculty to examine faculty-specific patterns in acceptance rates and associated factors.

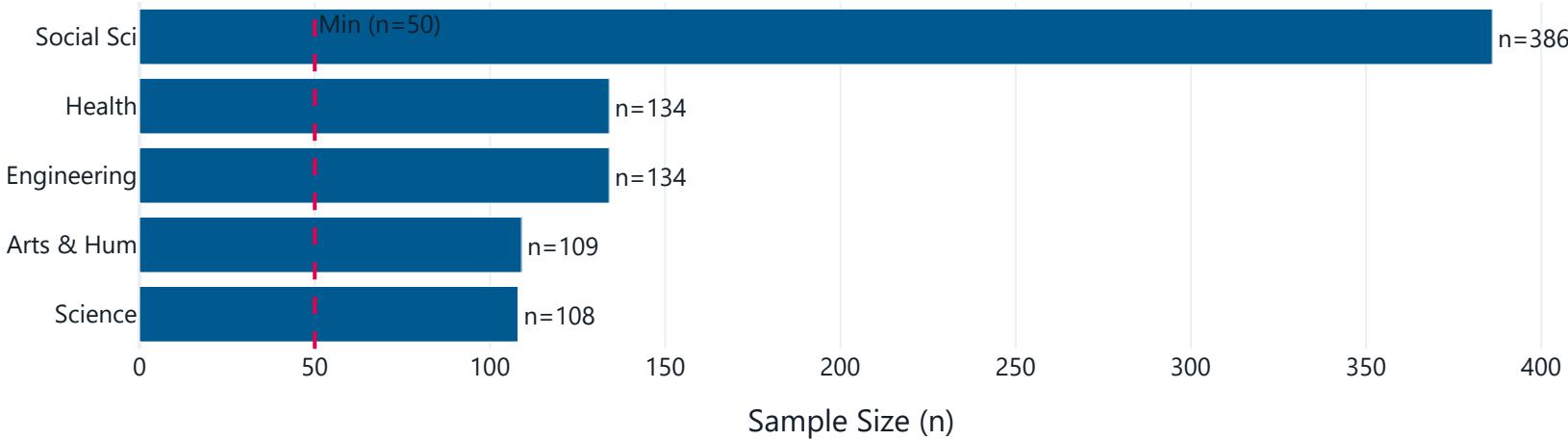
2.1 Faculty Acceptance Rates

Acceptance rates vary across faculties. This section presents the observed variation alongside confidence intervals and sample sizes.

Faculty Acceptance Rates (with 95% CI)



Faculty Sample Sizes



Observations: Faculty Acceptance Rates

Reading the charts: - Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals — wider intervals indicate greater uncertainty due to smaller samples - Blue bars indicate faculties with sufficient sample sizes ($n \geq 50$) for more detailed analysis - Grey bars indicate smaller samples that should be interpreted with additional caution

Summary

Grouping	Faculties	Interpretation
Above overall average	(Green bars)	These faculties show acceptance rates above the university-wide average
Below overall average	(Red bars)	These faculties show lower acceptance rates, though confidence intervals may overlap with the overall rate

The variation across faculties is consistent with the possibility that discipline-specific factors (such as programme content, competitor landscape, and applicant demographics) influence acceptance rates alongside university-wide attributes.

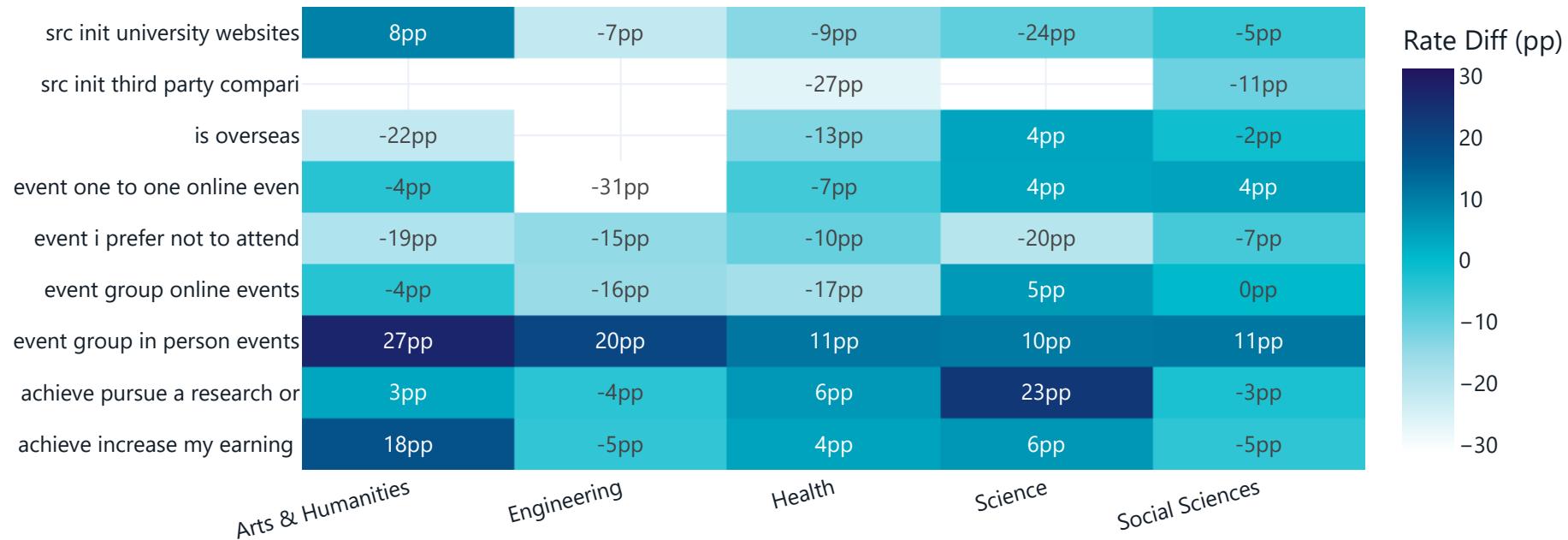
2.2 Faculty-Specific Drivers (Exploratory)

Important: Faculty-level findings use raw (uncorrected) p-values due to the small sample sizes at this level. These should be treated as exploratory and hypothesis-generating rather than confirmatory.

Effect Size Reference (Cramér's V)

V Value	Interpretation
< 0.10	Negligible
0.10–0.20	Small
0.20–0.30	Medium
> 0.30	Large

Top Exploratory Drivers by Faculty (raw p < 0.10)



Observations: Faculty-Specific Drivers

Reading the heatmap: - Green cells indicate a positive association (the factor is associated with higher acceptance in that faculty) - Red cells indicate a negative association (the factor is associated with lower acceptance) - Numbers represent rate differences in percentage points - Empty cells indicate insufficient data or no notable association at p < 0.10

Selected Faculty-Level Patterns (Exploratory)

Faculty	Factor	Effect	Detail
Engineering	One-to-one online events	-31pp	Engineering respondents who attended 1:1 online events showed a 31pp lower acceptance rate
Arts & Humanities	Group in-person events	+27pp	Arts & Humanities respondents who attended in-person group events showed a 27pp higher acceptance rate
Science	University course websites	-24pp	Science respondents who used course websites showed a 24pp lower acceptance rate
Health	Group online events	-17pp	Health respondents who attended online group events showed a 17pp lower acceptance rate
Social Sciences	Group in-person events	+11pp	Social Sciences respondents who attended in-person events showed an 11pp higher acceptance rate

Cross-Faculty Pattern

In-person event attendance shows positive associations across multiple faculties, consistent with the university-wide observation.

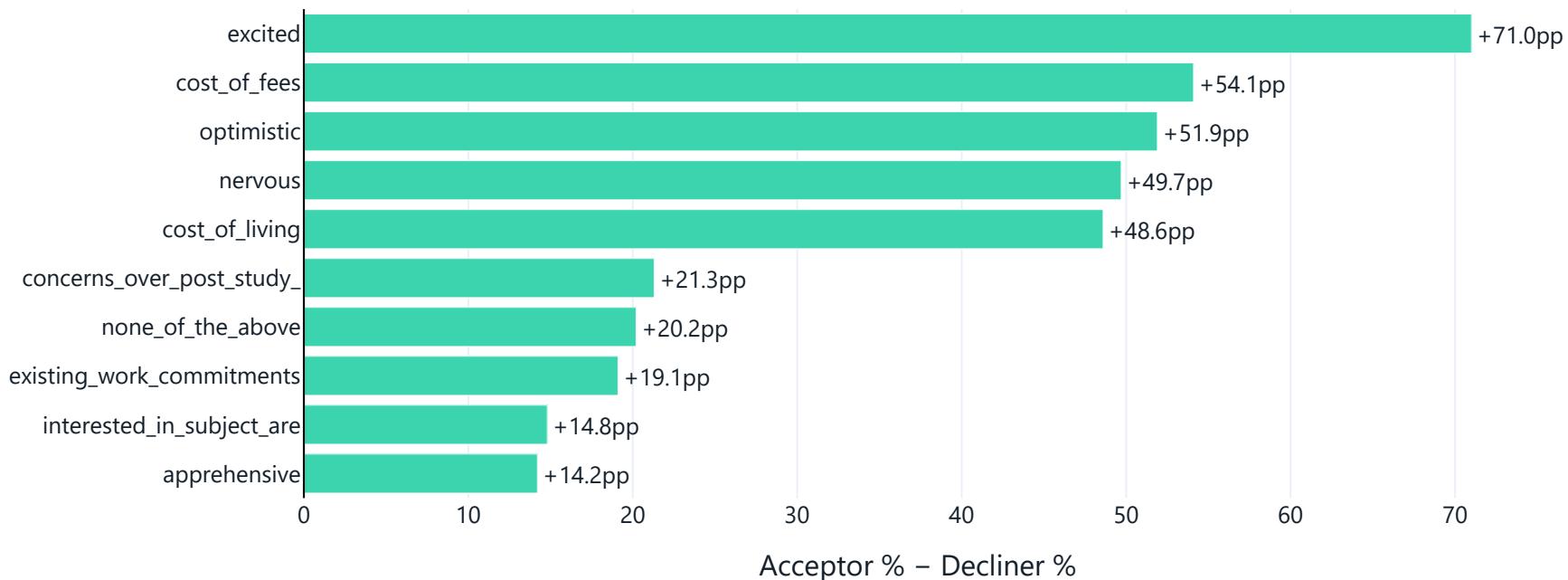
Caveat: These are exploratory findings from small faculty-level samples using raw (uncorrected) p-values. They indicate possible patterns that would require further investigation and larger samples to confirm.

2.3 Home vs Overseas Comparison

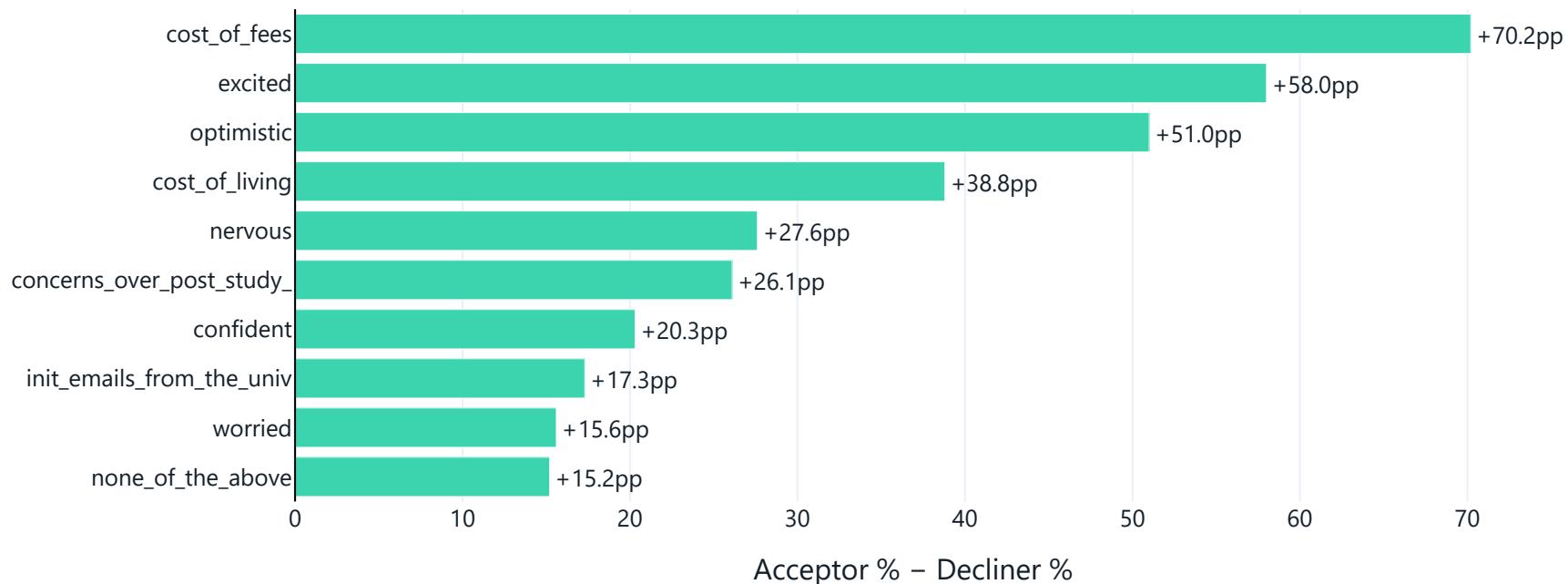
This section examines which factors differ between acceptors and decliners within each fee status segment (Home and Overseas).

Reading the charts: - Green bars indicate factors more common among acceptors within that segment - Red bars indicate factors more common among decliners within that segment - Longer bars indicate larger differences between acceptors and decliners

Home Students: Acceptor – Decliner Differences



Overseas Students: Acceptor – Decliner Differences



Observations: Home vs Overseas Segments

Home (UK) and overseas (international) students have different fee structures, visa requirements, and geographic considerations. This section examines which factors differentiate acceptors from decliners within each group.

Home Students (UK)

Acceptance Rate: ~78.9%

Observation	Detail
Event attendance	Home respondents who attended events showed higher acceptance rates
League tables	Home decliners cited rankings more frequently than home acceptors
Location factors	Geographic proximity and regional factors appeared more frequently in home respondents' answers

Overseas Students (International)

Acceptance Rate: ~73.1%

Observation	Detail
Cost factors	Overseas respondents showed higher frequency of cost-related responses
Comparison sites	Overseas applicants reported higher use of comparison websites
Timeline considerations	Overseas applicants may face different decision timelines due to visa and logistical requirements

Summary: Home respondents show a 5.8pp higher acceptance rate than overseas respondents. Several factors may contribute, including fee levels, geographic proximity, and the competitive landscape with institutions in other countries. However, this is an observed difference and multiple confounding factors may be at play.

Summary and Limitations

Summary of Findings

Finding	Confidence Level	Basis
In-person event attendance associated with higher acceptance	High	FDR-significant with a meaningful effect size
Course content cited more frequently by acceptors	High	Consistent pattern across multiple analyses
Respondents classified as "Rankings Researchers" show lower acceptance	Moderate	-8pp in persona analysis; based on a provisional classification
League tables cited more frequently by decliners	Moderate	Consistent across relative importance and persona analyses
Faculty-specific patterns exist	Exploratory	Small samples, raw (uncorrected) p-values

Limitations

Limitation	Implication
Observational data	All findings are associations, not established causal effects. Confounding variables may explain observed patterns.
Self-selected sample	Survey respondents may differ systematically from non-respondents, introducing potential response bias.
Small faculty-level samples	Faculty-level findings are exploratory only and should be used for hypothesis generation.
Point-in-time snapshot	Findings reflect this particular cohort and time period. Results may not generalise to future cohorts.
Correlation ≠ Causation	For example, high-intent applicants may both attend events and accept offers — event attendance may not itself cause acceptance.
Survey routing	Some questions (barriers, accept/decline factors) were presented only to specific subgroups. Comparisons across groups must account for this design.

Report generated from PGT Decision Survey Analysis. Statistical methods: Chi-square tests, Mann-Whitney U, logistic regression with FDR correction. For detailed methodology, see the full analysis notebook.