

stayin



Guidance for inclusion Practices and needs in European Universities



Lifelong
Learning
Programme

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DELIVERABLE SUMMARY

Purpose and Scope of this Deliverable

This Deliverable presents the results of STAY IN work package 1 – Analysis. The overall aim of work package 1 was to review the ‘landscape’ of student guidance and counselling, taking into account the policies, programmes and practices that have developed in the field, and using the lessons learned to feed into the design of the STAY IN services in work package 2.

Methodology

The detailed methodology for the research that fed into this deliverable is set out in STAY IN Deliverable 1 – Research Handbook. The overall methodology adopted is based on a ‘Realist Review’ approach (Pawson, et al, 2005). This combines three methods of data collection and analysis: a set of Key Informant Interviews; a Literature Review of theory, research and practice on student guidance and counselling; a Student Survey.

Key Conclusions

Triangulation of the results of the Key Informant Interviews, Literature Review and Student Survey shows a high degree of congruence and consistency across the data with regard to identifying target groups and their needs. In all three sets of data, there is a clear consensus that:

- students should not be homogenised into static target profiles. Their needs are shaped by a process that is continually evolving, as they progress through the study life cycle, and as their circumstances change
- guidance services need to reflect this process, addressing a spectrum of needs that begin with the transition between school and university, and end with the transition between university and the external world, particularly the world of work

The survey results clearly show that there is a potentially high level of demand for student counselling and guidance services. The overall potential demand for such services would run somewhere in the region of 13.4 million students within the EU-27.

There is in general a big gap between support needs and support provision.

There is also a gap between the supply of support and perceptions of the utility and usefulness of the support provided.

The provision of basic information and support appears far from adequate.

The counselling and guidance areas that are seen by students themselves as the key areas for improvement are orientation services; regular monitoring of student issues; awareness-raising actions on counselling and guidance; support for financial problems. There was also strong support shown for providing training for students in counselling; for providing a Student Charter in all institutions and for providing regular workshops in study skills

Recommendations for service design

The STAY IN service design should be based on an over-arching framework that is holistic, adaptive and flexible.

The service design should not be based on targeting specific ‘target groups’ of students but should be based on configuring a set of support elements that address five broad ‘support scenarios’: the ‘Unproblematic Scenario’; the ‘Kick Starters’ Scenario; the ‘Self-supporting’ Scenario; the ‘Complex Needs’ Scenario; the ‘Pragmatic’ Scenario.

The service design should be based on a 'blended model'. This would incorporate: information and advice elements aimed at the whole student community (for example website; Handbook); face-to-face advice and support elements (for example one-to-one counselling); group elements (for example student 'buddying'); on-line elements (for example an on-line Forum).

The optimum benchmark the service design should aim at would provide: an on-line information service; a Student Handbook; one-to-one consultation; personal guidance tutors; 'one stop shop' in which services are integrated; 24 hour access to services.

Within the overall design, a set of counselling and guidance support elements needs to be configured to reflect the context of the specific institution and the range of support scenarios that need to be addressed. The possible range of support elements could cover the following:

- A basic 'Entry Pack'. This would provide information, advice and support mainly aimed at first time students. As well as the basic Student Handbook, the service would include: orientation support; advice on course and subject choices and how to change them; advice and support on study skills.
- A basic 'Exit Pack'. This would provide advice and support on preparing for life after studying; work experience; careers advice; financial management and planning.
- 'On-demand' counselling and guidance services, customised to the individual needs presented. This would cover: disability support, mental health support, learning needs support, family support, relationships support, social support, living support, financial problems support, legal support, studying support.
- Ancillary services aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of service provision. This could cover: awareness-raising actions; a Student Charter; training for students and staff; regular workshops for students in study skills; continuing professional development for professional counselling and guidance staff; a monitoring system to continuously assess the level and nature of student issues and potential problems, and to assess the performance of the counselling and guidance services provided.

On-line counselling and guidance services would be welcomed by students. These should cover two essential items, i.e.: a basic information service and on-line Student Handbook; individual guidance from professionals (for example on-line psychological counselling). Optional elements could include: an on-line discussion forum; on-line group counselling; on-line mentoring.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Deliverable presents the results of STAY IN work package 1 – Analysis. The overall aim of work package 1 was to review the ‘landscape’ of student guidance and counselling, taking into account the policies, programmes and practices that have developed in the field, and using the lessons learned to feed into the design of the STAY IN services in work package 2.

Against this background, the main objectives of work package 1 are:

- to undertake a review of the guidance and counselling service for inclusion at tertiary education level, with specific regard to e-services
- on the basis of the review, to develop a typology of good practices and their defining characteristics
- to identify ‘what works, for whom and under what circumstances’ in the field of student guidance and counselling
- to identify gaps in the existing knowledge base
- to use the learning from the review to identify the needs of the target groups for the project
- to implement an online survey aimed at higher education students, with focus on online students, to identify their experiences of guidance and counselling services; assess their needs for guidance and counselling, and assess the level of demand for on-line services.

Following this Introduction, the deliverable is set out as follows:

- Section 2 reports on the methodology used for the Research
- Section 3 presents the results of interviews with key respondents
- In Section 4, we present the results of a review of key policies and practices in the field of student guidance and counselling
- Section 5 presents the results of the Student Survey
- The concluding section – Section 6 – presents the overall conclusions and recommendations following from the research.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overall approach

The detailed methodology for the research that fed into this deliverable is set out in STAY IN Deliverable 1 – Research Handbook. The overall methodology adopted is based on a ‘Realist Review’ approach (Pawson, et al, 2005)¹. The realist review maps the direction and nature of travel along which a policy or intervention proceeds, with a particular focus on how ‘context’ influences that change, and how ‘intangibles’, like ideological positions and power relations, affect that journey. A key element of the realist review approach is a search for, and an assessment of, the ‘middle-range theories’ that underpin policies and interventions.

The review starts with identification and clarification of the research purposes, focusing on the key questions the research needs to address. This clarification is normally supported by a conversation, between the research team and/or stakeholders who are aware of the ‘problem’ and who are looking for answers on to how to improve current approaches and practices. The main aim of this conversation is to pin down and further clarify the scope of the enquiry and to specify the key questions for the review. Subsequent stages of the review entail an iterative process of:

- mapping the key ‘drivers’ that shape policy and practice
- searching the field for ‘evidence’, including ‘grey’ literature
- applying quality criteria to the material identified, based on relevance and rigour
- extracting data from the final shortlist of material to uncover evidence in support or contradiction of the drivers identified
- synthesising the results of the data extraction and analysis to re-assess the original ‘map’ of the field, and to produce conclusions and recommendations on ‘what works, for whom under what circumstances’

Implementation of the Review incorporated three data collection and analysis activities:

- a series of interviews with experts and key stakeholders in the field
- a search and analysis of relevant literature in the field
- these two activities were supplemented by an on-line Student Survey

2.2 Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interviews were intended, in parallel with the literature review, to fulfil three objectives:

- to verify the scope of the project and its key objectives
- to identify the key issues that need to be addressed in the review
- to collect information on key policies and practices that could be further explored in the review

The key informants included experts and stakeholders with an in-depth knowledge of the field of higher education and the issues associated with student drop-out. They included academics with an interest in the field, as well as practitioners with first-hand experience of student counselling services. The respondents were selected by the STAY IN partners. A total of seven interviews were carried out, using a semi-structured interview schedule, covering four themes:

¹ Pawson R, Greenhalgh T, Harvey G, Walshe K. (2005), *Realist review--a new method of systematic review designed for complex policy interventions*. J Health Serv Res Policy. 2005 Jul;10 Suppl 1:21-34.

- Theme 1: Background to widening participation in tertiary education
- Theme 2: Needs of students for guidance and counselling services
- Theme 3: Current and future provision
- Theme 4: Suggestions for analysis of practices.

2.3 Literature Review

The starting point for the literature review entailed a 'Data Audit' which searched for and collated relevant material on student drop-out, guidance and counselling. The material was drawn from three sources:

- firstly, existing and already known source material, including material suggested by the experts interviewed through the Key Informant interview
- secondly, searches of bibliographic databases to expand the existing material
- thirdly, items identified through 'snowballing' (recommendations from partners; external experts; other experts)

Searching procedures covered both 'official' literature – e.g. books; journal articles; formal reports and 'grey' literature , e.g. website material; dissertations.

The second phase in the literature review entailed evaluating the long list of material derived from the Data Audit to compile a short list of material for more detailed review by applying a quality appraisal exercise to ensure that the most appropriate and relevant material is included in the review . Five 'inclusion-exclusion' criteria were used in this appraisal:

- Domain relevance- does the item cover inclusion in higher education?
- Research relevance- does the item cover counselling and or guidance services for students?
- Timeliness- is the item relatively recent (i.e. produced after January 2005)?
- Quality- is the item sufficiently well-written and intelligible enough to summarise?
- Comprehensiveness- is the material extensive enough in breadth and depth to allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn?

The resultant shortlist of material was reviewed using content analysis (Stemler, 2001). ² A manual inspection method was used which entailed compressing the text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding, using the following meta-categories:

- Drivers and Barriers – the key factors that are shaping inclusive higher education and the main obstacles that need to be addressed to increase participation
- Theoretical perspectives – the major theoretical and conceptual approaches that are shaping how policy and practice are developing to support increased participation in higher education
- Policies – the key policies that have emerged at trans-nation and national levels to support increased participation in higher education and what are their features
- Practices – the kinds of interventions that have developed to support policy implementation
- Technologies – how ICTs are being applied in policy and practice, for example in on-line student counselling
- Organisational aspects – institutional issues and factors that affect the effectiveness and efficiency of support measures
- Outcomes and impacts identified – evidence of 'what works, for whom, under which circumstances'

² Stemler, S (2001) An introduction to content analysis

- Transferable learning – concrete evidence that can be transferred to develop the STAY IN services, like cases of good and best practices
- Other – other themes that can be identified that are not covered in the above list
- Study Logistics – material that can be used to help develop and implement define two important aspects of STAY-IN activities: i) analysis the needs of the STAY IN target groups ii) developing and implementing a student survey

Each item of material was then summarised on the basis of the codes identified within each category. A second round of analysis was then carried out on the summaries, using an item analysis procedure (Haney, Russell, Gulek, & Fierros, 1998) to provide a final list of codes. These were reviewed and integrated to produce a consolidated Report on the Review exercise.

2.4 Student Survey

The Student Survey was intended to add value to the results of the realist review, described above by exploring in more depth the key themes identified by the review. The main objective of the Survey was to capture and analyse the needs of students with regard to guidance and counselling services, and the expectations they have about the type of guidance and counselling services that could be provided through STAY IN and, more broadly, within the wider EU tertiary education sector.

The survey design was based on a quota sample of 400 students, concentrated in the three universities in which the STAY IN guidance services will be piloted, i.e. University of Macerata, IT; University of Seville, ES; Budapest University of Technology and Economics, HU. The survey was delivered on-line through the 'Limesurvey' platform, using a self-administered questionnaire. The SAQ was developed using as input the results of the key informant interviews and review of policies, studies and practices. The draft SAQ was validated using 'cognitive interviews'.

A total of 975 respondents accessed the survey, of which 546 – 56% - completed the questionnaire. The data collected from the 546 completed questionnaires were analysed using the software package statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS).

3. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

3.1 Approach and profile of interviewees

As noted above, the key informant interviews were carried out, using a semi-structured interview schedule, covering four themes:

- Theme 1: Background to widening participation in tertiary education
- Theme 2: Needs of students for guidance and counselling services
- Theme 3: Current and future provision
- Theme 4: Suggestions for analysis of practices

A total of seven key informants were interviewed, one from Spain, four from Italy and two from Hungary. Three held senior positions in student counselling services; three were academic staff with responsibility for pedagogical, student welfare and quality issues, and one was a student representative.

3.2 Theme1: Background to widening participation

Five main drivers were highlighted by the respondents, each of which is seen as significant in shaping current policies and practices around student guidance and counselling. These are :

- The need for a holistic and 'joined-up' approach to addressing drop-out rates
- The need for higher education institutions to embed a 'quality culture' in their approaches and practices
- The increasing importance of reflecting the student voice and a student-led education service model
- The recognition that guidance and counselling is a 'formative' process rather than a 'reactive response'
- The need for higher education institutions to recognise, and respond to profound changes in the relationship between education and society, and in particular the relationship between education and work

Many of the themes highlighted stem from what is seen as the significant changes that have occurred in society as a result of the onset of the 'Knowledge Society' and in particular the relationship between education and work. A number of commentators, for example Giddens (1999), have argued that as the old institutions of industrial society are undermined by globalization, young people must learn to navigate the new 'risk society' for themselves.³ This has created both uncertainty for young people around what education is for as well as new anxieties for students that need to be addressed as they study. The experts suggested that school simply does not prepare young people for these risks nor the new challenges they create:

"Often students just follow the path decided when entering secondary school... regardless of their vocations and aspirations"

"Students drop out because the university is an 'exam factory' with no relevance to the real world."

³ Giddens, A (1999). Runaway world. London: Profile Books.

3.3 Theme 2: Needs of students for guidance and counselling services

The experts showed a high degree of consensus in terms of the key areas of need to be addressed by student guidance and counselling services. These reflect the process of the student 'journey', as follows:

- Advice on entry – particularly orientation
- Changing study pathways – advice on course and subject changes
- 'On demand' needs that respond to a 'presenting problem', particularly psychological and health support
- Special needs – particularly for students with disabilities
- International Students - assistance on accommodation; legal problems; administrative issues
- Needs on exit – particularly careers advice

The emphasis that emerges from the interviews is of a need for student guidance and counselling services to understand that the student experience is not simply an educational matter but a significant 'life journey' that needs to be supported. In the words of one of the experts consulted:

"The key need is to help students understand what is relevant for them so that they become adults".

3.4 Theme 3: Current and future provision

The consensus amongst the experts was that, although most HEI's do currently provide services for student guidance and counselling, these services are typically basic. There are a number of gaps in current provision and a need for reform of the current systems. The key issues in current provision identified were as follows:

- Services are fragmented and not joined up
- The lack of stakeholder collaboration and joint planning
- The lack of Monitoring and Evaluation of both student needs and the performance of provision.
- Services are reactive rather than preventative and pro-active

There was a consensus that the dominant ethos in student guidance and counselling is based on reacting to problems rather than helping to create an environment aimed at supporting the overall development of students, thus reducing the risk factors that lead to subsequent problems that then need to be solved. As one respondent put it:

"Guidance services are mostly aimed at filling the gaps in access, and at allowing 'weak' students to reach the required level of competences".

Against this background, the experts identified a number of needs that remain to be addressed, and areas where improvements in guidance and counselling services could be made. These are:

- The need to design and implement services based on evidence-based practice
- Need for 'one stop shop' for services
- Staff need to have common vision of student support and share responsibilities
- The need for a shift from a simple 'information point' to a 'comprehensive reference point'
- The need for support in the transition from school to HEI.

- Key need to reduce isolation and sense of loss on entry
- The need for mentoring and peer support

A strong theme that emerged from the interviews was the need for better collaboration between stakeholders in order to support this move towards 'pro-active' rather than reactive services. As one informant observed:

"A guidance and counselling service should be articulated in different levels of intervention according to a collaborative logic, based on the sharing of the same objective by students and teachers, i.e. to make the university experience as a unique and meaningful opportunity of learning, and cultural and personal growth".

3.5 Theme 4: Suggestions for analysis of practice

The experts were asked to suggest some of the key areas in the field that need to be further explored in order to develop better guidance and counselling services for the future, as well as suggesting examples of good practice in the field. The themes highlighted varied, as follows:

- Teaching innovation involving research, mentoring, training of teachers and administrative personnel and services;
- Design of materials for accessibility;
- Research and Good Practices on developing entrepreneurial skills for students;
- Work on the isolation students feel and the separation between University institutions and the students;
- Address the current situation of young people who are very confused about their life and their future;
- Identifying the reasons for low levels of student utilisation of existing services;
- In-depth assessment of the impacts of on-line services.

However, one theme on which there was a high degree of consensus amongst experts was the notion, identified in 'Theme 3' above, that one of the key gaps in current provision was addressing the confusion students feel about their life and about the future. As one expert observed:

"In our regular work we meet young people young people who are very confused about their life and their future.... The role of education is changing: a few years ago studying was almost directly linked to the future work position. This is not true anymore."

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Approach and scope of the review

As noted above in Section 2, the literature review adopted a 'narrative' approach using a 'realist review' methodology. This entailed: an initial 'Data Audit' aimed at searching for, collecting and collating material in the field of student guidance and counselling; carrying out an initial appraisal of this long list of material by applying a set of assessment criteria based on relevance, timeliness, quality and comprehensiveness; selecting a final short list of items; analysing these items using content analysis.

A total of 120 items were collated and assessed through the Data Audit. A final short list of 27 of these items were subsequently reviewed in more detail using content analysis.

4.2 Key themes identified in the literature review

Five 'meta-themes' were identified through the literature review:

- Factors affecting student drop out
- Support Needs of students
- Type of Provision in current HEIs
- On-line provision
- 'What works' in student guidance and counselling services

4.2.1 Factors affecting student drop out

There is a significant literature on student drop-out. Analysis of the literature shows the most significant factors identified as key factors influencing premature departure from a higher education course are as follows:

- The student's sense of belonging and embeddedness in a community;
- Distance to study – (home-sickness; isolation; off-campus) – the literature suggests this is a more important factor for younger than older students;
- The 'personal context' of study – a common causal factor in drop-out is money issues;
- Problems with the course or the institution – a number of studies suggest that significant numbers of students select a particular institution or course with no real justification, rationale or evidence to support their choices;
- The student study status - part-time students appear to be more at risk of dropping out than full-time students;
- Stage in study – mature students appear to be more 'high risk' of dropping out than undergraduates;
- Socio-economic position – some studies suggest that students from working class backgrounds are more likely to drop out;
- Strength of relationships with students and teachers – a number of studies suggest that institutions that adopt peer and mentoring support programmes have lower rates of drop out.

The box below provides an example of a key study in the field.

Research Example: 'Leaving University Early: The final research report from the back on course project -back on course'. HEFCE; UCAS: Open University (UK), 2012.

This study reports on an impartial advice and guidance service for people who had withdrawn from higher education before completing their studies. It was funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as a three-year project, and managed by The Open University with contact and data services provided by UCAS. This final research report from the project looks at all the data gathered in the three-year period. Some of the key findings of the research are:

- A regression analysis based on a selection of key variables, produced significant associations and differences between institutions based on institutional average tariff scores. UCAS (the UK agency responsible for finding places for students) assigns a 'tariff' score to UK universities based on factors like research awards and outputs; examination performance and teaching performance. The research suggests that 'higher tariff' (aka 'higher performing') institutions have lower drop-out rates
- Distance to study appears to be an important factor for Middle and especially Higher Tariff Group institutions, and appears to be a more important factor for younger students than older students.
- The largest group of early leavers did so primarily for personal/financial reasons (including caring for others).
- Nearly two-fifths (37%) left primarily for HE-related reasons to do with either the course or the institution.
- There is some evidence that the reason for leaving may be influenced by the reason for choosing the HE institution, and whether the student had access to information, advice and guidance before application.

The above example suggests a similar set of factors affecting drop-out to those highlighted by the experts in the key informant interviews. In particular, three main factors can be identified from the example. First, the extent to which students have had access to relevant – and useful – information and advice about the institution and the learning pathway they were choosing before their application. Second, the extent to which institutions project a clear 'identity' and sense of community that students can buy into and in which they feel a sense of belonging – an image that is attached great importance, for example in 'high tariff' universities in the UK. Third, structural factors associated with the 'life world' of the student, with family and economic situation and stage in the life cycle identified as key factors affecting drop-out.

These patterns are mirrored in other studies in other countries. A study conducted at the University of Colombia ⁴ identified four main clusters of factors that can affect the decision to leave or graduate: institutional, socio-economic, academic and individual factors. A key institutional factor is level of satisfaction with the curriculum. With regard to socio-economic factors, the study suggests that working class students are more likely to drop out than students from middle class backgrounds. Academic factors refer to the dynamics that create a sense of belonging, with students who enjoy a good relationship with both teachers and classmates less

⁴ Elkin Castaño, Santiago Gallón, Karoll Gómez and Johanna Vásquez, 2008

likely to drop out than those who don't. Finally the key 'individual' factors associated with drop out cover things like personal finances, family and relationship status.

4.2.2 Support Needs of students

The second major theme identified by the literature review centres on research, studies and examples of initiatives that explore the key needs of students with regard to guidance and counselling. Five key areas of need were highlighted:

- Orientation and integration needs
- Exiting and careers support needs
- Mature students support needs
- Psychological counselling
- Support for studying

As with Theme 1, the areas of need identified in the literature are highly consistent with the areas of need identified by the experts consulted in the key informant interviews. A consistent theme identified in the literature reflects a recognition in recent years that guidance and counselling needs reflect a dynamic process, associated with the study 'journey' and the different challenges this poses for students at different times over the study lifecycle. This in turn suggests that counselling and guidance needs are determined on the one hand by 'common' factors associated with a particular stage in this process as well as individual factors that reflect the particular circumstances of individual students, as the example in the Box below shows.

Example: Review of Support Services in Spanish Universities, *Acción Psicológica*, 6(1), 17-40, 2009.

This review of guidance and counselling services in 74 Spanish Universities was carried out using a multi-methodological approach, incorporating website analysis, staff surveys and interviews. The results showed that around 70% of the universities analysed provided some form of guidance and counselling service – although this means that almost a third of HEIs did not provide a service. Most of these services were 'mixed', providing a range of psychological counselling, pedagogic support and information services, although there was an emphasis on meeting the psychological and psycho-educational needs of students. The study suggests that there has been a growth in service provision over the last decade, reflecting and increasing recognition that guidance and counselling needs to be part of an 'organic' approach that recognises the importance of supporting the personal development of students rather than reacting to problems as they occur. A key conclusion of the study is that student guidance and counselling needs reflect on the one hand 'generic' issues that are common to all students as well as needs that reflect individual and personal characteristics and circumstances.

4.2.3 Type of Provision

The results of the literature review show a close correlation between the major themes identified in work on defining student guidance and counselling needs and work on what is currently being done to address those needs. Content analysis of the material collected shows that interventions and research on guidance and counselling provision focuses on six main areas:

- The holistic and 'whole-student' approach
- Orientation and integration support

- Tutorial guidance and mentoring
- Psychological counselling
- Peer Assisted Learning and Peer Tutoring
- Exiting and career counselling

These themes once again are consistent with the expert's assessment of the current state of the art, as reflected in the responses to the key informant interviews. They also suggest that guidance and counselling services in HEI's within the EU are responding to the recognition, highlighted in Theme 2 (Support Needs of Students), that the challenges faced by students are 'process-led'. We see evidence in the literature of a spectrum of services represented that progresses from support that focuses on 'orientation needs' on first entry to exiting and career counselling provision at the end of the study journey. In turn, this has led to recent efforts to design and implement services that are holistic in orientation, aimed at reflecting and addressing the complex needs that evolve according to changing circumstances. The example shown in the Box below – the Alma Orienta service at the University of Bologna – typifies this trend.

Example of current guidance and counselling provision: the Alma Orienta service at the University of Bologna.

The distinguishing feature of Alma Orienta is a focus on supporting the guidance and counselling needs of every student, at every phase in their study path and for any issue they have to cope with. In this context, four inter-connected service elements are provided:

- Guidance for school leavers
- Ongoing Guidance and Support, based on tailoring support to the needs of individual students through assigning them individual tutors for study pathways, exams, administrative issues, personal issues
- Career Service for graduate and post-graduate students.
- Support for International Students from Erasmus/Leonardo Programmes and worldwide.

The organisational and management structure is extensive. There is a central office of coordination, but specific guidance offices are present at each faculty. Private and group meetings are scheduled in order to help students to make informed choices. For students with disabilities there is a special service to better analyse and provide solutions for them. A central feature of the system is the extensive tutoring, mentoring and peer support provided. Tutors are assigned to students for each faculty, for students taking the step between high school and university, specialist tutoring at critical transition pathways, for personal problems, administrative issues and a tutor for EU mobility. Personal tutoring includes provision for face-to-face counselling. Students with 'special needs' can attend a specialist guidance centre. The system uses an on-line registration facility. It also provides an eGuidance service to support guidance and counselling at distance using social media tools. The guidance and counselling system is further supported by an extensive set of networks connected to the University, which provides opportunities, for example, to link career guidance to external stakeholder networks.

The key features of the provision model shown by this example are:

- It reflects the whole spectrum of the student journey, beginning with supporting the transition from school to university and ending with supporting the transition to work
- The organisational design and management of the system is centralised, supporting a 'one stop shop' approach, but also provides dispersed satellite services to enable wider access
- It utilises the University's extensive external networks to reinforce the services provided

- The system incorporates a comprehensive system of personal tutoring, mentoring and peer support
- It applies a 'blended' service model that combines generic services with group and personal support
- It provides an 'e-guidance' support service using social media tools

4.2.4 On-line services

The literature review suggested an increasing trend towards adopting on-line platforms and tools within student guidance and counselling services. The key trends highlighted by the literature review are as follows:

- On-line guidance and counselling is becoming increasingly more prevalent
- Most HEIs provide at least a basic information service on line – a web-site; information services; maps of the institution
- On-line psychological and therapeutic counselling is on the increase
- There has been an increasing interest recently in using peer-assisted learning, on-line mentoring and group discussion forums in guidance and counselling.

The dominant model of on-line guidance and counselling identified in the literature is based on information provision to support students in making decisions about their courses and to support them in studying. A typical example is Student Online Support (SOS), developed by Swansea University, Wales. This is aimed at BA (Hons) Part-time Degree students who are studying on campus and/or in community venues. It provides Study Skills information and advice for adults who have recently returned to learn at Higher Education level. Resources are mainly in the form of PDF's, downloadable from the website. The delivery model is based on providing a single point of information for a specific target group – in this case mainly adults who are returning to education and who are studying part-time. The second main area where on-line guidance and support services are on the increase is in psychological counselling. A typical example is the University of Birmingham, shown in the Box below.

Example, on-line counselling: University of Birmingham, England

The on-line counselling service forms part of a structured guidance and counselling service model. The service is open to all students who feel in need of support in terms of counselling. A designated counsellor enrolls the student onto their WebCT topic on a sessional basis. Each session lasts 50 minutes. An email link is provided for the student to complete an online form just before each online counselling session. This enables the student and the counsellor to consider what is going on for the student on a weekly basis and to assess whether the counselling appears to be helpful.

Where the student presents mental health needs or potential risky behaviours, he/she is supported using the traditional face to face service. Counsellors who work online have additional training to manage the technology.

A key strength of the approach is that it is seen as a way of overcoming resistance to seeking support: "Sometimes the lack of visual contact can help a client to disclose things they may not have felt able to express in person".

Although the literature review suggested that on-line guidance and services are on the increase, little systematic evidence is available on outcomes and impacts. A Spanish study of the 'INDITIC' project, developed at the National University of Distance Education of Spain, looked at

the effectiveness of social networking in facilitating mentoring to foster relationships between teachers and students. The results suggest that the effectiveness of on-line guidance and counselling depends on factors like the motivation of students and tutors. A study of on-line counselling services in Nigeria suggested that another key factor influencing effectiveness was the level and quality of the training provided to counselling practitioners as well as students who received the support. An Asian study in 2010 concluded that web-based counselling has great potential and its benefits are likely to be enhanced if professional counselling is supplemented with peer-focused counselling.

4.2.5 What works in student guidance and counselling

The literature review suggested that the evidence base on what works in student guidance and counselling is under-developed with few systematic studies carried out. Most of the research is based on case studies of specific interventions. Against this background, the review identified the following 'success factors' that appear to have an effect on successful student guidance and counselling practices:

- Adopting a 'whole-student' approach
- Supportive peer relations and peer mentoring
- Meaningful interaction between staff and students
- Developing knowledge, confidence and identity for students
- Engaging teachers and students as mentors
- Student and teacher training in guidance and counselling
- Monitoring of needs and outcomes
- Co-operation between students and key actors in the labour market
- A single point of information

One of the few systematic studies of what works was carried out in the UK by the Higher Education Funding Council and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. This entailed a comprehensive review of the approaches of 22 higher education institutions over a three year period and provides key insights into the factors and good practices that are associated with positive outcomes and impacts. The study is summarised in the Box below.

Example of 'what works' – 'What works?': Report on the Student Retention and Success programme, HEFCE/Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2012.

The 'What Works?' programme sought to analyse and evaluate best practice skills to ensure high student retention in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), with a particular focus on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Twenty two HEIs collaborating through seven distinct projects participated in the programme from 2008-11. The methodology consisted of combining student survey data, qualitative research with students and staff, literature reviews and analysis of institutional data.

The main conclusion of the research was, at the heart of successful retention and success is a strong sense of belonging in Higher Education for all students. This is most effectively nurtured through mainstream activities that all students participate in. The key to boosting student retention and success lies not in any specific intervention, but stems from a set of key characteristics, underpinning principles and wider institutional culture, all intended to foster student belonging. Student belonging is achieved through:

- Supportive peer relations
- Meaningful interaction between staff and students
- Developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners
- A HE experience relevant to students' interests and future goals

The results of this systematic review reinforce the key conclusions from the literature review on the main contributing factors to student drop-out, as well as the key conclusions from the expert interviews on what are the key success factors in student guidance and counselling services. These emphasise the need to develop systems that are holistic in orientation, address the 'whole student' experience, reflect the developmental process of the 'study journey' and address the complex needs that evolve according to changing circumstances.

5. 5. STUDENT SURVEY

5.1 Purpose and approach used

5.1.1 Aims and objectives of the Survey

The main objective of the Survey was to capture and analyse the needs of students with regard to guidance and counselling services, and the expectations they have about the type of guidance and counselling services that could be provided through STAY IN and, more broadly, within the wider EU tertiary education sector.

5.1.2 Sample design

The target group for the survey was students involved in tertiary education, with a special focus on 'at risk' students and those coming from disadvantaged groups, and a focus on the needs of the students studying in the three participating universities in which the STAY IN guidance services will be piloted, i.e. University of Macerata, IT; University of Seville, ES; Budapest University of Technology and Economics, HU. The sample design was a quota sample of 400 students, concentrated in these three universities.

5.1.3 Survey Instrument

The Survey was implemented through a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ). The design and development of the SAQ took an iterative approach. The SAQ was developed using as input the results of the review of policies, studies and practices described above. The review entailed a narrative review of relevant material collected through an audit of the literature on student guidance and counseling services. The content analysis template used to analyse this material included a coding category intended to elicit possible questions for inclusion in the SAQ. This provided inputs to the development of an initial draft questionnaire.

5.1.4 Validation of the Survey Instrument

The draft SAQ was validated using 'cognitive interviews'. Cognitive interviews explicitly focus on the cognitive processes that respondents use to answer survey questions; therefore, covert processes that are normally hidden, as well as overt, observable ones, are studied. (Lester et al, 1999; Willis et al, 1991).⁵ The methodology adopted was based on verbal probing (Willis, 1999)⁶ which evaluated the SAQ instrument using five types of probe: comprehension; paraphrasing; confidence judgment ; specific probe; general probes . A total of nine cognitive interviews were carried out, 3 with students at the University of Seville, Spain; 3 with students at the University of Macerata, Italy; 2 with students at Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Hungary and one from a Budapest Technology College. Analysis of the cognitive interviews was carried out using De Vaus's method ⁷, which assessed the overall questionnaire design, structure and content on four criteria: flow; question skips; timing; respondent interest

⁵ Lessler, J.T., & Rothgeb, J.R. (1999). Integrating cognitive research into household survey design. In M. Sirken, T. Jabine, G. Willis, E. Martin, & C. Tucker (Eds.), *A New Agenda for Interdisciplinary Survey Research Methods: Proceedings of the CASM II Seminar*. National Center for Health Statistics, pp. 67-69; Willis, G.B., Royston, P., & Bercini, D. (1991). The use of verbal report methods in the development and testing of survey questionnaires. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 5, 251-267.

⁶ Willis, G (1999) *Cognitive Interviewing: a 'how to' Guide*, American Statistical Association

⁷ De Vaus (2002) *Surveys in Social Research*. Sage: 118.

and attention, and the specific question items on six criteria: variation; meaning; redundancy; scalability; non-response; acquiescent response.

5.1.5 Delivery of the Survey

On the basis of the cognitive interview analysis, a revised version of the SAQ was drafted and circulated among the STAY IN partners for final checking. The final version of the SAQ was then translated into Italian, Spanish and Hungarian and uploaded in these languages, plus English, to the 'Limesurvey' server. The survey was then publicised through the STAY IN website, through the websites of the three STAY IN participating Universities (Seville, Macerata and BME) and through partners websites, which provided a link to access the SAQ through the Limesurvey website.

A total of 975 respondents accessed the survey, of which 546 – 56% - completed the questionnaire. The data collected from the 546 completed questionnaires were analysed using the software package statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS).

5.2. Survey Results

5.2.1 Respondent Profile

Location of Respondents

Reflecting the survey's focus on the needs of students in the three STAY IN participating Universities, the majority of questionnaires were completed by students from Italy (38%), Spain (36%) and Hungary (19%). In Spain and Hungary virtually all of the respondents were studying at the University of Seville and Budapest University of of Technology and Economics. In Italy, the respondents came from two main institutions – University of Macerata and Roma Tor Vergata, although a range of other institutions were also represented, including La Sapienza di Roma; University of Napoli; University of Bolzano; Politecnica del Marche; Politecnico di Milano; University of Torino; University of Parma; University of Bologna; University of Catania . 7% of the questionnaires were completed by students from outside these three countries, covering a wide spread of institutions in Greece, Montenegro, the UK, Portugal, France, Ukraine, Romania, Germany, Sweden, USA, Canada (Figure 1).

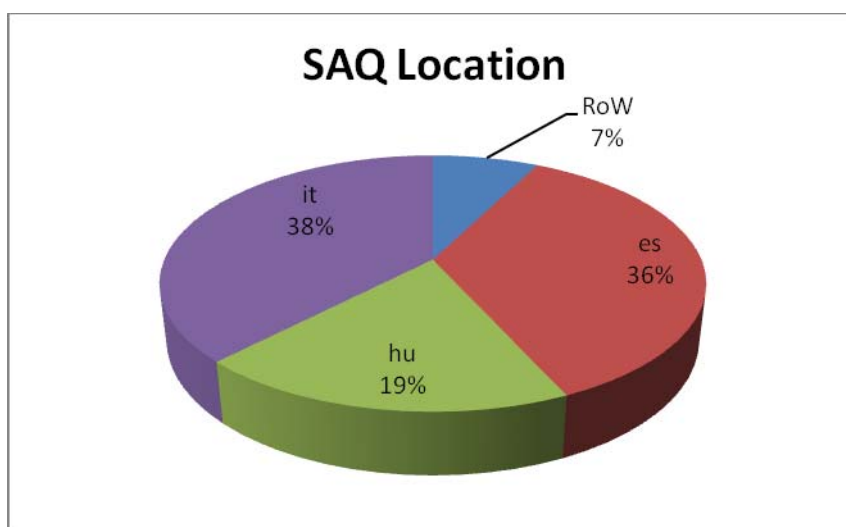


Figure 1: Location of Respondents completing SAQ

Socio-cultural profile

The demographic, social and cultural characteristics of the survey sample are broadly similar to the EU student population as a whole. As successive Eurostat and Eurostudent surveys have demonstrated⁸ the socio-cultural profile of students varies considerably across member states and for these reasons the profile of the STAY IN sample was compared with similar data for the student population in the countries from which the majority of respondents were drawn, where relevant data are available.

As Figure 2 shows, the majority of students – 45%- were in the 17-22 age group, with 32% between 23 and 26; 12% between 27 and 30 and 11% over 30. This is broadly in line with the situation in Italy and Spain and for the EU as a whole, where the median student age is 21 years. 62% of the sample were female and 38% male. This compares with a ratio of 59% female to 41% male for the EU, and 56%-54% for Spain (Figure 3). 6% of the sample were studying in countries outside their 'home' country, compared with 7% for the EU as a whole (Figure 4). 3% of the sample described themselves as coming from an ethnic or minority background. It is difficult to compare this figure with trends in the EU and in member states, since data on ethnicity are not routinely collected and are defined in different ways in different countries, but for illustrative purposes, recent (2012) Department for Education data for the UK estimate the proportion of students from black and ethnic minority backgrounds is 18%, whilst data from the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) (now the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights) in 2004⁹ suggested that the representation of students from ethnic minority backgrounds varied considerably from 4% in the Netherlands to 30% in Sweden.

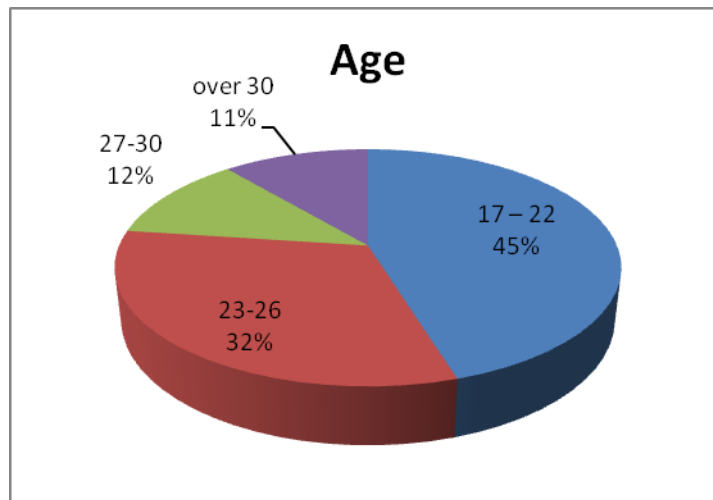


Figure 2: Age distribution of sample

⁸ Eurostat (2012); Eurostudent III (2008); Eurostudent IV (2011)

⁹ EUFRA (2004) Migrants, Minorities and Education

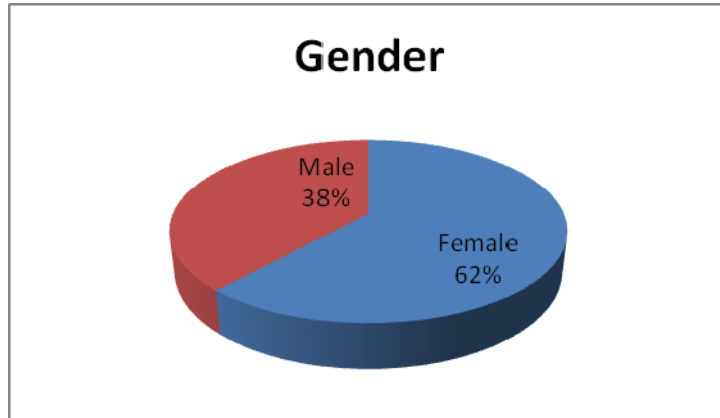


Figure 3: Gender distribution of sample

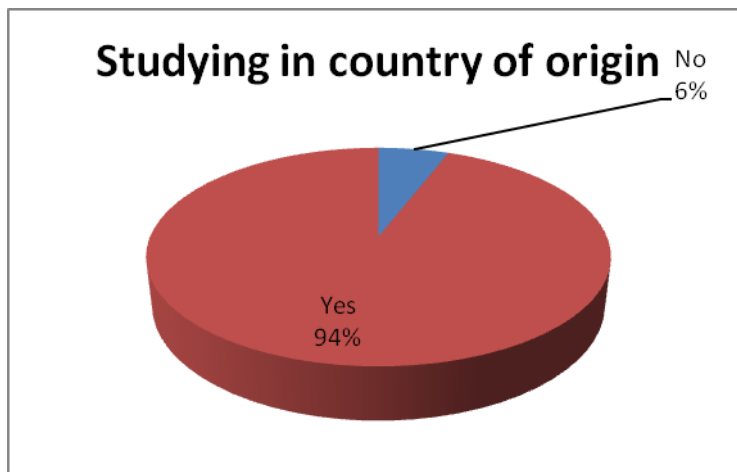


Figure 4: Origin of Respondents

Another problematic indicator of student profile is socio-economic background, the definition of which again varies significantly from country to country. Taking the definition used in the 'Eurostudent III' (2008) and 'Eurostudent IV' (2011) surveys of 'blue collar' occupations (defined as covering ISCO-08 major groups 6 – skilled agricultural and fishery worker, 7 – craft and related, 8 – plant and machinery operators and assemblers, 9 – Elementary occupations, and 0 –armed forces personnel, Figure 5 shows the distribution of survey respondents in terms of the occupation of the household highest wage-earner, using the *International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)*. This shows that the profile of the sample is consistent with that of the EU as a whole. 26% of the sample come from a 'blue collar' background compared with 20% for Spain, 28% for Italy and 26% for the EU. However, it should be noted that the largest group of students in the sample – 32% - come from a 'professional and managerial' background.

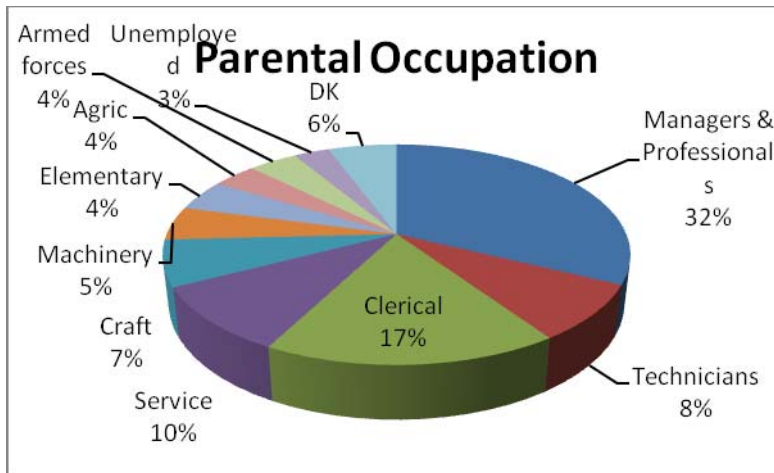


Figure 5: Parental Occupation of Sample

Study profile

Figures 6 to 10 show the study profile of the sample, in terms of the qualification aimed at; the length of time studying; whether full or part-time; on or off campus and if a previously had experience of being a student.

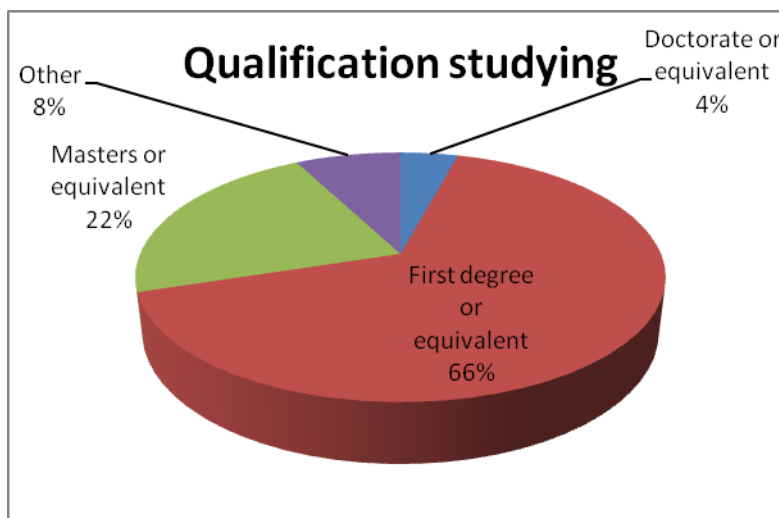


Figure 6: Qualification Studying

As figure 6 shows, the majority of the sample – around two thirds – are currently undergraduates, with 22% studying for a Masters qualification; 4% postgraduates and 8% studying for another type of qualification. The spread of subjects studied is in line with Eurostat and Eurostudent trends, with a broad spread of the respondents across a range of subject areas, although the survey sample is slightly biased towards students studying in Languages, Humanities, Business, Education and Engineering.

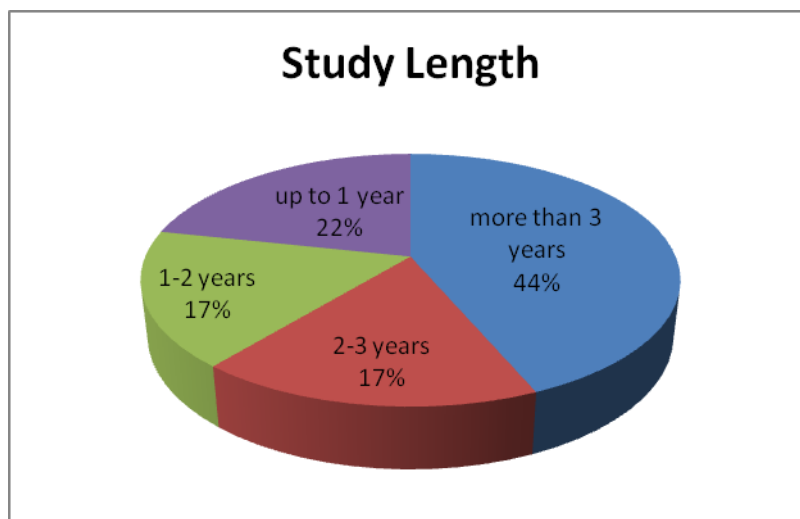


Figure 7: Duration of Study

Thee of qualification studying for is also reflected in Figure 7 – which shows the length of time the sample has been studying at their current institution. 56% of the sample have been studying for between 1 and 3 years, which will reflect the majority of the undergraduates, except those studying for four-year or more degrees (for example medical students). 44% of the sample have been studying for more than four years. The sample reflects a broad distribution of ‘newer’ and ‘older’ graduates, with 22% ‘freshers’ (studying for up to 1 year); 17% studying for between 1 and 2 years and 17% studying for between 2 and 3 years.

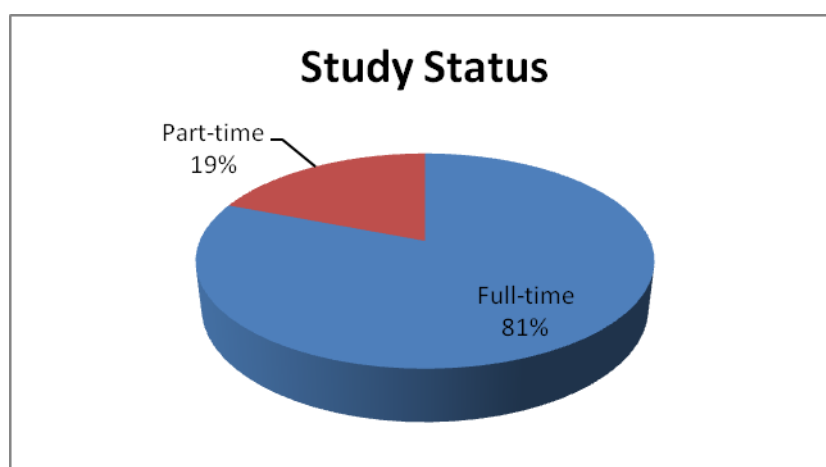


Figure 8: Study Status

Figure 8 shows the proportion of the sample who are ‘full-time’ students – 81% - compared to those who are part-time 19%. This figure compares with a level of 14% for Spain and 2% for Italy (Eurostudent IV).

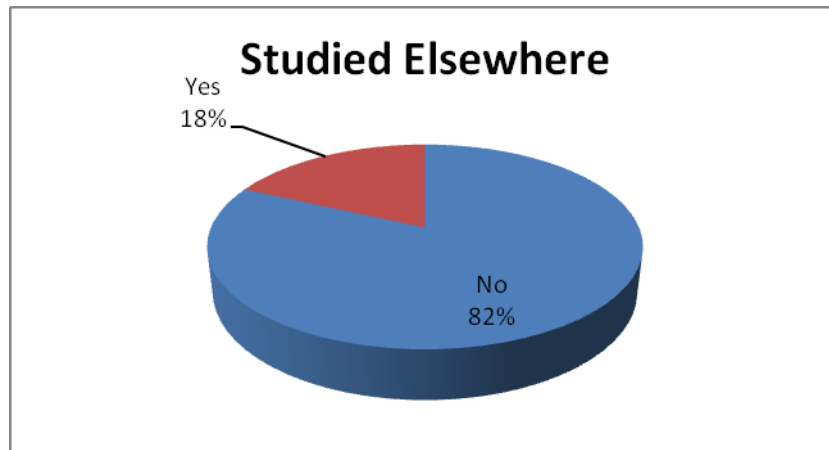


Figure 9: If studied elsewhere*

Figure 9 shows that for the majority of the sample this is their first student experience, with 82% not having previously studied elsewhere.

Figure 10 shows there is a significant proportion of students whose study life takes place outside their institution. Although 62% are based on campus, some 23% of the sample are studying off campus and 13% study both on and off campus.

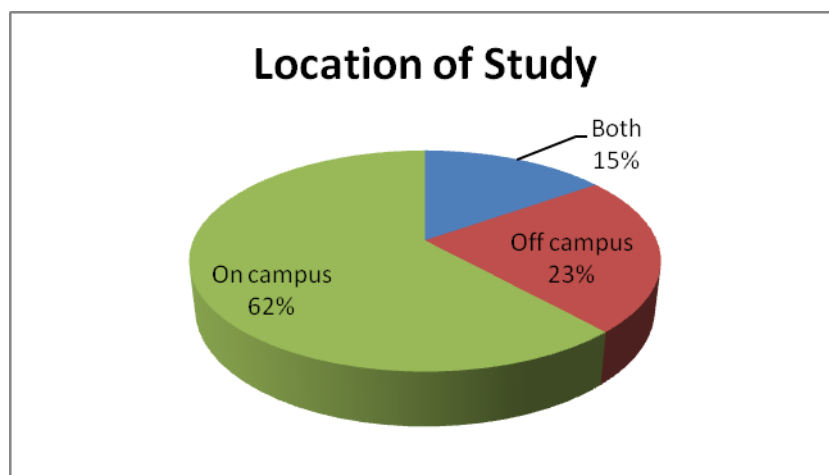


Figure 10: If Studying on/Off campus

Summary of the Student Profile

To summarise, the profile of the students sampled has the following distinguishing features:

- Most students are studying in Italy, Spain and Hungary, though a smaller proportion are studying in institutions across the globe
- Most students are in the 17-22 age group, though there is a significant minority of 'mature' students
- The majority of students are female
- A very small proportion are overseas students
- A very small proportion are from black and ethnic minority backgrounds
- Most students are from 'white collar' occupational backgrounds, with many from professional and managerial backgrounds.

- Most of the students are currently undergraduates, but a significant proportion are doing a Masters or postgraduate course
- Around a fifth of the students are 'freshers', i.e. completing their first year of study. However, almost half the students have been studying for more than four years.
- The vast majority of students are studying full-time
- Most of the students are based on campus, but a significant proportion study off campus
- For the majority of students, this is their first student experience.

5.2.2 The Student Experience

Study mobility

One of the aims of the survey was to assess the level and extent of what might be termed 'study mobility'. The literature suggests that many students are ill-prepared to make the transition between school and University and are not given enough advice on what courses are best for them. If this is the case, then this is likely to have an effect on their subsequent student career. Figure 11 provides indicators of student mobility for the population sampled in the survey, from changing courses to dropping out altogether.

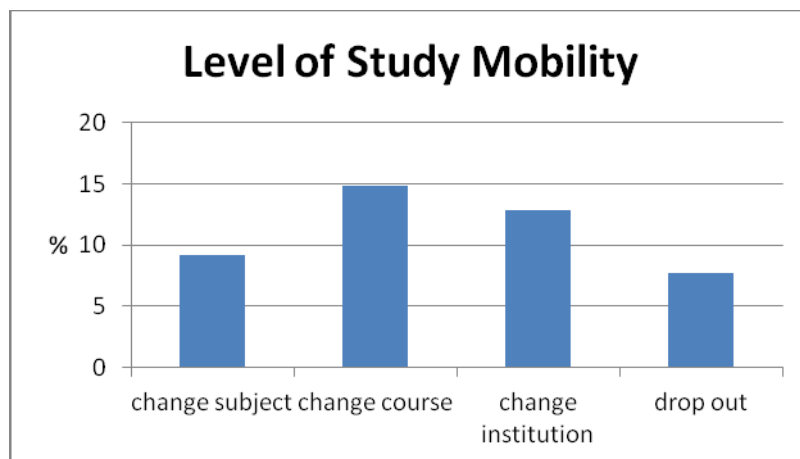


Figure 11: Student Mobility

As Figure 11 shows, students do experience some degree of dislocation and disruption in their study pathways, although this is not widespread. Just under 10% of the sample had changed subjects during the course of their study; 15% had changed their course; 13% had switched universities and 7% had dropped out altogether. This latter figure seems low in comparison with global trends. OECD figures for 2012 suggest an average drop-out rate of 30% of those entering higher education across OECD countries. However, rates vary significantly between countries and OECD figures are sometimes contrary to the figures provided by individual countries themselves. For example the latest (2012) figure for the UK produced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency show a national drop-out rate of 7.4%, compared with a figure of 35% provided by OECD in 2012. It is also likely that the 7% of our sample who reported they had dropped out altogether reflects students who had returned to higher education at a later point in their lives.

The analysis showed little correlation between student mobility and student profile, except in relation to three aspects where there was a statistically significant association between mobility and student profile. Postgraduate students were more likely to have changed their course during the period they were studying – 39% had changed courses compared with 10% of

undergraduates (Pearson = 11.7; significance = 0.008). This is also linked to age, where 26% of the 27-30 age group had changed courses compared with 10% of the 17-22 age group (Pearson = 10.6; significance = 0.014). Drop-out rates were associated with gender and age. 11% of male students had previously dropped out, double the rate of females (Pearson = 12.01; significance = 0.003). 18% of the over 30 age group had dropped out, compared with 7% of the 17-22 age group (Pearson = 13.6; significance = 0.002).

Problems Experienced and Support Received

The Student Survey elicited information on a range of potential issues in student life that could help shape how an innovative student guidance and counselling service could be developed. Figure 12 shows the distribution of issues experienced according to the survey responses. As the Figure shows, physical disability issues constitute a very small proportion of problems encountered – accounting for only 1% of the total issues cited. This reflects the relatively small numbers of students with long term disabilities in the student population as a whole – for example a level of 1.9% in Spain and 0.7% in Italy (Eurostudent IV).

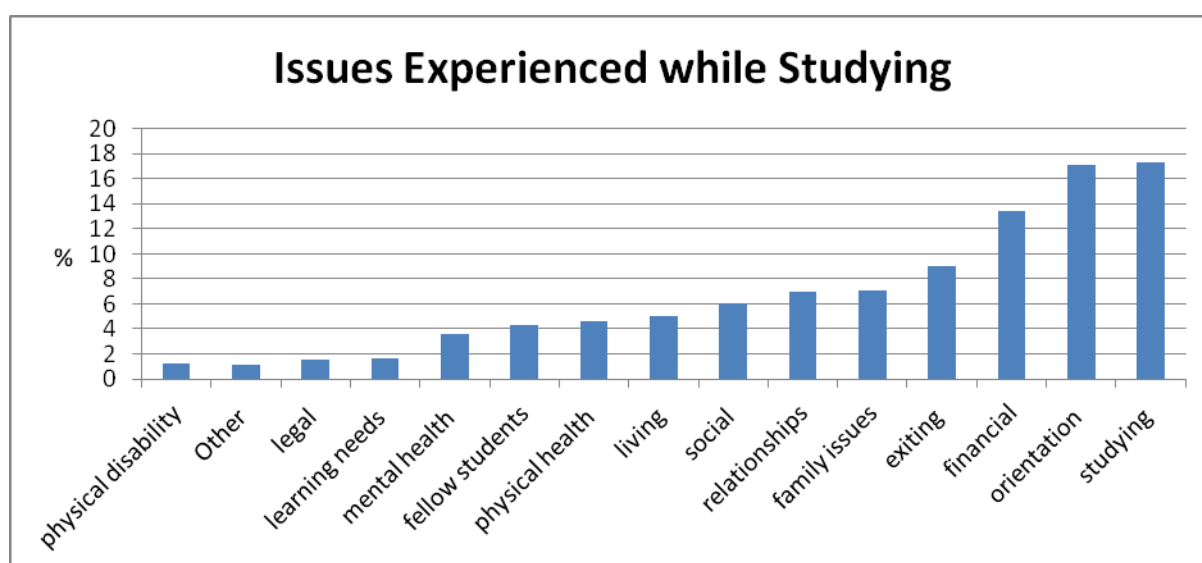


Figure 12: Issues Experienced while studying

The three biggest problems, in terms of the volume reported by the sample, are problems related to studying (like timetable issues and examination issues) – cited by 17% of the sample – ‘orientation’ problems (like issues around finding information on first arrival) – cited by 17% of the sample – and financial issues (for example paying tuition fees and paying for books) – which affected 13% of the sample. Other significant issues cited were issues around ‘exiting’ study (lack of careers advice, for example); family issues; relationship issues and social problems (for example feeling isolated).

As a check, in addition to the ‘closed’ survey questions on problems experienced, the survey respondents were asked an open-ended question: ‘In your student experience, what would you say are the three biggest problems and issues students face whilst studying? The answers to this question showed a high level of consistency. Five key problem areas were identified, i.e.:

- Economic problems (paying for fees, books, accommodation, living costs)
- Orientation problems (lack of information about where to find things)
- Problems with teachers (inadequate staff, lack of support from staff, hostility from staff)
- Timetable problems (course timetable clashes; work-study balance; exam timetables)
- Studying problems (workload, time management, study methods).

These categories were highlighted consistently across the different institutions represented in the survey sample, although they were attached different emphasis – for example, ‘economic’ issues were highlighted as the biggest problem in Spain; ‘orientation’ issues in Hungary and ‘timetabling’ and ‘study’ issues in Italy.

An important finding of the Survey, however, is the disparity between support needs and support provision. Figure 13 shows the pattern of support provision – the extent to which students who reported problems received help for those problems – together with students’.

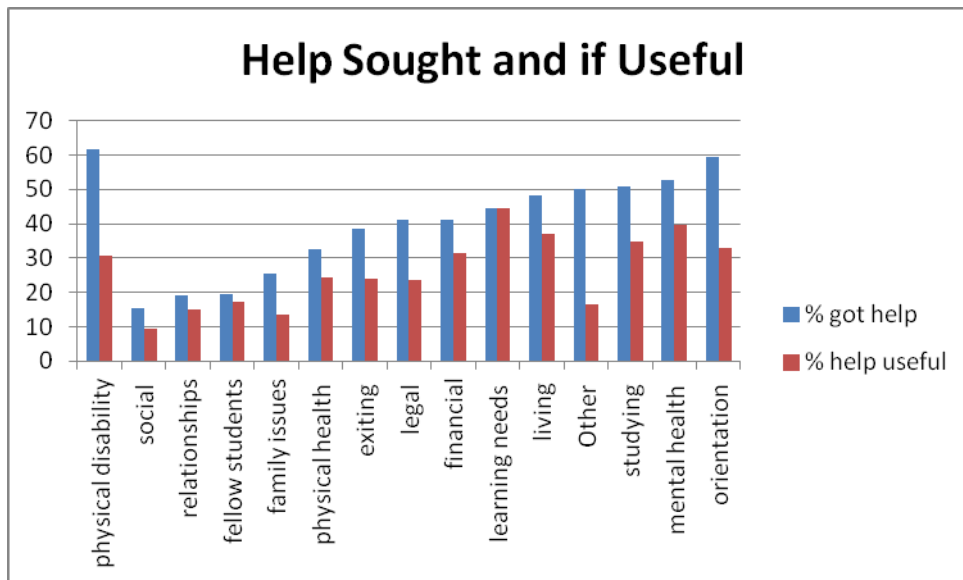


Figure 13: Support provision and efficacy of support provided

As Figure 13 shows, the students most likely to seek help for a problem are those with a long-term physical disability. Although numerically this is a very small group, over 60% of those who reported a physical disability received help for the problem. Students were more likely to receive help for problems around orientation, mental health issues and studying issues – situations in which around 50% of those who reported problems received help for these problems. Students with ‘social’ issues, relationship issues and students experiencing problems with fellow students were much less likely to receive help for these problems.

A key finding of the Survey is the relatively low levels of efficacy attributed by students to the support they received. Although 60% of students with a disability received help, only 30% of those who got support for a physical disability thought that the help they received was useful. As Figure 13 shows, across all the problem dimensions assessed – with the exception of ‘learning’ problems (for example students reporting dyslexia) and ‘mental health’ problems – the proportion of students receiving support who rated the support as useful is less than 40%. In the case of ‘social’ issues, relationship issues and problems with fellow students, less than 20% of those who received help considered the help to be useful.

Figure 14 illustrates the current situation of needs and provision more clearly by showing the ratio of support needs demand to supply, as reported by the student sample. The higher the value on the chart the bigger the gap between the volume of problems reported and the provision of support for the problem.

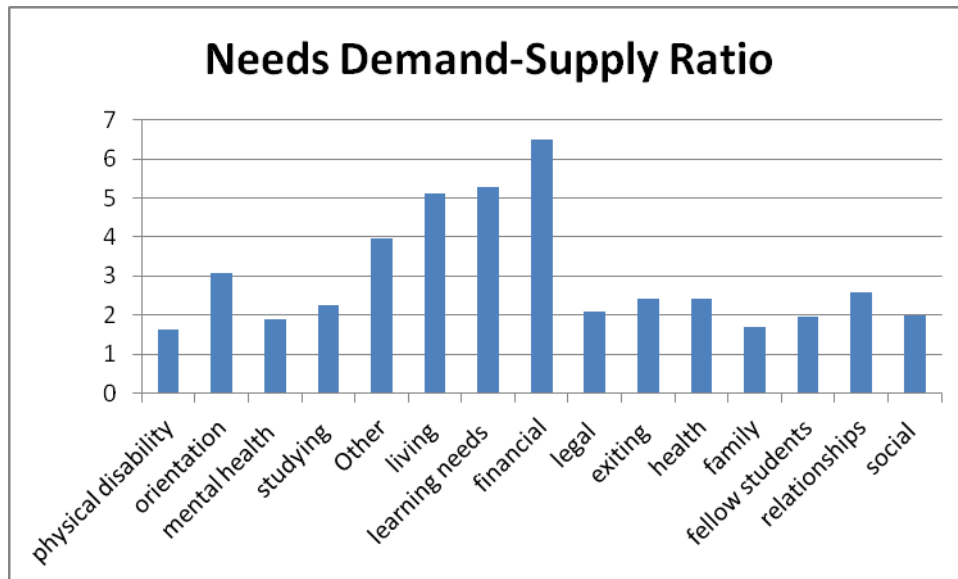


Figure 14: Ratio of Support Needs to Support Supply

As Figure 14 shows, the overall pattern shown by the analysis of the survey data is that there are discrepancies between the level and type of problems students experience; the support they receive, and their perception of the usefulness of the support received. Particularly with regard to financial issues, specific learning needs and living issues (for example getting accommodation) the level of need appears to significantly outweigh the level of support provided.

This conclusion is reinforced by correlation analysis of the relationship between the three indicators of support needs (demand); support provision (receipt of support) and support efficacy (whether support received is perceived as useful). Three aggregate indicators were computed to measure these factors: total number of problems reported by each respondent; total number of instances of help received for the problems reported; total number of times the help received was reported as useful. The results of a Pearson correlation analysis of these variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis: Support Demand, Provision and Efficacy

Correlations		total issues experienced	total issues help sought	cumulative score help on issues
total issues experienced (demand)	Pearson Correlation	1	.442**	.461**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	546	546	546
total issues help sought (supply)	Pearson Correlation	.442**	1	.569**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	546	546	546
cumulative score help on issues (efficacy)	Pearson Correlation	.461**	.569**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	546	546	546

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In an ideal world, there would be a perfect correlation (Pearson=1.0) between the three variables. However, although all three are statistically significantly correlated, the magnitude of correlation is relatively low. Taking the correlation co-efficient as a broad surrogate indicator of the level of need being satisfied, the results suggest that around 56% of student support needs are un-met. In turn, the results suggest that around 43% of the help received is not seen as useful.

Additional analysis of the survey data found little evidence connecting the student experience of problems and support with 'profile' characteristics like age and 'study' characteristics like duration of study. However, analysis of variance identified statistically significant differences in the level of problems experienced according to the following factors:

- country of origin – students not studying at an institution in the same country as their country of origin experienced three times more problems than 'indigenous' students (F=9.183; sig.=0.003)
- location of study – students studying off campus experience more problems than on-campus students ((F=3.163; sig.=0.043)
- ethnicity - students from an ethnic minority background experienced twice as many problems than students from non-ethnic backgrounds (F=6.81; sig.=0.002)

The analysis also showed that age was a significant factor in receiving support. Students in the 27-30 age group received twice as much support as students in the 17-22 age group (F=3.13; sig.=0.025)

A striking feature of the support supply situation, as reported by the survey respondents, is the extent to which students tend to turn to 'non-formal' sources of support in situations where they experience problems. Figure 15 shows the distribution of support received in terms of the source of the support.

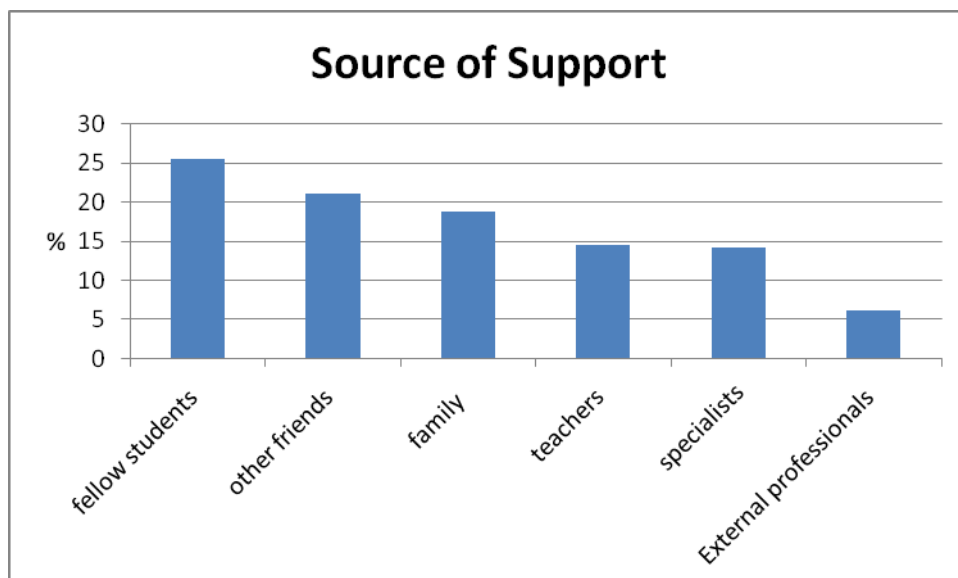


Figure 15: Source of Support Received

As Figure 15 shows, fellow students constitute the most significant source of help for students with problems, accounting for a quarter of the total incidences of help received reported by the survey respondents. Friends outside the University, as well as family members, also provide important resources of support. In contrast, more formal support sources – teachers; on-site professionals (like counsellors) and external professionals brought in by the institutional authorities are less important sources of support than informal networks.

5.2.3. The Experience of Student Guidance and Counselling Services

This Section considers in more detail the provision and utilisation of the student guidance and counselling services that are currently provided in the institutions covered by the Survey.

Service Provision

Figure 16 provides an indication of the level of awareness of student counselling/guidance services provision.



Figure 16: Level of Student Awareness of Counselling and Guidance Services provided

As the Figure shows, almost half of the sample of 546 students did not know whether their institution provided a counselling and guidance service. Just over half said their institution did provide a service and 6% said that a service was not provided in their institution. Of those institutions that did provide a service, most – 67% - provide services ‘in-house’, i.e. through agencies of the HEI. Just over a quarter of services are provided by agencies of the student body (for example the Students Union) and 6% are provided by another type of provider, typically an external sub-contractor (Figure 17).

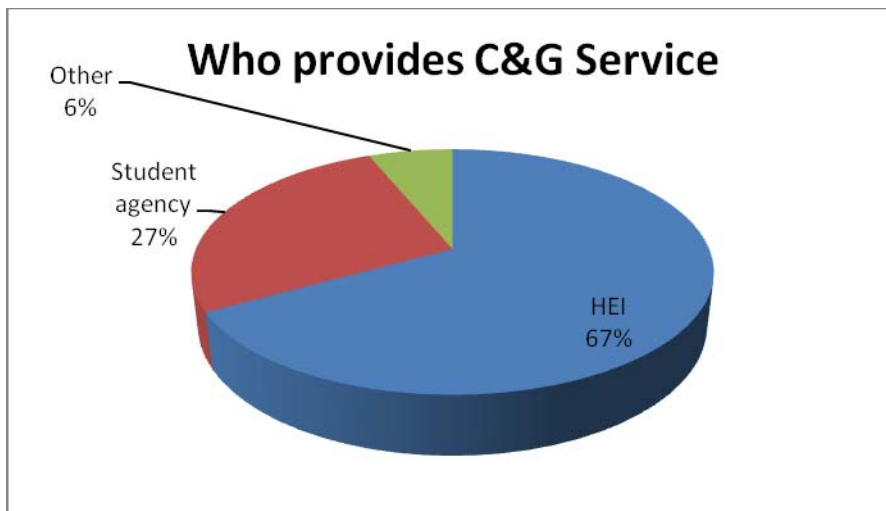


Figure 17: Type of Counselling and Guidance Service Provider

The nature of the services provided is shown in Figure 18. This shows the number of students sampled reporting whether or not a particular kind of service is provided within their institution.

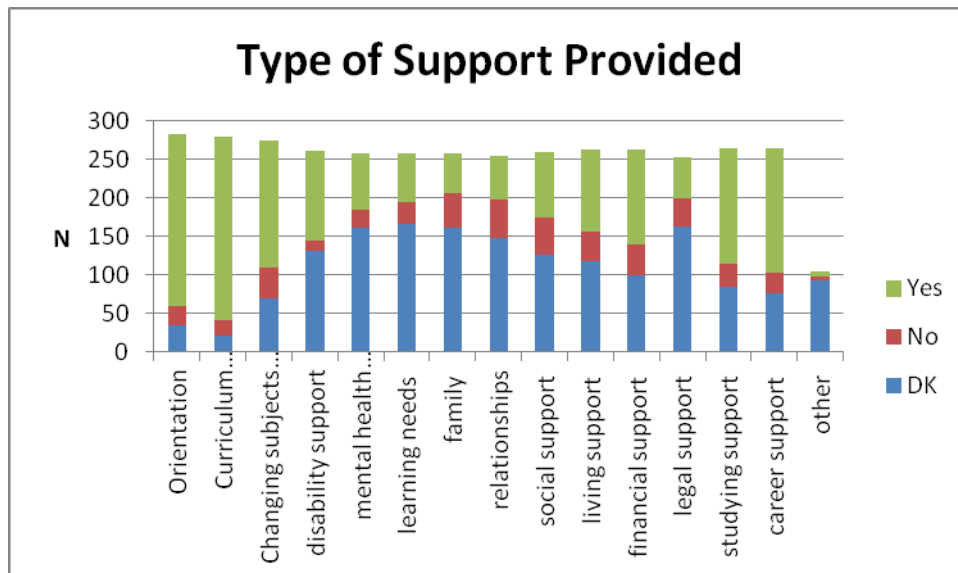


Figure 18: Type and Range of Counselling and Guidance Services provided

As Figure 18 shows, the service most frequently provided is ‘orientation support’ – covering things like providing information for ‘freshers’ on how to find their way around the institution. Support for studying, information on changing subjects and careers support are also relatively well provided for. The main areas of support under-provision, as reflected by students’

perceptions, are support for mental health issues; support for specific learning needs; support for family problems; support for relationship problems and legal support.

Respondents were also asked about the range of service elements provided in counselling and guidance services (Figure 19).

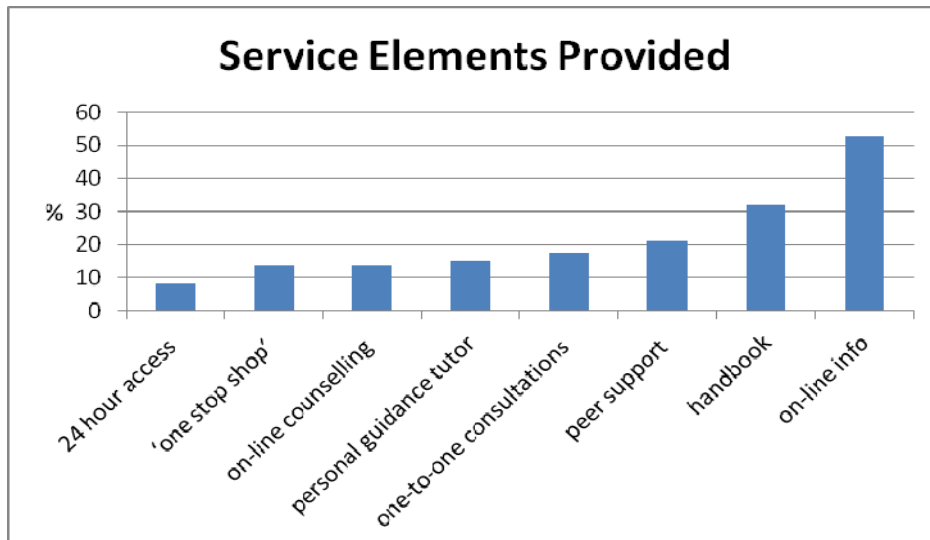


Figure 19: Service Elements Provided

As Figure 19 shows, just over half the students in the sample reported their institution provided an on-line information service, and one third reported their institution provided a Student Handbook with information services. However, provision of other service elements appears to be low. Only 15% of respondents said their institution provided one-to-one consultation or a personal guidance tutor; only 10% provided on-line counselling, only 10% a 'one stop shop' in which services are integrated, and less than 10% provided 24 hour access to services.

Service Utilisation

Figure 20 shows the utilisation rates of the services provided in the institutions covered by the Survey (indicated by the proportion of respondents reporting a service provided who used the service).

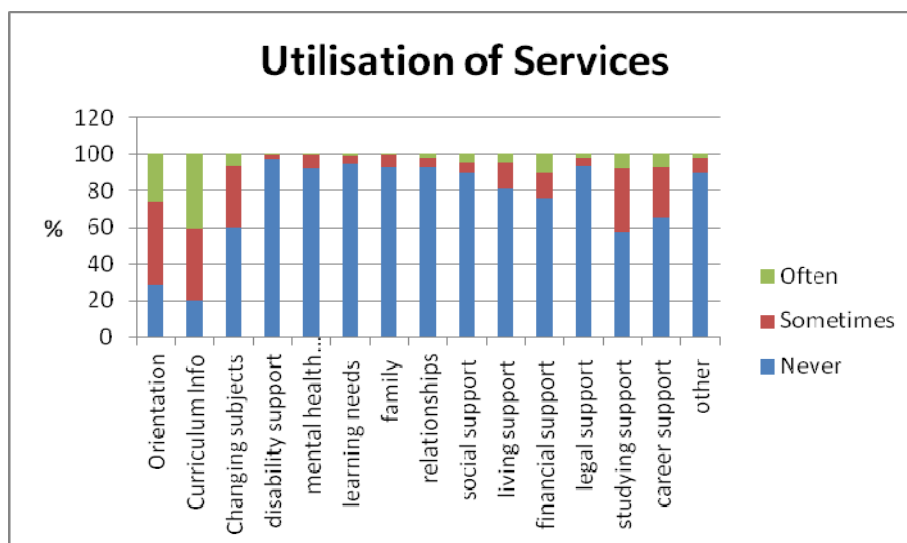


Figure 20: Service Utilisation Rates

As Figure 20 shows, the most frequently used counselling and guidance services are 'orientation' support services, with 26% of those sampled reporting they often used the service and 46% reporting they sometimes used them. Information and advice on curriculum matters – for example timetables; exams – is also relatively well-utilised. Students sometimes use services offering advice and support on changing courses and subjects; services providing study support and careers advice services. The other services show very low levels of utilisation.

Students did not use the services provided for a number of reasons. In the majority of cases – 30% - students simply did not need support. Just over 20% of those who did need support did not know how to access the services; 12% got help elsewhere; 11% reported that the service did not provide the right kind of support; 10% said the service was not accessible when they needed it, and 7% were reluctant to approach the service (Figure 21).

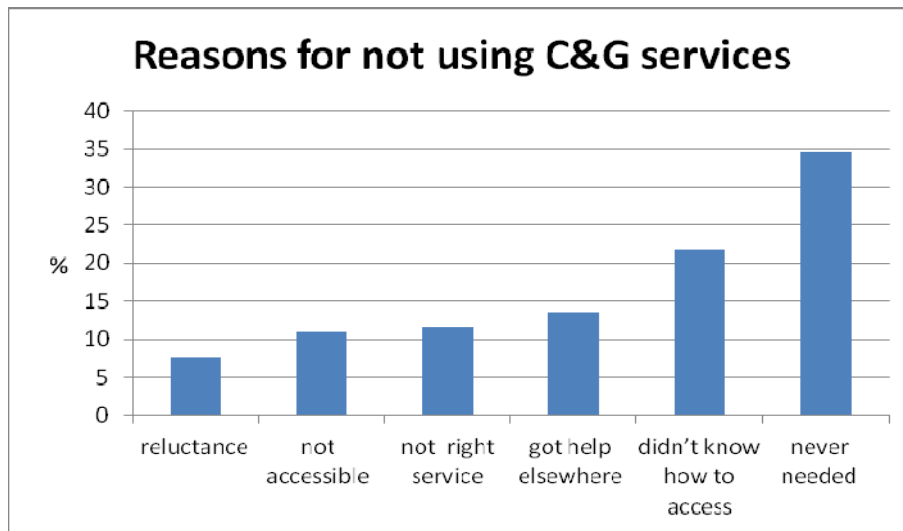


Figure 21: Reasons for non-utilisation of services

User Satisfaction

The 'performance' of student counselling and guidance services varies considerably. Figure 22 shows how those who had used the services provided at their institution rate the different kinds of services provided.

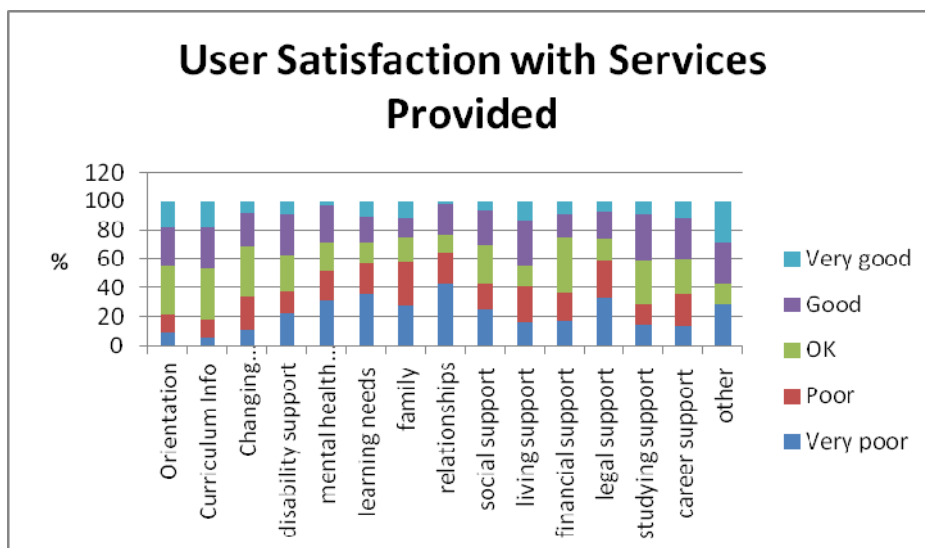


Figure 22: Rating of Services

As Figure 22 shows, the most highly-rated services are ‘orientation support’, curriculum information, support for changing courses and subjects; study support; career support and ‘other’ support. The worst-performing services, in terms of user satisfaction ratings, are relationships support; legal support; family support; support for specific learning needs; mental health support; social support.

Factors affecting service utilisation

Cross-tabulation of the survey data identified a number of statistically significant associations between patterns of service utilisation and user characteristics. The main factors affecting service utilisation are:

- length of time engaged in study
- type of qualification
- whether full or part time
- age
- location of study

Table 2 summarises the main results of the analysis

Table 2: Factors affecting service utilisation (chi square significant at 0.005 or below)

Service	Duration of study	Qualification	Full/part time	Age	Study location
Orientation	75% first year use often 10% 3 years+ use often	30% postgrad never use 10% undergrad never use	22% full-time 9% part-time		25% on-campus 9% off campus
Curriculum support		17% postgrad never use 7% undergrad never use	20% full-time use often 9% part-time use often	23% 17-23 age use often 10% 27-30 age use often	30% on-campus use often 9% off-campus use often
Changing courses			30% part-time never use 10% full-time never use		
Mental health					36% on campus never use 20% off campus never use
Career support					53% on campus never use 34% off campus never use

The results shown in table 2 suggest that the design of STAY IN counselling and guidance services would need to be tailored to user profile and ‘scenario of use’. What seems clear is that there are distinct differences in support needs and support behaviour between undergraduate

and postgraduate students, with the former demonstrating a requirement for 'early transition' support services focusing on orientation support and support for reviewing and, if necessary, changes subjects and courses. This is clearly linked to the age of students. The other significant factor is connected to physical presence within the institution. Table 2 suggests that part-time students and those who study 'off-campus' are more likely to require support across a spectrum of support elements, including orientation; course advice; mental health advise and career support. This could be due to their isolation from the institutional community.

5.2.4 Expectations of counselling and guidance services

The final part of the Survey elicited student perceptions of the kind of counselling and guidance services they would like to see provided in their institution. This also identified the gaps in current provision as well as an assessment of the potential demand for 'on-line' services.

Gaps in provision and areas for improvement

From the survey results, there is strong evidence that students are not satisfied with current provision of counselling and guidance services. As Figure 23 shows, 67% of the sample thought services could be improved.

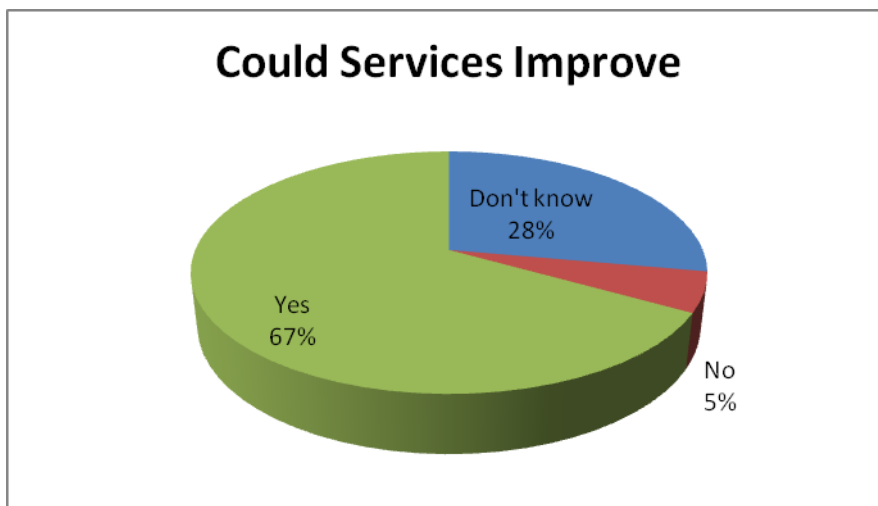


Figure 23: If Services could be improved

Figure 24 shows the areas where the students thought improvements could be made.

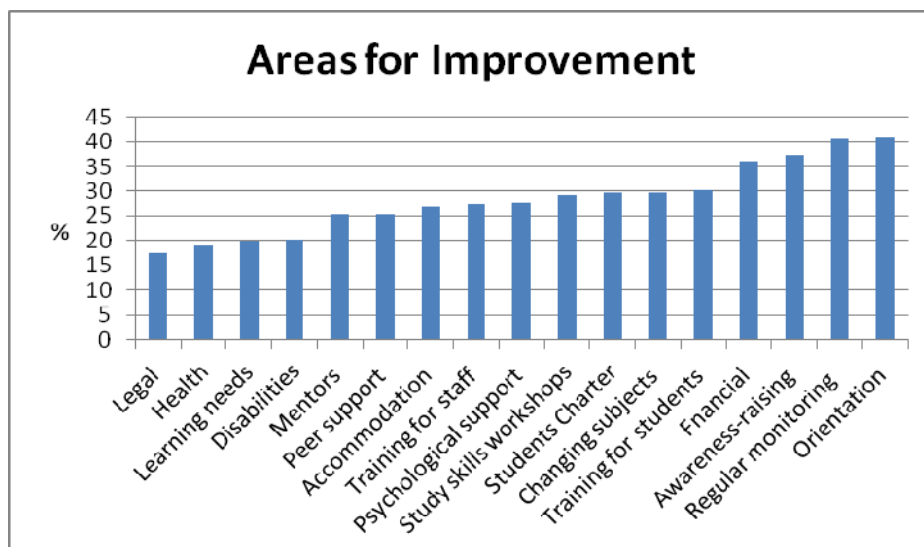


Figure 24: Areas for Improvement

As Figure 24 shows, the counselling and guidance areas that are seen as the key areas for improvement are orientation services – which 41% of the sample thought needed to be improved; regular monitoring of student issues (41% support); awareness-raising actions on counselling and guidance (37%) and support for financial problems (37%). There was also strong support shown for providing training for students in counselling; for providing a Student Charter in all institutions and for providing regular workshops in study skills.

The students who took part in the survey strongly supported on-line counselling. As Figure 25 shows, over 70% said they would like to see an on-line counselling service provided at their institution.

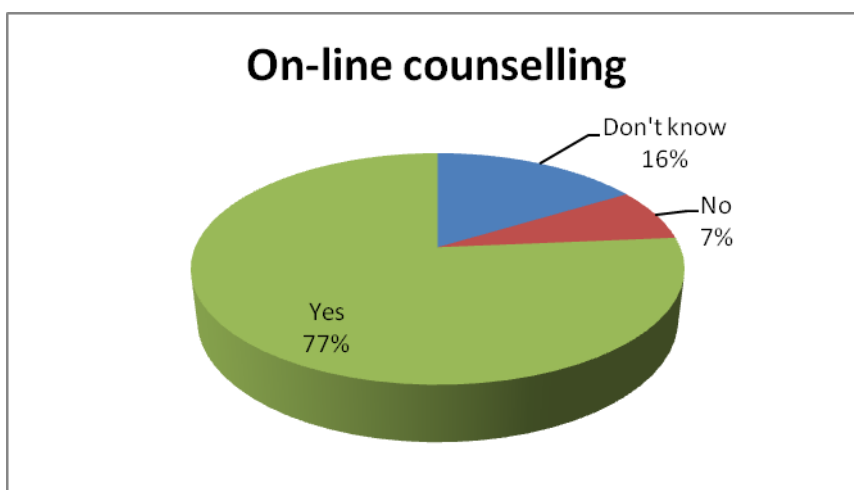


Figure 25: Support for on-line counselling

The type of on-line services that students see as useful are shown in Figure 26.

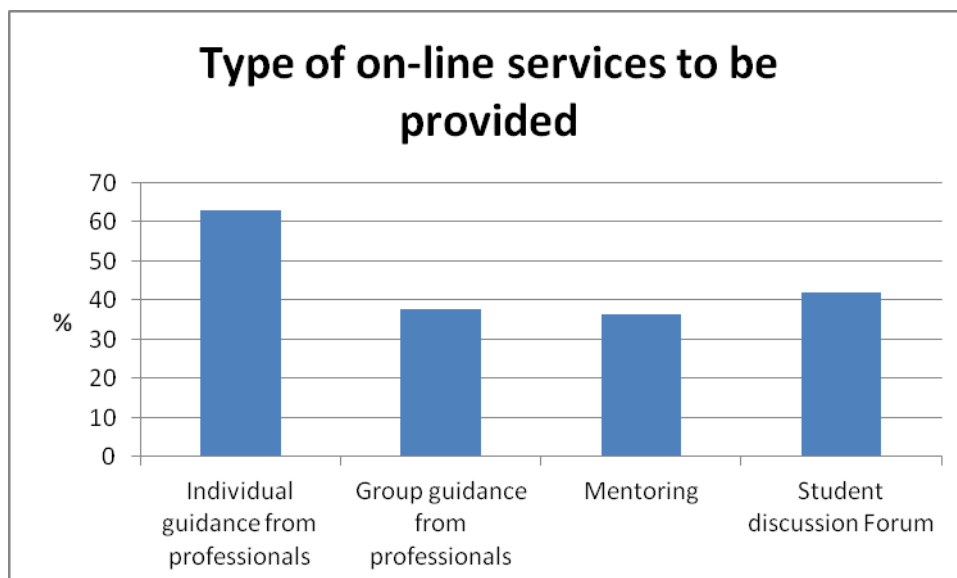


Figure 26: Type of on-line services to be provided

As Figure 26 shows, the most popular on-line service is likely to be individual guidance from professionals (for example on-line psychological counselling), which over 60% of the sample thought should be provided. Other proposed services were less popular with an on-line discussion forum endorsed by only 40% of the sample; on-line group counselling endorsed by 38% and on-line mentoring by 37% of the sample.

5.2.5 Developing a service typology

As noted above, analysis of the survey data suggests distinctive patterns that can be identified in terms of demand, utilisation and rating of student counselling and guidance services, based on variables like student profile and context (scenario) of use. To further explore these patterns, a cluster analysis of a selection of the survey data was carried out.

Methodology

Cluster analysis is an exploratory data analysis tool which aims at sorting different objects (cases) into groups in a way that the degree of association between two objects is maximal if they belong to the same group and minimal otherwise. With cluster analysis, the aim is to identify 'natural' clusters of service target groups (on the basis of their existing properties).¹⁰ Basically, it uses a 'joining' or 'tree clustering' algorithm. The purpose of this algorithm is to join together objects into successively larger clusters, using some measure of similarity or distance. The joining or tree clustering method uses the similarities or distances between objects when forming the clusters. In the analysis of the student survey data, the objective was to identify possible sub-target groups within the student population and to link these groups to types of support needs. Because the data are nominal rather than interval, the method used was 'two step' clustering. Two step clustering begins with cases assigned to 'preclusters.' In the second step, the preclusters are clustered using the hierarchical clustering algorithm. At successive steps, similar clusters are merged. Inspection of the 'agglomeration schedule' enables the optimal number of clusters to be selected. The analysis was carried out using the data derived from Question 2.2 of the survey questionnaire. This elicited responses on:

¹⁰ Anderberg, M.R. (1973): *Cluster Analysis for Applications*, New York: Academic Press, Inc.

- whether a range of problems and issues was experienced
- whether support was received for the problem
- whether the support received was helpful

The range of problems and support dimensions covered included:

- a long-term physical disability
- a physical health issue
- a mental health issue
- specific learning needs issues (e.g. dyslexia)
- family issues
- problems with fellow students
- relationship issues outside university
- social issues (e.g. feeling isolated)
- living issues (e.g. finding somewhere to live)
- financial issues
- legal issues
- orientation issues (e.g. finding information)
- issues with studying (e.g. timetables; exams)
- exiting issues (e.g. career guidance)
- other issues

Following assignment of the cases into clusters, analysis of variance and cross-tabulation of cluster membership against a range of variables – including socio-cultural indicators and study profile – was carried out to further identify the distinguishing features of the clusters.

Results of the cluster analysis

The cluster analysis suggests that a typology of five main support scenarios can be identified, each associated with a specific target group. This typology is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Typology of Support Scenarios and Target Groups

Type	Label	%	Distinguishing characteristics
A	Unproblematic	30	No issues. No demand. No utilisation.
B	Kick starters	29	Specific needs mainly around initial entry: orientation; financial; study support. High representation of part-time and off-campus students.
C	Self-supporting	20	High need. Low utilisation. Focus on mental health support; family support; relationships; orientation and study support.
D	Complex needs	10	High need. High utilisation. High efficacy. Needs spread across the spectrum of support areas.
E	Pragmatic	11	Specific needs. Big focus on orientation; support for studying and careers advice. High representation of Masters and post-grad students and off-campus students.

The characteristics of the five scenarios are as follows.

Type A: Unproblematic

This scenario is associated with the largest, and ‘mainstream’ target group, representing just under one third of the students participating in the Survey. Virtually none of this group report experiencing any issues or problems. Therefore, they rarely seek help or support. Although this group can be discounted as a direct target group with regard to the design of STAY IN support

services, they could play an important role in awareness-raising actions and in roles such as mentoring, peer support and monitoring.

Type B: Kick Starters

The target group associated with this scenario – the second largest in the typology representing 29% of the students participating in the Survey – are mainly students who have just started their study career. They report a low level of issues and their support needs focus on problems encountered on initial entry to higher education – where to find information; how to get help on reviewing their course and subject choices; advice on study skills and methods, and particularly help on financial issues. A significant sub-group in this scenario are students who are part-time and who are studying off-campus.

Type C: Self-supporting

This scenario covers a spectrum of support needs, focusing on 'basic' issues around orientation and study support, as well as problems around family and relationship issues and with a particular focus on mental health. Although this target group, which constitutes 20% of the survey sample, reports a relatively high incidence of problems and issues, the level of utilisation of support services for these issues is low, and the group's assessment of the usefulness of support received is correspondingly low. This suggests that this target group is characterised by a low level of motivation to seek help and its members tend to solve problems for themselves.

Type D: Complex Needs

This scenario is associated with the smallest target group – 10% of the participating students – but represents the most complex challenge for the design of the STAY IN services. The group shows by far the highest incidence of problems reported, as well as the highest level of utilisation and rating of service efficacy. The problems reported, and the services accessed, reflect the full spectrum of support elements provided currently in higher education institutions. This cluster also includes a significant proportion of 'marginalised' sub-groups, i.e. students originating from outside the EU; students with an ethnic minority background; part-time and off-campus students.

Type E: Pragmatic

This scenario is closely associated with Type B – 'Kick Starters' – and represents 11% of the survey sample. Like Type B, their support needs focus on problems encountered on initial entry to higher education – where to find information; how to get help on reviewing their course and subject choices; advice on study skills and methods. What distinguishes this group from Type B is, firstly, the higher level of problems reported and, correspondingly, the higher level of service utilisation and, secondly, a greater focus on support for careers advice. This is reflected by the larger representation of Masters and postgraduate students and an older age profile. There is a particular emphasis in this scenario on orientation and study support, probably reflecting the entry of students who have already completed some form of study into a new institution.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions: applying the survey results to service design

This final section summarises and integrates the key results and conclusions of the Key Informant Interviews, Literature Review and Student Survey and applies them as follows:

- to make an estimate of the overall level and nature of the potential demand for STAY IN counselling and guidance services
- provide a specification of the key target groups that should be addressed
- provide a specification of the main needs of these target groups
- provide an assessment of the gaps in current service provision
- provide recommendations for the design of the services.

6.1.1 Level and nature of the potential demand for STAY IN counselling and guidance services

The survey results clearly show that there is a potentially high level of demand for student counselling and guidance services. Of the total sample of 546 students who took part in the survey, 366 – 67% - had experienced at least one problem during their period of study which required some form of advice or support. Around 15% had experienced up to five different kinds of problem that required advice or support and around 7% had experienced more than 5 different kinds of problem that required advice or support. Analysis of the profiles of the students who took part in the survey showed that their profiles broadly correspond to those of the broader population of students in the EU (Eurostat, 2010; Eurostudent III,2008; Eurostudent IV, 2012). On this basis, if we extrapolate the results of the survey to make an estimate of the broad level of demand for counselling and guidance services in the EU27, then the overall potential demand for such services would run somewhere in the region of 13.4 million students.

With regard to the nature of this demand, three key conclusions from the interviews, literature review and Survey stand out:

- The service design needs to address the needs of the student population and its profile. These needs are strongly influenced by three factors: type of qualification and stage reached in the course of study; age; embeddedness in the student community (whether part or full time; whether on or off campus).
- The service design needs to reflect the 'life-course of study' – i.e. it needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the changing circumstances of students as they proceed through key transitions in the course of their student life – from school to University; from 'fresher' to established student; from undergraduate to postgraduate; from student life to work life.
- Significant 'minority' and 'special needs' sub-groups also need to be addressed, i.e.: students who come from outside the country of study; students with an ethnic minority background; students with a physical disability; students with specific learning needs.

6.1.2 The key target groups and their needs

Triangulation of the results of the Key Informant Interviews, Literature Review and Student Survey shows a high degree of congruence and consistency across the data with regard to identifying target groups and their needs. In all three sets of data, there is a clear consensus that:

- students should not be homogenised into static target profiles. Their needs are shaped by a process that is continually evolving, as they progress through the study life cycle, and as their circumstances change
- guidance services need to reflect this process, addressing a spectrum of needs that begin with the transition between school and university, and end with the transition between university and the external world, particularly the world of work.

It follows then that not all students need or would benefit from a counselling and guidance service. As noted above, counselling and guidance needs are shaped by individual student profile and characteristics (existing presenting issues such as a physical disability or specific learning need; personality characteristics and so on); by the context in which they are studying (type of institution; type of course) and by changing circumstances – particularly on entry to University and on exit.

It is clear from the Survey that many students are ill-prepared to make the transition between school and University and are not given enough advice on what courses are best for them. This conclusion is echoed in the responses of the experts consulted through the key informant interviews, in which the experts suggested that school simply does not prepare young people for the risks and new challenges they encounter in the transition to higher education. There is therefore a need for a ‘basic’ ‘entry support’ package aimed at ‘first timers’ that provides: orientation support; advice on course and subject choices and how to change them; advice and support on study skills. There is a corresponding need for a basic ‘exit support’ package that provides advice and support on preparing for life after studying; work experience; careers advice; financial management and planning. In between these two major transition milestones in student life – for the majority of students - lie a range of problems and support solutions that can be seen as either ‘endemic’ – for example the continuing need for students to be provided opportunities to support them in acquiring good study skills – or ‘opportunistic’ – for example getting into financial difficulties or falling ill.

What this means is that, for the purposes of designing relevant and effective counselling and guidance services, the student population should not be considered in terms of a set of static, homogenous target groups but as a *‘moving target’* whose needs are shaped by context and changing circumstances. This reinforces the key conclusion from the Survey, from the interviews and from the literature review that counselling and guidance services need to be holistic and flexible.

In this context, the Survey has identified five broad ‘support scenarios’ that could form the basis for developing an over-arching framework for service design – shown in Table 3 above. But the key point of this typology is that, although it references broad ‘target groups’ – students who are ‘unproblematic’; students with complex needs, and so on – these target groups should be seen as ‘ideal typical’ categories. What the typology really defines are scenarios of need, demand and provision rather than fixed target groups of students. Students may fall into one or more of these support scenarios as they progress through their course of study and as their circumstances and needs change.

The five scenarios are as follows:

Type A: The ‘Unproblematic Scenario’

This acknowledges the fact that, for many students, student life is unproblematic. The needs of students in this scenario are therefore: to be made aware that a counselling and guidance service is there if they need it; to be provided with clear information about the location of the service; what it provides; how it operates; how it can be accessed if needed. Students who do not directly require counselling and guidance services should however be supported and encouraged to participate and make a contribution to services provided through, for example, awareness-raising actions and in roles such as mentoring, peer support and monitoring.

Type B: The ‘Kick Starters’ Scenario

This suggests that a basic element of the counselling and guidance service should aim to address the initial needs of students who are embarking on their student career. The support needs of these students focus on problems like where to find information; how to get help on reviewing their course and subject choices; advice on study skills and methods, and particularly help on financial issues. A significant sub-group in this scenario are students who are part-time and who are studying off-campus.

Type C: The ‘Self-supporting’ Scenario

This scenario addresses the situation where students present with specific problems and support needs, but are reluctant to access the support that is on offer. In this scenario, the counselling and guidance service should aim to overcome the barriers to resistances that prevent potential users from accessing services. These barriers cover: lack of information on how to access services; poor motivation (for example issues around ‘shame’ and confidentiality); services not providing the right kind of support; services not accessible when needed. The specific needs that are associated with this scenario are: issues around orientation and study support, as well as problems around family and relationship issues and with a particular focus on mental health.

Type D: The ‘Complex Needs’ Scenario

This scenario represents the most complex challenge for the design of the STAY IN services. The needs that have to be addressed in service design are multi-faceted and inter-related. The problems presented, and the services that need to be provided, reflect the full spectrum of support elements from orientation, through course advice, disability issues, mental health issues, family and relationship issues; accommodation issues and exiting issues. This scenario is also associated with the needs of ‘marginalised’ sub-groups -, i.e. students originating from outside the EU; students with an ethnic minority background; part-time and off-campus students.

Type E: The ‘Pragmatic’ Scenario

This scenario is closely associated with Scenario B – ‘Kick Starters’ – and reflects support needs that focus on problems encountered on initial entry to higher education – where to find information; how to get help on reviewing their course and subject choices; advice on study skills and methods. What distinguishes this scenario from Type B is, firstly, the higher level of problems reported and, correspondingly, the higher level of service utilisation and, secondly, a greater focus on support for careers advice. There is a particular emphasis in this scenario on orientation and study support, reflecting the entry of students who have already completed some form of study into a new institution.

6.1.3 Gaps in current service provision

There are a number of gaps in current service provision and areas for improvement that STAY IN could take advantage of. These are as follows:

- Firstly, there is in general a big gap between support needs and support provision. This is particularly the case with support for ‘social’ issues – for example coping with isolation, and relationship issues (both with fellow students and outside the campus), support for mental health issues; support for specific learning needs. Similarly, with regard to financial issues, specific learning needs and living issues (for example getting accommodation) the level of need appears to significantly outweigh the level of support provided.
- Secondly, in general there is also a gap between the supply of support and perceptions of the utility and usefulness of the support provided. Essentially, across all sector of

counselling and guidance, there is room for improvement in the quality, relevance and effectiveness of support provided - 67% of the survey sample thought services could be improved. This is particularly the case with support for 'social' issues, relationship issues and problems with fellow students.

- The provision of basic information and support appears far from adequate. In the case of Spain, for example, the literature review showed that almost a third of Universities do not provide a basic information support service. Only half the students in the survey sample reported their institution provided an on-line information service, and only one third reported their institution provided a Student Handbook with information services. These services should be provided as a matter of course. Key areas where the level of service provision is currently very low are: one-to-one consultation; personal guidance tutors; on-line counselling; a 'one stop shop' in which services are integrated; 24 hour access to services.
- The counselling and guidance areas that are seen by students themselves as the key areas for improvement are orientation services; regular monitoring of student issues; awareness-raising actions on counselling and guidance; support for financial problems. There was also strong support shown for providing training for students in counselling; for providing a Student Charter in all institutions and for providing regular workshops in study skills.

6.2 Recommendations for the design of the STAY IN services

Based on the key results and conclusions from the Interviews, Literature Review and Student Survey, three sets of recommendations for the design of STAY IN counselling and guidance services are proposed:

- General design principles
- Specific service elements
- On-line elements

6.2.1 General design principles

- The STAY IN service design should be based on an over-arching framework that is holistic, adaptive and flexible, i.e.: it incorporates a conceptual design that addresses the multiplicity of situations and problems that define the student experience; it focuses not simply on the individual student but on the students' cultural background, social relationships and social interactions; it provides basic support services coupled with tailored support to fit specific circumstances; it adapts to the key changes and transitions that students experience as they proceed through their course of study.
- The service design should not be based on targeting specific 'target groups' of students but should be based on configuring a set of support elements that address broad 'support scenarios'. Five basic support scenarios are proposed: the 'Unproblematic Scenario'; the 'Kick Starters' Scenario; the 'Self-supporting' Scenario; the 'Complex Needs' Scenario; the 'Pragmatic' Scenario. Specifications of these scenarios are set out in Section 5.2 above.
- The service design process should include a broad spectrum of stakeholders working in 'collaborative' mode to produce a design that is relevant, effective and efficient. In particular, the design process should include students who represent the five different support scenarios.
- The service design should be based on a 'blended model'. This would incorporate: information and advice elements aimed at the whole student community (for example website; Handbook); face-to-face advice and support elements (for example one-to-one

counselling); group elements (for example student 'buddying'); on-line elements (for example on-line Forum).

- The optimum benchmark the service design should aim at would provide: an on-line information service; a Student Handbook; one-to-one consultation; personal guidance tutors; 'one stop shop' in which services are integrated; 24 hour access to services.

6.2.2 Specific service elements

Within the overall design, a set of counselling and guidance support elements needs to be configured to reflect the context of the specific institution and the range of support scenarios that need to be addressed. The possible range of support elements could cover the following:

- A basic 'Entry Pack'. This would provide information, advice and support mainly aimed at first time students. As well as the basic Student Handbook, the service would include: orientation support; advice on course and subject choices and how to change them; advice and support on study skills.
- A basic 'Exit Pack'. This would provide advice and support on preparing for life after studying; work experience; careers advice; financial management and planning.
- 'On-demand' counselling and guidance services, customised to the individual needs presented. This would cover: disability support, mental health support, learning needs support, family support, relationships support, social support, living support, financial problems support, legal support, studying support.
- Ancillary services aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of service provision. This could cover the following:
 - awareness-raising actions to ensure all students are aware of potential problems and issues; where to go for support for these issues; what support is on offer and when
 - development of a Student Charter or similar governance vehicle that clearly sets out and operationalizes the strategy the institution is taking for counselling and support
 - training for students in: problem recognition; peer support; buddying and mentoring
 - regular workshops for students in study skills
 - training for general staff in problem recognition; personal tutoring; mentoring
 - continuing professional development for professional counselling and guidance staff
 - a monitoring system to continuously assess the level and nature of student issues and potential problems, and to assess the performance of the counselling and guidance services provided.

6.2.3 On-line elements

The Literature Review and Key Informant Interviews showed that on-line services are increasingly seen as an important element of guidance and counselling services, and are increasingly being included in systems that are currently being implemented in HEI's. The Survey results suggest that on-line counselling and guidance services would be welcomed by students. These should cover two essential items, i.e.:

- a basic information service and on-line Student Handbook
- individual guidance from professionals (for example on-line psychological counselling),

optional elements could include:

- an on-line discussion forum
- on-line group counselling on-line mentoring.

