

Summary of the 2023–24 Dubai Student Survey

1. Introduction and changes to the survey

The University of Birmingham Dubai (UoBD) relies on the Dubai Student Survey (DSS) as a key tool for understanding and enhancing the student experience. Conducted annually since 2020–21, this survey gathers comprehensive feedback from all UoBD students, and then responds to it effectively and transparently.

The survey questions and the response mechanisms have evolved significantly between 2020–21 and 2023–24 and the relevant information can be found in previous summary documents. The changes between 2022–23 and 2023–24 were minimal; specifically, the administration of the process was spread across different teams, and the phrase "(within 15 working days)" was removed from the question "How often have you received assessment feedback on time? (within 15 working days)" to better align with our code of practice on taught programme and module assessment and feedback. This adjustment reflects the 20-working-day timeframe allowed for returning feedback on end-of-module coursework, as well as the required timeline for releasing examination results to students.

2. Summary and analysis of the results

The response rate improved from 55.3% in 2022–23 to 60.9% in 2023–24, considerably above our target of 50%. Simultaneously, the overall student satisfaction improved from 76.8% to 82.5%. Table 1 shows the evolution of the response rate and overall student satisfaction between 2020–21 and 2023–24. The simultaneous rise in both metrics is a robust indicator of positive progress. This upward trend reflects the effectiveness of the efforts invested in enhancing student feedback processes and demonstrates a positive response from the growing student body.

	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Response rate	22.2%	36.7%	55.3%	60.9%
Overall satisfaction	61.9%	73.4%	76.8%	82.5%

Table 1: Evolution of the response rate and overall student satisfaction between 2020–21 and 2023–24.

The positivity measures increased across all nine question groups (table 2), and in 31 out of the 32 specific questions (figure 1 and appendix A). The full 2023–24 results are also available on a [Power BI dashboard](#). It is important to note that the 32 specific questions use a four-point response scale and the overall satisfaction question uses a five-point response scale, and that the reasoning behind this setup can be found in the 2022–23 summary document. The average increase in the positivity across the 32 specific questions is 3.4%. The question with the lowest positivity measure is "How clear is it that students' feedback on the programme is acted on?" with a positivity measure of 78.7%. It is worth noting that this value increased from 74.9% in 2022–23 and is a relatively healthy result when compared with the higher education sector. The question "How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?" is the only area that has seen a decline between 2022–23 and 2023–24 with a minor drop from 84.8% to 83.3%.

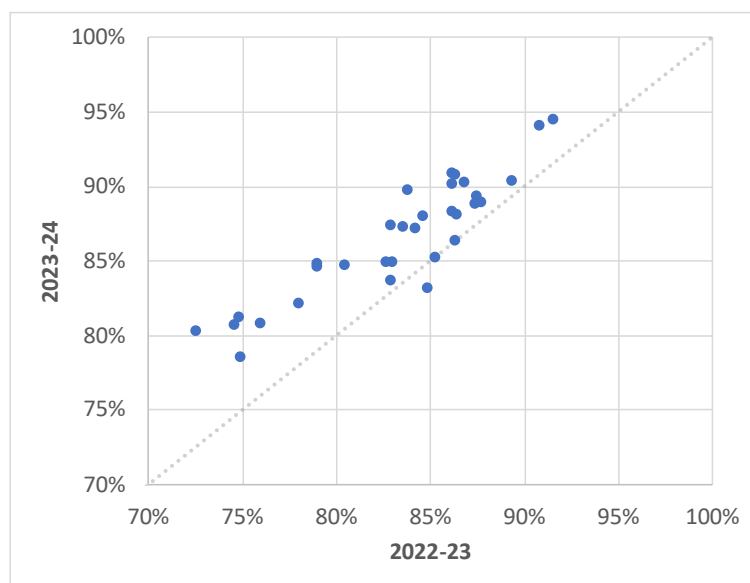


Figure 1: Comparison of the positivity measures for the 32 specific questions between 2022–23 and 2023–24.

Question group	Positivity measures	
	2022–23	2023–24
Teaching on your programme	87.5%	89.8%
Learning opportunities	84.6%	87.5%
Assessment and feedback	81.7%	84.0%
Academic support	89.2%	91.6%
Organisation and management	83.9%	87.1%
Learning resources	83.6%	88.2%
Student voice	81.9%	85.1%
Student experience, community and support	77.7%	83.6%
Overall satisfaction	76.8%	82.5%

Table 2: Comparison of the average positivity measures for the different question groups between 2022–23 and 2023–24.

Students on 88 different programmes participated in the 2023–24 DSS. There are 48 programmes with more than five responses, 29 out of which have an overall student satisfaction that is higher than the campus' average of 82.5%, and 19 that are lower. These are shown in figure 2 and appendix B.

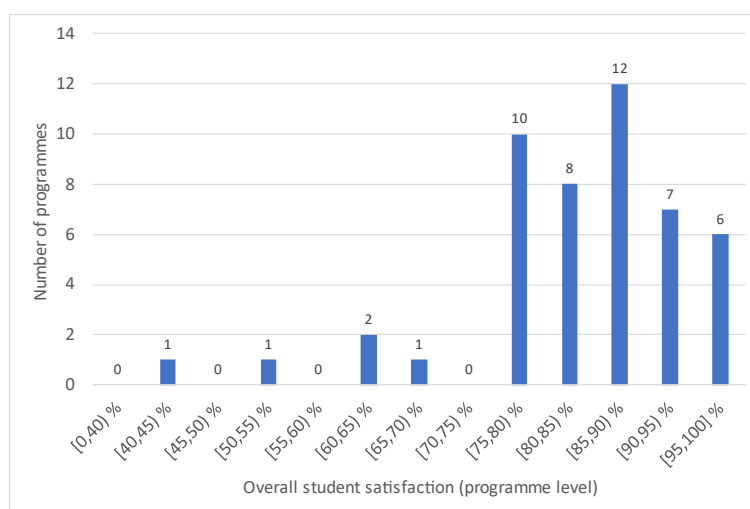


Figure 2: Distribution of the overall student satisfaction for the 48 programmes that have more than five responses.

It is valuable to compare the DSS results not only with those from the previous years but also with benchmarks from the broader higher education sector and specifically with our Edgbaston campus as measured by the National Student Survey (NSS). However, it must be noted that such comparisons are not like-for-like as the sets of questions are similar but not identical and the contexts, programme portfolios and target students differ (the Dubai Student Survey gathers input from all students whereas the National Student Survey only targets final-year undergraduate students). The comparison of the positivity measures across the 23 common questions is shown in figure 3. The positivity measures are higher in Dubai for 22 questions and lower for the question relating to library resources. The average positivity of the common questions is around 88% in Dubai (87.5% for all students and 88.4% for final year undergraduate students) compared to 78.8% in Edgbaston.

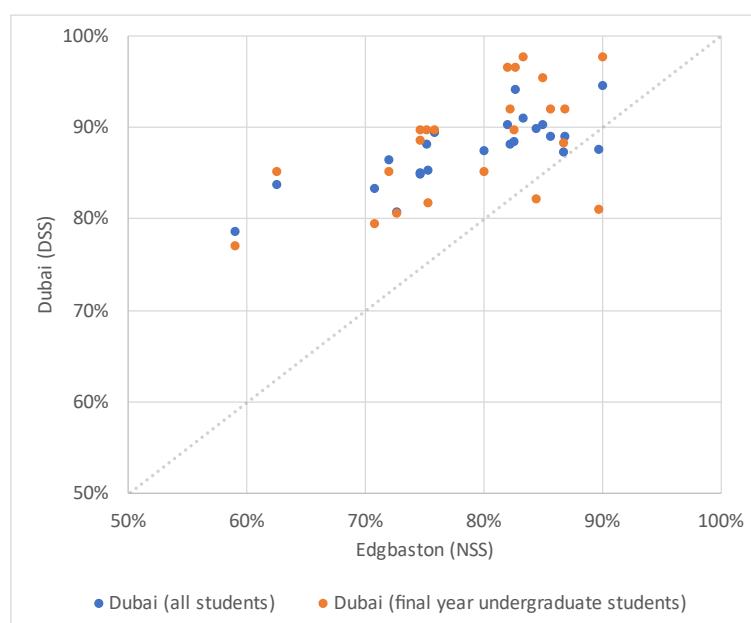


Figure 3: Comparison of the positivity measures for the 23 common questions in 2023–24 between the Dubai (DSS) and Edgbaston (NSS) campuses.

Since 2022–23, our responses to student feedback have been integrated into the annual programme reviews. These reviews compile information from various sources, including student performance, academic evaluations of modules, and different channels of student feedback, with a section that is dedicated to the DSS. In 2023–24, the annual programme reviews addressed the programme-specific aspects of student feedback and were shared with student representatives in the initial round of staff-student forums. It should be noted that there were some challenges with the quality of the data and responses for a couple of programmes and that enhancements to the process are planned for the next cycle. Moreover, programmes with student satisfactions below 90% of campus' ($90\% \times 82.5\% = 74.25\%$) were asked to, in addition to their response through the annual programme reviews, perform a deep dive and produce more comprehensive academic action plans. These dives covered MSc Bioinformatics, the undergraduate Computer Science programmes, MSc International Business and LLM programmes.

The last question in the DSS is qualitative and led to 569 open text comments. These were analyzed and considered at programme level, and then analyzed again at a campus level through human intervention coupled with a sentiment analysis natural language processing (NLP) algorithm. The analysis shows an even spread of sentiments (negative sentiment of 0.33, neutral of 0.35 and positive



of 0.32). We identified seven main categories and reported 348 comments relating to assessment and feedback, 298 to teaching, 89 to careers, 84 to facilities, 79 to organization, 53 to community, and 20 to wellbeing. Furthermore, the human analysis revealed student dissatisfaction with assessments (e.g. number and density of assessments in the summer examination period in the new academic calendar, as well as diverse comments about assessment support and feedback) and some of the administrative processes (e.g. finance, communication).

3. Final reflections

The response rate and overall student satisfaction have increased year on year for four consecutive years, the former from 22.2% to 60.9%, and the latter from 61.9% to 82.5%. More feedback fuels positive change, and positive change, in turn, encourages more feedback. Students and staff have a duty and a responsibility to maintain this virtuous cycle.

As the number of programmes, students, and responses increases, analyzing and effectively addressing feedback at the campus level becomes more challenging, making it even more essential to ensure a robust, transparent, and consistent approach at the programme level. Programme-level responses, introduced in 2021–22, have been pivotal in achieving the strong position we hold in 2023–24. However, to sustain this positive cycle, considerable effort must be invested in ensuring the continued effectiveness and timeliness of the annual programme reviews. This work will be prioritized in preparation for the 2024–25 DSS cycle.

8th of November 2024

Dr Mohamad Zalzale, Head of Education, University of Birmingham Dubai



Appendix A. Results of the 2023–24 Dubai Student Survey, University of Birmingham Dubai. The positivity and overall satisfaction measures are computed at campus level.

	2022-23	2023-24
Teaching on your programme	87.5%	89.8%
How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	91.5%	94.5%
How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?	85.2%	85.3%
How often is the programme intellectually stimulating?	87.3%	89.0%
How often does your programme challenge you to achieve your best work?	86.1%	90.3%
Learning opportunities	84.6%	87.5%
To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	86.1%	88.4%
How well does your programme introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?	86.1%	91.0%
To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics?	86.4%	88.2%
To what extent is teaching on your programme informed by current research?	89.3%	90.4%
How manageable is the workload on your programme?	77.9%	82.3%
To what extent does your programme have the right balance of directed and independent study?	82.9%	85.0%
How well has your programme developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?	83.5%	87.4%
Assessment and feedback	81.7%	84.0%
How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	84.8%	83.3%
How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	84.5%	88.1%
How often have you received assessment feedback on time?*	74.6%	80.8%
How often does feedback help you to improve your work?	82.9%	83.7%
Academic support	89.2%	91.6%
How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	87.7%	89.0%
How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	90.7%	94.2%
Organisation and management	83.9%	87.1%
How well organised is your programme?	80.4%	84.8%
How well were any changes to teaching on your programme communicated?	87.4%	89.5%
Learning resources	83.6%	88.2%
How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	83.8%	89.8%
How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?	82.9%	87.5%
How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?	84.2%	87.3%
Student voice	81.9%	85.1%
To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your programme?	86.8%	90.4%
To what extent are students' opinions about the programme valued by staff?	86.3%	86.5%
How clear is it that students' feedback on the programme is acted on?	74.9%	78.7%
How well do the student leaders represent students' interests?	78.9%	84.9%
How well do the student representatives represent students' academic interests?	82.6%	85.0%
Student experience, community and support	77.7%	83.6%
To what extent do you feel part of a community of students and staff?	72.5%	80.4%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by your personal academic tutor?	86.3%	90.9%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by wellbeing services?	78.9%	84.7%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by careers services?	76.0%	80.9%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by student services?	74.8%	81.3%
Overall satisfaction		
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the programme and overall support I have received.	76.8%	82.5%

* Note that this question was “How often have you received assessment feedback on time? (within 15 working days)” in 2022–23.



Appendix B. Results of the 2023–24 Dubai Student Survey, University of Birmingham Dubai. The overall satisfaction is computed at programme level and is only shown for programmes with more than five responses. The results are shown in alphabetical order.

Programme	Overall satisfaction
BEng Mechanical Eng FT (Dubai)	88.6%
BIA Engin Phys Sci 43m Jan Dub	77.8%
BIA Engin Phys Sci 4Yr (Dubai)	83.3%
BIA Med Life + Geo Sci 4Yr Dub	79.2%
BIA Soc Sci Bus La 43M Jan Dub	90.9%
BIA Soc Sci Bus Law 4Yr(Dubai)	96.2%
BSc Account + Fin (Dubai) FT	89.2%
BSc Art Int + Com Sci FT Dubai	60.9%
BSc Biomedical Science FT Dub	76.2%
BSc Bus Man w Econo (Dubai) FT	88.9%
BSc Bus Man w Finan (Dubai) FT	92.9%
BSc Bus Man w Mark Y Ind Dub	78.6%
BSc Bus Man w Market Dubai	88.6%
BSc Bus Man w Psych (Dubai) FT	100.0%
BSc Bus Man w Yr in Ind (Dub)	88.9%
BSc Business Manage FT (Dubai)	89.2%
BSc Computer Sci FT (Dubai)	66.7%
BSc Economics FT (Dubai)	76.9%
BSc Money Bank + Fin (Dub) FT	81.8%
BSc Psych w Bus Mgt FT (Dubai)	75.0%
BSc Psychology (Dubai)	84.1%
LLM (Int Dispute Res) FT Dubai	42.9%
LLM (Intern Comm Law) FT (Dub)	50.0%
LLM (Intern Comm Law) PT (Dub)	80.0%
MA Ed (In&Sp Ne) PT Dub	90.9%
MA Education (Leader) PT Dubai	85.7%
Master of Public Health Dub FT	75.0%
MEng Comp Sci Sof En FT (Dub)	61.4%
MSc Adv Prac in Hlth 2y PT Dub	83.3%
MSc Art Int + Comp Sc FT (Dub)	79.2%
MSc Art Int + Comp Sc PT (Dub)	81.8%
MSc Art Int + Mac Lea FT (Dub)	90.9%
MSc Art Int + Mac Lea PT (Dub)	87.5%
MSc Computer Science FT(Dubai)	85.7%
MSc Data Science FT (Dubai)	90.0%
MSc Data Science PT (Dubai)	83.3%
MSc Financial Managem FT (Dub)	88.9%
MSc Financial Managem PT (Dub)	100.0%
MSc Health Data Science PT Dub	100.0%
MSc Human Res Manag FT (Dubai)	85.7%
MSc Intern Business FT (Dubai)	77.3%
MSc Marketing FT (Dubai)	100.0%
MSc Urban Planning FT Dub Blen	100.0%
MSc Urban Planning PT Dub Blen	91.7%
MSci Biomedical Science FT Dub	87.5%
PGCE (Int) (PGCEi) Dubai PT	80.0%
PGCE (Int) (PGCEi) PT Dub Jan	77.8%
PGCE Prim Educ FT w iQTS (Dub)	94.4%