

BACP Universities & Colleges annual survey

Mary Dailey and Tina Abbott report the headlines findings from the BACP Universities & Colleges survey for 2011/12

This year the BACP Universities & Colleges Executive has trialled a new way of collecting data about counselling and counselling services across the HE and FE sectors.

We designed a Bristol Online Survey that was, we hope, fairly quick and simple to complete, with the aim of collecting some descriptive benchmarking data that could be used by colleagues.

There is no intention that this survey will replicate the enormous amount of data we used to collect through the AUCC survey in the past. Currently we do not have the resources to analyse and report on a large survey so have opted for something that is manageable for both the survey reporters and participants.

The survey was live for two months during the first term of the 2012/13 academic year and relates to the work undertaken in the previous academic year 2011/12.

The results are as follows.

Figure 1

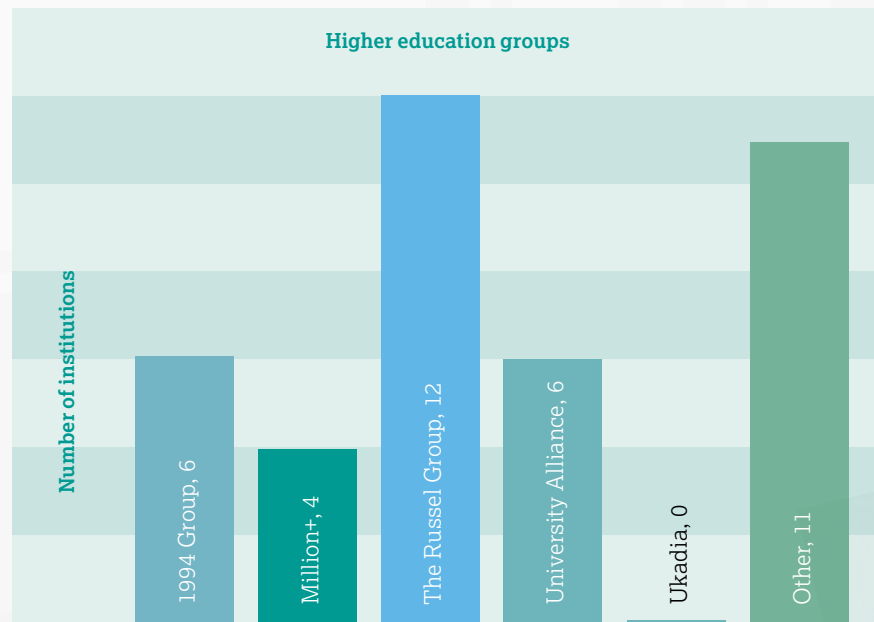


Table 1

	Students only	Students/staff	Staff only
HE	26	12	4
FE	15	10	0

The institutions

A total of 63 institutions responded to the survey, of which 38 were from higher education (HE) and 25 were from further education (FE). The HE institutions belonged to the groups listed in figure 1.

The client group

Respondents were asked whether they saw students only, students and staff, or staff only (table 1).

Staffing (paid)

This was extremely variable by full-time equivalents (fte) (table 2).

FE institutions tended to have lower staffing levels than HE institutions, with 68 per cent employing fewer than two fte counsellors and 42 per cent of HE institutions employing between four and 10 counsellors.

Staffing (unpaid)

A total of 45 institutions (71 per cent) used associate volunteer counsellors.

The HE respondents had an average of 0.8 fte associate placements (counting each three-hour placement as 0.1 fte); FE institutions had an average of 0.6 fte.

Table 2

Staffing Levels FTE	HE	FE
0.4 – 0.5	1	4
0.5 – 1	3	6
1.1 – 1.75	4	8
2 – 2.25	7	3
2.6 – 3	6	3
3.5	1	1
4 – 4.2	4	
5 – 6	8	1
6 – 8	3	
10	1	

Table 3

Numbers of student referrals	HE	FE
Up to 100	3	6
101 – 200	3	10
201 – 300	5	5
301 – 400	3	1
401 – 500	3	1
501 – 600	4	2
601 – 700	5	
Over 700	4	

Table 4

Percentage of total student population	All
0 – 1%	6
1 – 2%	2
2 – 3%	4
3 – 4%	4
4 – 5%	5
5 – 6%	3
6 – 7%	2
7 – 8%	4
8 – 9%	1
9 – 10%	4

Referrals - student

In total, 41 institutions provided data on student referrals. The number of students who attended counselling ranged from one to 1,465. The average number among the 41 respondents was 427 student referrals (table 3).

In addition, 35 of the 41 respondents also expressed these as a percentage of the institution's total student population (table 4).

One respondent who worked at a specialist institution saw 45 per cent of the total student population. These variations are likely to occur, particularly in small, specialist institutions.



Total number of sessions offered (including failed appointments)

In total, 54 respondents offered between 230 and 7,334 appointments, the average number being 2,211 (table 5).

Average number of sessions

The most common average number of sessions offered in HE (67%) and FE (50%) was four to five sessions per student client (table 6).

Failed appointments

Five respondents presented this as a percentage, which was in a range of 6–17%.

A further 30 respondents provided data that gave an average of 391 failed appointments.

Referrals - staff

The number of staff who attended counselling ranged from two to 378, with an average of 81 from 25 institutions.

Sixteen respondents expressed this as a percentage of the institution's total staff population, producing an average of 2.3 per cent.

Total number of sessions offered, including failed appointments

Twenty respondents offered a range of between 16 and 2,151 appointments, giving an average of 553.

HE institutions tended to offer on average more sessions (681) than FE (313).

Average number of sessions per client

In total, 21 respondents provided a range of between two and 12 sessions, with an average of 5.6. This did not vary significantly between HE and FE institutions.

Failed appointments

Twelve respondents provided data, with a range of 20 to 188 failed appointments, giving an average of 59.

One institution expressed their failed appointments in percentages as 13%.

Group work - students

More HE institutions (81%) than FE institutions (32%) provided group work (table 7).

An average of 186 students attended group work across 26 institutions (table 8).

Table 5

No of sessions	No of institutions	HE	FE
Under 1000	18	5	13
1000 – 2000	12	7	5
2000 – 3000	11	8	3
3000 – 4000	3	3	
Over 4000	8	8	

Table 6

Average no of sessions	HE	FE
1	1	
2	2	2
3	2	4
4	10	8
5	14	5
6	3	1
7	3	2
8	1	1
23		1

Group work - staff

Fifty per cent of the 25 institutions (HE and FE) that responded provided group work for staff.

An average of 72 staff attended group work (table 9).

The survey

We would welcome feedback on whether or not the data collected in this survey is useful to services and suggestions for further modification. This might include the layout of the results as well as the actual data.

There was a large number of suggestions for additional data to measure and collect through the survey, which will be considered next time.

We are constantly trying to find the least time-consuming ways to collect and collate data – members of the Executive who organise the survey all work in counselling services as well and have to find ways to do this quickly and easily. We appreciate that heads of service also have limited time to complete surveys.

We are enormously grateful to all of you who participated in this survey and hope that we will entice yet more of you to complete it next year. This survey will only give us meaningful data if a sizeable proportion of services contribute.

Suggestions for future surveys

There were several suggestions for what might be included in future surveys. Respondents were interested in knowing about the level of administrative support available and, where there was an integrated service, what other services were included. There was interest in knowing about salary scales and other benefits; what services received in non-staffing as well as staffing budgets, and the ratio of fte counsellors to the total student or staff population.

Further information was requested about the demography of clients, what they are studying and where they work, the common presenting issues, the levels of severity and the average waiting time for assessment and ongoing work.

Respondents were also interested to know about any related activities undertaken by counsellors, such as preventative work through staff training and how services advertise themselves.

Finally, there was a suggestion to separate out the HE and FE services to make reporting more straightforward. In general the results that are expressed as a percentage are more useful for benchmarking purposes, as some of the numerical ranges were very broad.

If you have any feedback or queries please contact Mary Dailey at m.f.dailey@bradford.ac.uk or Tina Abbott at AbbottTA@cardiff.ac.uk.

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Table 7

Group work	HE	FE
Yes	30	8
No	7	17

Table 8

No of students attending groups	HE	FE
Under 100	10	3
100 – 200	3	1
201 – 300	4	1
Over 300	3	1

Table 9

No of staff attending groups	HE	FE
Under 100	11	7
100 – 300	3	1