



# NUS/ HSBC Students Research

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### Table of contents

<b>1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 SURVEY FINDINGS: STUDENT EMPLOYMENT.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 WORKING WHILE AT UNIVERSITY .....	4
2.2 STUDENT EARNINGS .....	8
2.3 MOTIVATIONS FOR WORKING .....	9
2.4 IMPACT OF PAID EMPLOYMENT .....	11



## 1 Executive summary

- The majority of students, 78%, undertake some form of paid work while at university. However far more students (51%) intend to work during the holidays than work during term time (35%). Interestingly, students with dependent children are significantly less likely to take out paid employment while at university. 54% of students with dependent children said that they do not have, or intend to arrange, any form of paid employment, compared with 20% of students without dependent children.
- During the term time students work an average of 14 hours a week; this rises to 29 hours during holidays. The number of hours that students work during term time is influenced by what motivates them to work; students that work longer hours are more likely to be working to meet basic living costs or pay for books or other study equipment.
- On average students earn £6.45 per hour. Wages are also significantly influenced by age and older students are likely to earn more than younger students. A key factor in this is likely to be the two-tier structure of the national minimum wage.
- 46% of students in paid employment said that they worked because their basic living costs exceed the amount they can borrow, indicating that for a significant proportion of students work is still essential to pay their way through university. The most popular reasons given for working are: to pay for extras such as clothes and holidays (62%), and to pay for socialising (62%). Therefore, for a large proportion of students, paid employment is optional and geared to improving their quality of life.
- If students work longer hours they are more likely to feel that this work has a negative impact on their studying and social life; students that work longer hours are also more likely to be trying to meet basic living costs or pay for books or other study equipment. There are however a proportion of students that don't feel that there is a negative impact on studying, again largely linked to the number of hours worked. .



## **2 Survey findings: Student employment**

The results set out below refer to section 10 of the questionnaire, which deals with student employment. The results are split into four sections. Section 2.1 looks at the number of students that work either during term time or during the holidays, as well as the types of work undertaken and hours worked. Section 2.2 addresses how much students earn. Section 2.3 looks at the motivations that students cite for taking up paid employment. Finally, Section 2.4 looks at the effects that students think paid employment has on their studies, as well as their social life and ability to take up voluntary work.



## 2.1 Working while at university

The overwhelming majority of students, 3 out of 4, do take out paid employment to help make ends meet, either during term-time or during the holidays. Holiday work was more popular than term-time work with 51% of students planning to work during the holidays as opposed to 35% during term time (see chart 1 below).

Interestingly the number of students that work during term time is not significantly influenced by year of study. This is surprising as the qualitative interviews found that a number of students commented that their academic work was an introduction to their course and that they had more free time than expected.

*"In the first year, you can pass without going to lectures."*

Post 1992 Yr 1

*"All you need is a 40% to pass, first year is a foundation year, so it doesn't count as much as the third year"*

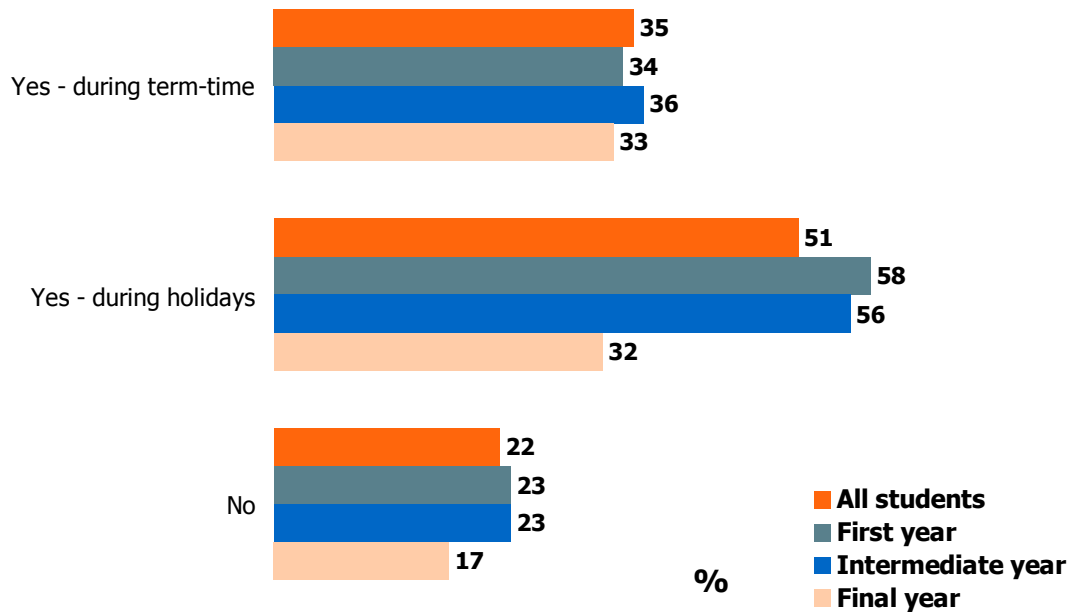
Post 1992 Yr 1

However this attitude towards the first year of university might be offset by first year students being in a better financial situation, this point was made by a number of students during the qualitative interviews. Therefore, while first year students might have more time to undertake paid employment they have less financial need.

In contrast, the number of students that work during the holidays is significantly affected by year of study, with final year students being significantly less likely to work during the holidays compared to first year and intermediate year students (see chart 1 below).

## Chart 1: Majority of students work while at university

*Q87. Do you currently have any form of paid employment or intend to arrange any in the current financial year, including the summer holidays?*



Base: All students (2372), 1<sup>st</sup> year (622), intermediate (1174), final year (576)

Interesting, when these results are crossed by whether or not students have dependent children, those with dependent children are significantly less likely to have paid employment. 54% of students with dependent children said that they do not have, or intend to arrange, any form of paid employment, while only 20% of students without dependent children said that they don't have paid employment. This may be a result of time pressure making it difficult to balance paid work with studies as well as looking after children.

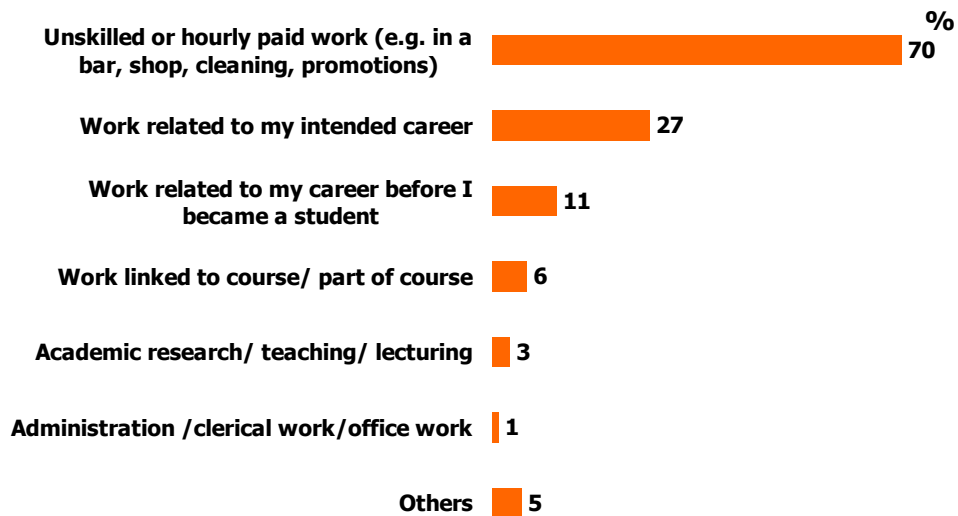
Where work is taken on by students, this would typically be unskilled, hourly-paid work such as bar work, which is viewed as being a more sociable form of work, and because the shift hours are outside of their



teaching hours (see chart 2 below). However, more than a quarter of students, 27%, gain employment related to their intended career.

## Chart 2: Unskilled or hourly-paid work most common type of work

Q 90 What type(s) of paid work do you do?



Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614)

When looked at by institution type, students that attend Post 1992 institutions can be seen to be significantly more likely to work during term time than students that attend both Pre 1992 institutions and Russell Group institutions. 40% of students that attend Post 1992 institutions said they worked during term time compared to 32% of students that attend Pre 1992 institutions and 30% of students that attend Russell Group institutions.

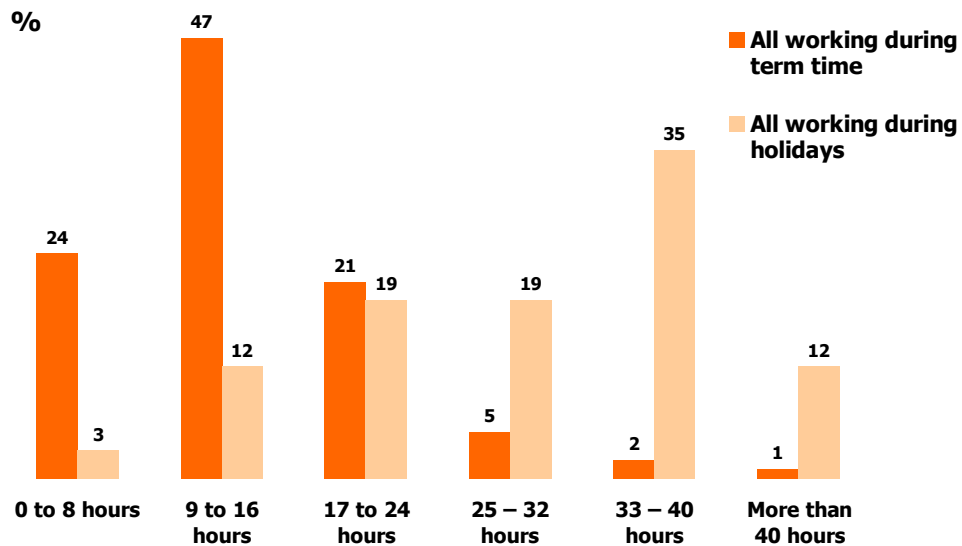


On average students work 14 hours a week during term time. However, while the majority of students work less than 16 hours a week, a significant proportion, 29%, work 17+ hours. During the holidays students work, or intend to work, much longer averaging 29 hours a week (see chart 3 below).

### Chart 3: Student likely to work longer hours during the holidays

**Q88 How many hours a week do you work during term time?**

**Q89 How many hours a week do you intend to work during the holidays?**



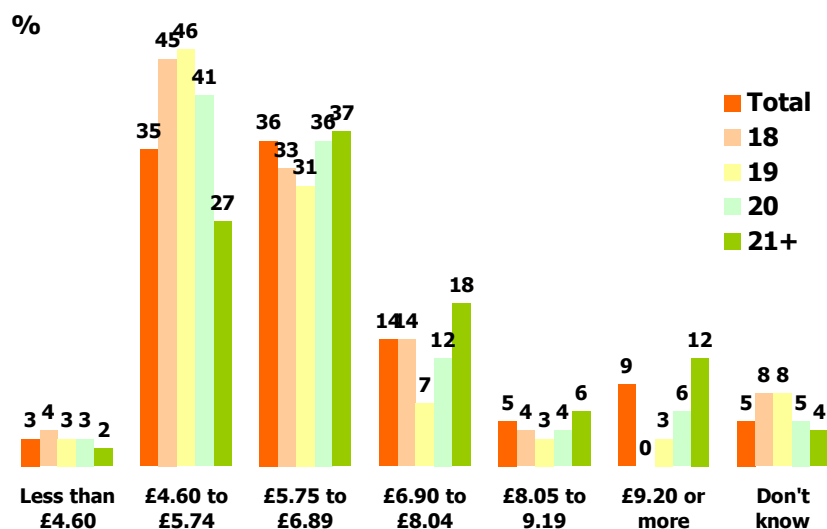
Base: Q88 All working during term time (830)  
Q89 All working/planning to work during holidays (1199)

## 2.2 Student earnings

On average students earn £6.45 per hour, which is significantly above the development rate minimum wage of £4.60 per hour (for workers aged 18 - 21), and slightly above the minimum wage for workers aged 22 years or older, set at £5.52. Only 3% of students said that they earn less than the minimum wage. However within this, non-EU international students were significantly more likely to be earning below the minimum wage with 11% saying that they earn less than £4.60 per hour. As can be seen in chart 4 below, student earnings are significantly affected by age, with older students more likely to receive higher wages, a result no doubt of the two-tier minimum wage framework. Interestingly, there were no significant differences when looking regionally at student wage rates.

### Chart 4: Student earnings are significantly affected by age

Q 91 Approximately how much do you get paid per hour?



Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614), 18 (49\*), 19 (286), 20 (394), 21+ (882)  
 \*small base

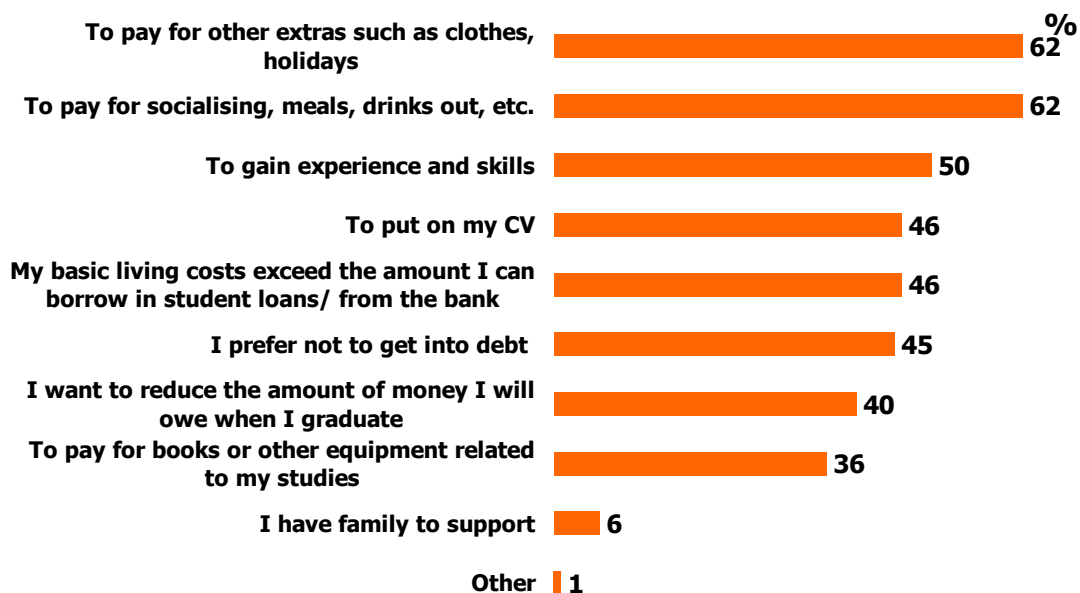


## 2.3 Motivations for working

The most common motivations students cite for working are: to pay for extras such as clothes and holidays (62%), and to pay for socialising (62%). This would seem to indicate that for a large proportion of students paid employment is optional and geared to improving their quality of life. Having said this, a large minority of students, 46%, are still reliant on paid employment to fund their basic living expenses, with 36% relying on paid work to pay for books and other study aides (see chart 5 below).

**Chart 5: Student motivated to work in order to pay for extras such as clothes and holidays or to pay for socialising**

**Q 92. Why do you work?**

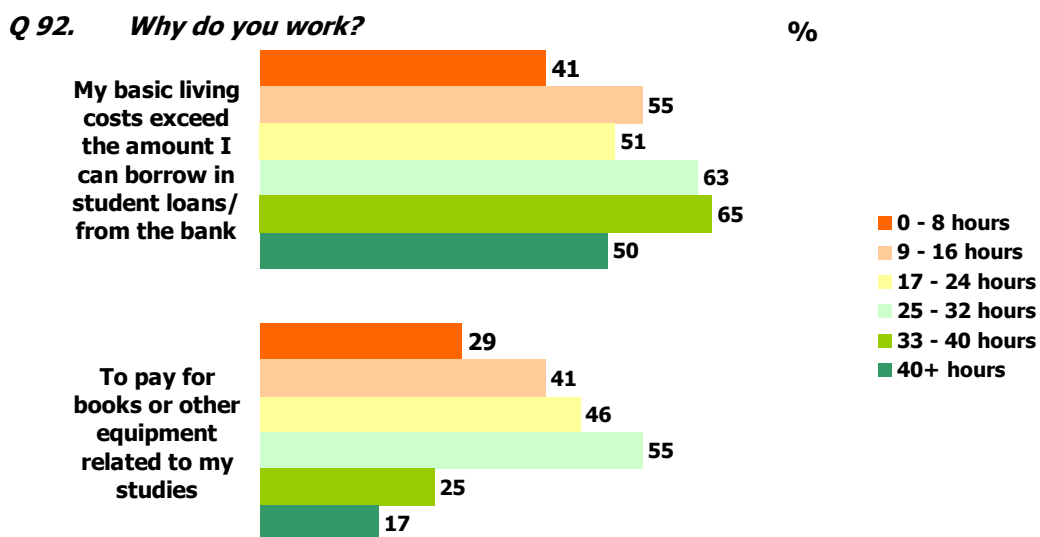


Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614)



When this is crossed by the numbers of hours worked during term time, a trend appears whereby students that work longer than 8 hours a week are significantly more likely (with the exception of those that work between 17 and 24 hours where the difference is not significant) to say that their basic living costs exceed the amount they can borrow. In addition, students that work more than 8 hours a week are more likely to cite paying for books and other study equipment as a reason for working (see chart 6 below).

### Chart 6: Students working to meet their basic living costs or to pay for books or other equipment are likely to work longer hours



Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 to 8 hours (196), 9 to 16 hours (394), 17 to 24 hours (174), 25 to 32 hours (40\*), 33 to 40 hours (20\*\*), 40+ hours (6\*\*) \*small base \*\*very small base ineligible for sig. testing

In addition, institution type has an effect on motivations to work, a significantly higher proportion of students attending a Post 1992 institution, 49%, rely on work to pay for basic living costs, higher than those at Pre 1992 institution, 42%, or a Russell Group institution, 43%.



## 2.4 Impact of paid employment

Looking at the impact that paid employment has on a studying, social life and voluntary work shows that there is a fairly even split between those that feel that paid employment has a negative impact and those that don't (see chart 7 below). A significant departure from this trend occurs when students were asked whether they thought paid employment during the holidays has a negative impact on studies. Here the vast majority of students, 70%, did not think such work has a negative impact on studies. This would appear to be one of the reasons why this is more popular among students. These issues were also covered in the qualitative work, which indicated that many students are unwilling to work during term-time, as they feel this would be detrimental to both their studies and, importantly, their social life.

*"If you work? Well you can get in debt and have a good time or work and miss out on Uni"*

Pre 1992 BSc Yr 1

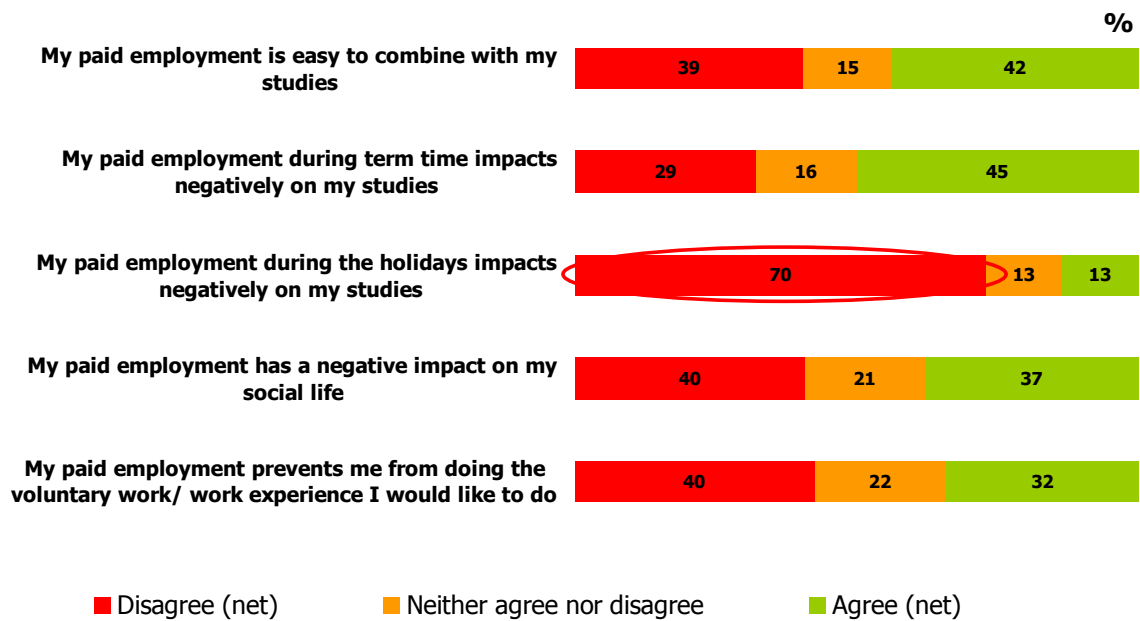
In addition, the point was made that what is important is time management, and that if you manage your time properly it is possible to balance both work and study, and work and socializing.

*"If you manage your time properly, it isn't a problem"*

Post 1992 Yr1

## Chart 7: Impact of paid employment

*Q 93. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?*



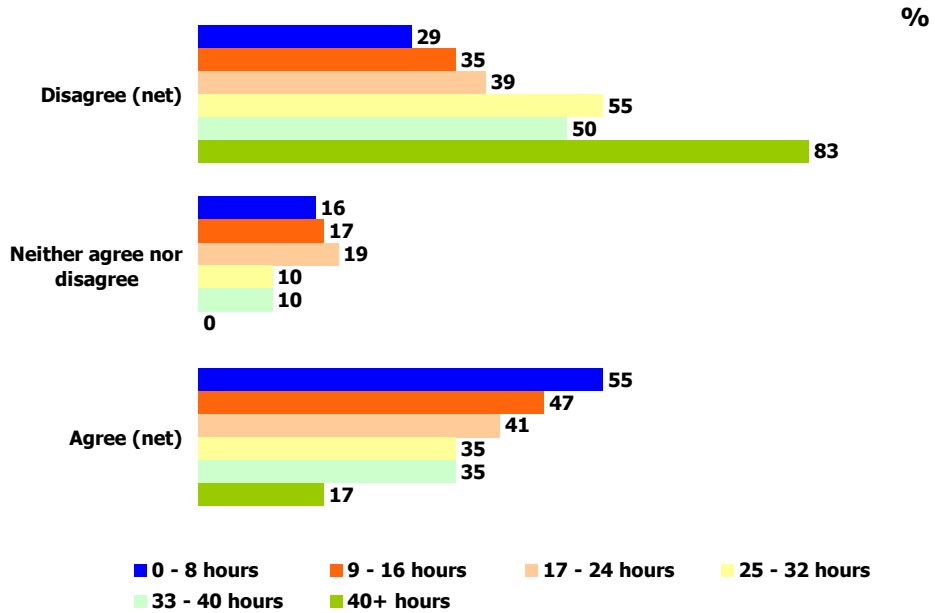
Base: All who have, or intend to have, paid employment (1614)

While these results do not change significantly when crossed with either year of study or institution type, they are influenced by the number of hours worked during term time. Unsurprisingly, students that worked longer hours were significantly less likely to say that paid work was easy to combine with their studies, and significantly more likely to say that paid employment has a negative impact on their studies and social life (see charts 8 and 9 below). Therefore, students motivated to work because they cannot meet their basic living costs, or to pay for books and study equipment, are not only likely work longer hours, but also tied in with this more likely feel that working has a negative impact on their studying and social life.

## Chart 8: Hours worked significantly affects student attitudes on how easy it is to combine work with study

Q 93 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?

*My paid employment is easy to combine with my studies*

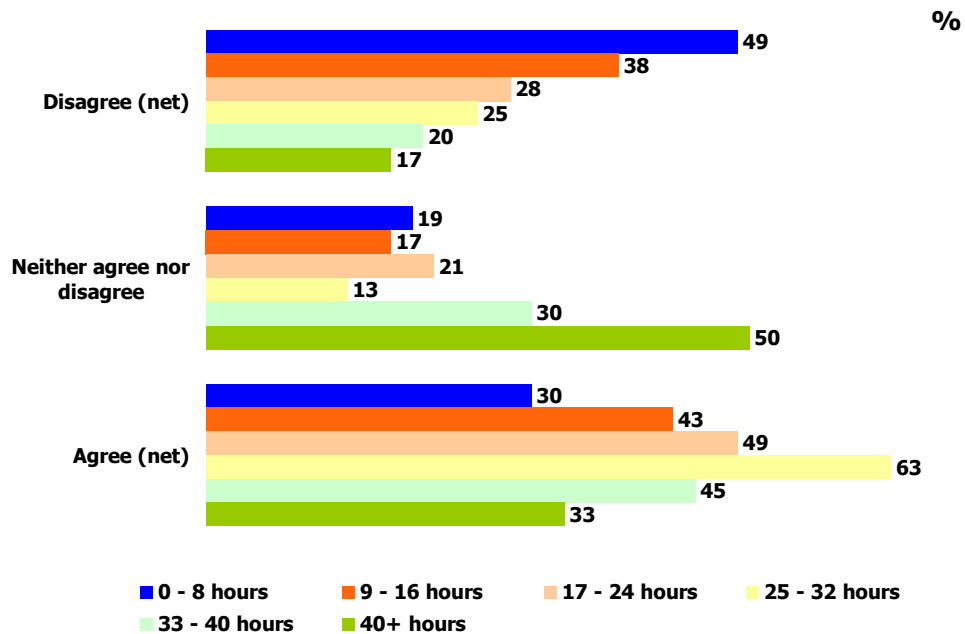


Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 to 8 hours (196), 9 to 16 hours (394), 17 to 24 hours (174), 25 to 32 hours (40\*), 33 to 40 hours (20\*\*), 40+ hours (6\*\*) \*small base \*\*very small base ineligible for sig. testing

## Chart 9: Hours worked significantly affects student attitudes on whether work negatively impacts on studies

Q 93 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about combining studying and paid employment?

*My paid employment during term time impacts negatively on my studies*



Base: All students working during term time (830), 0 to 8 hours (196), 9 to 16 hours (394), 17 to 24 hours (174), 25 to 32 hours (40\*), 33 to 40 hours (20\*\*), 40+ hours (6\*\*)

\*small base \*\*very small base ineligible for sig. testing



## Methodology

- Interviews with current were carried out via online questionnaires:a total of 3,135 current students were interviewed.
- Interviews with current students were conducted between 2-24 June 2008.
- Quotas were set on the basis of: gender, ethnicity, parental socio-economic status, and course type in order to ensure samples were representative of their respective populations. Where necessary, results were weighted.
- For the initial qualitative research, a total of 6 focus groups were conducted in the first and second weeks of June, at Leeds, Reading, Coventry and Winchester universities.