



## Office of the Vice President Academic and University Affairs

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## Executive Summary

The Academic Experience Survey (AES) is distributed annually with the purpose of gathering data on student experiences at the UBC Vancouver campus. Data will contribute to the Alma Mater Society's (AMS) mission of improving the academic, social and personal lives of UBC students. This marks the 10th year of the Academic Experience Survey, with a total of 1090 respondents. Respondents included full-time and part-time undergraduate and graduate students, including those from affiliated colleges. The survey was open between April 3rd and May 31st 2022.

The intent of this report is to analyze student responses to the AES into an accessible format. Our analysis presents key findings on student perceptions of UBC, experiences with discrimination on campus, post-graduation plans, affordability, wellbeing, sexual misconduct and more. Lastly, we outline our final recommendations based on the data.

Please refer any questions or clarifications of the report to [vpacademic@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpacademic@ams.ubc.ca). Data not accessible in this report is available by request to the VP Academic and University Affairs.

Lastly, we would like to thank our partners at **Leger** and the wonderful AMS staff that contributed to this report. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to all the respondents of the 2022 AES.

Kindly,



**Dana Turdy**

Vice President Academic and University Affairs  
Alma Mater Society of UBC

# Respondent Profiles

The following is a breakdown of our respondent profile comparing the AES 2022 data sample to the Planning and Institutional Research (PAIR)<sup>1</sup> office data on the population of UBC from the academic year 2021 to 2022.

## Breakdown by Undergraduate and Graduate Studies

| Students            | Surveyed (AES) (n=1,071) | Actual (PAIR)  |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Undergraduate       | 951 (88.8%)              | 47,400 (80.7%) |
| Graduate            | 116 (10.8%)              | 11,368 (19.3%) |
| Affiliated Colleges | 4 (0.4%)                 | –              |
| Total               | 1,071 (100%)             | 58,768 (100%)  |

## Breakdown by Full-Time/Part-Time (Undergraduate & Graduate)

| Students                 | Surveyed (AES) (n=1,071) | Actual (PAIR)   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Full-Time Undergraduates | 921 (85.99%)             | 42,889 (72.98%) |
| Part-Time Undergraduates | 30 (2.80%)               | 4,511 (7.95%)   |
| Full-Time Graduates      | 106 (9.90%)              | 9,102 (16.03%)  |
| Part-Time Graduates      | 10 (0.93%)               | 2,266 (3.86%)   |
| Affiliated Colleges      | 4 (0.4%)                 | –               |
| Total                    | 1,071 (100%)             | 58,768 (100%)   |

<sup>1</sup> The [Planning and Institutional Research Office](#) provides data and analytics for UBC, including numbers on student admissions, demographics, enrolment, faculty and departmental profiles, and more.

## Breakdown by Faculty

| Students                                   | Surveyed (AES) (n=905)         | Actual (PAIR)        |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Arts                                       | 288 (32%)                      | 14,484 (30.56%)      |
| Science                                    | 278 (31%)                      | 9,675 (20.41%)       |
| Engineering                                | 100 (11%)                      | 5,334 (11.25%)       |
| Commerce                                   | 78 (9%)                        | 3,988 (8.41%)        |
| Land & Food Systems                        | 60 (7%)                        | 1,829 (3.86%)        |
| Kinesiology                                | 32 (4%)                        | 1,396 (2.95%)        |
| Forestry                                   | 24 (3%)                        | 512 (1.08%)          |
| Vancouver School of Economics <sup>2</sup> | 12 (1%)                        | N/A*                 |
| Pharmaceutical Sciences                    | 10 (1%)                        | 147 (0.31%)          |
| Architecture and Landscape Arch.           | 8 (1%)                         | 126 (0.27%)          |
| Education                                  | 8 (1%)                         | 853 (1.80%)          |
| Medicine                                   | 7 (1%)                         | 1,601 (3.38%)        |
| Music                                      | 5 (1%)                         | 217 (0.46%)          |
| Social Work                                | 4 (0%)                         | 116 (0.24%)          |
| Dentistry                                  | 3 (0%)                         | 166 (0.35%)          |
| Nursing                                    | 3 (0%)                         | 245 (0.52%)          |
| Law  | 0                              | 572 (1.21%)          |
| Other                                      | 14 (2%)                        | 6,139 (12.95%)       |
| None                                       | 0                              | N/A                  |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>934 (105%) / 905 (100%)</b> | <b>47,400 (100%)</b> |

<sup>2</sup> Please note that students enrolled in degrees in the Vancouver School of Economics may be obtaining a Bachelor's degree in Arts or International Economics and/or a Master's degree in Arts.

### Breakdown by Domestic/International (Undergraduate & Graduate)

| Students                  | Surveyed (AES) (n=1,071) | Actual (PAIR)   |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Domestic (Lower Mainland) | 568 (53.03%)             | 41,968 (71.41%) |
| Domestic (Outside L. M.)  | 216 (20.17%)             |                 |
| International             | 287 (26.80%)             | 16,800 (28.59%) |
| Total                     | 1,071 (100%)             | 58,768 (100%)   |

# Overall Experience in UBC

This section discusses student satisfaction and experiences at UBC. Overall, students seem to be more satisfied with their university experience, but fewer students believe that UBC cares about what students think about the cost of education, fewer students think they are getting good value for their tuition fees, and fewer students think that the UBC is transparent with spending tuition revenue.

## Cost of Education

- Only 14% of undergraduate respondents agree that the University cares about what students think about the cost of education, declining from previous years (17% in 2021). Graduate students are more likely to agree at 27%.

## Value and Transparency of Tuition Fees

- 34% of undergraduate respondents agree that they are receiving good value for their tuition fees, an increase from 2021 (30%). Graduate students are more likely to agree (43%), but this is still a decrease from 2021 (48%).
- More undergraduate respondents (54%) do not believe that the University has been transparent and communicative about where student tuition is going than in 2021 (46%). Graduate respondents are more likely to agree that the University has been transparent with tuition fees (34%).

## Overall Satisfaction

- Both undergraduate and graduate respondents agree that overall they are satisfied with their university experience (65% for both pools);
  - ◊ Compared to 2021, this number has remained relatively stable for graduate respondents, but is a 10% increase for undergraduate respondents (55%).
- However, respondents with courses primarily online seem to be overall less satisfied than others (29%).



# Campus Community

This section discusses students' sense of belonging at UBC, feelings of safety, satisfaction with Indigenous reconciliation, and experiences of discrimination. Compared to 2021, more students feel a sense of belonging on campus and feel safer on campus at night. However, instances of discrimination have remained stable compared to 2021, with racial/ethnic discrimination being the most frequently experienced.

## Reconciliation

- 48% of undergraduate students are satisfied with the opportunities of in-depth learning about reconciliation on campus. Graduate students are slightly more satisfied at 52%. Both groups barely changed from 2021 (less than 1% change for undergraduate and no change for graduate students).

## Belonging on Campus

- 58% of undergraduate respondents feel a sense of belonging on campus, an improvement from 2021 (50%);
  - ◇ This number increased 11% for graduate respondents, with 52% of them reporting feeling a sense of belonging on campus.
- The following groups experience the lowest sense of belonging on campus: age group of 25+ (29%), online students (32%) and 4th-5th year students (27%).

## Safe and Inclusive Space

- More undergraduate respondents feel safe on campus at night (65%) compared to 2021 (47%).
  - ◇ Data is similar for respondents belonging to the LGBTQIA2S+ community (66%);
  - ◇ Male identifying participants feel more safe on campus (79%) than female identifying participants (60%);
  - ◇ More graduate students feel safe on campus (68%) compared to 2021 (50%).



## Discrimination

- Racial/ethnic discrimination seems to be the most frequent type of discrimination on campus, with 39% of undergraduate students responding that they have experienced racial discrimination on campus;
  - ◊ Other types of discrimination include gender (36%), age (27%), religious beliefs (22%), sexual orientation (20%), gender identity (18%), and disability/ability (18%).
- These numbers are relatively similar for graduate students, with 43% who have experienced racial/ethnic discrimination, an increase from 2021 (34%).

# Student Affordability

This part of the report explores issues and concerns that students have in regards to affordability. The survey report will be providing information that focuses on the financial support and resources that are available to students in UBC. The survey found that the top reasons for students' financial problems are tuition fees, textbook and course material expenses, and the cost of housing.

Similar to last year, fewer than 1 in 10 students report ever having lacked an adequate nighttime residence while at UBC. However, the lack of an affordable housing market (both on-campus and off campus) and increased rent remains the top reason why students experience a lack of fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. The lack of available housing remains as the second top reason for this issue.

In terms of food insecurity, 2 out of 5 undergraduate participants reported being worried that they might run out of food in the past 12 months. This was a larger concern amongst the graduate participants (50%). This is an increase from 2021 where only 1 out of 3 students were worried about affording groceries.

## Textbook Costs

- 3 out of 10 undergraduate respondents have often or frequently gone to class without a textbook. 70% of undergraduates reported that they have at least once gone without a textbook or other course resource because of the cost. This is an increase from 2021 (62%).
- Nearly all undergraduate respondents stated that they have bought a textbook or course resource that was never used or only rarely used in class (90%).
- 61% of undergraduate and 44% of graduate respondents have accessed a textbook or course material illegally this year.
- The average amount spent on textbooks this year by undergraduate respondents increased from \$893 (2021) to \$1,253;
  - ◇ The average amount for graduate respondents increased from \$613.90 to \$921.60.
- Almost all undergraduate respondents reported again that, like last year, they were able to use open educational resources (OERs) in lieu of textbooks at least once (97%).

## Personal Debts

- More students are unaware of the amount of personal financial debt to expect after their graduation. In 2020, only 30% of undergrad survey participants chose “Don’t know” on the options, but this number has increased to 47% this year.
- The average amount of expected student debt after graduation has significantly increased from \$35,017.20 (2021) to \$40,878.30.
- More students are applying for student loans this year, as only 17% of undergraduate respondents said that they are not expecting any student debt after graduation, a significant decrease from 2021 (40%).

## Student Housing

- 40% of undergraduate respondents are currently living on campus, which is an increase from 2021 (18%);
  - ◊ Relatively unchanged since 2021, 24% of graduate respondents currently live on campus.
- More than half of undergraduate respondents (57%) expressed that they have experienced financial hardship related to the cost of housing, a 17% increase from 2021 (40%);
  - ◊ This is even more prevalent amongst graduate respondents, as 75% of them reported the same, which is a 23% increase from 2021 (58%).

## Food Insecurity<sup>3</sup>

- 3 out of 5 undergraduate respondents point to high housing costs as one of the main reasons they are facing food insecurity;
  - ◊ Similar to last year, high tuition costs and not enough financial aid also contribute to the lack of food security.
- 10% of respondents expressed concern about the limited accessibility of culturally appropriate foods on campus.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the AMS Services section on page xx to find information about the AMS Food Bank.

## Financial Support and Resources

- 76% of undergraduate respondents rely on their parents or other family members for financial support, which remains unchanged from 2021;
  - ◊ However, compared to 2021, less undergraduate respondents are depending on personal savings (50%).
  - ◊ 1 out of 3 respondents rely on private and/or government loans for financial support.
- Of the scholarships, bursaries and other awards that students received last year, half of them were from UBC or other UBC-affiliated organisations and the other half were from organisations not associated with UBC.
- 31% of graduate respondents think that they might not be able to come back to UBC at some point in the future due to financial reasons, an increase from 2021 (18%);
  - ◊ 20% of undergraduate respondents reported thinking the same, which is an increase from 2021 (15%).
- 3 out of 5 respondents are not aware or informed on how to access emergency funding if an unexpected financial emergency were to arise.
- Some of the top reasons for students' financial problems are tuition fees, textbook and course material expenses, and the cost of housing. The survey also shows health-related costs as one of the reasons for students' financial hardships.
- 50% of students disagree with the statement that UBC has assisted and helped them meet their financial needs required to attend their program;
  - ◊ 2 out of 5 students said that UBC's financial services have not been transparent and accessible to students, and that UBC has not taken measures to lower financial barriers.

# Safety and Wellbeing

This section of the report looks at students' wellbeing, and their use and awareness of wellbeing services available on campus. There are three subsections devoted to harm reduction, disability/ability, and sexual misconduct.

Like in 2021, half of respondents reported feeling that their wellbeing is supported at UBC (50%). Awareness amongst students and the wellbeing services provided at UBC remains high too. Utility remains relatively the same as 2021 across both AMS and UBC Wellbeing Services.

The pandemic continues to have an effect on wellbeing, as 17% of students reported being unable to finish their degree within a 4 year period because of mental or physical health issues related to COVID-19.

## AMS Services

- Awareness of the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) increased by 8% this year, but utility remains about the same as 2021 (8%)
- Compared to last year, awareness of the AMS Food Bank has increased 10% amongst undergraduate respondents (87%).
  - ◊ Of the respondents that used the Foodbank, 36% reported the foodbank helping them significantly, which is a 15% increase from 2021.
- More respondents are aware of AMS Safewalk (92%);
  - ◊ But fewer respondents think AMS Safewalk is a useful service as 22% of students that used this service reported it not helping at all, which is a 9% increase from 2021.
- Utility of AMS Tutoring declined since 2021 (10%) while awareness stays relatively the same.
- Students are more aware of AMS Peer Support (76%) but utility of this service has declined since 2021.

## UBC Services

- There is more awareness of the Centre for Accessibility (CfA) this year (92%), while utility levels remain at about 20% of respondents.
- With UBC's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) there is more awareness amongst this year's respondents (78%);
  - ◊ Utility of SVPRO remains identical to 2021.
- More respondents are using UBC Student Health Services this year, while awareness levels remain the same as 2021 (90%).

## Harm Reduction

- Both undergraduate and graduate respondents are largely in support of having FTIR Spectrometer Drug Checking made available on campus (77% for both pools);
  - ◊ 37% of undergraduate students and 30% of graduate students would access, or know someone who would access, the FTIR Spectrometer Drug Checking service if it was made available on campus.

## Disability/Ability

- 30% of undergraduate respondents and 31% of graduate respondents stated that they have a disability;
  - ◊ 1 of 5 of these respondents are diagnosed with mental illness;
  - ◊ 30% of these respondents are registered with the Centre for Accessibility (CfA) which is an increase from 2021 (28%);
    - » 1 out of 3 respondents said that they do not know how to register with the CfA; and/or that they do not know what services the CfA offers.

## Sexual Misconduct

- The survey examined student perception of sexual misconduct on campus and UBC's response to sexual misconduct;
  - ◊ 52% of undergraduates and 28% of graduates respondents are concerned about the prevalence of sexual assault at UBC.
- 1 out of 2 students said that they would know how to respond appropriately if they witnessed or were informed of a sexual assault or other sexual misconduct;
  - ◊ 1 out of 3 participants also believe that other UBC students would know what to do in a similar situation.
- 2 of 5 undergraduates and 1 of 5 graduates respondents disagree with the statement: "UBC has provided me adequate education about issues surrounding sexual assault and other sexual misconduct."
- If UBC students were to personally experience sexual assault or misconduct, they would be most comfortable accessing support resources from the SASC (60%) and/or SVPRO (56%).
- 1 out of 5 UBC students has personally experienced sexual assault or other sexual misconduct;
  - ◊ 72% of these respondents are undergraduate students that identify as female, while 13% identify as male;
  - ◊ 31% of these respondents are undergraduate students that have personally experienced sexual assault or other sexual misconduct by a member of the UBC community.

# Post-Graduation

This section of the survey asks students to share their post-graduation plans, and whether UBC education and career support services have played a useful role in preparing them for post-graduation.

- The majority of undergraduate respondents (65%) plan to enter the workforce after graduation;
  - ◊ Most know what careers they are interested in pursuing after graduation (69%), but only half feel prepared to enter the workforce after graduation (55%).

## UBC Career Services

- 57% of undergraduate respondents, which is a 17% increase from 2021, feel they have had adequate opportunities at UBC to decide their career path.
- 37% of undergraduate respondents have used CareersOnline services and found it useful.
- Despite more than half of the student population being aware of Resume and Cover Letter Workshops available only one quarter of students have used this service.
  - ◊ Of the students that used this service, 81% found it useful. This trend remains common across the career services offered by UBC, with around half of students being aware of the following services but only about a quarter of students using available services, like in-person advising and LinkedIn workshops.
- 83% of graduate respondents plan to enter the workforce after graduation;
  - ◊ More respondents know what careers they are interested in pursuing after graduation and majority of them feel prepared to enter the workforce (78% for both statistics).
- Overall awareness of career services has increased amongst graduate students.
  - ◊ Graduate student use of CareersOnline (27%) has increased by 4% this year, compared to 2021 (23%);
  - ◊ Additionally, 84% of graduate students agree that the academic opportunities offered at UBC have helped prepare them for their post-grad goals;
  - ◊ However, 86% of graduate students have expressed that they would like to have more professional development opportunities outside of their specific discipline.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

As per the AMS policy CM-3 (Surveys), this section outlines recommendations in response to data collected in the AES. These recommendations will be presented to UBC leadership and efforts will be made to incorporate the recommendations into advocacy for the following year. Please note that these recommendations are non-exhaustive.

One of the most concerning themes from this year's AES is the surge in affordability concerns among undergraduate and graduate respondents. Factors such as remaining effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, and the housing crisis in Vancouver continue to create financial burdens for students. At the same time, fewer students believe that UBC cares about affordability issues and is taking steps to address them. UBC must continue to take concrete actions outlined in the [Student Affordability Taskforce Report and Recommendations](#) and communicate to the student body on progress and decisions made from the recommendations, such as tuition revenue allocation, and the resources available to students experiencing financial hardship and emergencies.

Another concerning theme is the frequency of racial/ethnic discrimination on campus, remaining stable over the years despite efforts made to address this issue. For example, UBC has robust reports and recommendations, including the [Inclusion Action Plan](#) and the [Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Report and Recommendations](#). UBC has also recently hired a new AVP Equity and Inclusion, who will be leading much of this work in the coming years. Similarly to the SATF recommendations, it is vital that these are implemented with metrics in place to measure progress. This includes launching the work being done on the [Student Demographic Data Project](#), which will contribute valuable data so that UBC can address systemic discrimination on campus.

A few new questions were added into this year's survey in order to contribute to existing student advocacy regarding harm reduction and the toxic drug supply in BC. It is clear that both undergraduate and graduate respondents are largely supportive of FTIR Spectrometer Drug Checking being made available on campus, with 1 in 3 students responding that they know someone who would use this service if made available. While over the past year students have already organised occasional [drug testing clinics](#) at UBC, alongside various advocacy efforts, the University needs to take more of an active role in addressing the toxic drug supply. This includes providing support with FTIR Spectrometer Drug Checking and looking into a program similar to the one at UBCO [HaRT](#).

Finally, we acknowledge that there was a decrease in the number of respondents this year to the AES. The survey release date was later than previous years, opening in the beginning of April; the 2020 and 2021 surveys were previously released in mid to late February. April is a busier time for students with end of term, final exams and assignments, and graduation preparation, resulting in less time for students to engage with the AMS. For future surveys we recommend returning to the previous timeline of February. This would also align with the elections of the AMS Executives, which is a high engagement period for the Society, likely garnering a higher response rate.