

Exams wrap up, Year 13s top uni research tool, what's making students change their firm choices, and early clearing questions

Student sentiment update by The Student Room

5 June - 2 July 2023



Sharing the student voice

As the UK's largest online student community, we are privileged to witness the support, reassurance and advice young people share with one another everyday. What we learn about their experiences and concerns guides us in the support we provide.

We started writing these student sentiment updates back in January of 2021, when schools were closed to most students and traditional exams were cancelled. In 2022 we shared 13 of these updates, showcasing 108 community polls, with over 23,000 votes from students.

We have an incredible opportunity (and responsibility) to raise the voice of students and share it with people like you who are there to support them. It's by listening to students and working across every sector together that we can make a real difference in students' lives.

Highlights in this update

- Wrap up of exam season 2023 - student reactions and what we saw on The Student Room
- Most students found exams as tough as they were expecting
- The majority of students think ChatGPT makes no difference to GCSE and A-level exams
- Students are asking early clearing questions on The Student Room - here's what they need to know
- In person open days are the most helpful for Year 13s researching universities
- 73% of 2023 entry UG respondents had changed their firm choice plans due to the cost of living
- 77% felt the cost of living would impact their student experience at university

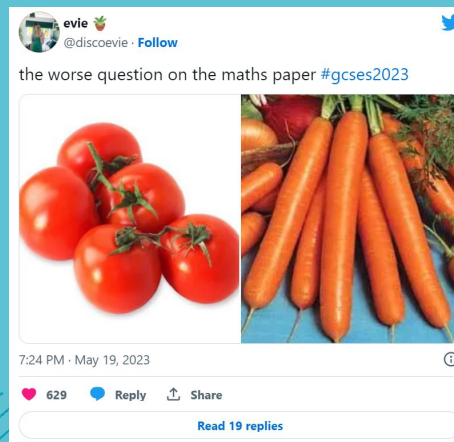
The rest of exam season 2023

A-level students have now gone through the first 'normal' exam season since 2019. Although it's important to remember these students have still really felt the impact of Covid across their secondary education.

It was a massive exam season on The Student Room this year with 30% more posts and people talking in our forums throughout exams compared to 2022.

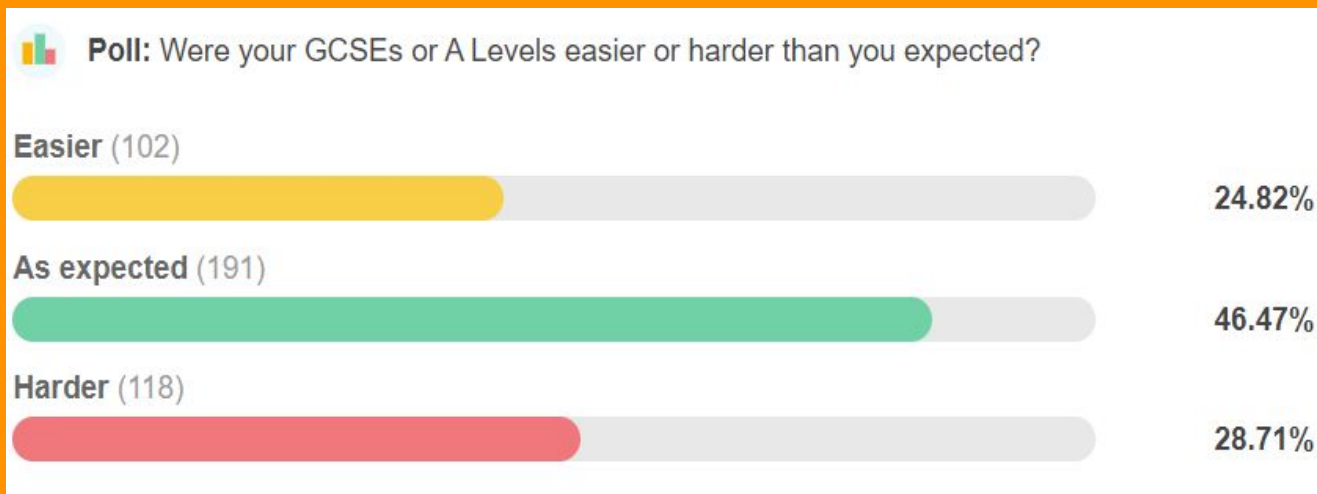
In the third week of exams we saw conversation pivot from a focus on humanities to more of a STEM emphasis.

Our 'students react' articles continued to be popular, with GCSE Maths and English papers being the most popular in the last fortnight of exams.



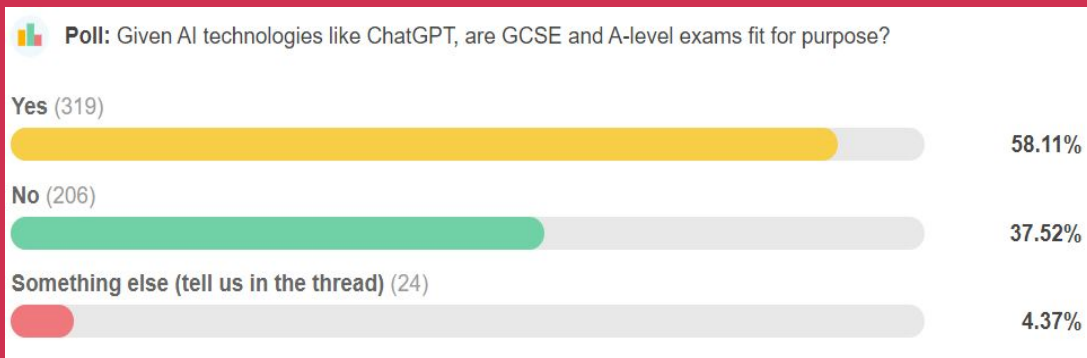
Most students found exams just as tough as they expected

It was a truly mixed bag of responses when we asked whether they'd found their GCSE or A-level exams easier or more difficult than they expected. Almost an even split every way, some found them easier, some found them tougher and lots found them exactly as they expected.



Majority of students think ChatGPT makes no difference to GCSE and A-level exams

While almost 30% of [students said](#) they feel using ChatGPT is cheating, in a new poll this month, almost 60% said they feel current GCSE and A-level exams are still fit for purpose. This is mostly because while students could revise using AI, it won't help them in the actual exam. Others feel exams aren't fit for purpose - but not because of AI.



You can't use AI to cheat during an exam, and it even has limitations when being used for revision, for example, it won't be able to produce a perfect english literature essay because it doesn't know the markscheme or the AOs so the best it will give you is a generic essay that won't score high marks.

I would say that they aren't fit for purpose, but not because of AI. Especially with adjustments made during covid, we've seen the flaws with the way that students are currently assessed. I think that even at secondary school level, they need to use a more coursework and assessment based approach rather than the final exams system that is currently used.

Clearing questions are coming up already

More than a month before results, we're already seeing lots of questions from students about clearing.

Researching about clearing but I've basically gone nowhere... every degree has grade requirements that are really high, i check the salary of graduates and it's always something like 'starts at 20k, can work up to 33k in 10 years' for degrees requiring minimum ABB??

I was looking at the clearing options this year, and was surprised to see that KCL had so many competitive courses in clearing. They had computer science, medicine, artificial intelligence all in clearing. Is this a mistake or is it legit, because it seems too good to be true. I want to apply to the AI course, but if my grades are lower than the entry requirements can I still apply?

Hi does applying for advance interest for clearing at a university get rid of all of your current offers that you hold?

Do university's offer lower grades on results day through clearing and if so by how much for example accounting at Birmingham is AAA would it go down to abb on results day via clearing?

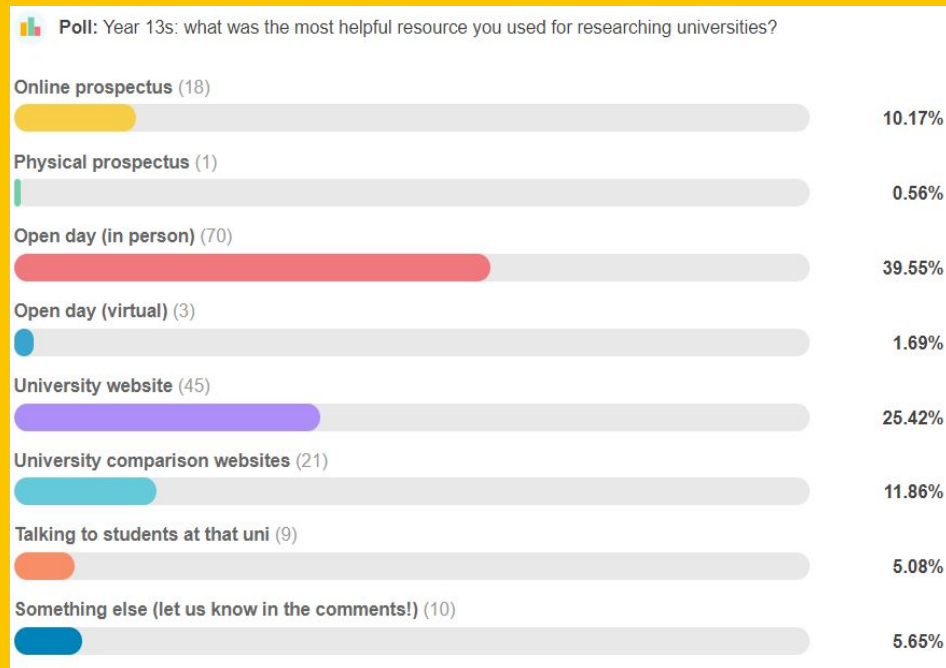
is it true that with clearing (especially early clearing) there may be some courses that aren't advertised as in clearing but do have vacancies and are available to be taken?

I was rejected by my Extra choice because the course was full, yet it's listed as in clearing on the Uni website? Surely in that case it cannot be full?

Just wondering, is it likely that if a certain course from certain unis aren't in clearing right now, that they will be on results day? (If they reject some people etc.)

In person open days are the most helpful for Year 13s researching universities

Now exams are over, Year 13 students are facing the nervous wait for their results. We asked Year 13 students what resource they found most helpful when they were researching for universities. The clear top choice was in person open days. This shows the importance of the 'real life' experience and reflects what we saw during the pandemic when in person open days were the most missed resource. It's important to note however, the cost of living is presenting barriers for some students to attend these events.



How prospective 2023 and 2024 undergrads feel about the rising cost of living

In May, approximately 800 prospective 2023 and 2023 undergrads talked to us about the rising cost of living. This graph shows what one word students would most use to describe how they're feeling about it...



How prospective 2023 and 2024 undergrads feel about the rising cost of living

73%

of 2023 entry UG respondents had changed their firm choice plans due to the cost of living

55% who'd chosen a different course and 41% who'd chosen a different uni (some had changed both uni and course choice)

How prospective 2023 and 2024 undergrads feel about the rising cost of living

77%

felt the cost of living would impact their student experience at university

75%

of prospective UG respondents said a university's response to rising costs of living was important to them when deciding where to study.

How prospective 2023 and 2024 undergrads feel about the rising cost of living

31%

said they were more likely to consider a degree apprenticeship

24%

were more likely to defer their university start.

28%

said they were more likely to attend open days online rather than in person, so these remain an important resource for prospective students to connect with universities