



UniSmart: United Kingdom Survey Research Report

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction and Design	3
2	Detailed Findings	4
2.1	Rating of UniSmart.....	4
2.2	Living Circumstances.....	5
2.3	Intended Future Career.....	6
2.4	Funding Study.....	6
2.5	Mental Health Background	7
2.6	Concerns about Starting University.....	7
2.7	Life style Factors	8
	Appendix: Demographic Details	9

1 Introduction and Design

UniSmart is a presentation for first year tertiary education students, prepared and delivered by a New Zealand-based company, the Ideas Agency. The UniSmart presentation is described as a breakthrough, supporting first year tertiary students through transition.

First year students need to take on so much new information, some academic, some of a more personal nature. With its high energy blast of street theatre tactics, straight talking, music, comedy and visuals, the UniSmart presentation gives students the information they need to get through the first year and beyond; and empowering them to seek help if and when they need it. For many students struggling with a major life change, the presentation has been described as ‘a lifesaver’.

UniSmart is currently delivered on university campuses in the United Kingdom, as well as New Zealand and Australia. Topics covered include:

- Diversity;
- Isolation and shyness;
- Making friends;
- Study habits;
- Culture shock;
- Sex, drugs and very loud music;
- Drink spiking; and
- Staying safe

This report provides the data from universities in the United Kingdom gathered in the most recent enrolment period (Spring 2009). This report consolidates responses from universities involved in data collection and reporting¹.

The UniSmart presentation gives students information they need to get through the first year and beyond

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¹ The self-completion nature of the data collection has resulted in some discrepancies in responses by various institutions.

2 Detailed Findings

2.1 Rating of UniSmart

Having seen the UniSmart presentation, students were asked to rate it on a five point scale from 'poor' to 'awesome'. 90% of the participants rated the presentation as 'Awesome', or 'Very Good'. This was in line with the national average rating, and represents a very positive response to the UniSmart presentation (Table 2.1).

**Nationally,
nine in ten
students
thought
UniSmart was
'Awesome'
or 'Very Good'**

Table 2.1 Rating of UniSmart

Option	UK Average
Awesome	64%
Very Good	26%
Good	8%
Fair	2%
Poor	0%

The survey participants were then asked the reasons for their rating scores. Among students, the primary reasons for this rating were (i) that the presentation was funny, (ii) informative, (iii) entertaining and (iv) interesting, (Table 2.2).

**Students
felt the
presentation
was funny,
informative,
relevant and
interesting**

Table 2.2 Reason for Rating of UniSmart

Option	UK Total (percent of responses)
Funny	23%
Informative	21%
Entertaining	17%
Interesting	12%
Relevant	6%
Good	6%
Helpful	4%
Interactive	3%
Other	8%

2.2 Living Circumstances

The next set of questions asked students about their living circumstances, including where they currently lived, if they were an 'international' student; and whether they had relocated within country to study at their current university.

The national response demonstrates that nearly half of students have moved out of their 'home situations' when taking up studying. An average of one in ten students have migrated to the UK to study, while a further three in ten have relocated within the UK.

Nationally, nearly half of all students are living in university residences, private boarding or flatting

Table 2.3 Current Living Situation

Option	UK Average
University Residence	29%
Private Boarding	13%
Flatting	2%
With Parents	46%
Own Home	8%
Other	3%

Table 2.4 International Students

Option	UK Average
International Student	10%
Domestic Student	90%

Four in ten students have relocated either to or within the UK to take up their study

Table 2.5 Relocated within the Country

Option	UK Average
Relocated	30%
Did not move to study	70%

2.3 Intended Future Career

Students were asked to identify whether they knew what careers they would pursue after graduation. A total of 90% of students throughout the UK knew or 'sort of knew' their intended career, (Table 2.6).

Nationally, 90% of students knew or 'sort of knew' their intended future career

Table 2.6 Know Intended Career

Option	UK Average
Yes, know career	47%
Possibly, 'sort of know'	43%
No	10%

2.4 Funding Study

Nationally, (70%) of students are funding their study through either a student loan or family support, (Table 2.7).

70% of students are funding their study through a student loan or family support

Table 2.7 Source of Funding for Studies

Option	UK Average
Family Support	20%
Student Loan	49%
Own Savings	10%
Part Time Job	15%
Entrepreneurial activity	1%
Not sure	2%
Credit Card	2%
Other	2%

Money was some level of concern for 72% of students completing the survey nationally, (Table 2.8).

Money was 'a big concern' or 'some concern' for over 70% of students, nationally

Table 2.8 Money a Concern

Option	UK Average
Big Concern	32%
Some Concern	40%
Not sure yet	18%
No	9%

2.5 Mental Health Background

A range of issues face students at tertiary institutions, some of which may potentially stress students. To understand how students may adjust to this stress, they were asked whether they had any history of mental health problems. Table 2.9 demonstrates that on average; one in ten students reported experiencing anxiety and / or depression prior to study.

Around 1 in every ten students nationally identified anxiety and/ or depression

Table 2.9 History of Mental Health

Option	UK Average
Anxiety	10%
Depression	12%

2.6 Concerns about Starting University

The survey participants were asked to reflect on their concerns about starting university. Among students the four most highly rated factors were in line with the national perspectives, being (1) Passing Exams; (2) Money while studying; (3) Making new friends; and (4) Studying. The factors of least significance were 'child care', 'English as a second language' and 'mental health'. Details are shown in Table 2.10.

The biggest concerns about starting university were 'Passing Exams', 'Money while studying', 'studying', and 'Making new friends'

Table 2.10 Factors Concerning Students regarding Starting University

Factor	UK Average
Passing exams	1
Money while studying	2
Making new friends	3
Studying	4
My course choices	5
Loneliness	6
Moving away from family	7
Moving away from friends	8
Paying back student loan	9
Finding my way around Uni	10
Settling into a new culture	11
My physical health	12
Having support	13
My mental health	14
My age	15
Living in Halls	16
English - second language	17
Child care	18

2.7 Life style Factors

A number of questions were asked about the students' lifestyles, including the use of alcohol, smoking and recreational drugs (recall that the survey was completed anonymously, and students were encouraged to be frank about these lifestyle factors). Nationally, 75% of students noted that they drank alcohol. Key factors from the student population were:

- 25% **never** or rarely consumed alcohol;
- 14% smoked cigarettes;
- 79% had **not** tried marijuana

However, of 21% of students who had tried marijuana:

- 62% (i.e. 13% of students) did not currently use ; while
- 12% (i.e. nearly 3% of students) were using daily.

95% of students had not tried other drugs. Drugs trialled included Cocaine, LSD, Ecstasy and Speed.

Three quarters of students drank alcohol

2 in 10 had tried marijuana. Nearly 3% were using daily

Only 4% had tried 'other' drugs

Table 2.11 Use of Drugs and Alcohol

Percentage of Respondents	UK Average
Drink Alcohol	
Never	25%
Only occasionally	
Weekends only	75%
Three or more days per week	
Daily	
Smoke Cigarettes	14%
Tried Marijuana	79%
Of those who have tried Marijuana	
Don't use now	62%
Rarely	18%
Monthly	5%
Weekly	3%
Daily	12%
Tried Other Drugs	
None	95%
Ecstasy	1%
LSD	0.3%
Speed	0.1%
Cocaine	1%
Intravenous drugs	0%
Other	0%

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Appendix: Demographic Details

The UniSmart presentation was delivered to students at a range of UK institutions during the Spring intake of 2009. Data has been analysed from all universities. National data averages are provided in Tables A.1 and A.2.

The students at UniSmart presentations were generally under 20 years old, with a balance of both males and females

Table A.1 Age of Respondents

Age Band	UK Average
17-20	74%
21-25	15%
25-30	5%
Over 30	6%

Table A.2 Gender of Respondents

Gender	UK Average
Male	49%
Female	51%