

KMPF

KENT & MEDWAY
PROGRESSION
FEDERATION

2023



EVALUATION REPORT

FEC OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Summary

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the FEC Outreach Programme was conducted via analysis of three surveys, and reported in three sections, as outlined below.

- **Student Exit Survey (538) completed Spring 2023** - focusing on students' self-reported impacts of activities they took part in, via a number of 'activity impact' statements.
- **Matched Baseline and Exit Survey responses (340)** - A subset of exit survey respondents were identified as having previously answered a similar baseline survey, towards the start of their FE course (mostly Autumn 2021). The analysis focused on observed changes between baseline and exit survey responses, within the sample of matched students, across a number of 'knowledge' and 'attitudes' statements relating to HE, as well a question around students' 'likelihood to apply to HE'.
- **Staff Survey (29) completed Spring 2023** - to garner feedback from the staff perspective around the impact of KaMCOP activities on their students.

Student Exit Survey

The majority of students reported positive impacts across all activity impact statements. The pattern of responses was similar to 2022, with *'increasing knowledge and awareness of HE'* and *'supporting informed choices about my future'* remaining the top two benefits of KaMCOP activity, with the highest levels of agreement among students.

The percentages of students who agreed with each activity impact statement were largely similar to last year, with the exception of *'taking part has helped encourage me to apply to HE'*, which fell by around 10 percentage points. However, the majority of students did still agree with this statement, suggesting that KaMCOP activities did help encourage most students towards HE.

There was also some evidence that Level 2 students experienced greater impacts than Level 3 students, especially around 'personal development' and that students from KaMCOP wards¹ experienced greater impacts than those from other areas. There were no notable differences in impact with regards to gender or 'first generation HE'.

Encouragingly, there appears to be a **positive relationship between the number of activities students took part in and their agreement with impact statements**, suggesting that more activity tends to lead to greater impacts. With regards to the impact of specific activities, students who took part in **'Mentoring'** showed the highest levels of agreement across 3 out of 5 impact statements, suggesting a strong positive impact of this activity.

Evidence of positive impacts was also echoed in students' open-ended comments, around which three quarters were positive. **Students described activities they experienced as being 'informative', 'helpful', 'interesting', 'enjoyable' and 'inspiring'**. Several students suggested that activities had 'helped with decisions about the future' and/or 'encouraged them towards HE'.

A small number of students provided more critical comments about *'availability or access to activities'*, and about some activities that they felt were *'not engaging'* or *'not relevant'*. However, these were again a minority, with the majority of feedback suggesting positive impacts overall.

¹ KaMCOP wards are identified as geographical areas with low HE progression levels (Polar 1, Quintile 1)

Matched Baseline v Exit Surveys

Students who were identified as having completed both the baseline and exit surveys showed **consistent improvements in self-reported knowledge of HE** in this period, showing significant increases across all knowledge statements. In particular, students showed large increases in knowledge of *'where to find information about applying'*, *'where to find out more about HE'* and *'different routes into HE.'*

Students showed slight improvements in 4/5 attitude statements regarding HE, between baseline and exit survey collection, with the largest increase in *'HE is for people like me'*. However, none of these changes were statistically significant.

Students' overall 'likelihood to apply to HE' decreased between baseline and exit survey collection, with a significant increase in 'unlikely' responses and only a slight non-significant increase in 'likely' responses, with a significant decrease in 'don't know' responses. While this finding alone may appear to be negative, the increase in 'unlikely' responses appears to be mostly driven by a large number of students who simply 'didn't know' at the start of their course, subsequently deciding not to apply to HE, rather than KaMCOP activity turning students away from HE. As stated previously, the majority of students agreed that *'taking part has helped encourage me to apply to HE'*, while the majority of staff agreed that KaMCOP activities helped to *'increase the number of UCAS applications.'* While overall *'likelihood to apply to HE'* may have declined between baseline and exit survey collection, this is likely due to a number of personal and contextual factors affecting students' decisions, including a normal progression of many previously 'undecided' students deciding against HE during the period of their FE course, which was similarly observed in the 2022 report. Wider feedback suggests that application to HE would have been further reduced without KaMCOP activity.

Staff Survey

Staff feedback on KaMCOP activities was very positive. 92% of staff agreed that *'KaMCOP activities are beneficial to students who live in KaMCOP wards'* while 85% agreed to the benefits to students who DO NOT live in KaMCOP wards. **100% of staff agreed that they 'support having more KaMCOP activities in my college.'**

Staff agreed to a number of benefits of KaMCOP activities that they perceived among their students. In particular, staff were most likely to agree that **KaMCOP activities helped to 'broaden students' horizons', 'increase students' knowledge of the HE application and student support/life' and 'increase students' awareness of future pathways.'** This aligned with student's own self-reported impacts on 'knowledge and awareness of HE' and increases in HE knowledge statements. Over half of staff agreed that KaMCOP activities helped to *'increase the number of UCAS applications.'*

Staff open-ended comments were mostly positive, including *'praise for specific staff members'*, positive impacts on students' *'soft skills'*, and *'interest in HE'*, as well as to the benefits of *'consistent staff'*. When asked about the challenges affecting students, posing barriers to their progress to HE, **'finance' was by far the most common concern**, followed by *'mental health'*, *'self-belief'* and *'family expectations'*. While overall staff and student feedback suggests that KaMCOP activities are already helping to address some of these barriers, there may be scope for further focus on these challenges. Other suggestions for improving KaMCOP activity included: *'more activities'*, *'catchup sessions'*, *'small-group sessions'*, *'more 1-1 support'* and *'support for level 1 and 2 students'*. One staff member also commented that *'university-focused activities may not be relevant for some students.'*

Overall Conclusions

Overall staff and student feedback suggests clear positive impacts of KaMCOP activities; particularly regarding students' knowledge and awareness of HE. While this did not lead to an overall increase in students' self-reported likelihood to apply to HE between the start and end of their FE courses, where many students may have decided against HE for a number of reasons, the majority of students agreed that *'taking part has helped encourage me to apply to HE'*, while the majority of staff agreed that KaMCOP activities helped to *'increase the number of UCAS applications.'*

While a small number of critical comments point to potential areas for improvement of activities, these point to subtle refinements rather than wholesale changes, to ensure that activities are as accessible, engaging and relevant for as many students as possible, with the majority of feedback on KaMCOP activities being largely positive. Overall, KaMCOP activities appear to have had a net positive impact on FE students' knowledge and attitudes around HE, providing positive learning experiences and helping them to make more informed decisions about their future pathways, including HE, and should aim to continue to provide these benefits in coming years. More detailed recommendations can be found in the 'Recommendations' section at the bottom of this report.

Table of Contents

Summary	1
Evaluation Methodology	1
Student Exit Survey	1
Matched Baseline v Exit Surveys.....	2
Staff Survey	2
Overall Conclusions.....	3
Introduction	5
Evaluation Design	5
Programme Design	6
Exit Survey	8
Sample - Participant Characteristics.....	8
Activity Impacts - Overall	9
Activity Impacts - Student Comments.....	10
Activity Impacts - Activity Breakdown.....	12
Activity Impacts - Participant Characteristics.....	13
Matched Baseline and Exit Survey	15
Sample - Participant Characteristics.....	15
Knowledge about HE.....	16
Attitudes towards HE	17
Intention towards HE	17
Staff Survey	18
Sample - Participant Characteristics.....	18
Activity Impacts - Overall	18
Activity Impacts - Activity Breakdown.....	20
Additional Staff Feedback	21
Conclusions	23
Recommendations	23
References	24
Appendices	25
Appendix 1: Theory of Change.....	25
Appendix 2: Evaluation Groups and Activity Numbers	26

Introduction

The Kent and Medway Progression Federation ([KMPE](#)) is founded on a belief that we can achieve more together as partners than we could as separate entities. The Further Education (FE) Outreach Programme is a true collaboration between Further Education Colleges (FECs) and universities that work together to target and tailor programmes, creating bespoke packages to meet the needs of identified groups.

Predominately funded by The Office for Students' Uni Connect programme, the FE Outreach Programme has been running since 2017. The Kent and Medway Collaborative Outreach Programme (KaMCOP) is the local arm of the national Uni Connect programme. The aims of the FEC Outreach Programme are to reduce gaps and perceived barriers in higher education participation for less represented groups, whilst broadening horizons through insight and information to increase the number of students that progress to higher education.

The FE College context is particularly relevant to the Uni Connect aims as FE learners are more likely to come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and to have no direct family experience of HE (Hatt & Tate, 2009). As students from lower socio-economic and underrepresented groups are more likely to take vocational training routes, FE colleges can help contribute to motivating, advising and preparing these young people for higher-level study (Bowl, 2012). A further contextual challenge may be that young people, particularly in more vocational settings, may already have well-articulated possible selves outside of HE, which may affect their intention to continue into HE (Gartland & Smith, 2018).

The FE programme was designed to give young people, specifically those in an FE College setting the opportunity to think broadly about their future and explore some of the barriers that may prevent them from considering HE.

The programme is delivered across the three college groups in Kent and Medway (EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College). This report summarises the evaluation of activities delivered through the programme from September 2021 to June 2023.

Evaluation Design

The FE Theory of Change (Appendix 1) outlines the causal pathway leading to the intended outcomes, linked to the aims of the programme. This provides the framework for measuring impact.

The original evaluation plan was to compare the changes in response between the priority group and the light-touch group as a comparator (see 'Programme Design' section below), thus achieving a quasi-experimental design. However, in practice, the groupings were not well-defined in terms of the number of activities they had taken part in. Therefore, the evaluation approach was adapted to pre/post change. This is classified as type 2 standard of evidence as defined by the Office for Students (2019) and allows us to determine whether the intervention has an association with beneficial results, rather than a causal effect. Data was collected via the following three surveys:

- **Student Exit Survey completed Spring 2023** - focusing on students' self-reported impacts of activities they took part in, via a number of 'activity impact' statements.
- **Matched Baseline and Exit Survey responses** - A subset of exit survey respondents were identified as having previously answered a similar baseline survey, towards the start of their FE course (mostly Autumn 2021). The analysis focused on observed changes between baseline and exit survey responses, within the sample of matched students, across a number

of 'knowledge' and 'attitudes' statements relating to HE, as well a question around students' 'likelihood to apply to HE'.

- **Staff Survey completed Spring 2023** - to garner feedback from the staff perspective around the impact of KaMCOP activities on their students.

Programme Design

Partnered with KMPF the three college groups in Kent and Medway deliver a sustained and progressive package of outreach to their learners on Level 3 courses, and a lighter-touch package to students on Level 2 (and some Level 3) courses. Each year FECs identify 'priority groups' within their Level 3 cohorts to receive the intensive offer, as it is not possible to include all students within the priority groups due to limits on capacity and support.

Priority groups are identified as having:

- A high percentage of students from a Uni Connect/target ward
- The potential and available pathways to progress to higher education
- Limited existing interaction with HE outreach

Light touch groups are identified as having one or more of the following:

- A high numbers of students from a Uni Connect/KaMCOP target ward
- Existing interactions with HE outreach
- High progression to HE
- Low likelihood of progression to HE (e.g. Hairdressing, Plumbing)

The outreach offer aims to enable young people to make informed decisions about their future, through addressing barriers, supporting educational aspirations and building knowledge routes and support available within HE.

Each college employs a Project Officer (via Uni Connect funding), who's role is

'to design, deliver and coordinate a programme of activity to support students' aspirations, awareness and progression to HE'

The Project Officer, in conjunction with Senior Leaders, identify priority groups who can benefit most from HE outreach and facilitates the co-ordination and/or delivery of an agreed programme of events that is designed to meet the needs of the target groups. Each programme varies but accesses activities from multiple partners.

There are a range of workshops and programmes that have been designed specifically for FE students (FE Curriculum) that can be delivered or organised by the Project Officer. In addition, Project Officers also facilitate access the HE Curriculum, activities delivered by KMPF university partners. This includes accessing activity funded through Uni Connect, Access and Participation Plans (APPs) and recruitment.

On both the FE and HE Curriculum, each activity is mapped to the FE Theory of Change. There are three themes of activity that provide a framework for an effective programme of progression. All activities map to one of these three themes:

1. **Removing barriers** (Short term outcomes: increased confidence and self-efficacy)
2. **Broadening horizons and aspirations** (Short term outcomes: broaden horizons and increased aspirations, increased awareness of future pathways)
3. **HE insight and information** (Short term outcomes: increased knowledge of HE pathways, application and student support/life)

Learners in priority groups have access to 6 activities throughout their course. As a minimum, they should receive:

- One activity from Removing Barriers (e.g. Future You or resilience workshop)
- One activity from Broadening Horizons (e.g. Guest speaker, conference or off-site visit)
- One HE Campus visit or Taster Day
- One HE partner led workshop from HE insight and information (e.g. What next after college? Student Life, HE finance)
- Two additional activities (based on the needs of the group)

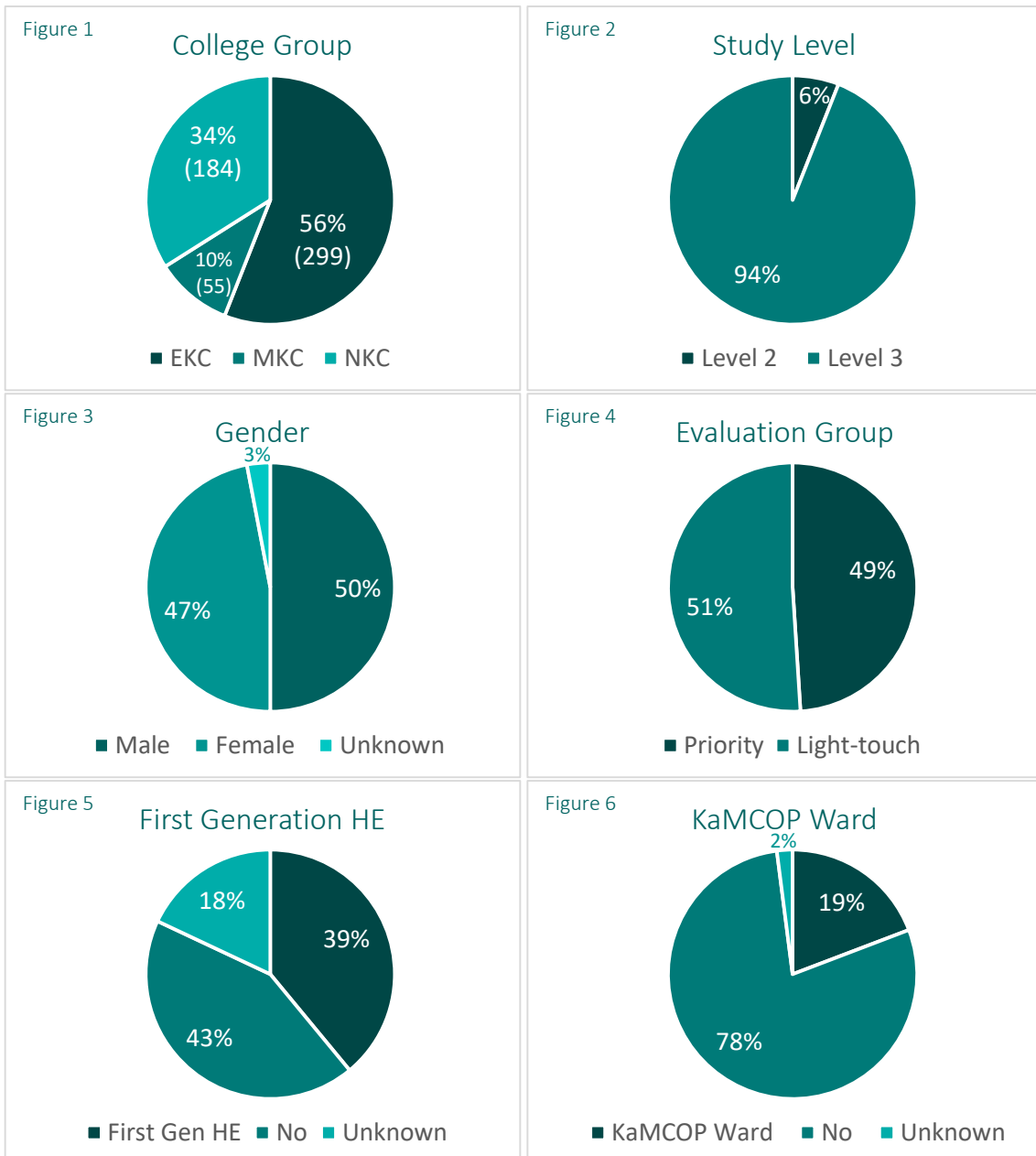
These needs are identified in consultation with both staff and students. Additionally, each year, between 3000 and 4000 FE learners complete a baseline survey. KMPF then creates an interactive baseline dashboard for each college. Project Officers use this to review students' responses and create a progressive programme of activities.

Exit Survey

Sample - Participant Characteristics

538 students completed exit surveys in Spring 2023. Over half were completed by students from EKC Group, with around one third from North Kent College (NKC) and 10% from Midkent College (MKC). 94% of students completed the survey while studying a Level 3 course, with just 6% in Level 2. A slightly greater proportion of male students completed the survey than female students.

Around 1 in 4 students answered that they would be the 'first generation' to go to Higher Education, should they do so. Around 1 in 5 were identified as residing in KaMCOP Wards.

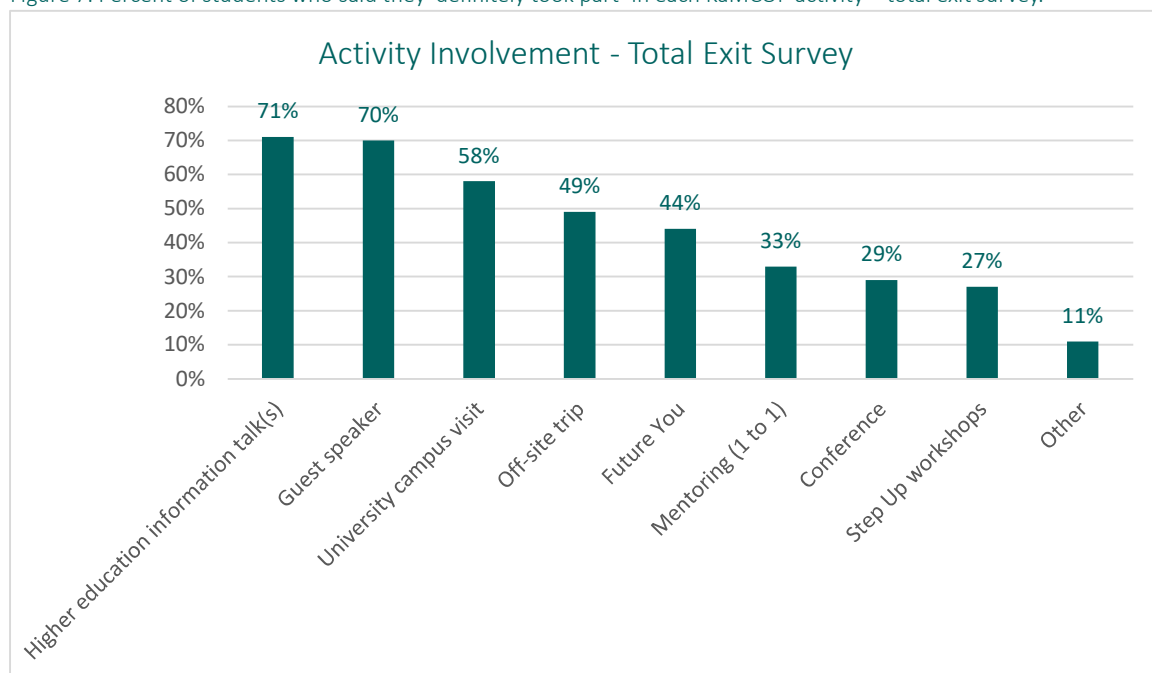


Activity Impacts - Overall

Students self-reported which activities they had taken part in. 97% of students reported that they had *'definitely taken part'* in at least one activity, with 75% reporting that they had *'definitely taken part'* in three or more activities (up to a maximum total of 9 activities, including *'other'*). The average number of activities that students reported having *'definitely taken part in'* was 3.92. *'Higher Education Talks'* and *'Guest Speakers'* were the most frequently attended activities, as shown in Figure 7 below.

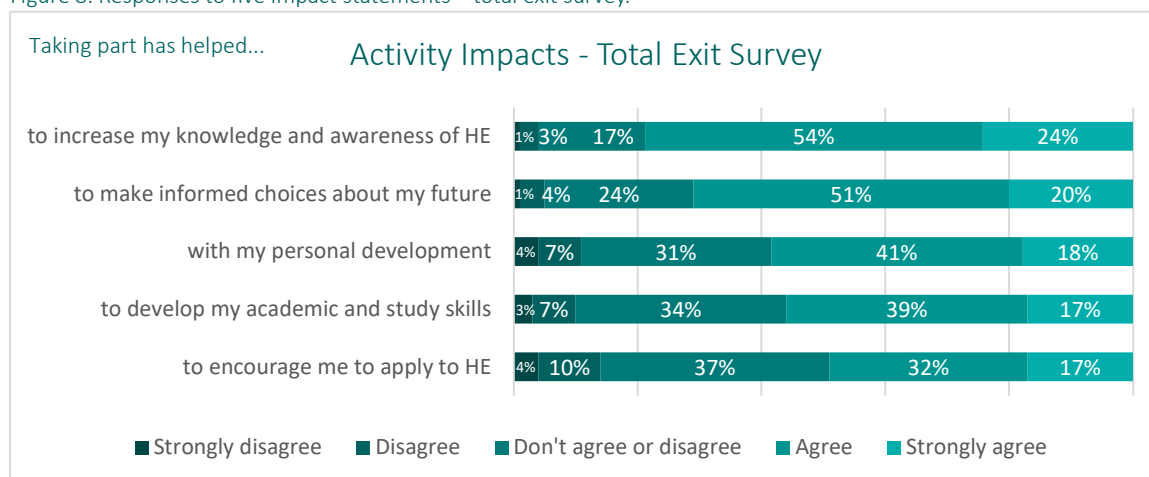
It should be noted that while *'Higher Education Info Talks'* is listed as one activity, this comprises a range of one-off sessions covering topics such as student support and finance, different routes into HE, and applying to UCAS. Students could have attended multiple talks but this level of detail was not collected in the survey.

Figure 7. Percent of students who said they *'definitely took part'* in each KaMCOP activity – total exit survey.



Students were asked how taking part in KaMCOP activities had helped them. They were asked how much they agreed with each of five activity impact statements, as shown in Figure 8 below. The pattern of responses was similar to the previous exit survey in 2022, with *'taking part has helped to increase my knowledge and awareness of HE'* and *'taking part has helped support and prepare me to make informed choices about my future'* remaining as the top two highest rated statements. The percentages of students who agreed with each statement were also largely similar to last year, with the exception of *'taking part has helped encourage me to apply to HE'*, which fell by around 10 percentage points.

Figure 8. Responses to five impact statements – total exit survey.



Activity Impacts - Student Comments

Students were asked to provide any further comments about the activities they had taken part in. 58 students provided usable comments, of which around three quarters expressed positive sentiment.

Figure 9. Sentiment of student comments. Sentiment applied through qualitative analysis of students' comments.



Students frequently described activities they experienced as being *'informative'* and *'helpful'*, as well as *'interesting'*, *'enjoyable'* and *'inspiring'*. In keeping with impact statement responses, several students suggested that activities had *'helped with decisions about the future'* and/or *'encouraged them towards HE'*.

"These activities really helped my gain the knowledge about higher education and what it involves."

"They helped and I'm grateful I took part because I learned a lot."

"The activities were all informative and gave me a better insight into many different things. They helped give me more inspiration to do things, and gave me more knowledge on specific things too."

"They were helpful and insightful and contributed to me making my ultimate decision."

"It has helped me think more about maybe going to university in the future."

While the majority of comments were positive, around a dozen students expressed some negative sentiment about activities, which may point to some potential areas for improvement. A few students highlighted issues with *'availability or access to activities'*, while a few suggested that some activities were *'not engaging'*. A couple suggested that some activities were *'not relevant'*.

“Most of the activities we either weren't aware of or were on days when we weren't in college to take part.”

“Some got delayed or cancelled due to lack of staff or timing.”

“Make them more entertaining and for more people to take part.”

“They weren't very engaging.”

“The interview was pointless for those who already have a job.”

Activity Impacts - Activity Breakdown

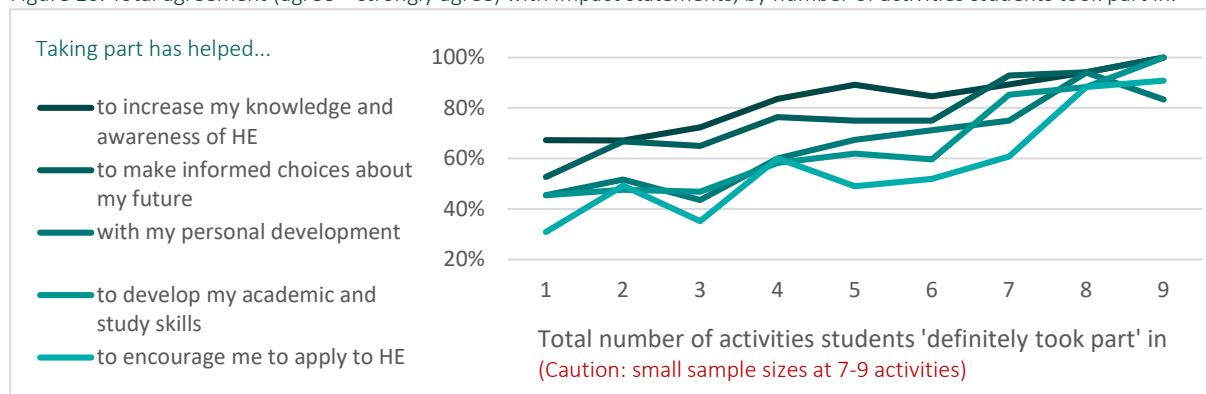
While students were asked to respond to impact statements in relation to *'all the KaMCOP activities you have taken part in'*, the relative impact of each specific activity may be inferred indirectly by comparing responses between students who took part in different activities, as shown below. While only a third of students took part in *'Mentoring'* (Figure 7), those students showed the highest levels of agreement across 3 out of 5 statements, suggesting a strong positive impact of this activity. Students who took part in *'University campus visits'* showed the lowest levels of agreement on 3 out of 5 statements, suggesting this may be less impactful compared to other activities.

Table 1. Total agreement (agree + strongly agree) with impact statements, by students who 'definitely took part' in activities. **Light highlights** show the activity associated with the highest level of agreement with each impact statement. **Dark highlights** show the activity associated with the lowest level of agreement with each impact statement.

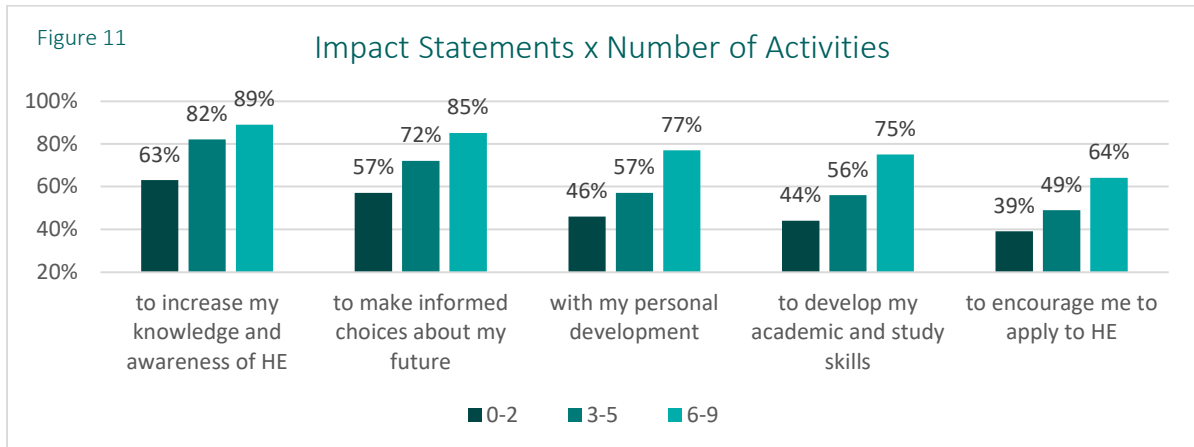
Taking part has helped...	Higher education information talk(s)	Guest speaker	University campus visit	Off-site trip	Future You	Mentoring (1 to 1)	Conference	Step Up workshops	Other
to increase my knowledge and awareness of HE	84%	80%	83%	84%	85%	87.7%	87.9%	87%	86%
to make informed choices about my future	75%	75%	73%	77%	78%	84%	83%	79%	78%
with my personal development	63%	61%	59%	65%	68%	73%	68%	74%	76%
to develop my academic and study skills	61%	59%	56%	64%	62%	72.5%	71%	72.4%	69%
to encourage me to apply to HE	55%	51%	53%	57%	50%	63%	61%	58%	61%

Encouragingly, there appears to be a positive relationship between the number of activities students took part in and their agreement with impact statements, as shown in Figure 10 below. While there were some dips in agreement with some statements at various numbers of activities, the overall positive trend suggests that more activity tends to lead to greater impacts.

Figure 10. Total agreement (agree + strongly agree) with impact statements, by number of activities students took part in.



The positive impact of more activities is also shown by the following Figure 11, by grouping students according to the number of activities they reported taking part in, where 0-2 indicates the expected number of activities for 'light-touch' students, 6-9 indicates the expected number for 'priority students' and 3-5 indicates a number of activities falling between these two levels, showing an incremental increase in reported impacts between these levels (see Appendix 2 for more detail around priority/light-touch evaluation groups and activity numbers).



Activity Impacts - Participant Characteristics

Activity impacts were also compared across various sample and participant characteristics, as shown in figures 12-15 and summarised below.

- Level 2 students reported greater impacts than Level 3 students on 4/5 statements, significantly so on *'taking part has helped with my personal development'*
- Students from KaMCOP wards consistently reported slightly greater impacts than other students – though these differences were not statistically significant
- Gender differences varied across statements and were not statistically significant
- There were no significant differences or consistent pattern between students from 'First Generation HE' in comparison to other students

Figures 12-15. Total agreement (agree + strongly agree) with impact statements, across sample characteristics.

*Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences vs comparisons, at a 95% confidence level.

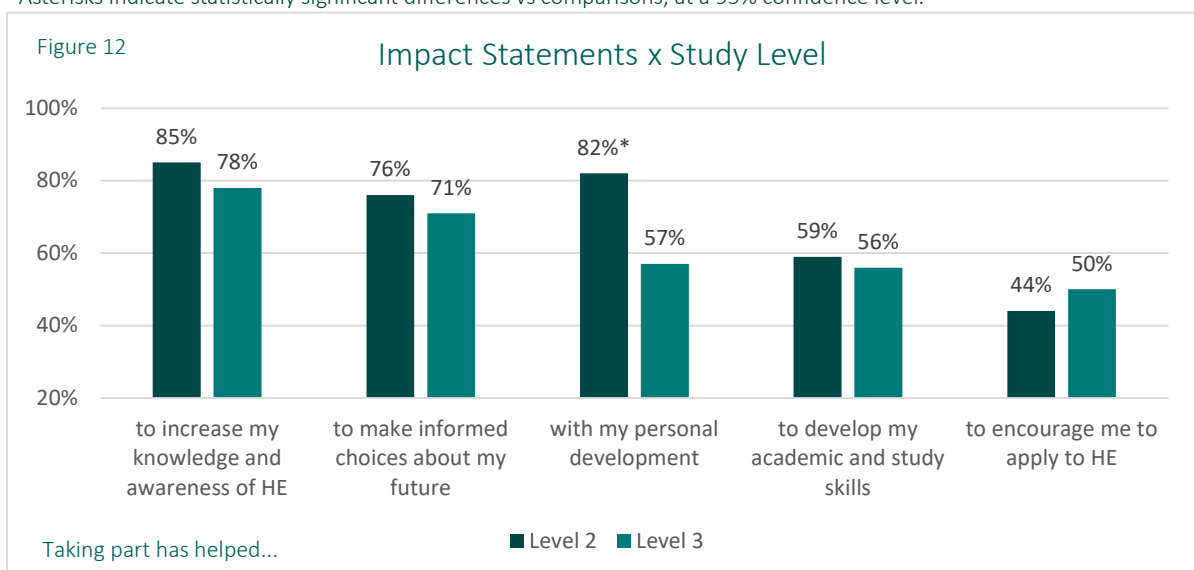


Figure 13

Impact Statements x KaMCOP Ward

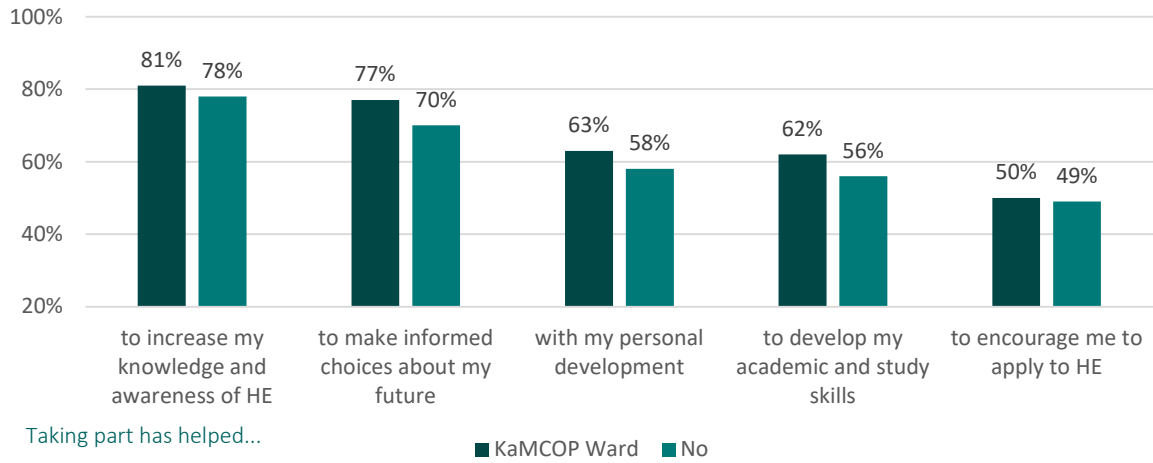


Figure 14

Impact Statements x Gender

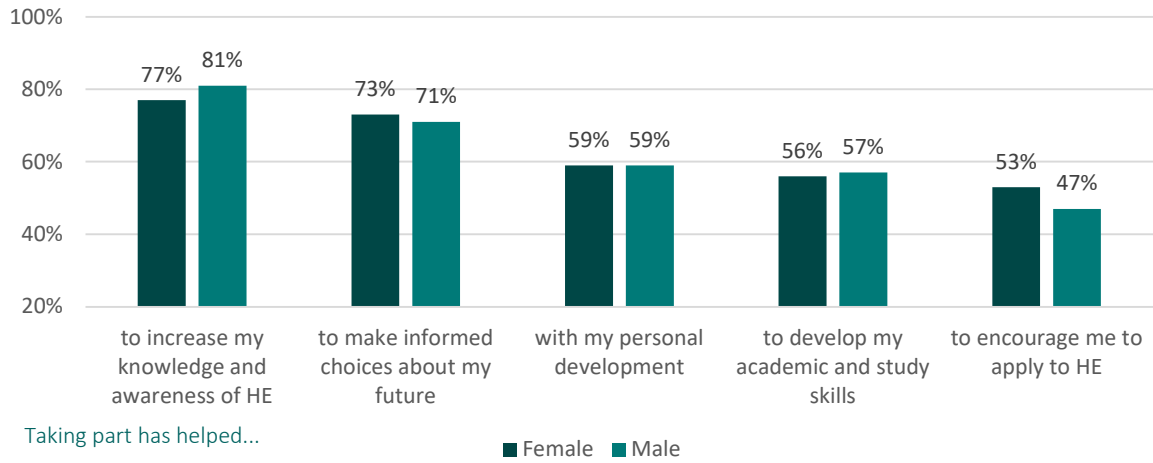
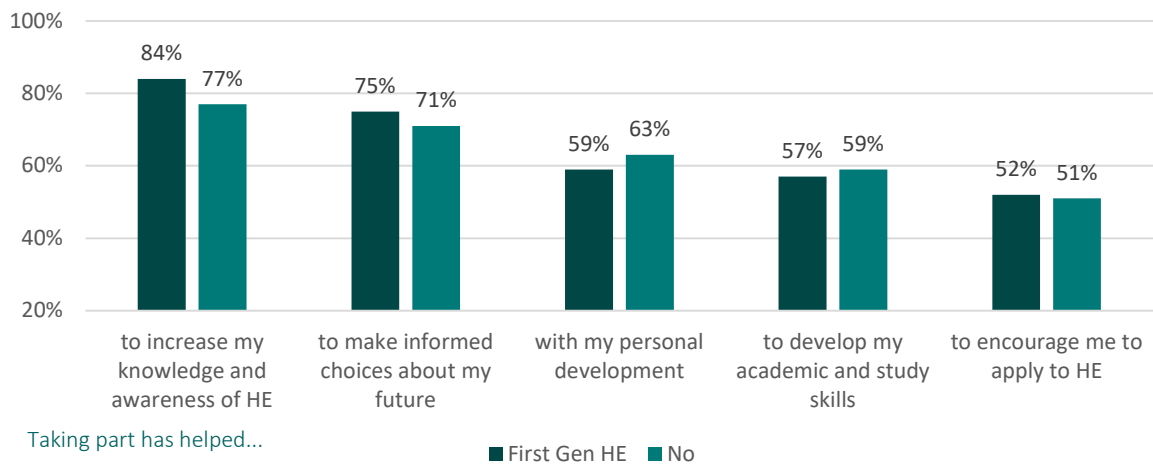


Figure 15

Impact Statements x First Generation HE



Matched Baseline and Exit Survey

Sample - Participant Characteristics

Further analysis of activity impacts was conducted by comparing the responses of a matched sample of 340 students, between their Spring 2023 exit survey and a baseline survey they completed at the start of their course (55% completing a baseline survey in Autumn 2021, 32% in Autumn 2022 and 13% in Autumn 2020). Students from NKC made up a greater proportion of the matched sample (Figure 16, below) than the total exit survey sample (Figure 1), but other characteristics were mostly similar. Activity involvement in the matched sample (Figure 22) was also similar to the total exit survey data shown in Figure 7.

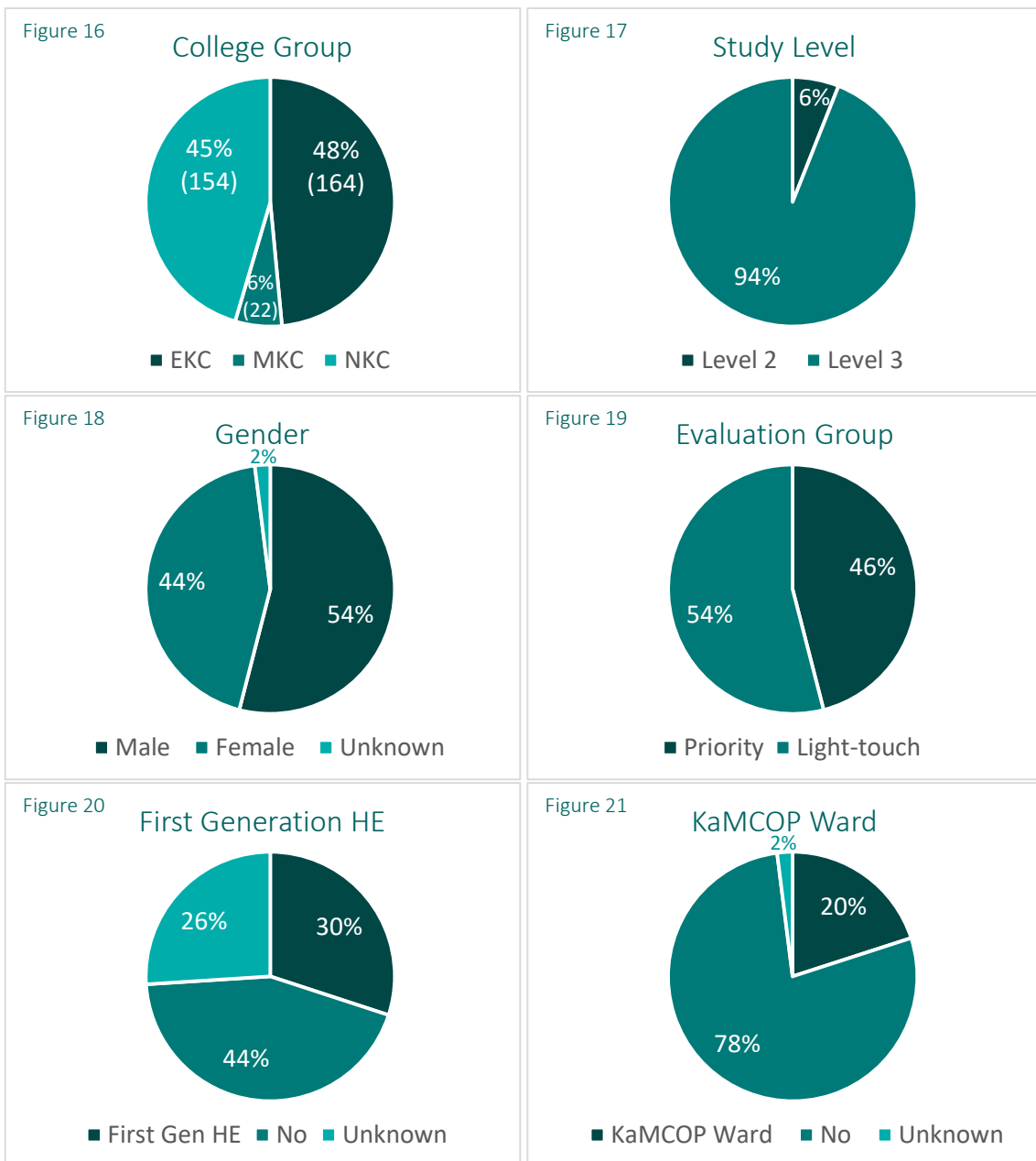
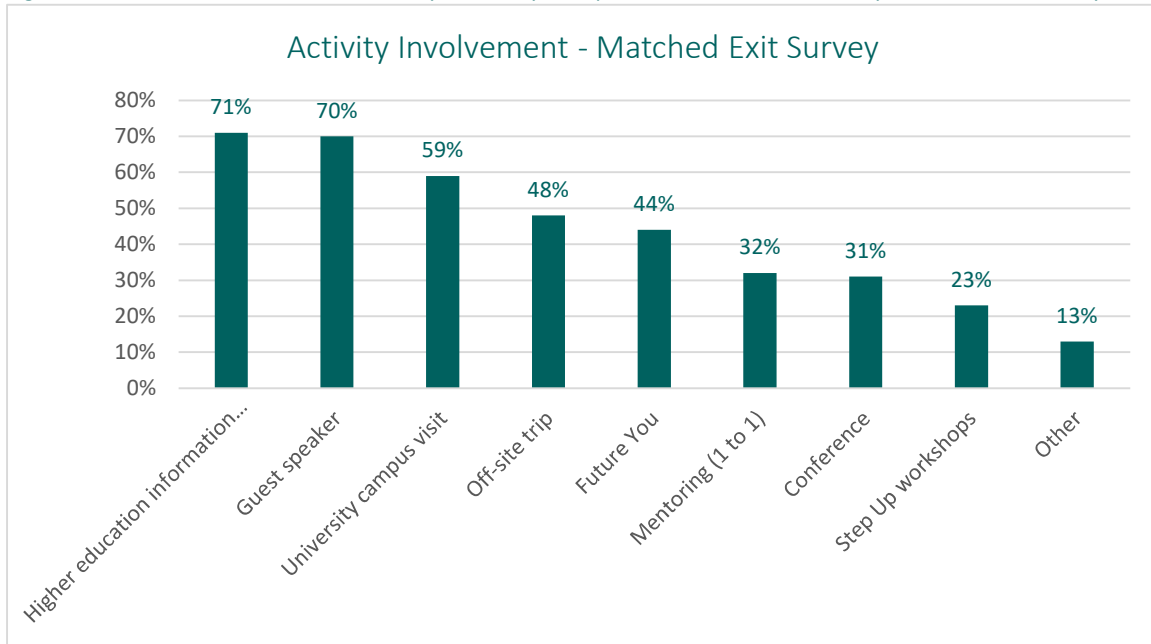


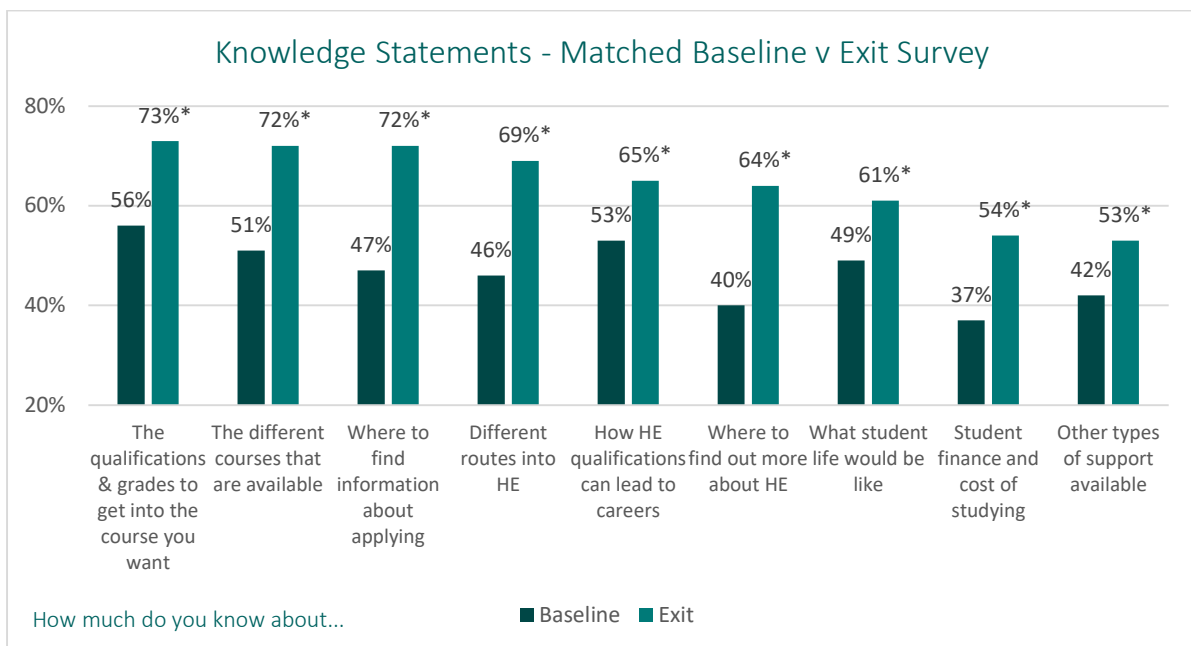
Figure 22. Percent of students who said they 'definitely took part' in each KaMCOP activity – matched exit surveys.



Knowledge about HE

Students were asked 'how much you know...' about various aspects of HE, using a five-point scale from 'nothing' to 'a lot'. The 'positive' responses ('quite a bit' and 'a lot') were grouped together for analysis purposes. Matched survey analysis showed consistent improvements in students' self-reported knowledge of HE between baseline and exit survey collection, showing significant increases across all knowledge statements. Statements which saw the biggest increases were 'where to find information about applying', 'where to find out more about HE' and 'different routes into HE.'

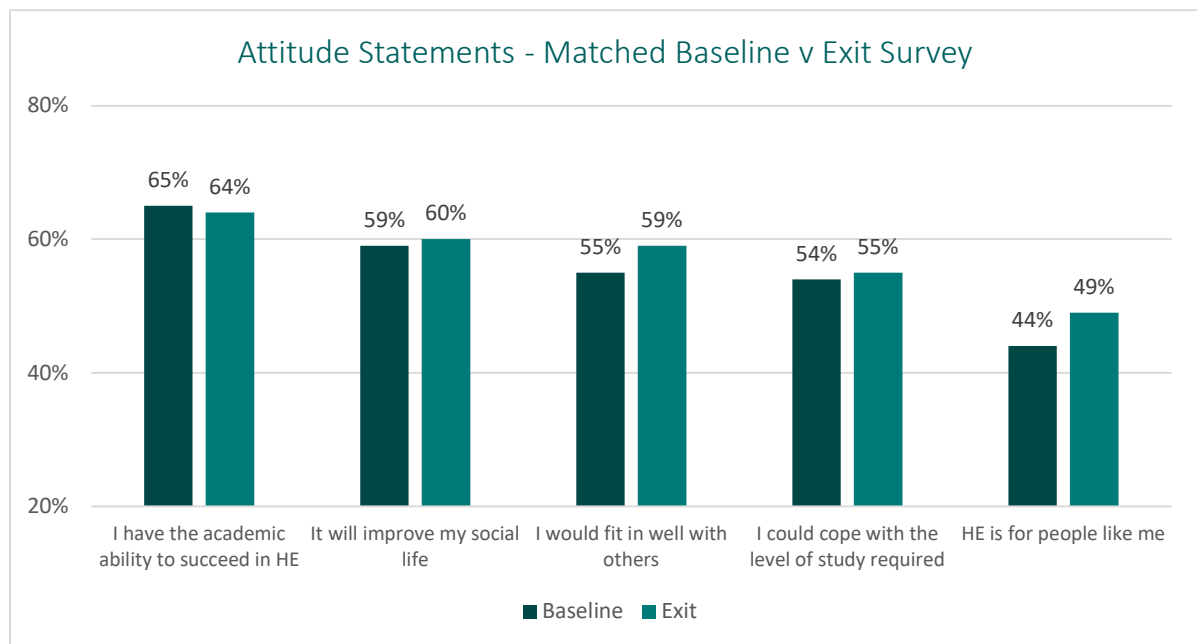
Figure 23. Percentage positive responses ('quite a bit' + 'a lot') for knowledge statements, between baseline and exit surveys. *Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences between baseline and exit surveys, at a 95% confidence level.



Attitudes towards HE

Students were asked 'how much you agree...' with various statements about HE, using a five-point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The 'positive' responses ('agree' and 'strongly agree') were grouped for analysis purposes. Matched survey analysis showed slight improvements in 4/5 attitude statements between baseline and exit survey collection, with the largest increase in 'HE is for people like me'. However, none of these changes were statistically significant.

Figure 24. Total agreement ('agree' + 'strongly agree') with HE attitude statements, between baseline and exit surveys. Differences are not statistically significant.

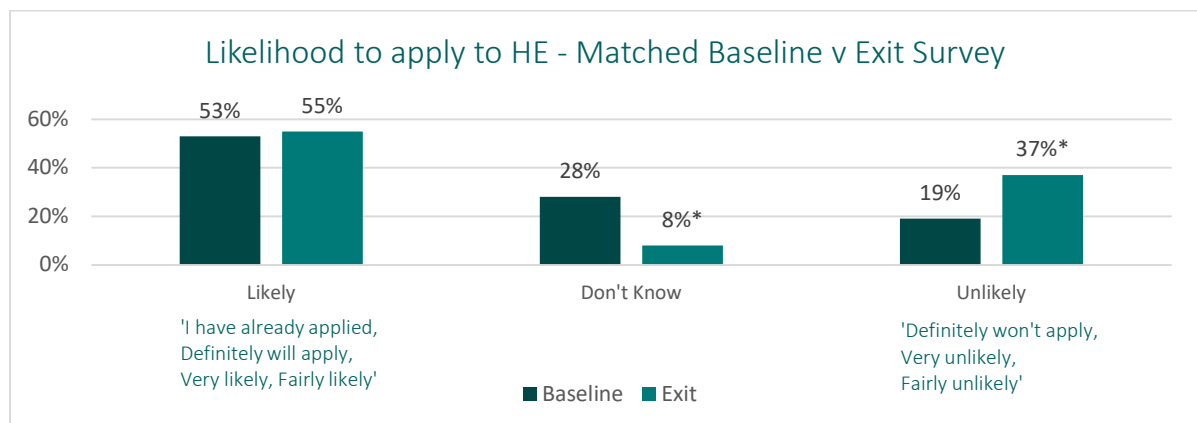


Intention towards HE

Students were asked in both the baseline and exit surveys, 'How likely are you to apply to Higher Education in the future?'. Matched survey analysis shows only a slight increase in 'likely' responses but a significant increase in 'unlikely' responses, with the number of 'don't know' responses being significantly reduced. Overall, students' likelihood to apply to HE decreased between baseline and exit survey collection. See page 2 for further commentary around this observation.

Figure 25. 'Likelihood to apply to HE' between matched baseline and exit surveys.

*Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences between baseline and exit surveys, at a 95% confidence level.

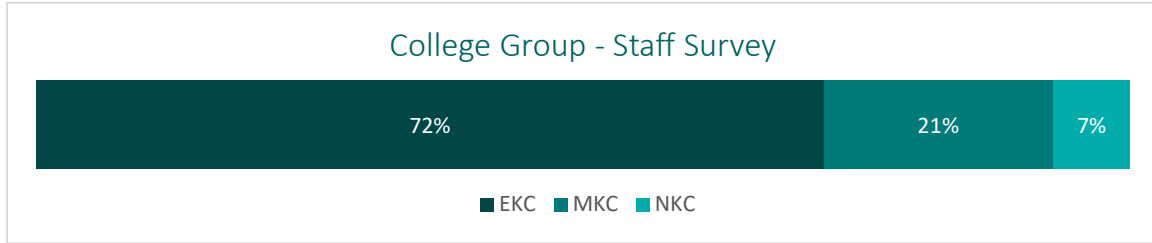


Staff Survey

Sample - Participant Characteristics

29 staff from FECs involved in KaMCOP activities completed the staff survey (21 EKC, 6 MKC, 2 NKC), providing feedback on the perceived impacts of activities and the challenges affecting students.

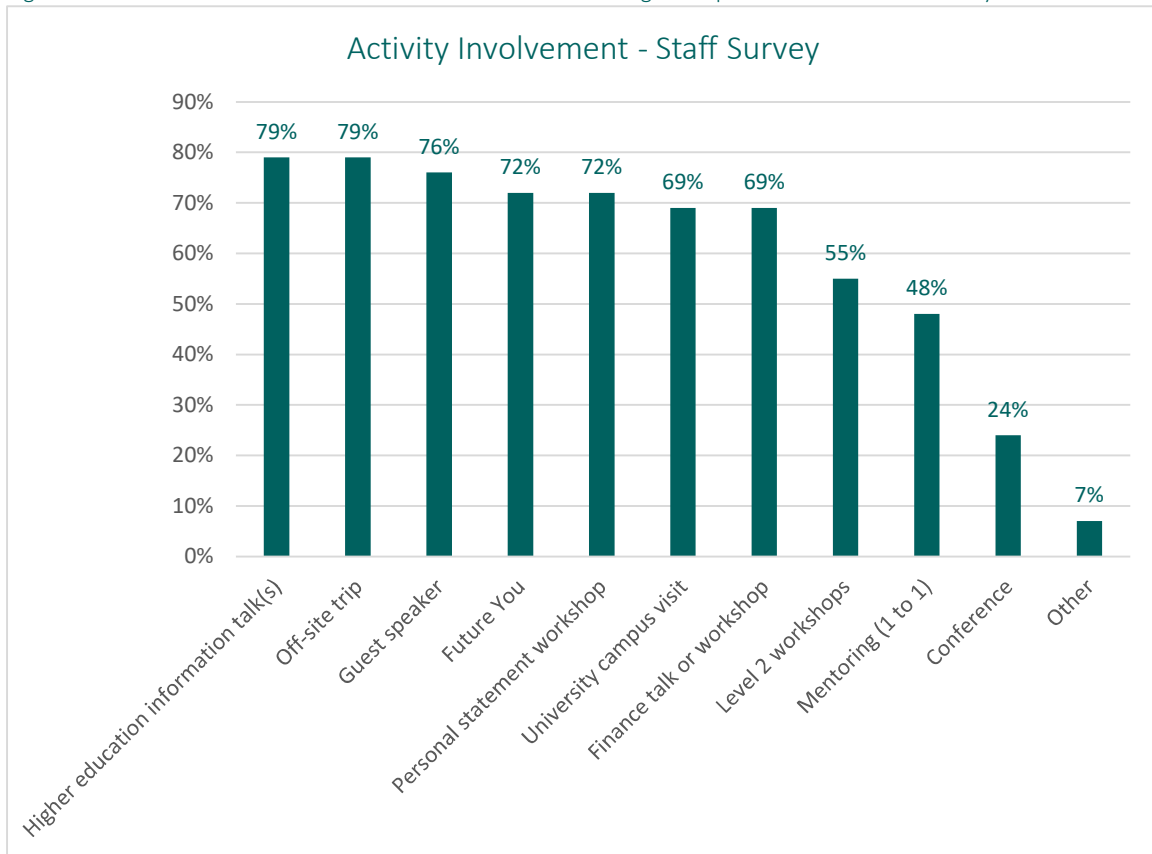
Figure 26. Percent of staff surveys across three college groups.



Activity Impacts - Overall

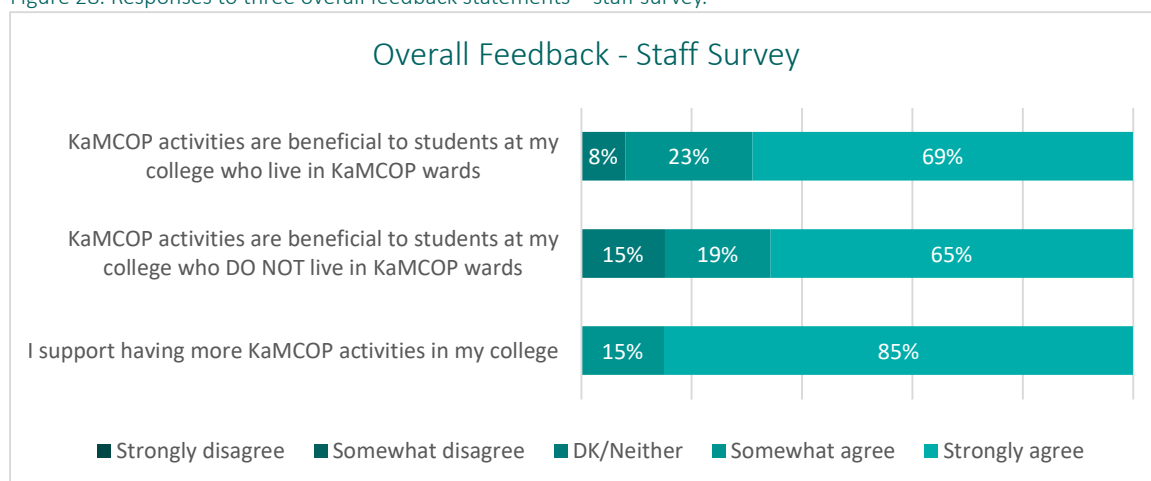
Staff reported which activities they were aware of their students taking part in. All staff reported that their students had taken part in at least one activity, with 93% aware of their students taking part in three or more activities (up to a maximum total of 11 activities, including 'other'). The average number of activities that staff were aware of students taking part in was 6.52.

Figure 27. Percent of staff who were aware of their students having taken part in each KaMCOP activity.



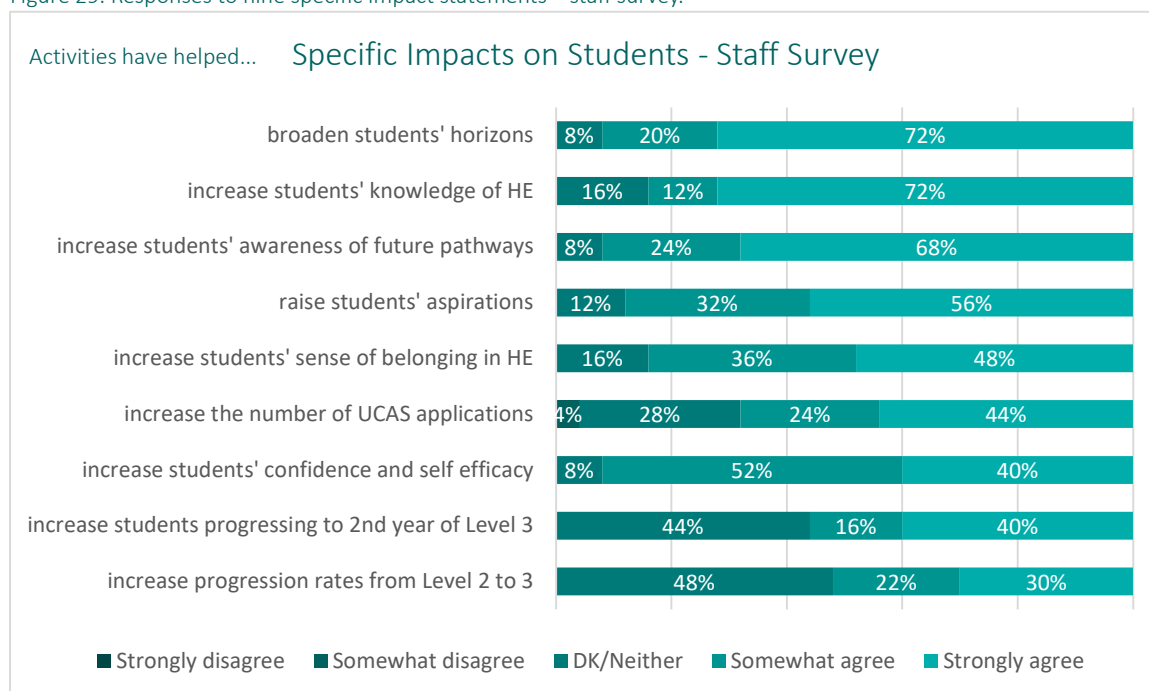
Staff were asked to rate the overall impact of KaMCOP activity and indicate their support for future activity in their college, across three statements, using a five-point scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Staff responses to these questions were very positive, with no staff disagreeing with any of these statements. Slightly more staff agree that KaMCOP activities are beneficial to students who live in KaMCOP wards than those who do not, with the majority of staff strongly agreeing with both these statements. All staff surveyed expressed support for more activities in their college.

Figure 28. Responses to three overall feedback statements – staff survey.



Staff were also asked to rate a number of specific impacts of activities on students in their college, across nine statements, again using a five-point scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Staff responses to these questions were again very positive. In particular, staff were most likely to agree that KaMCOP activities helped to ‘broaden students’ horizons’, ‘increase students’ knowledge of the HE application and student support/life’ and ‘increase students’ awareness of future pathways.’ This aligns with student’s own self-reported positive impacts on ‘knowledge and awareness of HE’ (Figure 8) and increases in HE knowledge statements (Figure 23). Over half of staff agreed that KaMCOP activities helped to ‘increase the number of UCAS applications.’

Figure 29. Responses to nine specific impact statements – staff survey.



Staff were asked to provide any further comments about the impact KaMCOP has had on their students. Only 10 staff provided answers to this question, almost all of which were positive. 3 referred to activity having *'positive impacts'*, with 2 expressing *'praise for specific staff members'*. Other themes, with single mentions, included referring to positive impacts on students' *'soft skills'*, and *'interest in HE'*, as well as to the benefits of *'consistent staff'*. One staff member commented that *'more activities would help'*, while another suggested that *'university-focused activities may not be relevant for some students.'*

"It is great to have use of KaMCOP in our college and we are glad to see it return."

"Very positive - interest in HE has increased tenfold."

"Having the same person deliver the session helped as it built a rapport."

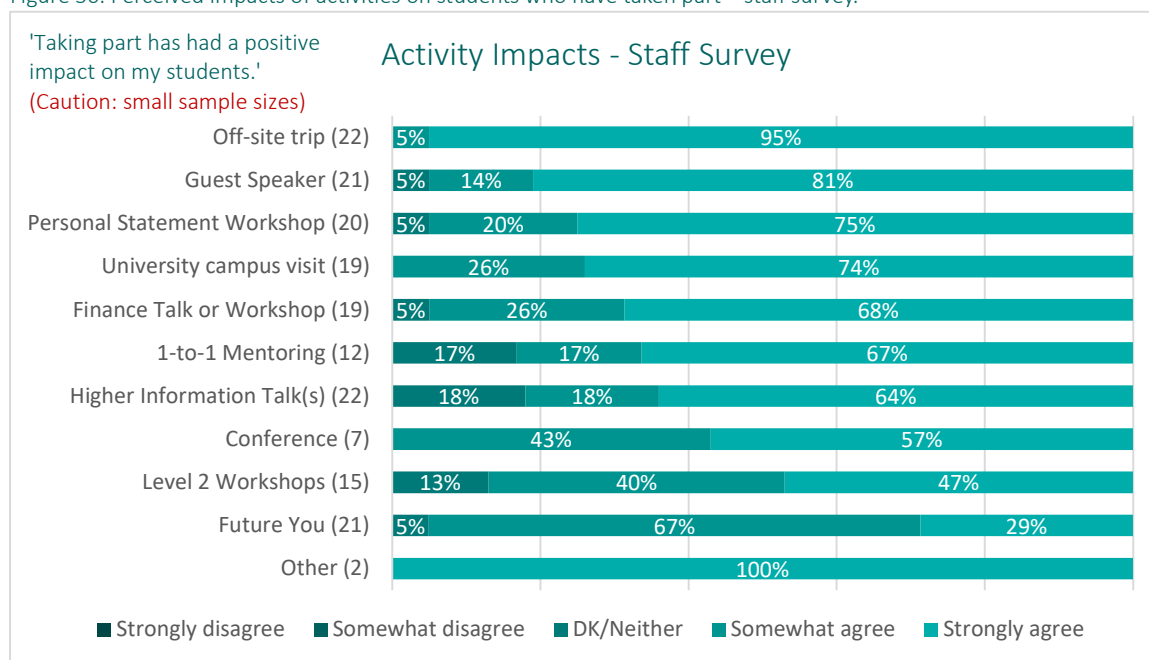
"Although they didn't get to experience everything this year, there is more planned for the next year which I think will be incredibly beneficial to the learners."

"These activities are mainly focused on qualifications that generally lead to university - despite some of our learners doing higher level qualifications, but not at uni."

Activity Impacts - Activity Breakdown

As well as providing feedback on KaMCOP activities overall, staff were asked to provide feedback on specific activities that they were aware of their students having taken part in. Across all activities, the majority of staff agreed that these had had positive impacts on students who had taken part, with no staff disagreeing with these statements. Staff whose students had taken part in an *'off-site trip'* were most likely to agree that this had a positive impact on their students. Comments suggested that *'off-site trips'* helped to expose students to *'new opportunities'* and brought *'learning to life.'*

Figure 30. Perceived impacts of activities on students who have taken part – staff survey.



Additional Staff Feedback

22 staff answered the question, 'what are the challenges facing the students you work with and what do you think the barriers are that might be preventing them from progressing to HE?'. By far the most common challenge referred to by staff was 'finances'. Other themes which received repeated mentions were 'mental health', 'self-belief' and 'family expectations'.

"Students are worrying about how to afford Higher Education."

"High levels of mental health, anxiety, SEN.

These students have possibly never felt HE is even in their remit."

"That their parents/guardians didn't go to uni so they often feel they can't either - low aspirations and low self-confidence."

"Financial issues at home faced by the students during a cost of living crisis, and the pressures they have from family to work and support the household instead of progressing to HE."

13 staff answered the question, 'what more do you think KaMCOP could do to work with your students?' 'Finance' again received the most mentions, again illustrating the importance of this topic. The only other theme which received repeated mentions was 'more support for level 2 students.' Other suggestions with single mentions included 'catchup sessions', 'small-group sessions', 'more 1-1 support' and 'support for level 1 students'.

"Look at the costs of going to University and what support is available."

"Continue to dispel the myths around student finance. Have examples of students who have been through the HE process and can give feedback on their financial situation afterwards."

“Have more on offer for Level 2's and maybe some more 1:1 support.”

“Perhaps visit Level 2 learners, also Level 1 learners.”

“Catch-up sessions? More small group sessions?”

Conclusions

Overall staff and student feedback suggests clear positive impacts of KaMCOP activities; particularly regarding students' knowledge and awareness of HE. While this did not lead to an overall increase in students' self-reported likelihood to apply to HE between the start and end of their FE courses, the majority of students agreed that *'taking part has helped encourage me to apply to HE'*, while the majority of staff agreed that KaMCOP activities helped to *'increase the number of UCAS applications.'*

While a small number of critical comments point to potential areas for improvement of activities, these point to subtle refinements rather than wholesale changes, to ensure that activities are as accessible, engaging and relevant for as many students as possible, with the majority of feedback on KaMCOP activities being largely positive. Overall, KaMCOP activities appear to have had a net positive impact on FE students' knowledge and attitudes around HE, providing positive learning experiences and helping them to make more informed decisions about their future pathways, including HE, and should aim to continue to provide these benefits in coming years. More detailed recommendations can be found in the 'Recommendations' section below.

Recommendations

Overall staff and student feedback suggests clear positive impacts of KaMCOP activities. As such, the first recommendation is to **continue to deliver such activities, to maintain these positive impacts.**

There appears to be a positive relationship between the number of activities students took part in and their self-reported impacts, suggesting that more activity tends to lead to greater impacts. As such, offering more and **as many activities as possible, to more students,** is likely to lead to more positive impacts.

Students who took part in **'Mentoring'**, in particular, reported the most positive impacts, suggesting a strong positive impact of this activity. This may be an activity to prioritise and provide to more students, if possible. Providing students with a mentor or point of contact that they can communicate with over a period of time, greater than any other single activity, may help to provide a sense of continuity and enable students to ask further questions and gain more personalised support between various activities, maximising positive impacts.

KaMCOP activities appear to have had a significant positive impact on students' 'knowledge' around HE, but changes to their 'attitudes' around HE are less clear. **Greater focus on understanding the source of students' attitudes and beliefs around HE** (e.g. family or social expectations), and **activities that aim to challenge and improve these attitudes,** may lead to more positive outcomes in terms of HE application than more focus on knowledge and information.

Despite positive impacts on students' knowledge of HE, as well as survey responses suggesting that activities encouraged the majority of students towards HE, this did not prevent an overall reduction in **'likelihood to apply to HE'** between baseline and exit survey collection. While this may be the result of a normal progression of many previously 'undecided' students deciding against HE during the period of their FE course, further exploration (through student activities and/or research) would help to clarify this hypothesis; to **understand students' reasons for their initial uncertainty** (again perhaps relating to attitudes, family or social expectations), and aim to address those reasons as effectively as possible.

Despite positive feedback overall, there were a few critical comments and suggestions provided by students and staff. While these represent a minority of respondents, they may highlight potential areas for improvement, as discussed below.

A small number of both staff and students questioned the relevance of some activities. This may be an unavoidable result of the differing needs of students taking part in activities, but is more likely something that could be improved through better **understanding of students' needs prior to delivering activities and/or adjusting activity content to those needs**. A small number of students also suggested that some activities were '*not engaging*' (the activities were not specified within exit survey comments). While this may be the unavoidable perspective of a minority of students, more **specific activity-based feedback and evaluation** (in addition to the broader exit survey) may help to understand to what extent and why any students found activities engaging or not, and help to identify ways to make these more engaging for more students. Other suggestions for improvements, suggested by staff, include '*catchup sessions*', '*small-group sessions*', '*more 1-1 support*' and '*support for level 1 and 2 students*'.

Financial concerns about HE are a common challenge for students, according to staff feedback. This should be a key focus for KaMCOP activities moving forwards. **Family expectations** were also cited as a key challenge, which may require greater focus from KaMCOP activities, potentially with the addition of activities or content specifically aimed at parents and carers, to supplement those already provided to students and help change family attitudes towards HE which may ultimately impact students' decisions.

Beyond maintaining and improving KaMCOP activity itself, as described above, another key priority is to **maintain and improve evaluation** - via student baseline and exit surveys and staff surveys as analysed within this report as well as additional activity-specific evaluation as mentioned above (e.g. activity-specific surveys and qualitative evaluation). Survey collection is critical to the success of such evaluation and FECs should be encouraged to collect surveys from as many relevant students as possible, to maximise sample sizes and facilitate effective analysis. It is hoped that by sharing the findings of such evaluation, as included in the current report, and demonstrating efforts to make improvements based on these findings, will help to encourage FECs of the benefits of such evaluation and help to maximise survey collection in years to come.

Despite the number of recommendations suggested in this section, it is worth repeating that these point to **subtle refinements rather than wholesale changes, continuing to build on the existing success of KaMCOP activities**. Finally, therefore, it is worth highlighting again the positive impacts achieved so far and expressing thanks to all those involved in activities and evaluation to date, to encourage these efforts to continue.

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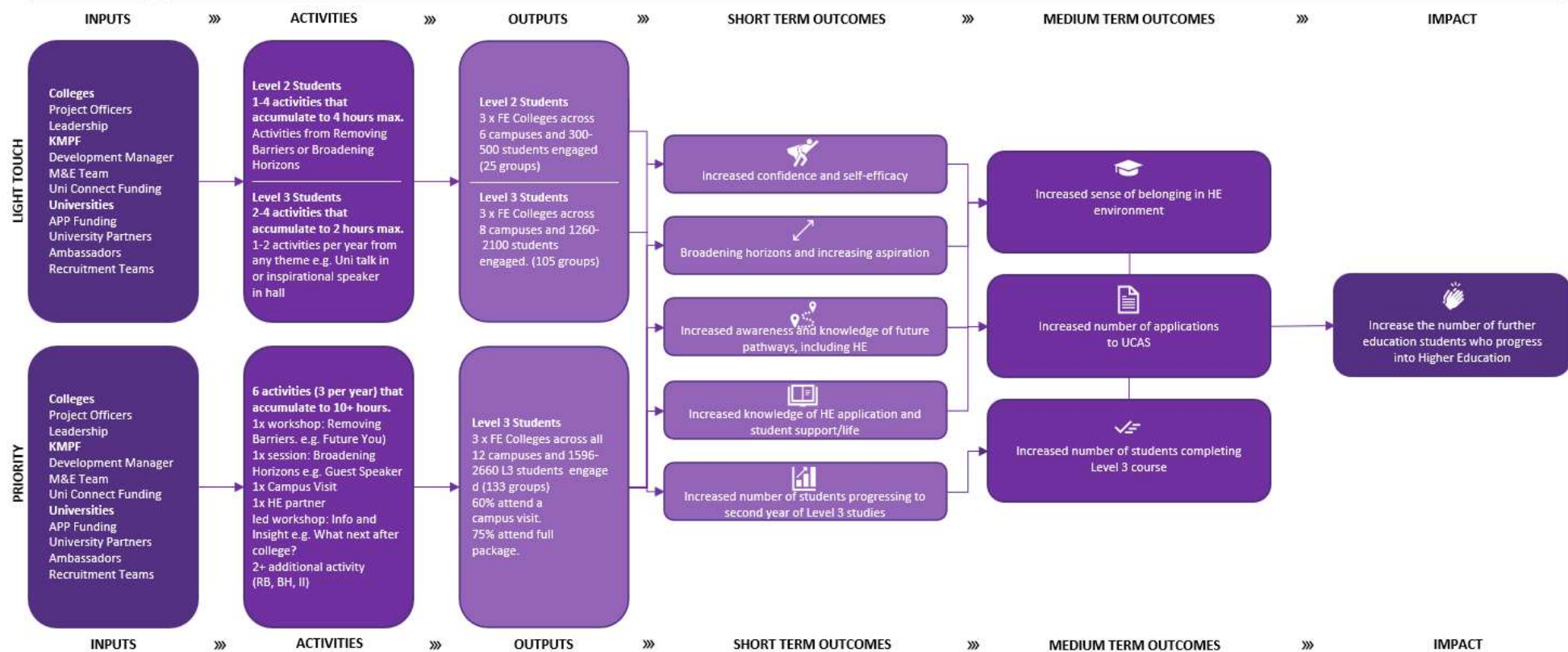
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Theory of Change

SITUATION: Higher Education progression is not a high priority for all colleges. Volume of CEIAG support varies across FECs. There is a strategic approach used to engage the different colleges and campuses based on the needs of learners. Each college is unique and requires relevant activities to meet the needs of the students within the framework. Underrepresented groups have lower progression to HE.

AIMS: To reduce gaps and perceived barriers in HE participation for less represented groups, whilst broadening horizons through insight and information to increase the number of students that progress to Higher Education.



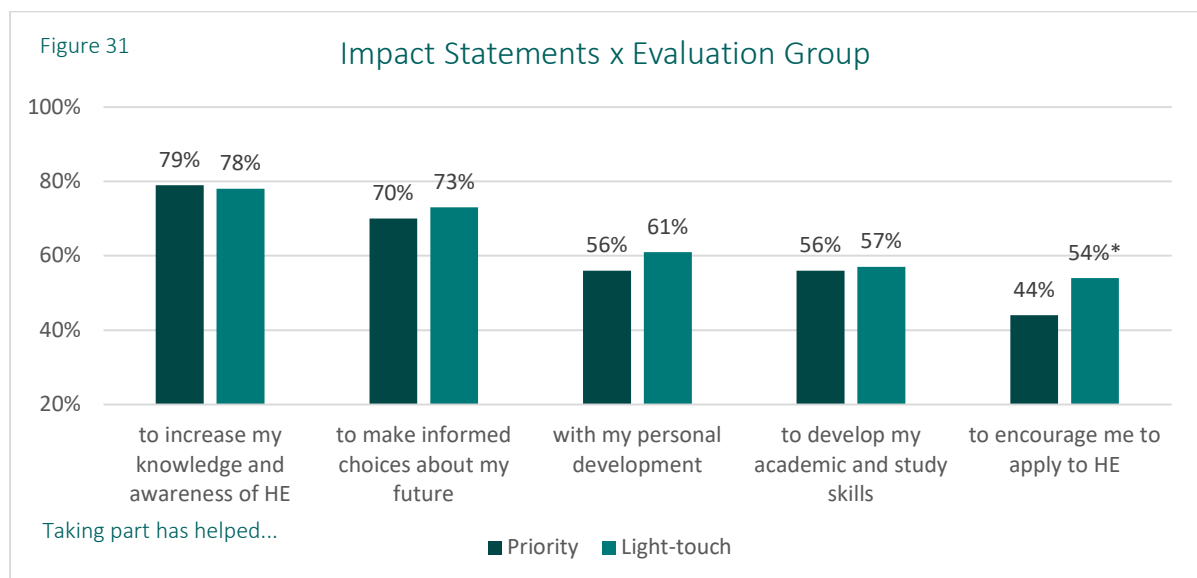
RATIONALE: Package of activities, maximum impact, build relationships, collaborative delivery and expertise with HEIs. Sustained and progressive interventions have more of an impact – due to capacity and support it is not possible to include all students within priority groups.

ASSUMPTIONS: Negative prior educational experiences (Barriers), Lack of exposure to social, cultural capital (Broadening Horizons), Lack of knowledge of Higher Education pathways (Insights & Information)

Appendix 2: Evaluation Groups and Activity Numbers

Prior to completing the current evaluation, KaMCOP pre-assigned students to one of two 'evaluation groups', referred to as 'priority' and 'light-touch'. It was expected that priority students would have taken part in at least six KaMCOP activities over their two years of FE, while light-touch students would have taken part in two or less.

On this basis, it was expected that priority students would report greater impacts of KaMCOP activities; however this was not the case. Indeed, light-touch students reported greater impacts than priority students on 4/5 statements, significantly so on *'taking part has helped to encourage me to apply to HE'*, as shown in figure 31 below.

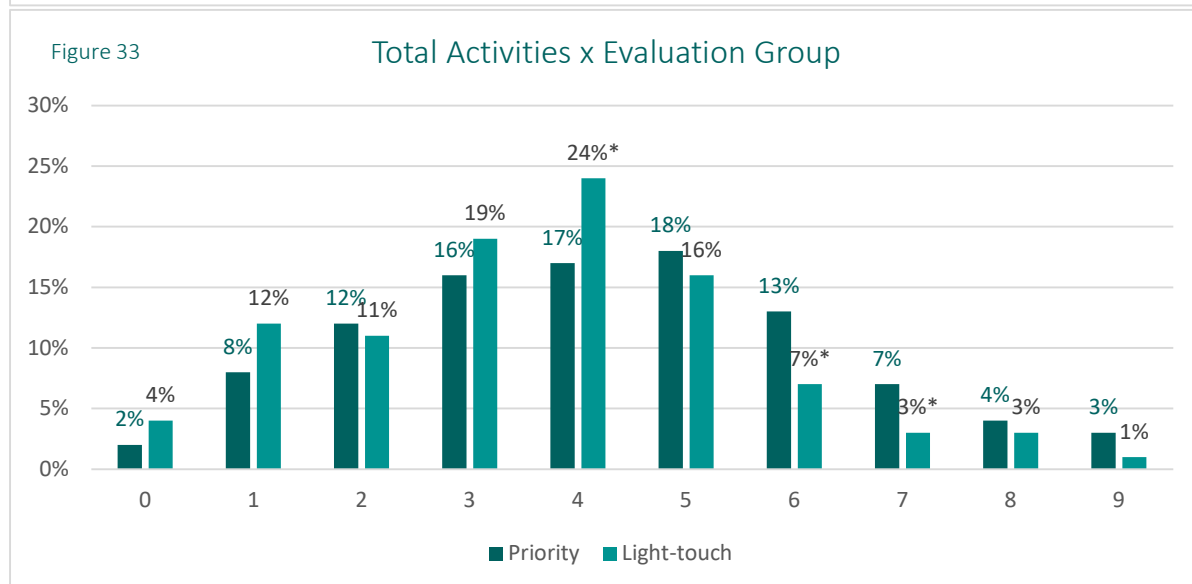
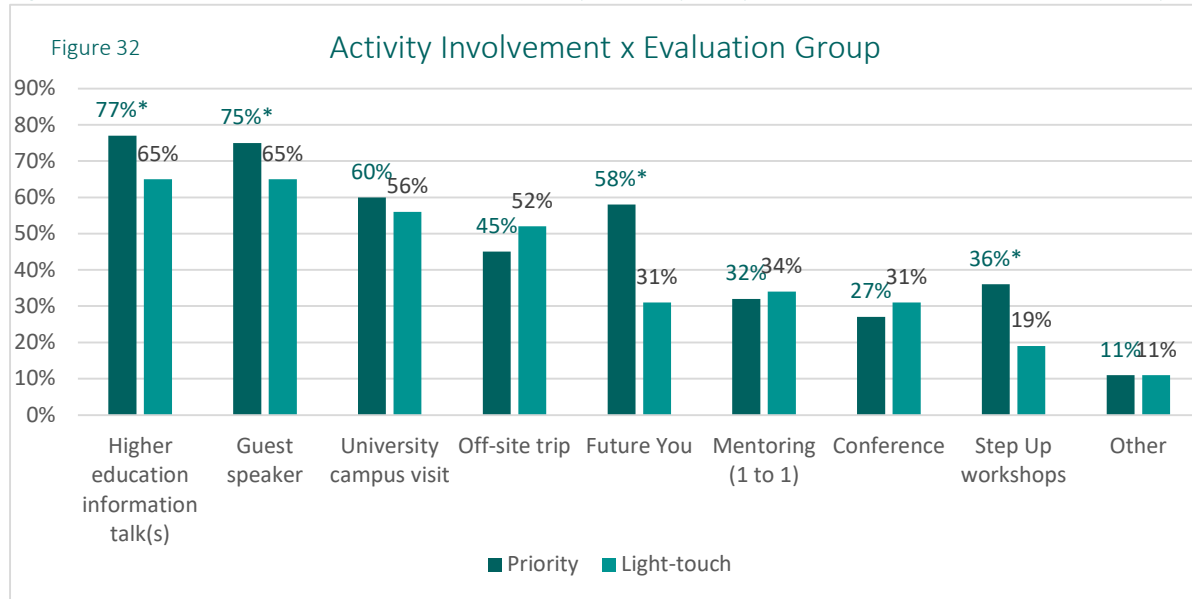


Following this unexpected observation, further analysis was conducted to verify whether students had taken part in the number of activities expected and whether direct comparison between these two groups was valid. This was found not to be the case.

While there were differences in specific activity involvement between priority/light-touch (Figure 32), there was little difference in the total number of activities reported by students. Only 27% of priority students self-reported the previous expected six or more activities, while 73% of light-touch students self-reported more than their expected maximum of two activities.

This discrepancy between the number of activities expected for priority/light-touch students and the number reported by students may be due to students actually taking part in more or less activities than was originally planned and/or errors in students' self-reporting. In either case, it was concluded that the planned priority/light-touch comparison did not provide the most accurate reflection of the actual number of activities students took part in. For this reason, Figure 31 is omitted from the main body of the report and included in this appendix, along with this explanation, for reference only. A more accurate representation of the impacts of activity volume can be found in the 'Activity Impacts – Activity Breakdown' section of the main report (p12/13), particularly figures 10 and 11.

Figure 32, 33 and Table 2. Percent of students who said they 'definitely took part' in KaMCOP activities – total exit survey.



	Priority		Light-touch		Total	
0 Activities	2%	6	4%	11	3%	17
1 Activities	8%	22	12%	33	10%	55
2 Activities	12%	31	11%	30	11%	61
3 Activities	16%	42	19%	52	17%	94
4 Activities	17%	44	24%	66	20%	110
5 Activities	18%	48	16%	44	17%	92
6 Activities	13%	33	7%	19	10%	52
7 Activities	7%	19	3%	9	5%	28
8 Activities	4%	10	3%	7	3%	17
9 Activities	3%	8	1%	4	2%	12
0-2 Activities	22%	59	27%	74	25%	133
3-5 Activities	51%	134	59%	162	55%	296
6-9 Activities	27%	70	14%	39	20%	109
Average Activities	4.22		3.64		3.92	