

## Dubai Student Survey 2024-25 Summary

### 1. Introduction and changes to the survey

Since 2020-21, the University of Birmingham Dubai (UoBD) has administered the Dubai Student Survey (DSS) annually to capture comprehensive feedback from the full student body and to inform transparent and evidence-based enhancements to the student experience. Over the 2020-21 to 2024-25 period, both the questionnaire and the institutional response mechanisms have been iteratively refined. For 2024-25, an important change was made to the DSS as the question “*Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the programme and overall support I have received*” was removed, and the main positivity score was redefined as the average of all the questions rather than the outcome of a single question. This average provides a more representative and balanced picture across different aspects of the student experience.

### 2. Quantitative results.

Table 1 summarizes the DSS results between 2020-21 and 2024-25.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Response rate</b>	22.2%	36.7%	55.3%	60.9%	56.4%
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	61.9%	73.4%	76.8%	82.5%	Question dropped*
<b>Av. student positivity</b>				86.5% <sup>†</sup>	86.4%

Table 1. Summary of the response rate, overall satisfaction and average student positivity between 2020-21 and 2024-25.

The overall campus-wide response rate for the 2024-25 Dubai Student Survey (DSS) was 56.4%, falling short of the target of 70% and representing a slight decrease from the 2023-24 response rate of 60.7%. Nonetheless, this remains a positive outcome given the increased student population, with 1190 responses collected in 2024-25 compared to 1010 in the previous academic year.

It is important to acknowledge the timing constraints that may have impacted engagement. Although the DSS remained open for eight weeks, only three of these overlapped with scheduled teaching, and two of those teaching weeks coincided with Ramadan. Additionally, four weeks overlapped with vacation periods, including Eid al-Fitr and the Easter break. Looking ahead, further planning will be required to optimize the timings of future surveys. It is also important to note that several relatively large programmes and Schools recorded response rates below 50% and had a considerable impact on the overall campus result.

The positivity rate reflects the proportion of positive<sup>‡</sup> responses across all the questions and is averaged across all the filtered respondents. In 2024-25, the average student positivity was 86.4%, consistent with the previous year's results within the margin of statistical variation (Table 1). Table 2 presents the response rates and average student positivity for each Dubai Subject Group, while Figure 1 shows the distribution of programme-level positivity. The programme level response rates and average student positivity can be found in Appendix A.

\* Please note that until 2023-24 the reported overall student satisfaction was based a single question (with a five-point scale). This question was dropped in 2024-25 and we moved to a new reporting metric in which the positivity score is calculated across all the DSS questions (with four-point scales).

<sup>†</sup> Hence, the reported 86.5% average positivity rate for 2023-24 has been calculated retrospectively to allow for year-on-year comparisons.

<sup>‡</sup> All the questions have a four-point response scale. A response is considered positive when a student selects one of the top two options out of the four available.

Subject Group	Response %	Av. student positivity
UoBD	56.4%	86.4%
Business	53.2%	87.0%
Computer Science and Mathematics	53.6%	82.5%
Education	63.3%	92.1%
Engineering and Chemical Engineering	54.5%	83.2%
Medicine and Health	72.2%	86.3%
Psychology	48.1%	77.1%

Table 2. Response rate and average student positivity by Dubai Subject Group.

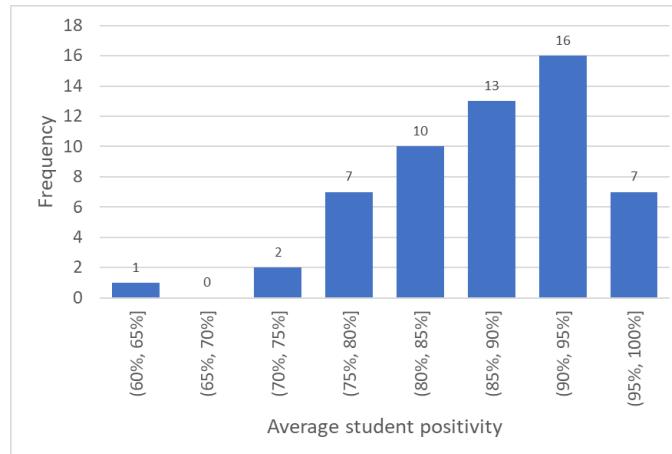


Figure 1. Distribution of the average student positivity across the different programmes (with more than five responses).

Table 3 shows the average student positivity for each questions and each of the categories. Most of the questions have positivity measures between 85% and 90%, and the following observations are noteworthy:

- The questions with the highest positivity measures are “*How good are teaching staff at explaining things?*” at 94.4% and “*How well have teaching staff supported your learning?*” at 93.2%.
- The questions with the lowest positivity measures are “*How clear is it that students' feedback on the programme is acted on?*” at 78.6%, “*To what extent do you feel part of a community of students and staff?*” at 79.1%, and “*How often have you received assessment feedback on time?*” at 79.7%. While the positivity scores for these specific questions are lower relative to other questions in the survey, they remain relatively strong when benchmarked against sector-wide data.
- The questions with the largest year-on-year increase in student positivity are “*How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?*” with an increase of 2.6%, “*When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by wellbeing services?*” with an increase of 3.2%, and “*When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by student services?*” with an increase of 5.0%.
- The questions with the largest year-on-year decrease in student positivity are “*How often does feedback help you to improve your work?*” with a decrease of 2.7%, and “*How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?*” with a decrease of 2.2%.

All academic programmes will undertake the standard Annual Programme Review (APR) in line with institutional quality assurance procedures.

Category / Question	Positivity
<b>Teaching on your programme</b>	<b>89.3%</b>
How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	94.4%
How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?	85.6%
How often is the programme intellectually stimulating?	87.9%
How often does your programme challenge you to achieve your best work?	89.6%
<b>Learning opportunities</b>	<b>87.6%</b>
To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	90.1%
How well does your programme introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?	90.5%
To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics?	89.1%
To what extent is teaching on your programme informed by current research?	91.1%
How manageable is the workload on your programme?	81.6%
To what extent does your programme have the right balance of directed and independent study?	84.4%
How well has your programme developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?	86.3%
<b>Assessment and feedback</b>	<b>83.2%</b>
How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	85.9%
How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	85.9%
How often have you received assessment feedback on time?	79.7%
How often does feedback help you to improve your work?	81.0%
<b>Academic support</b>	<b>90.6%</b>
How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	88.0%
How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	93.2%
<b>Organisation and management</b>	<b>88.5%</b>
How well organised is your programme?	85.9%
How well were any changes to teaching on your programme communicated?	91.1%
<b>Learning resources</b>	<b>87.5%</b>
How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	88.8%
How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?	86.6%
How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?	87.1%
<b>Student voice</b>	<b>85.4%</b>
To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your programme?	90.7%
To what extent are students' opinions about the programme valued by staff?	87.2%
How clear is it that students' feedback on the programme is acted on?	78.6%
How well do the student leaders represent students' interests?	84.6%
How well do the student representatives represent students' academic interests?	85.7%
<b>Student experience, community and support</b>	<b>84.7%</b>
To what extent do you feel part of a community of students and staff?	79.1%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by your personal academic tutor?	89.1%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by wellbeing services?	87.9%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by careers services?	81.4%
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by student services?	86.3%

Table 3. Campus-wide average student positivity for all the DSS questions and categories.

The National Student Survey (NSS) data provides a useful benchmark to contextualise the DSS results and to assess the relative strengths and areas for improvement at the Dubai campus in comparison to the Edgbaston campus. While the two surveys are not identical, their structural and thematic similarities allow for a meaningful comparative analysis. The DSS comprises 32 quantitative questions, while the NSS comprises 27. Excluding minor differences in terminology (e.g., "course" vs. "programme"), 23 questions are common to both surveys. The DSS targets all students (FY, UG and PGT) whereas the NSS is limited to final-year UG students. Both surveys use an identical four-point response scale and define positive responses in the same manner. Differences in the calculation of averages are minimal and arise primarily from the handling of the "*This does not apply to me*" responses (these differences are expected to result in variations of less than 1% and are therefore considered negligible for comparative purposes). The results are shown in Appendix B. The reported overall average student positivity in the DSS is 86.4% compared to 82.9% in the NSS. When considering only the 23 common questions, these figures change to 87.3% for the DSS and remain at 82.9% for the NSS. It is worth noting that:

- The results of the DSS are better than the results of the NSS in 18/23 questions (in 10 of these cases the difference is  $\geq 5\%$ , and in three of these cases the difference is greater than 10%).

- The results of the NSS are better than the results of the DSS in 5/23 questions (in four of these cases the difference is less than 2%, and in one case the difference is 4.7%).

The positivity for the question "*How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services, and learning spaces) supported your learning?*" stands at 86.6% in the DSS compared to 91.3% in the NSS. An action plan is being developed based on this result, qualitative feedback from the DSS and student-staff forums and the recent library survey. The recommendations include expanding the range and availability of physical books, increasing the provision and visibility of the Academic Skills Centre, strengthening coordination with IT services (e.g. access to software, student ID activation), and improving the timeliness and quality of responses to student inquiries.

### **3. Qualitative results and feedback themes.**

In addition to the quantitative data collected from 1190 students, the survey also included an open-text question to which 641 students responded. These qualitative comments were shared with academic leads and were reviewed at the programme level. Furthermore, the comments were thematically analyzed to identify key campus level issues, including recurring themes from previous years. Where appropriate, the qualitative data were also triangulated with feedback gathered through Student Staff Forums to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the student experience. We have identified a number of themes, determined whether they are campus-wide or programme-specific, and, where possible, developed short- and long-term solutions.

First, regarding assessment and feedback, the priorities are the timely availability of relevant past or sample assessment papers with worked solutions, the timely return of grades and feedback, the quality of that feedback, and student access to marked scripts. To address this, we have renewed communications with the relevant academic stakeholders, and the Head of Education is leading a project to audit and analyze the return of assessment feedback.

Second, regarding the timetabling of the examinations of Semester 1 modules during the summer examination period, this is part of a long-term University-wide educational enhancement project aimed at reducing overall assessment load and enabling more holistic, synoptic assessment that gives students space to demonstrate deeper understanding. We will continue to review this approach closely and gather and assess student feedback.

Third, regarding timetabling, we have introduced a new and comprehensive policy that will be continually refined. Students are encouraged to share any concerns with their programme director, bearing in mind that timetabling is inherently complex and often shaped by differing student preferences.

Fourth, regarding transportation services, our provider was based on campus to support with onboarding issues during the first two weeks of this academic year. Furthermore, to monitor service quality, we will start weekly audits and inspections of vehicles and drivers.

Fifth, regarding finance services, we are implementing clearer communications to students about what to expect, including during Welcome Week. The UK finance team visited the Dubai campus during the fourth week of this academic year to support and address student queries. We have secured an alternative payment provider to increase payment options, improved the data-entry process for scholarships to reduce errors, and introduced a Financial Statement to provide a clear view

of each student's account. We recognize this is a work in progress and will continue to improve these initiatives based on student feedback.

Sixth, regarding student services and the student hub, student ambassadors will support queue management during high-traffic periods. An enquiry-management review has identified key issues that we are currently working on. Staffing at the hub has been increased, and a dedicated team focusing on enquiry management has been introduced to support adherence to timelines and to identify and tackle areas of risk. Front-facing staff have received a customer-service training. We are also reviewing web-based information for enquiry management and introducing specialist drop-in hours and appointments (e.g. visa and finance).

Seventh, regarding catering services, menus and on-campus offerings will be regularly inspected to ensure variety and appropriate pricing. Reduced-price menus will be introduced for student-led events. Vending machines are available outside catering operating hours, and their locations will be promoted in the student newsletter.

Eighth, regarding wellbeing services, student induction slides have been improved to clarify how services can be contacted. We are focusing on proactive approaches through workshops and activities and increasing the visibility of the Student Experience and Wellbeing Officers. Common wellbeing processes are being automated to improve response times and reduce the administrative burden on students.

Ninth, regarding IT/AV, an equipment audit was completed ahead of the new academic year, and academic colleagues are being supported with concise guidance and scheduled room audits.

Tenth, regarding careers services, we have introduced a Careers Newsletter and are implementing a programme of skills-development sessions. We are increasing promotion of one-to-one appointments, which are currently under-utilized, and ensuring that the Dubai website pages present information through a UAE perspective to better serve our students. We are also working with programmes that have fewer employers represented at fairs to develop stronger employer relationships.

In addition to monitoring the implementation of these short- and long-term solutions with the relevant University staff, we will use the SSF as a monitoring tool, as all these themes are standing agenda items. We encourage students to support the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

#### **4. Summary and next steps.**

Student engagement remains a real strength, with a 56.4% response rate and 86.4% average student positivity, which shows a highly engaged community even as the campus grows. Our priority is to maintain strong results across the campus while driving targeted improvements in programmes and areas that trail the average. We are also investing in participation, grounded in a shared commitment to positive change and further encouraged through prizes aligned with career development and employability skills. Furthermore, we are strengthening follow through by tracking action items and working closely with student leaders and representatives to monitor and evaluate feedback. Preparation for the next cycle is underway, and we will review timings to embed lessons learned from last year.

Rimsha Irfan, Natalie Humphrey and Mohamad Zalzale (30 October 2025)

**Appendix A.** Results of the 2024-25 Dubai Student Survey, University of Birmingham Dubai. The average student positivity is computed at programme level and is only shown for programmes with more than five responses. Programmes with five responses or less show N/A. The results are shown in alphabetical order.

Programme	Response %	Avg. student positivity %
BEng Mech Eng IMechE FT Dub	53.6%	87.3%
BIA Engin Phys Sci 43m Jan Dub	84.6%	89.6%
BIA Engin Phys Sci 4Yr (Dubai)	47.1%	85.8%
BIA Medical Life 4 Yr (Dubai)	66.7%	93.9%
BIA Psychology 4 Yr (Dubai)	66.7%	92.6%
BIA Soc Sci Bus La 43M Jan Dub	71.4%	97.5%
BIA Soc Sci Bus Law 4Yr(Dubai)	61.9%	91.3%
BSc Account + Fin (Dubai) FT	55.0%	85.1%
BSc Art Int + Com Sci FT Dubai	36.4%	80.7%
BSc Biomedical Science FT Dub	59.2%	85.1%
BSc Bus Man w Econo (Dubai) FT	64.3%	89.5%
BSc Bus Man w Finan (Dubai) FT	63.8%	88.0%
BSc Bus Man w Indus Plac (Dub)	61.1%	90.8%
BSc Bus Man w Mark Ind Pla Dub	55.6%	83.7%
BSc Bus Man w Market Dubai	53.2%	89.6%
BSc Bus Man w Psych (Dubai) FT	57.1%	84.9%
BSc Business Manage FT (Dubai)	58.8%	91.1%
BSc Computer Eng FT (Dubai)	46.2%	80.0%
BSc Computer Sci FT (Dubai)	38.6%	84.1%
BSc Economics FT (Dubai)	52.7%	72.5%
BSc Money Bank + Fin (Dub) FT	52.2%	79.3%
BSc Psych w Bus Mgt FT (Dubai)	58.8%	83.6%
BSc Psychology (Dubai)	47.6%	77.8%
LLM (Energ & Env Law) FT Dubai	60.0%	N/A
LLM (Energ & Env Law) PT Dubai	25.0%	N/A
LLM (General) FT Dubai	75.0%	91.5%
LLM (General) PT Dubai	80.0%	N/A
LLM (Int Dispute Res) FT Dubai	70.0%	95.5%
LLM (Int Dispute Res) PT Dubai	100.0%	N/A
LLM (Intern Comm Law) FT (Dub)	62.5%	90.2%
LLM (Intern Comm Law) PT (Dub)	50.0%	84.4%
LLM General PT Dub Jan	100.0%	N/A
LLM Int Comm Law PT Dub Jan	30.8%	N/A
MA Ed (In&Sp Ne) PT Dub	63.2%	92.8%
MA Educ (Lea & Tea) PT Dub Jan	100.0%	N/A
MA Educ (Learn & Teach) PT Dub	66.7%	90.5%
MA Educati (Leader) PT Dub Jan	50.0%	N/A
MA Educati (Leader) PT Dub Sep	60.0%	91.4%
Master of Public Health Dub FT	100.0%	91.5%
Master of Public Health Dub PT	100.0%	N/A
MBA PT Dubai	39.3%	95.5%
MEng Comp Sci Sof En FT (Dub)	66.7%	76.0%
MSc Account & Finan FT (Dubai)	40.0%	N/A
MSc Account & Finan PT (Dubai)	33.3%	N/A
MSc Adv Eng Man (Gen) FT (Dub)	66.7%	N/A
MSc Adv Eng Man (Gen) PT (Dub)	50.0%	N/A
MSc Adv Eng Man Gen PT Dub Jan	33.3%	N/A
MSc Adv Prac in Hlth 2y PT Dub	100.0%	N/A
MSc Art In & Com Sc PT Dub Jan	36.4%	N/A
MSc Art Int + Comp Sc FT (Dub)	57.9%	83.7%
MSc Art Int + Comp Sc PT (Dub)	46.4%	89.3%
MSc Art Int + Mac Lea FT (Dub)	72.0%	75.3%
MSc Art Int + Mac Lea PT (Dub)	66.7%	84.3%
MSc Bioinformatics FT (Dubai)	75.0%	86.8%
MSc Bioinformatics PT (Dubai)	80.0%	N/A
MSc Computer Sci PT Dub Jan	50.0%	N/A
MSc Computer Science FT(Dubai)	50.0%	N/A
MSc Computer Science PT (Dub)	50.0%	N/A

MSc Constructio Man FT (Dubai)	50.0%	N/A
MSc Cyber Security (Dubai) PT	100.0%	N/A
MSc Cyber Security Dub Jan PT	100.0%	N/A
MSc Data Science FT (Dubai)	93.8%	90.8%
MSc Data Science PT (Dubai)	77.8%	90.2%
MSc Financial Managem FT (Dub)	64.3%	94.2%
MSc Financial Managem PT (Dub)	62.5%	N/A
MSc Financial Mathe FT (Dubai)	60.0%	N/A
MSc Glob Hea Sys Lead (Dub) FT	100.0%	N/A
MSc Glob Hea Sys Lead (Dub) PT	100.0%	N/A
MSc Health Data Sci PT Dub Jan	100.0%	N/A
MSc Health Data Science FT Dub	85.7%	84.1%
MSc Health Data Science PT Dub	100.0%	N/A
MSc Human Res Manag FT (Dubai)	35.0%	70.2%
MSc Intern Busin FT (Dub Jan)	50.0%	N/A
MSc Intern Busin FT (Dub Sep)	33.8%	85.3%
MSc Intern Busin PT (Dub Jan)	100.0%	N/A
MSc Intern Busin PT (Dub Sep)	33.3%	N/A
MSc Marketing FT (Dubai)	66.7%	96.2%
MSc Marketing PT (Dubai)	37.5%	N/A
MSc Mental Health Clin FT Dub	42.1%	63.3%
MSc Microbiol & Infecti FT Dub	100.0%	98.7%
MSc Microbiol & Infecti PT Dub	50.0%	N/A
MSc Rai Sys Eng & Int (Dub) PT	84.6%	75.9%
MSc Renew Energ Enginee FT Dub	40.0%	N/A
MSc Renewab Energ Engin PT Dub	33.3%	N/A
MSc Suppl Chain Man FT (Dubai)	57.1%	N/A
MSc Suppl Chain Man PT (Dubai)	38.5%	N/A
MSc Urban Plan FT Dub Jan	75.0%	83.4%
MSc Urban Planning FT Dub Blen	77.8%	99.6%
MSc Urban Planning PT Dub Blen	100.0%	87.2%
MSc Urban Planning PT Dub Jan	66.7%	N/A
MSci Biomedical Science FT Dub	90.0%	79.3%
PGCE (Int) (PGCEi) Dubai PT	79.5%	95.6%
PGCE (Int) (PGCEi) PT Dub Jan	47.4%	88.8%
PGCE Prim Educ FT w iQTS (Dub)	50.0%	93.5%
PGCert Ed (Inc&Sp Ed Ne) Dub	85.7%	91.8%
PGCert Ed Inc&Sp Ed Ne Dub Jan	16.7%	N/A

**Appendix B.** Comparison of the 2024-25 DSS and NSS results. The surveys are not identical, comparisons are shown where possible, and blanks are left where they are not.

Question	DSS	NSS	DSS – NSS
How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	94.4%	92.4%	2.0%
How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?	85.6%	77.6%	8.0%
How often is the programme intellectually stimulating?	87.9%	89.6%	-1.7%
How often does your programme challenge you to achieve your best work?	89.6%	87.3%	2.3%
To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	90.1%	86.1%	4.0%
How well does your programme introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?	90.5%	86.1%	4.4%
To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics?	89.1%	85.7%	3.4%
To what extent is teaching on your programme informed by current research?	91.1%		
How manageable is the workload on your programme?	81.6%		
To what extent does your programme have the right balance of directed and independent study?	84.4%	77.3%	7.1%
How well has your programme developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?	86.3%	83.6%	2.7%
How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	85.9%	73.7%	12.2%
How fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?		79.1%	
How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	85.9%	80.1%	5.8%
How often have you received assessment feedback on time?	79.7%	81.2%	-1.5%
How often does feedback help you to improve your work?	81.0%	66.3%	14.7%
How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	88.0%	89.3%	-1.3%
How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	93.2%	87.1%	6.1%
How well organised is your programme?	85.9%	80.2%	5.7%
How well were any changes to teaching on your programme communicated?	91.1%	82.9%	8.2%
How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	88.8%	86.2%	2.6%
How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?	86.6%	91.3%	-4.7%
How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?	87.1%	87.9%	-0.8%
To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your programme?	90.7%	87.6%	3.1%
To what extent are students' opinions about the programme valued by staff?	87.2%	78.8%	8.4%
How clear is it that students' feedback on the programme is acted on?	78.6%	67.8%	10.8%
How well do the student leaders represent students' interests?	84.6%		
How well do the student representatives represent students' academic interests?	85.7%		
How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?		71.6%	
To what extent do you feel part of a community of students and staff?	79.1%		
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by your personal academic tutor?	89.1%		
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by wellbeing services?	87.9%		
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by careers services?	81.4%		
When needed, how helpful was the information and advice offered by student services?	86.3%		
How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?		87.4%	
During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions, and beliefs?		84.9%	