

WPO/HEON Evaluation Report

Discover University Summer School

29 July to 1 August 2024

Background

Discover University 2024 was the second Summer School delivered jointly by Surrey WPO and HEON. It ran for four days from Monday 29th to Thursday 1st August. Students were selected to attend according to whether they met a range of widening participation criteria. 60 students attended with one or more of the following characteristics:

Free School Meals	27
Impairment, health condition, learning difficulty	18
Young carer	12
Military family	10
Refugee/Asylum Seeker	5
Looked after	1
Black & Minority Ethnic	20
GRT	1

25 students were on the WPO Scholars Programme and 5 were previously on HEON sustained programmes.

76% of students had not previously attended a summer school, 15% had attended once before and 9% twice or more.

Discover Uni was based at the University of Surrey and included visits to Merrist Wood and UCA. The programme included a campus tour, taster sessions, a research project and social activities.

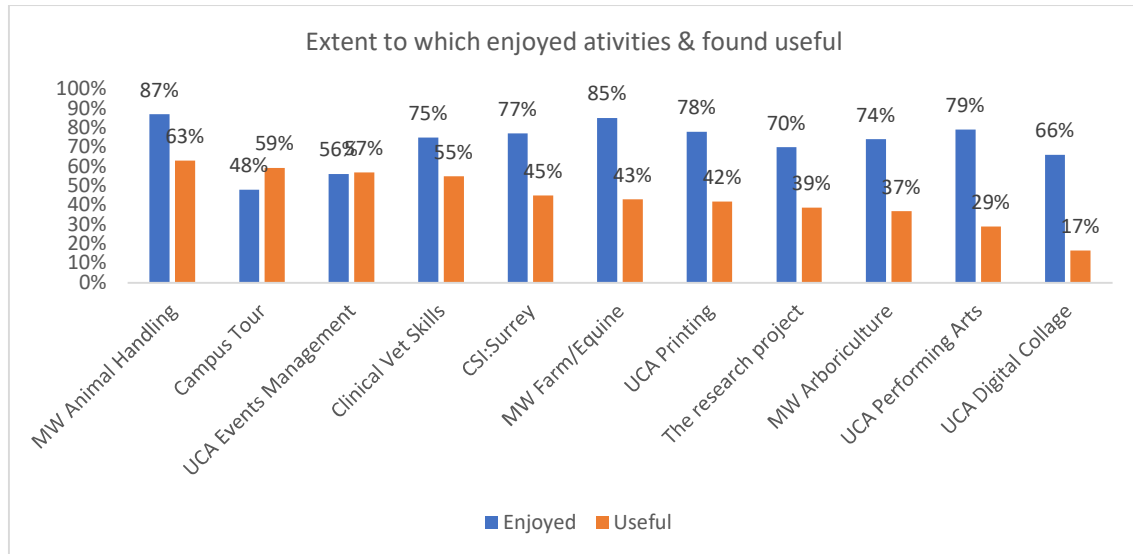
The Summer School has been evaluated using a pre (online) and post (paper) survey; a mini-focus group with four students; observation of the research project and a survey of student ambassadors.

Opinions of Discover University

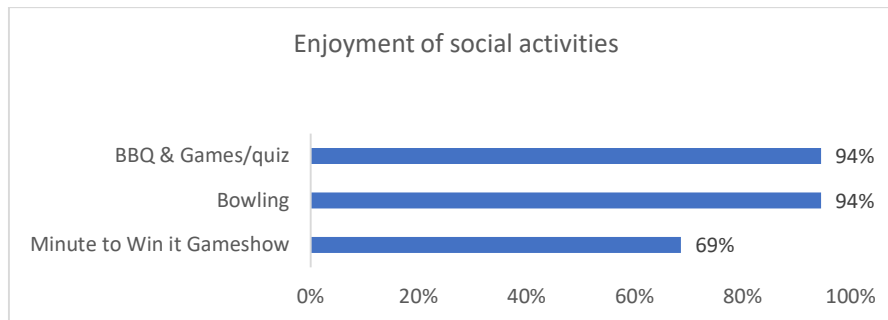
The majority of students **enjoyed** most of the activities.¹ The activities that the highest proportion of students enjoyed were Animal Handling at Merrist Wood (87%), Farm & Equine (85%), Performing Arts (79%) and CSI: Surrey (77%). Also more than seven out of ten students said they enjoyed vet skills, arboriculture and the Research Project.

¹ The CSI Surrey activity was not always fully completed and one group did not get their printing back in time

The activity that the highest proportion of students found **useful** was the animal handling (63%). 59% considered the campus tour useful but this was only a small majority and those who had been to a summer school before were less inclined to find this useful (46%). Students commented that the campus tour could have been more detailed with more information. A majority also found the events management and vet skills sessions useful. For all other activities only a minority of students found each one useful. Some felt that the range of subjects covered could be more diverse, including STEM subjects such as engineering and computer science. It was also suggested that there could be more subjects covered (although in less detail) e.g. a carousel/careers fair type activity.



With regard to the social activities, nearly all students enjoyed the BBQ and games and bowling (both 94%) and just over two-thirds enjoyed the gameshow.



Student ambassadors clearly made a big impact on the students and they found them to be very supportive and friendly and helped them to feel confident and able to talk to others. They felt able to relate to the ambassadors as they are of a similar age.

Outcomes

Knowledge Outcomes

Students understanding increased significantly for all knowledge outcomes.

- KO9/KO1 - there was a significant increase in the proportion of students who agreed that they had a good understanding of their options after school

- KO3 – there was a 50% increase in students saying they had a good understanding of student finance and support
- KO4 – there was a large increase (54%) in students who had a good understanding of the personal support available in HE
- KO6/KO5 – there was a 26% increase in the proportion of students who said that they understood what it would be like to study a subject at university
- KO7/KO6 – there was a 15% increase in the proportion of students who said that they had a good understanding of the skills required to study at university to 83%
- KO1/KO7 – 17% more students said they understood the benefits of higher education
- KO8 – students understanding of what student life would be like almost doubled to 94%

The target threshold of 75% or more was achieved for all knowledge outcomes except KO3 (finance). However, this increased significantly from a low of 17% to 67%.

WPO	HEON		PRE % agree	POST % agree	% change
KO9	KO1	I have a good understanding of the options available to me after I leave school/college	70%	91%	20%
KO3	KO3	I have a good understanding of how student finance works and the support available	17%	67%	50%
KO4	KO4	I have a good understanding of the personal support available for students in HE	26%	80%	54%
KO6	KO5	I understand what it would be like to study a subject at university	52%	78%	26%
KO7	KO6	I have a good understanding of the skills required for higher education study	69%	83%	15%
KO1	KO7	I have a good understanding of the benefits of higher education	80%	96%	17%
	KO8	I know what student life would be like	46%	94%	48%

When students were asked what they had learnt from attending Discover Uni, or the impact that it had on them, key themes were learning about student life including specific aspects such as options, independent learning, finance, the accommodation and support available. The information they had gained had a positive impact in reassuring them about university life:

“I learnt what uni life will be like. I learnt you have plenty of free time”

“it’s kind of your choice whether you go in or not, just as long as you get stuff done”

“I thought it was exactly like school or college where you have a set timetable”

“The flats – you think everyone is going to get a tiny little bedroom”

“Tuition is a lot cheaper than I thought”

“I was closed off about going to Uni, the debt and the money I didn’t want to think about it but talking to ambassadors and hearing about jobs that they are excited to do”

“I wanted to go to university before but (Discover Uni) has helped feel more confident about it, learning about budgeting etc and choosing A levels and degree subject”

Attitude Outcomes

There has been a substantial improvement in confidence and motivation for all attitude outcomes.

- A02/A01 – more than three-quarters of students said that they felt confident to progress to HE in the future after Discover Uni compared to just under two-thirds beforehand
- A04/A02 – many more students agreed that they felt confident to take decisions about their future education/career
- A05/A03 – there was a small uplift in students’ motivation to work hard
- A06/A04 – there was a significant increase in students’ confidence to make the transition into HE
- A08/A05 – many more students agreed that they felt confident that they have the skills for HE study after attending Discover Uni
- A01/A06 – there has been a significant increase in students’ self-confidence and awareness with 20% more saying they generally felt sure of themselves and what they might achieve

Many students felt they had gained social skills and confidence.

“it isn’t as scary to go to university as people say it is”

“I learnt more about the importance of teamwork and co-operating with others”

“It has changed my view about it being long and stressful and mentally challenging/demanding”

“It has made me more comfortable to make mates and do public speaking”

“I spoke to a lot more people than I thought I would have done”

			PRE % agree	POST % agree	% change
A02	A01	I feel confident that I could progress to Higher Education in the future	65%	76%	11%
A04	A02	I feel confident in taking decisions about my future education and career path	63%	78%	15%
A05	A03	I feel motivated to work hard at school/college to achieve my full potential	83%	89%	6%
A06	A04	I feel confident that I can make the change from school or college to HE in the future	65%	83%	19%
A08	A05	I feel confident that I have the skills for higher education study	50%	63%	13%
A01	A06	I generally feel sure of myself and what I might achieve in the future	57%	77%	20%

Attainment Raising

There was a small uplift in students’ understanding of the importance of metacognitive strategies and confidence in working with others. The likely impact on attainment raising is limited.

		PRE % agree	POST % agree	% change
Attainment raising	I'm confident working with others to complete a task together	72%	80%	7%
	I understand the importance of setting goals to help me improve myself	83%	89%	6%

I understand the importance of problem solving skills and techniques

87%

93%

6%

Multiple Attendance

Students were asked if they had previously attended a university residential before. There was an impact on more students who had not attended before particularly for understanding of personal support, student finance and what student life would be like compared to those who had not previously attended. There was an impact on more students who had attended before for understanding options and feeling confident that they have the skills for HE.

	Not previously attended			Attended 1+ times before		
	pre	post	% change	pre	post	% change
I have a good understanding of the options available to me after I leave school/college	70%	90%	20%	69%	100%	31%
I have a good understanding of how student finance works and the support available	15%	68%	53%	23%	62%	38%
I have a good understanding of the personal support available for students in higher education	25%	83%	58%	31%	69%	38%
I understand what it would be like to study a subject at university	40%	75%	35%	92%	85%	-8%
I have a good understanding of the skills required for higher education study	58%	78%	20%	100%	100%	0%
I feel confident that I have the skills for higher education study	50%	58%	8%	46%	77%	31%
I have a good understanding of the benefits of higher education	75%	95%	20%	92%	100%	8%
I know what student life would be like	40%	92%	52%	69%	100%	31%
I feel confident that I could progress to Higher Education in the future	60%	73%	13%	77%	85%	8%
I feel confident in taking decisions about my future education and career path	60%	75%	15%	69%	85%	15%
I feel motivated to work hard at school/college to achieve my full potential	88%	90%	3%	69%	85%	15%
I feel confident that I can make the change from school or college to higher education in the future	65%	83%	18%	62%	85%	23%
I generally feel sure of myself and what I might achieve in the future	48%	74%	27%	85%	85%	0%
I'm confident working with others to complete a task together	73%	80%	8%	69%	77%	8%
I understand the importance of setting goals to help me improve myself	78%	90%	13%	100%	85%	-15%
I understand the importance of problem solving skills and techniques	83%	90%	8%	100%	100%	0%

Group Research Project

The majority of students said that they enjoyed the Research Project (69%) but only 39% thought it was useful. Five of the seven ambassadors who provided feedback felt that the group research project had been effective and that it had been a good opportunity for students to work collaboratively, develop skills and learn about university life. Most reported that students had

engaged with the research project but for some it had taken some time and one group in particular did not want to engage.

Overall the Research Project appears to have been an important and effective part of Discover Uni. It is likely to have contributed to improving knowledge outcomes such as finance and support as this was the main method for obtaining information on university life in this year's summer school. It is also likely to have contributed to students' increased confidence.

There may be improvements that could further enhance engagement and students' perceptions that it is useful. Suggestions from ambassadors, were:

- for ambassadors to have more training in facilitation, in particular how to resolve conflict;
- to have a simpler output e.g. Powerpoint/poster or
- to have more time to complete as app design, presentation and video was challenging within the time

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, Discover University has been a highly successful and impactful activity that has had an impact on all planned outcomes. It has been effective at increasing levels of understanding of higher education, as well as their confidence.

The Research Project has been a largely successful element of the Summer School that appears to have been effective in increasing students' understanding of higher education. The impact is probably very dependent on the guidance ambassadors are able to provide. Engagement appears to have been impacted by who students were grouped with and concerns about filming and public speaking. In the future it may be worth considering further ambassador guidance, making the outputs less demanding, reviewing how students are allocated to groups and ensuring students understand the purpose and value of this activity.

This year's Summer School may not have sufficiently covered a range of different types of subjects with a focus on animals and creative arts. Students wanting to hear about other subjects, particularly STEM, did not feel that the timetable met their interests.

Most students found the campus tour useful but there was feeling that more detailed information could be provided about rooms and facilities during the tour.

CSI: Surrey was a successful activity that most students enjoyed and found useful. It may need to be reviewed to ensure that it can be completed within the time available, or extended.