Student Consultation Meetings 2023

Evaluation Report

PVC Students

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July 2023

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Background

The total number of applications for the 2023 Student Consultation was 1,172, which is an increase from last year. Students were allocated places based on whether they were currently studying, their location, and then to ensure the demographics of the students were representative of the wider student body.

Student Consultation meetings were held in March 2023 via online and face-to-face events. Meetings were facilitated by OU staff volunteers and with additional support from OU Students Association and student representatives.

The use of Vevox and Padlet applications during the online meetings enabled students to provide direct feedback whilst participants for the in person meetings completed answer sheets and took part in table and whole group discussions during which feedback was captured by student volunteers and/or OU staff members.

All meetings focussed on three topic areas:

- Retention
- Student Induction
- Careers and Employability Service (CES)

The second part of the meeting was run by the Students Association, feedback from this session was not collected by the PVC-Student Consultation Team and OU staff were not in attendance.

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Location and attendance data

Date	Platform/Venue	Invited	Attended	Turnout
Saturday 4 March	MS Teams	102	32	31%
Friday 10 March	Milton Keynes	106	48	44%
Saturday 11 March	Leeds	72	26	36%
Saturday 11 March	Cardiff	78	29	37%
Saturday 11 March	Belfast	51	16	31%
Monday 13 March	MS Teams	43	12	28%
Tuesday 15 March	MS Teams	104	24	23%
Wednesday 16 March	Adobe Connect	68	18	26%
Saturday 18 March	London	90	28	31%
Saturday 18 March	Edinburgh	40	14	35%
TOTAL		**754**	**247**	**AV: 32%**

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Feedback analysis

Participants were asked a series of questions relating to the three themes: Retention, Student Induction and the Careers and Employability Service. Feedback was gathered via question and answer sheets completed by individual students, student volunteers, OU staff notes, Vevox and Padlet applications depending upon the location/format of the event.

Responses and comments from all available answer sheets, Vevox and Padlet outputs were captured, collated and read; from this raw data common categories emerged. Using these common categories, the responses were again analysed and placed into the most applicable category. For ease of feedback review the percentage of responses against the common categories have been presented in graph format. The following slides demonstrate the outputs of the analysis by question posed. Each theme also has a section for general comments.

Responses that were not applicable to the questions asked were discounted from the analysis; however comments that were particular pertinent to the wider OU offer have been noted in General Comments.

Common themes across questions and discussions became apparent, these have been included in the General Comments and Common Themes section of this analysis.

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Retention:

Sharing Your Early Experiences Of The OU

The questions:

Question No	Question	Audience: Online only / All	Feedback source
1	At the very beginning, what one word would you have used to describe your first couple of weeks of studying with the OU?	All	Vevox / Student Facilitator notes
2a	What do you know now, about studying with the OU, that you wish you'd known at the start?	All	Vevox / Student Facilitator notes
2b	What would be your advice to students starting out?	All	Vevox / Student Facilitator notes

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1. At the very beginning, what one word would you have used to describe your first couple of weeks of studying with the OU?

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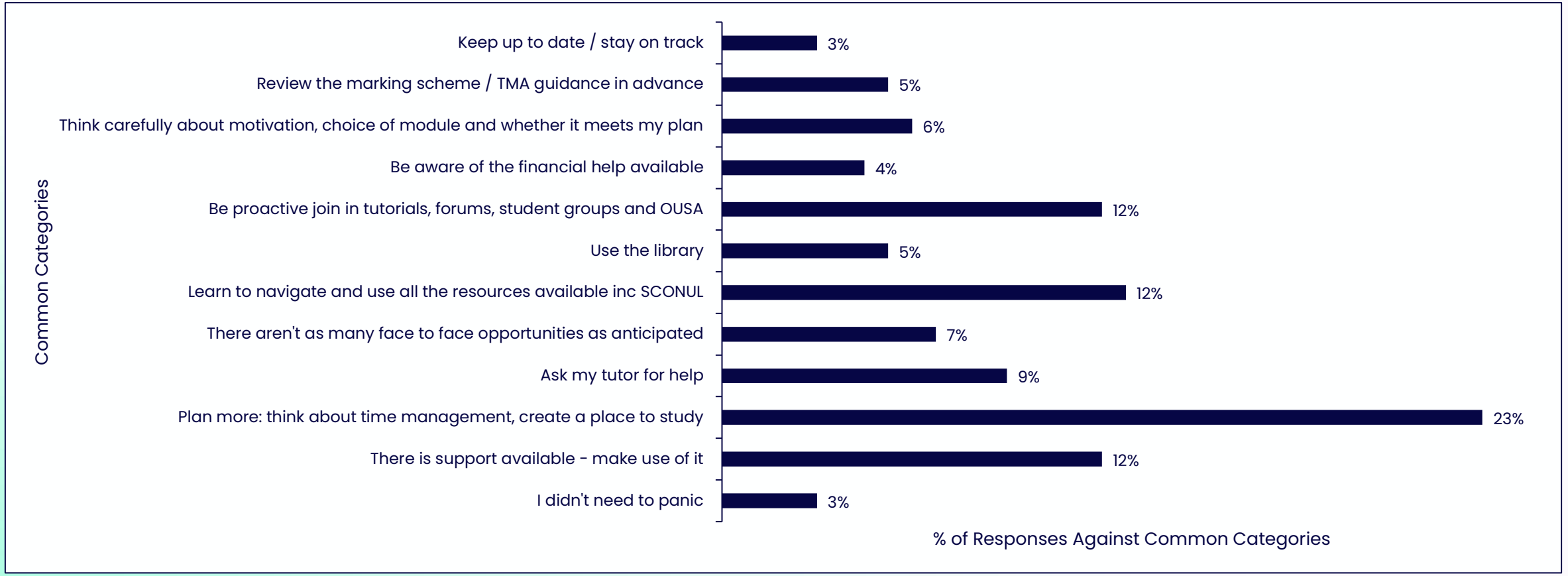
2a. What do you know now, about studying at the OU, that you wish you'd known at the start?



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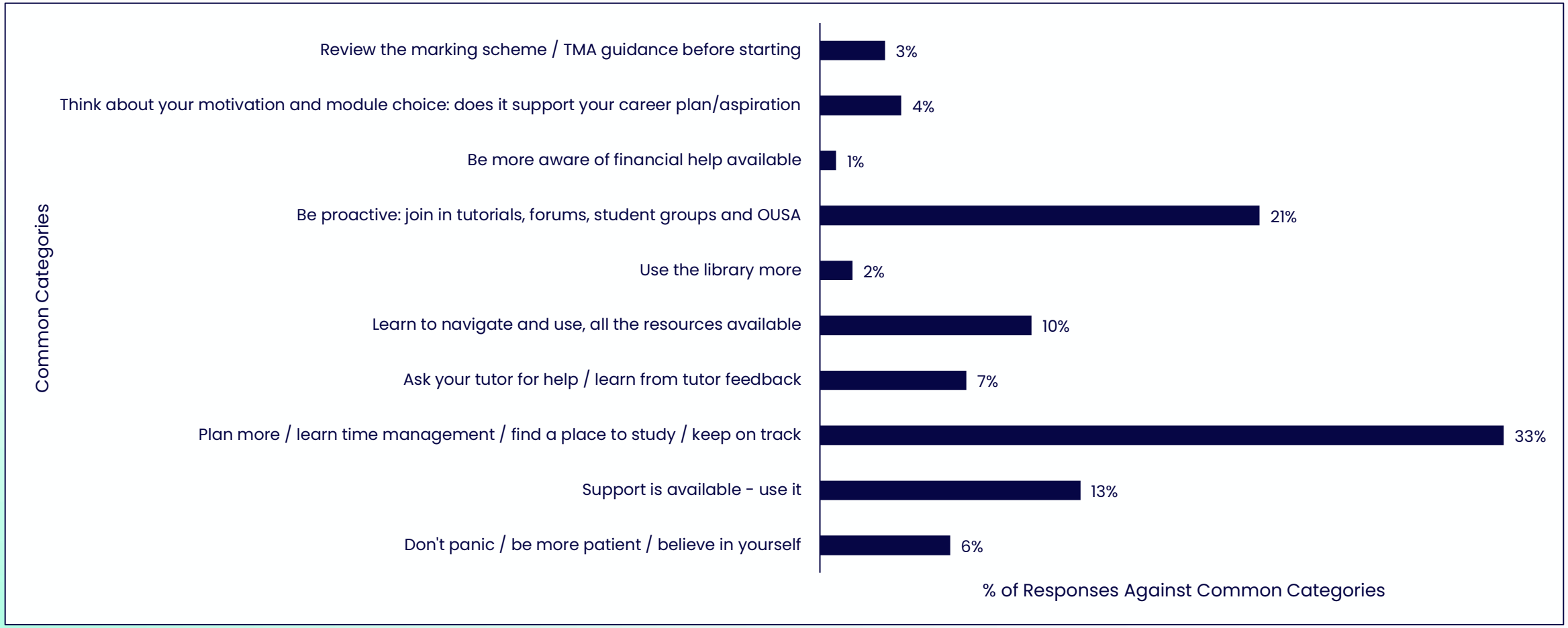
2b. What would be your advice to students starting out?



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Retention: general comments, quotes and advice

That I'd get hooked and I'm now considering a PHD!

Never go anywhere without your module reader :)

Be careful not to listen too much to negativity from other students in social media groups

It'll open up the way you look at things you never thought to look at before, opens the mind

Try the Pomodoro method for studying! Has been a lifesaver.

Don't to compare yourself to others it is a unique experience

My school teachers were wrong

Don't assume everyone else is an expert - if they were they wouldn't be studying

You might feel down, lonely sometimes

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Student Induction

The questions:

Question No	Question	Audience; Online only / In person / All	Feedback source
Online 1	How many of you remember induction activities when you started with the OU?	Online only	Vevox
Online 2	Did the induction activities give you everything you needed to get started at the OU? Scale of 1 - 5, with 5 being you felt they give you everything you needed.	Online only	Vevox
1	To what extent did the induction-related information and guidance you received at the OU support you in feeling ready to start your studies?	All	Student Facilitator notes
2	What activities should there be for students who register before the final date for registration?	All	Student Facilitator notes
3a	What should be the main priority for the OU's induction provision?	All	Student Facilitator notes
3b	What should we call the new induction module?	In person	Post it notes

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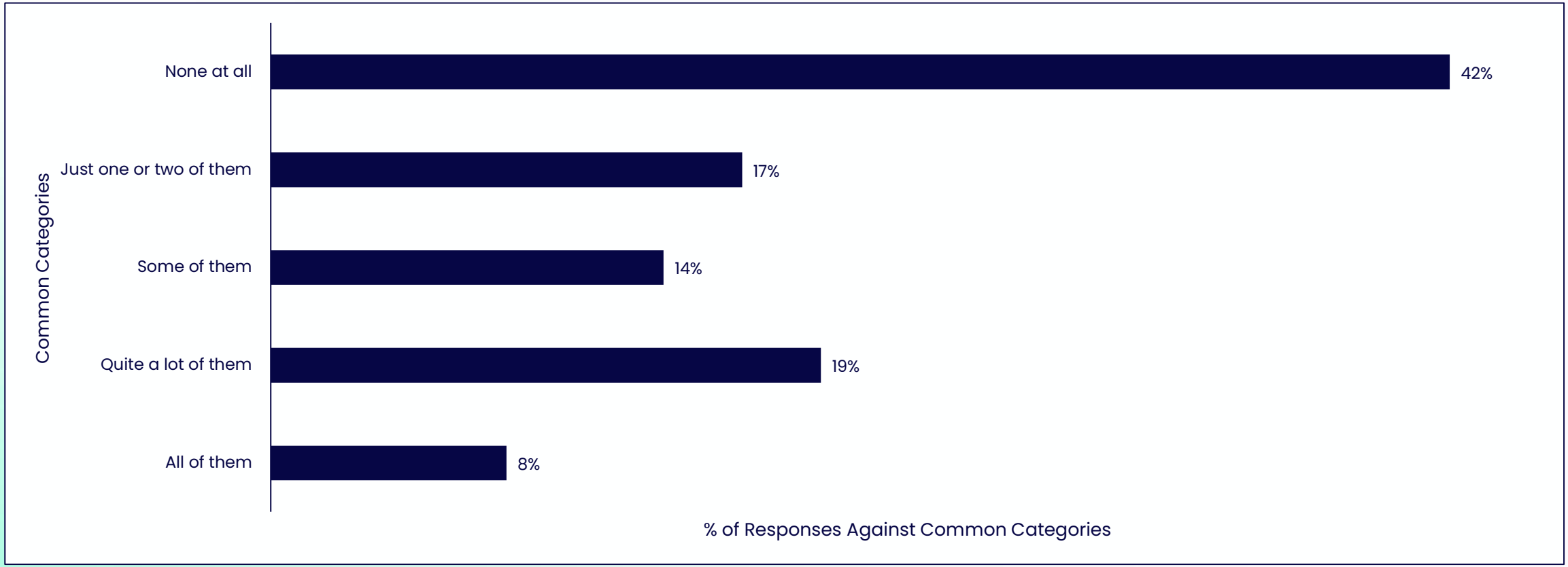
Online 1: How many of you remember induction activities when you started with the OU?



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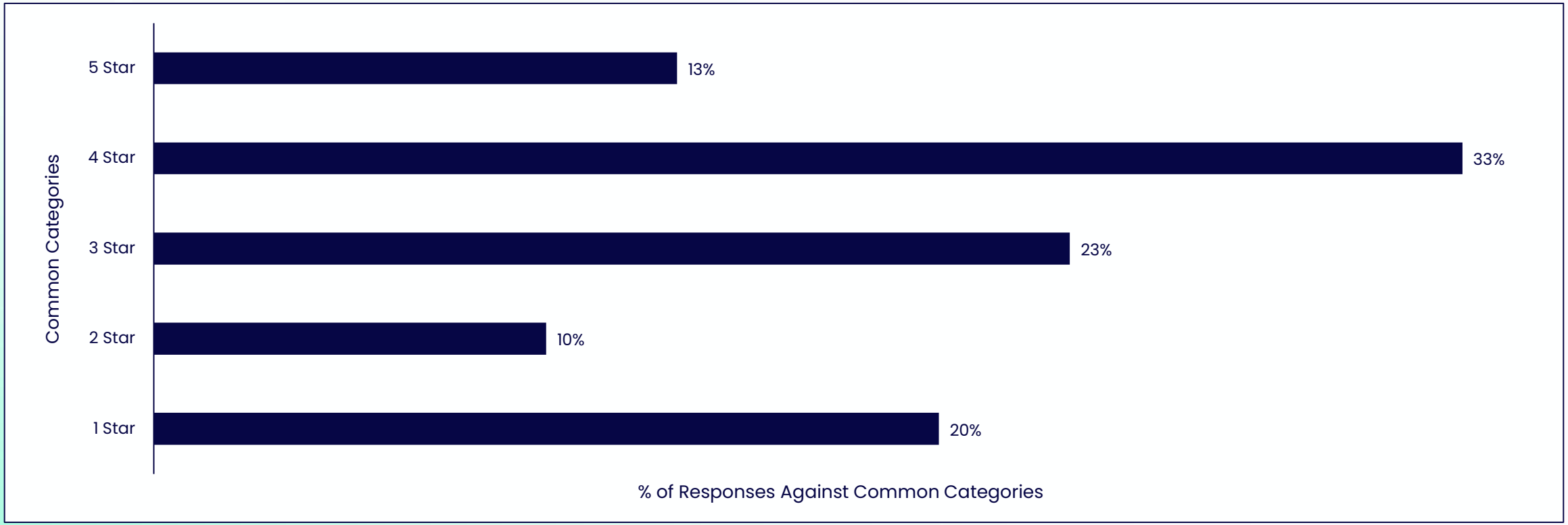
Online 2: Did the induction activities give you everything you needed to get started at the OU?

Scale of 1 - 5, with 5 being you felt they give you everything you needed.



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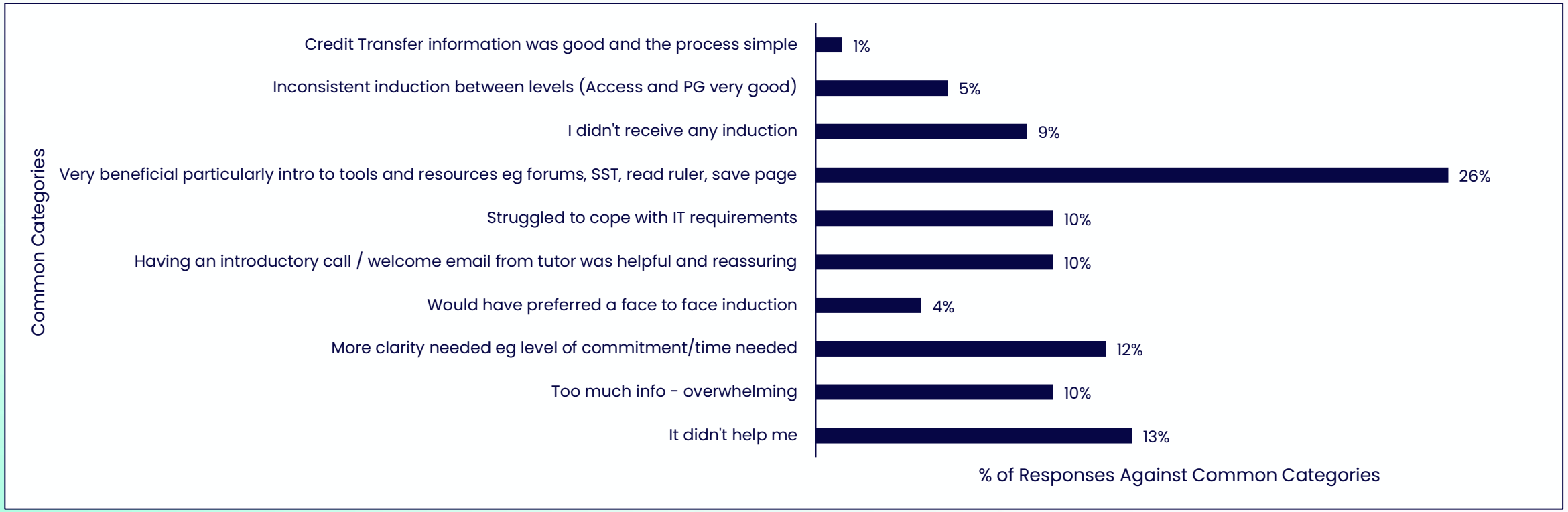
1. To what extent did the induction-related information and guidance you received at the OU support you in feeling ready to start your studies?



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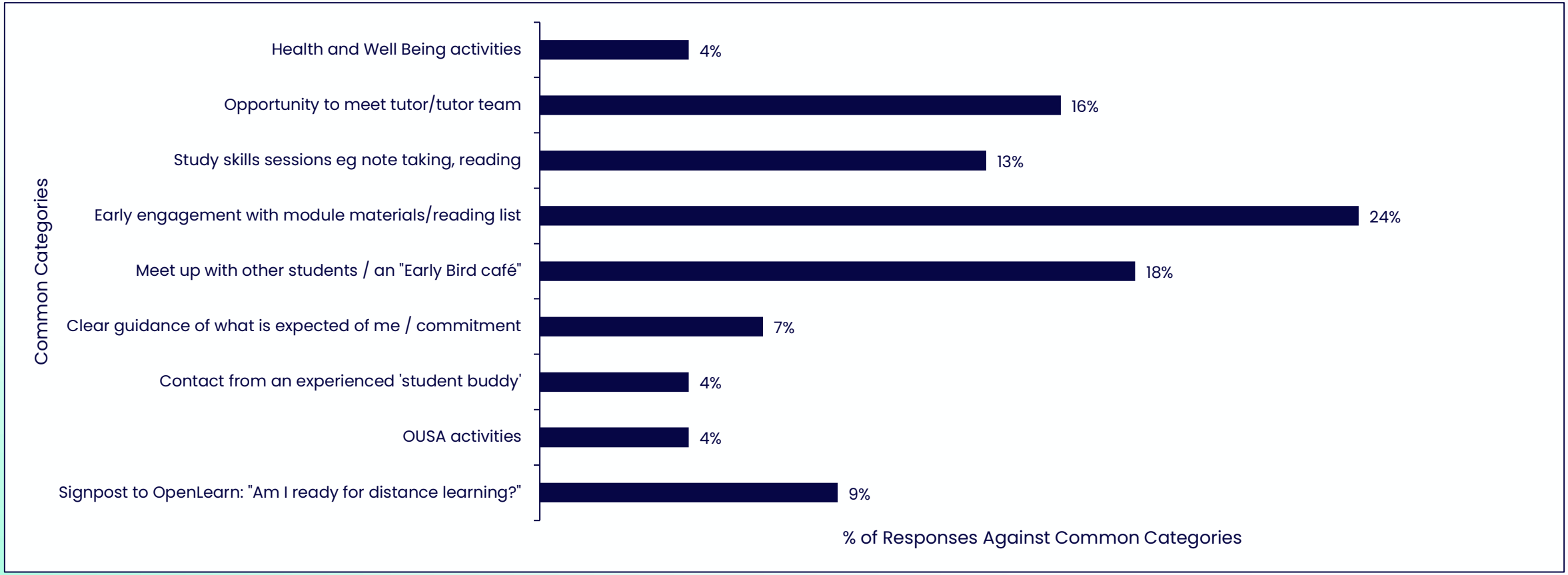
2. What activities should there be for students who register before the final date for registration?



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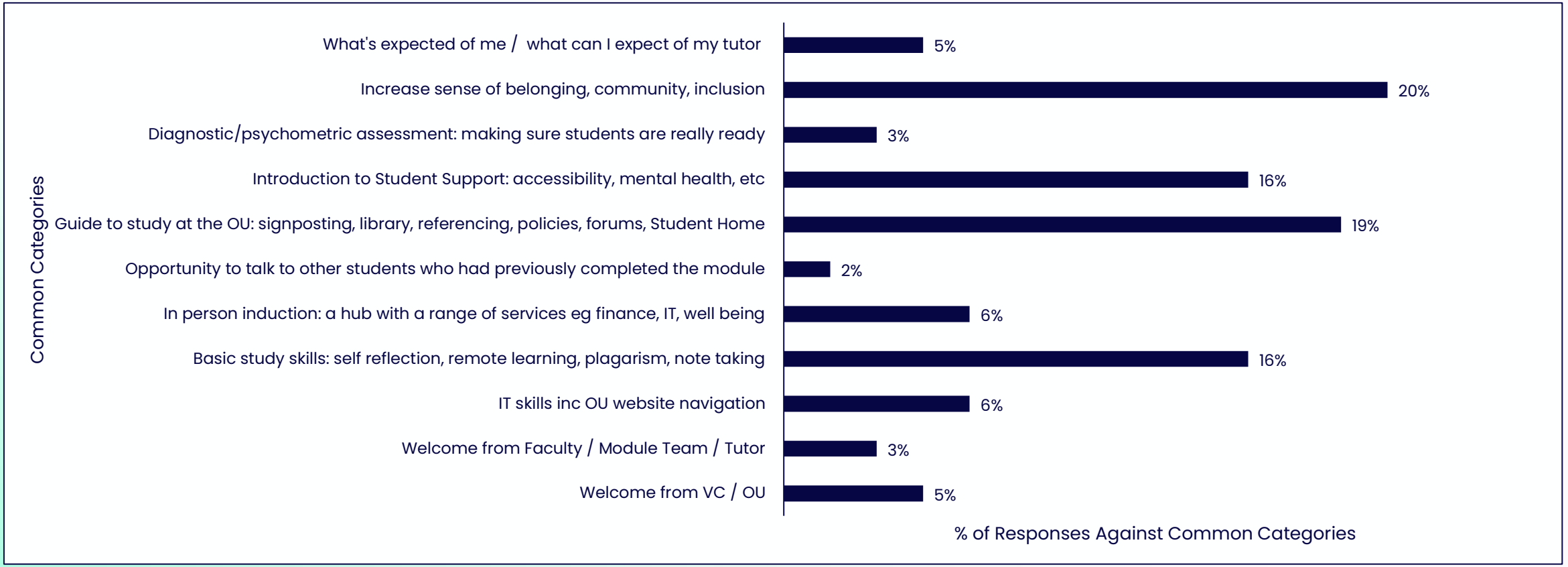
3a. What should be the main priority for the OU's induction provision?



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3b. What should we call the new induction module?

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Induction: general comments

The “Revise and Refresh” maths induction resource should be more widely available and to all

More dates for induction and offered at different times of the day

Induction material should always be accessible so that resources can be revisited as and when required

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Induction

Learning Outcomes session

The Learning Outcomes for Induction

	Students were asked to respond to the Learning Outcomes below and asked to suggest the most important areas that would support these and if there was anything missing	Audience: Online only / All	Feedback source
LO1	Describe what distance learning at the OU involves, including what is expected of me as an OU student and what I can expect from the OU What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO2	Identify available sources of help and support during my time as an OU student? What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO3	Identify current academic strengths and areas for development, and prepare a plan to support a successful start to OU study? What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO4	Explore opportunities to engage with others as part of the OU community What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO5	Identify my study goals and motivations, and reflect on how I can build on these throughout my study journey What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes

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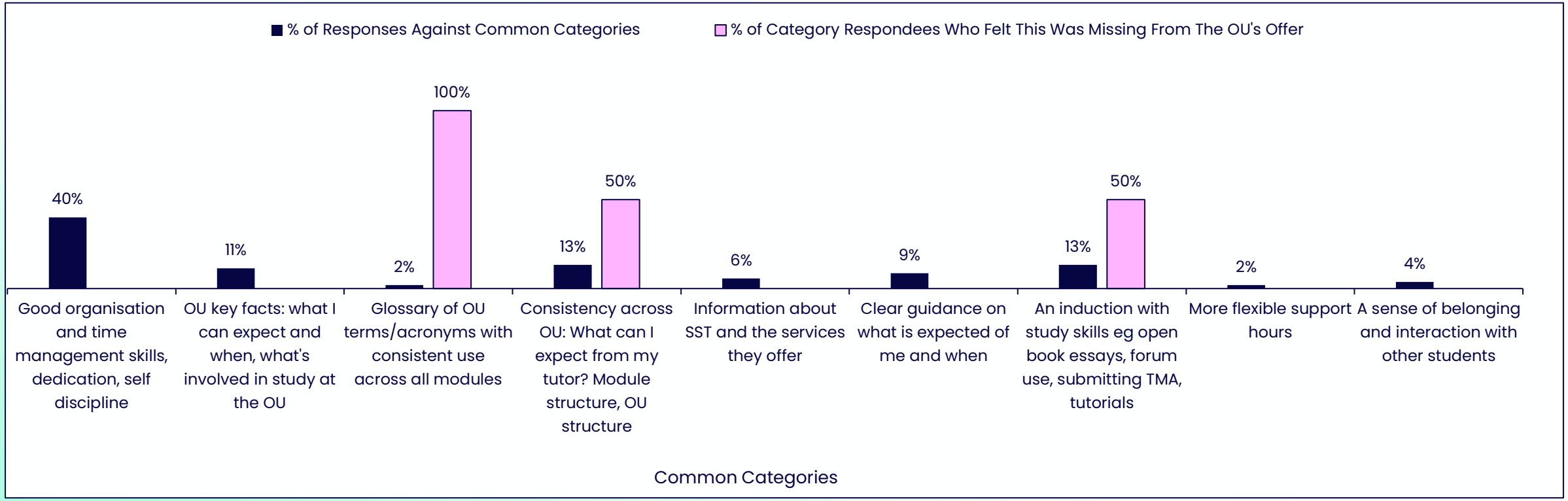
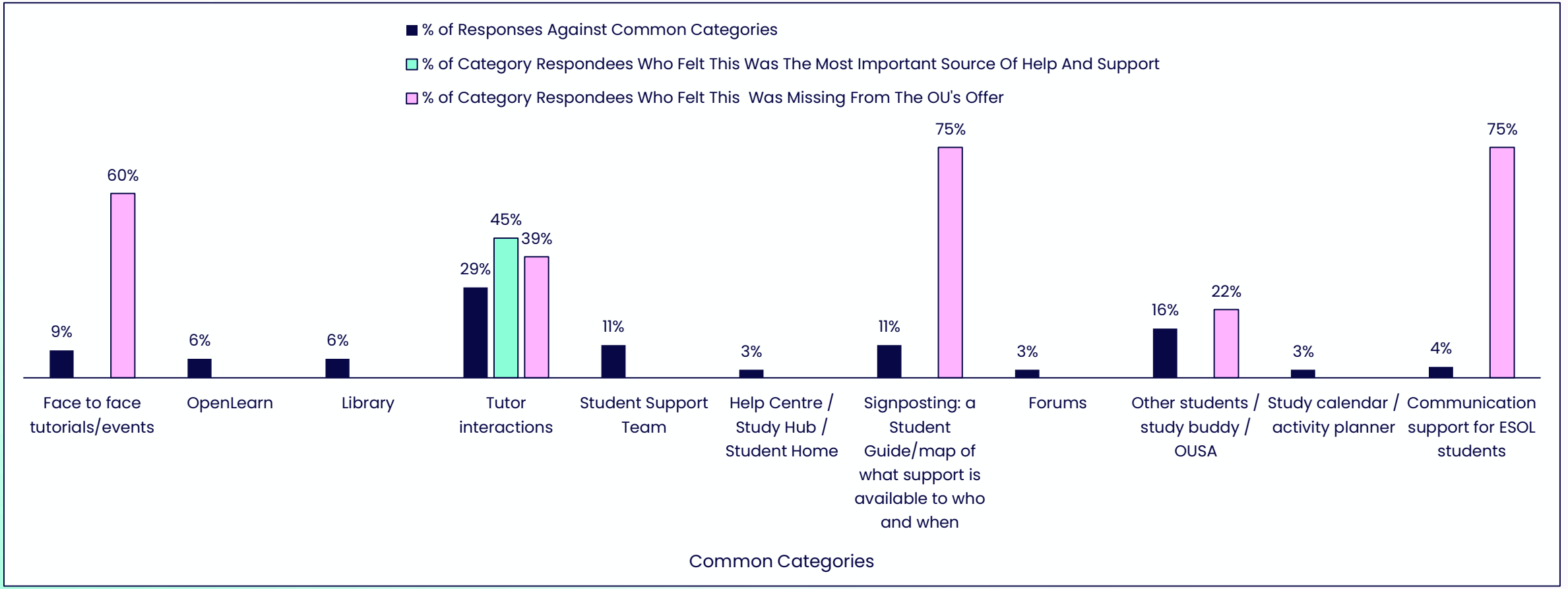
LO1: Describe what distance learning at the OU involves, including what is expected of me as an OU student and what I can expect from the OU

What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?



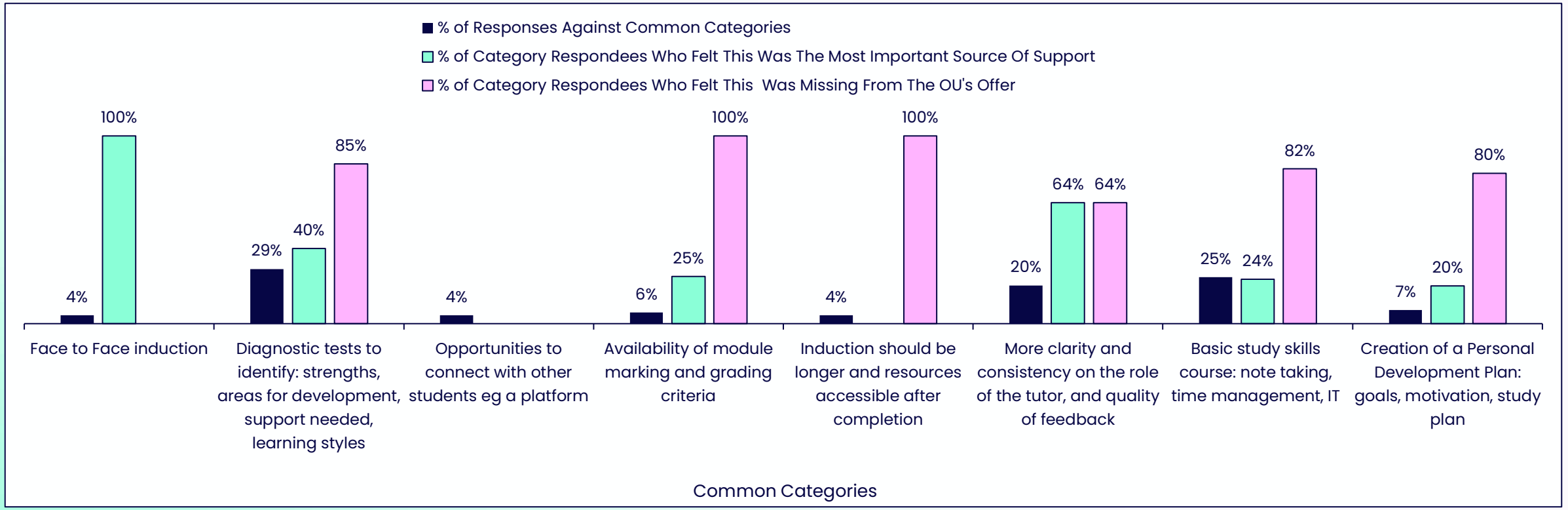
LO2: Identify available sources of help and support during my time as an OU student?

What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?



LO3: Identify current academic strengths and areas for development, and prepare a plan to support a successful start to OU study?

What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?



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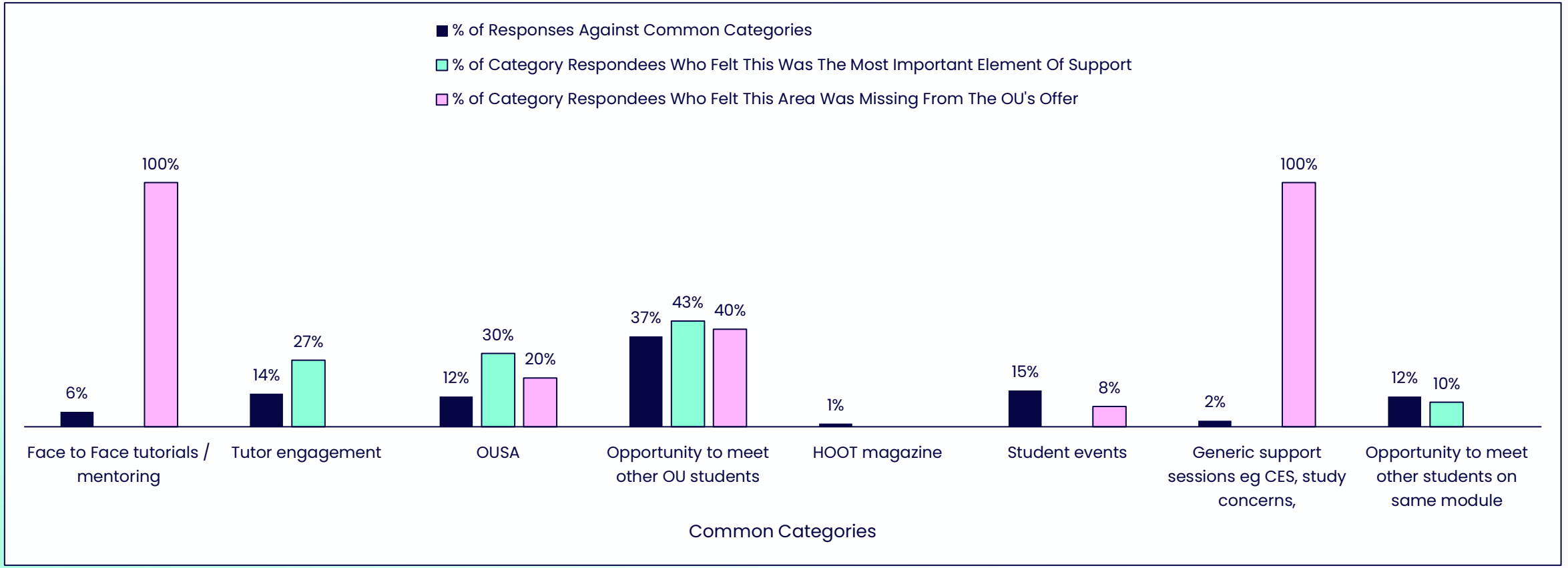
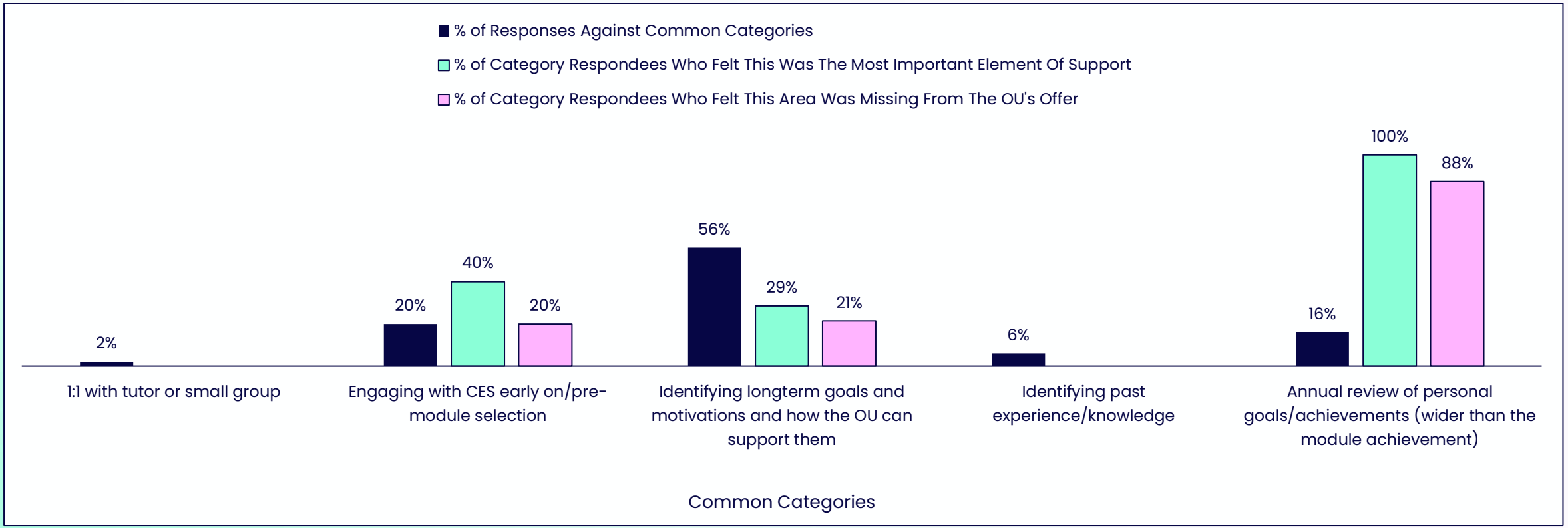
LO4: Explore opportunities to engage with others as part of the OU community

What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?



LO5: Identify my study goals and motivations, and reflect on how I can build on these throughout my study journey

What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?



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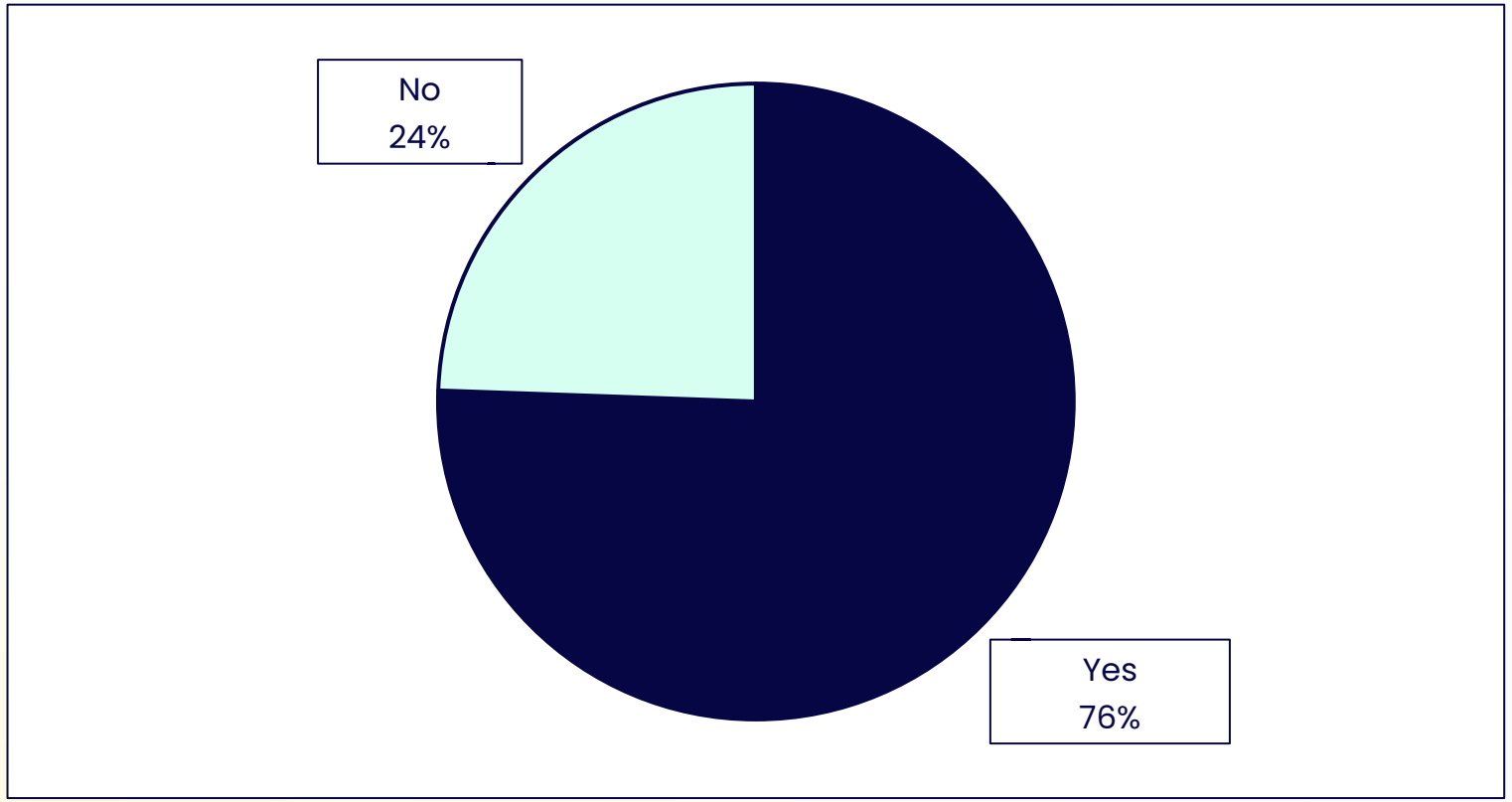
Careers and Employability Service

The questions:

Question No	Question	Audience: Online only / All	Feedback source
1a	Had you heard of the Careers and Employability Services (CES) before signing up to this Consultation?	Online only	Vevox
1b	Had you accessed the services in any way?	Online only	Vevox
2	What should Careers and Employability Services do? / What do they do?	Online only	Padlet
2a	To what extent were you aware of these particular services – do any surprise you?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
2b	Which of these services are of most interest to you?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
2c	Which ones didn't you know about it (if any)?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
2d	Do you feel there are any gaps and what are they?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
2e	What would your dream careers service provide for students?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
3a	What might be the possible issues and concerns that prevent students accessing Careers and Employability Services?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
3b	How could these issues be addressed – what more could the OU do to encourage students to engage with the service?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
4a	To what extent do you think employability and/or encouragement to engage with CES should be embedded into your student journey?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
4b	How and where would that best fit in?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes

1a. Had you heard of the Careers and Employability Services (CES) before signing up to this Consultation?



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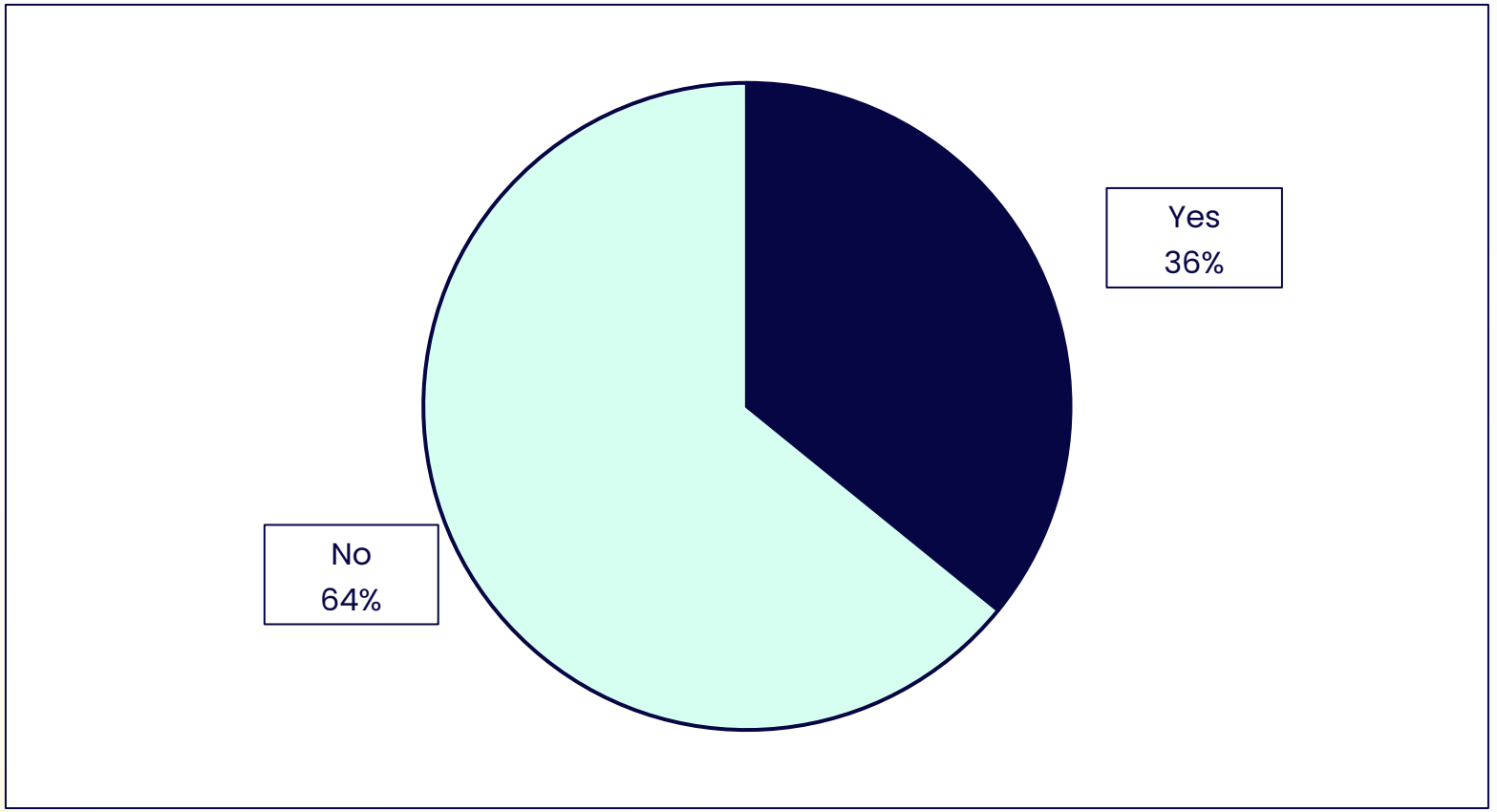
1b. Had you accessed the services in any way?



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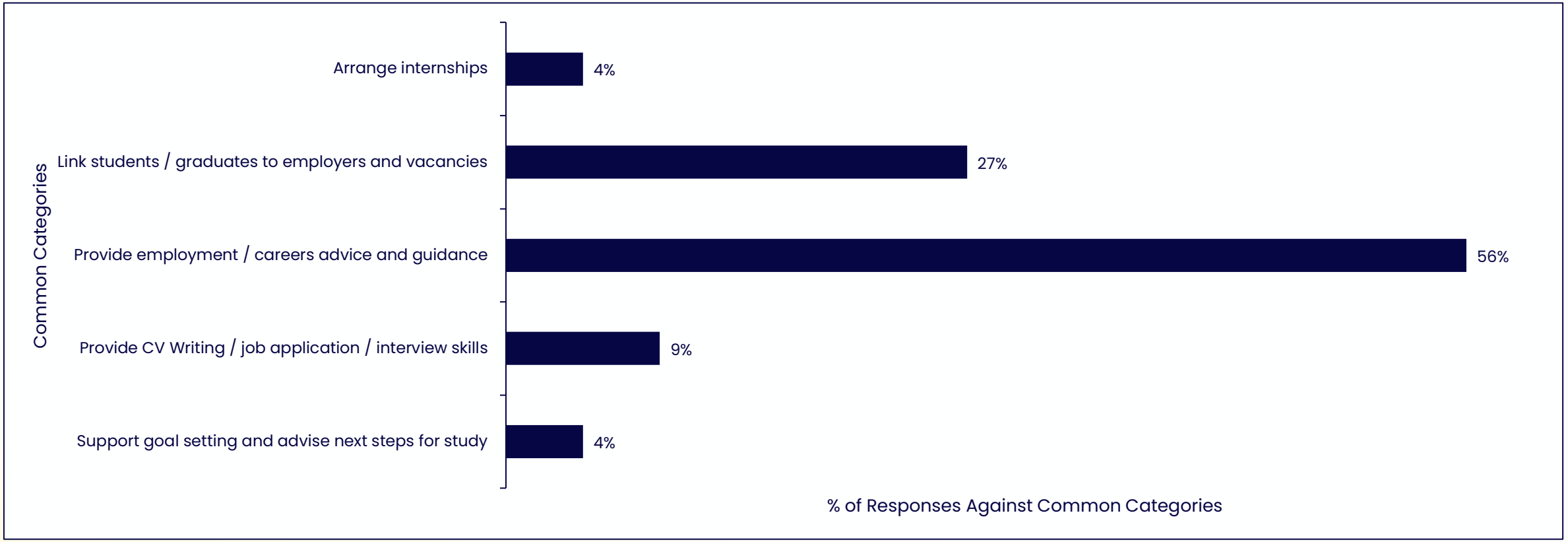
2. What should Careers and Employability Services do? / What do they do?



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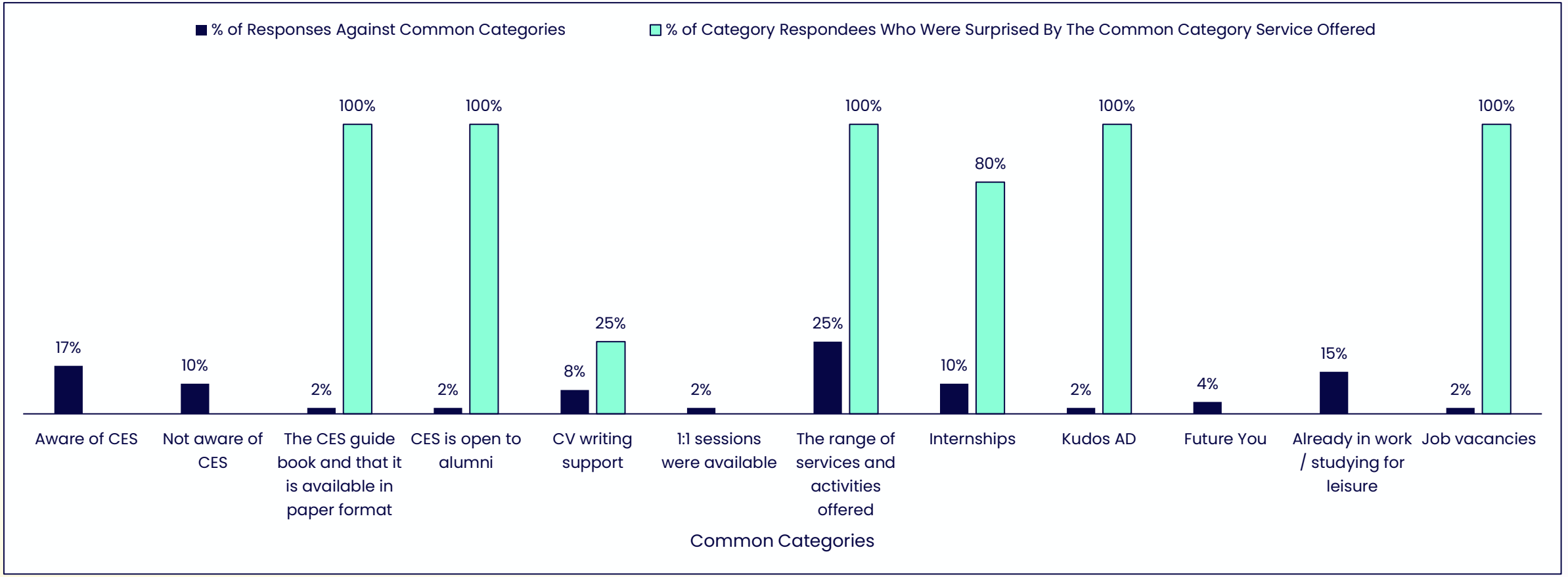
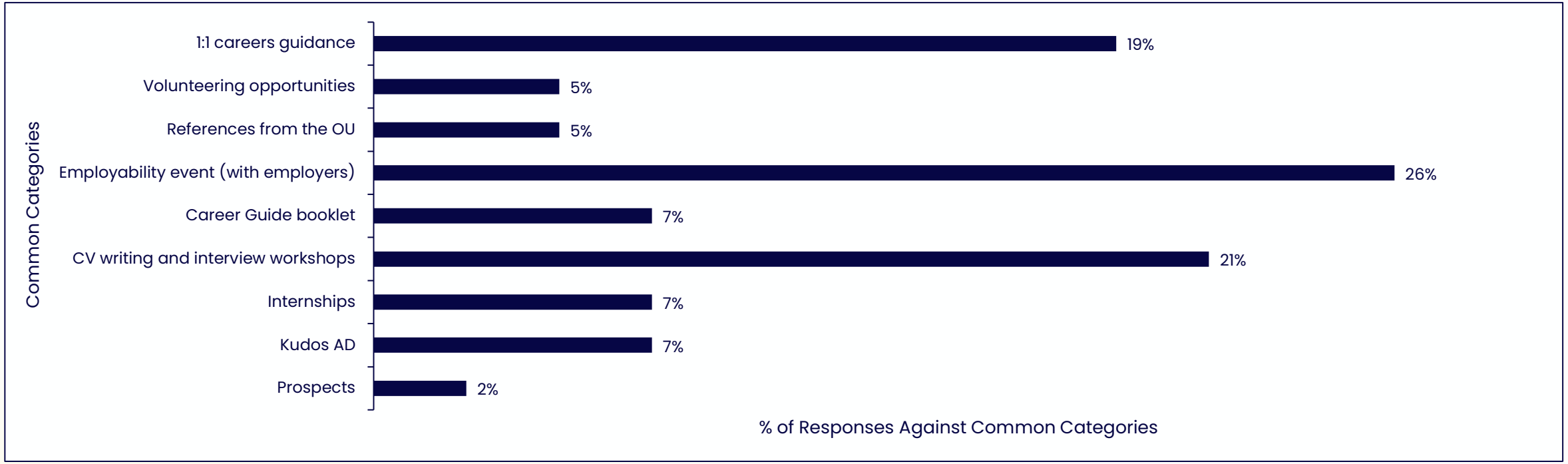
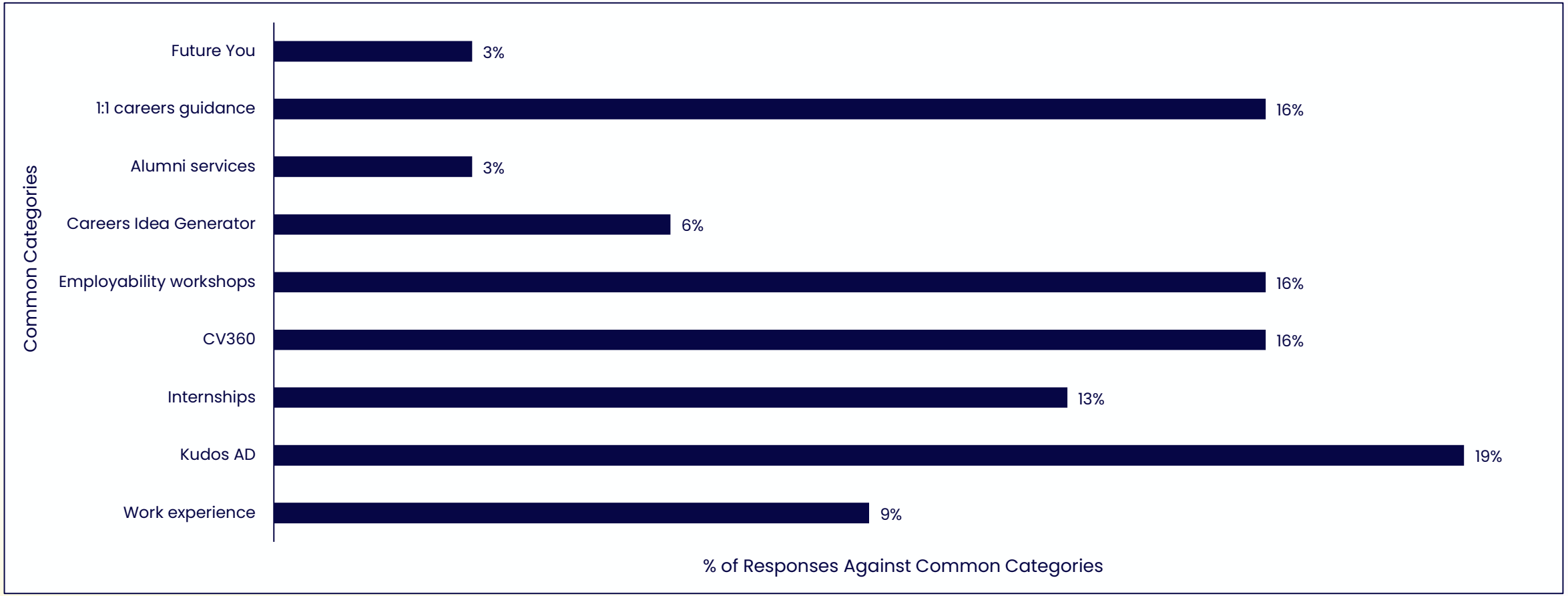
2a. To what extent were you aware of these particular services – do any surprise you?



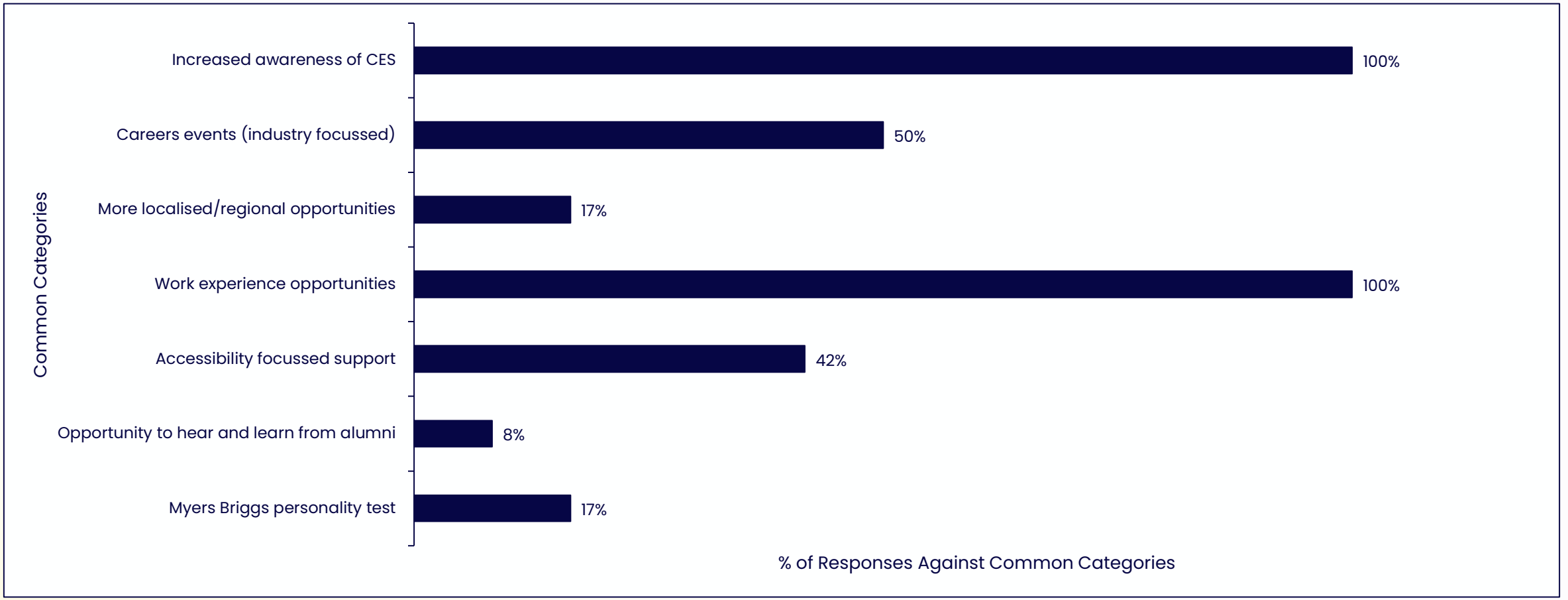
2b. Which of these services are of most interest to you?



2c. Which ones didn't you know about it (if any)?



2d. Do you feel there are any gaps and what are they?



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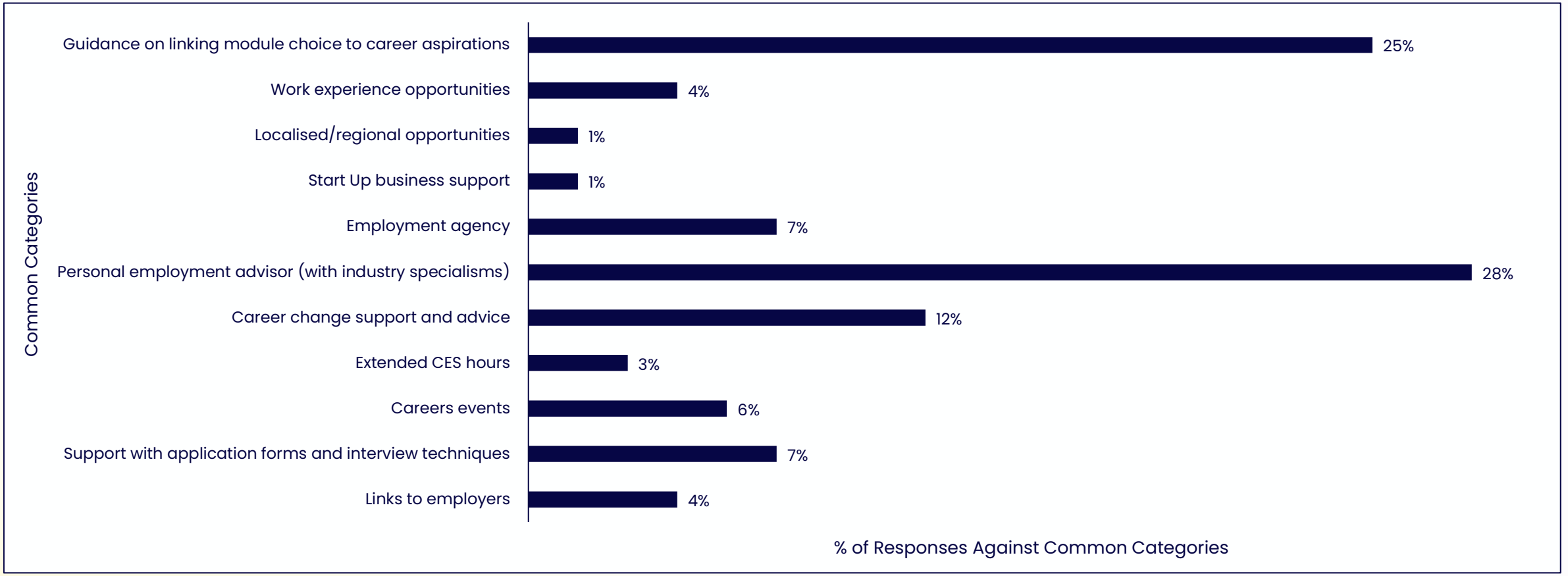
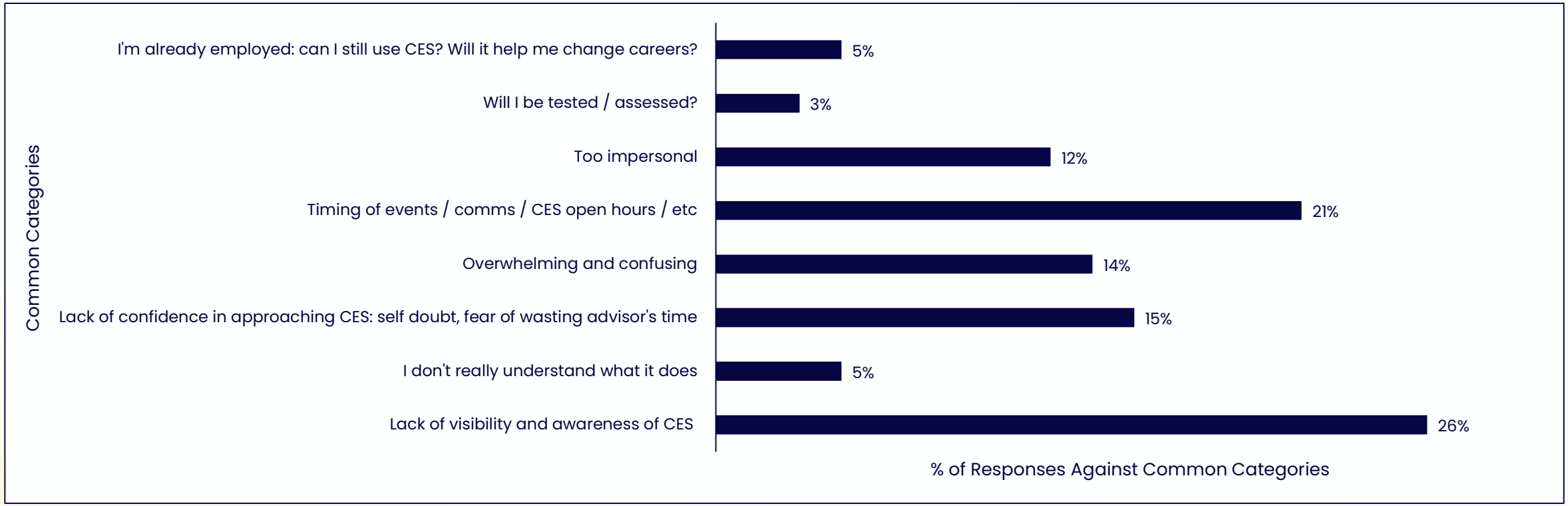
2e. What would your dream careers service provide for students?



3a. What might be the possible issues and concerns that prevent students accessing Careers and Employability Services?



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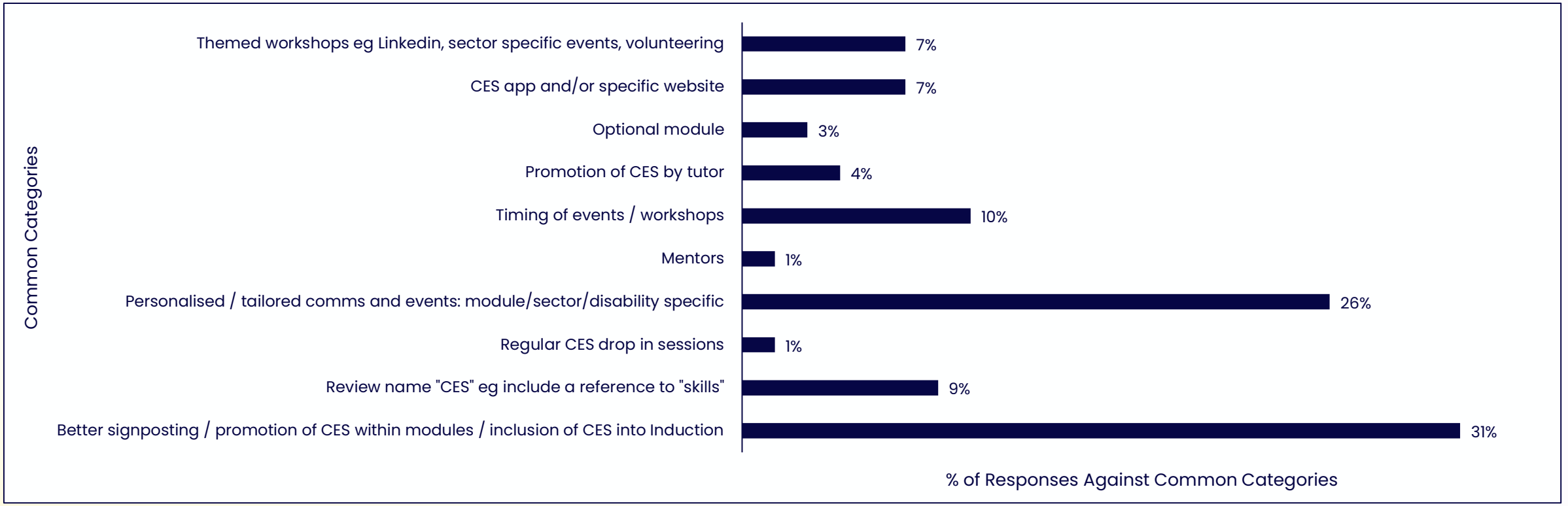
3b. How could these issues be addressed – what more could the OU do to encourage students to engage with the service?



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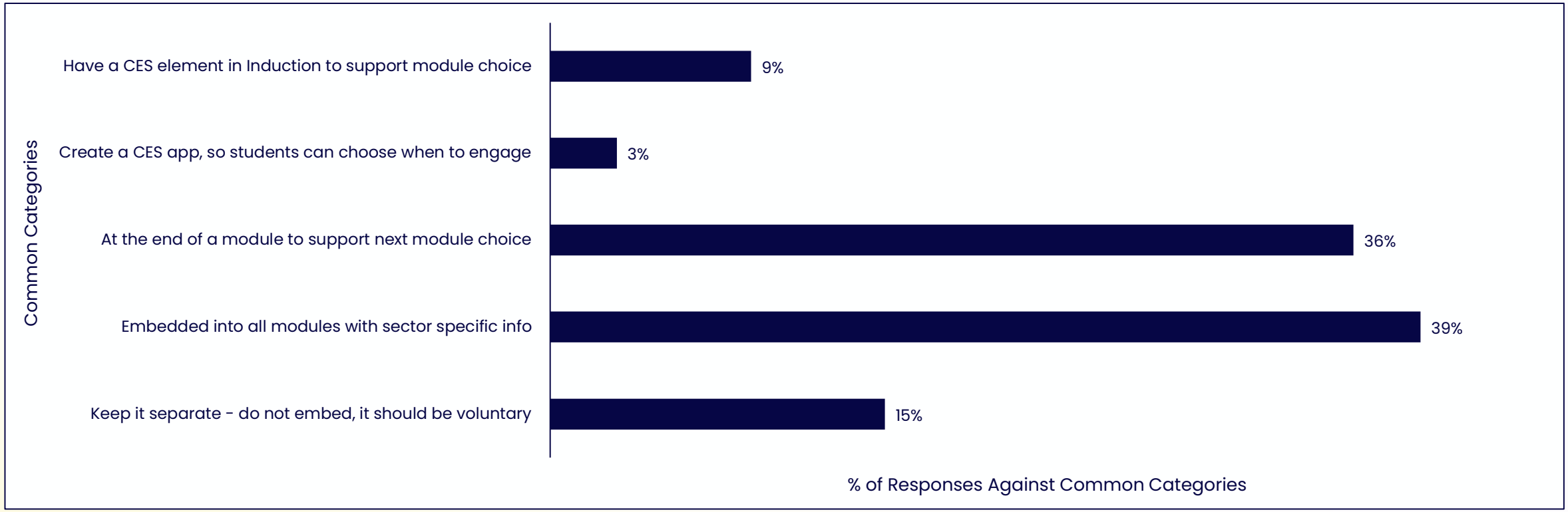
4a. To what extent do you think employability and/or encouragement to engage with CES should be embedded into your student journey?



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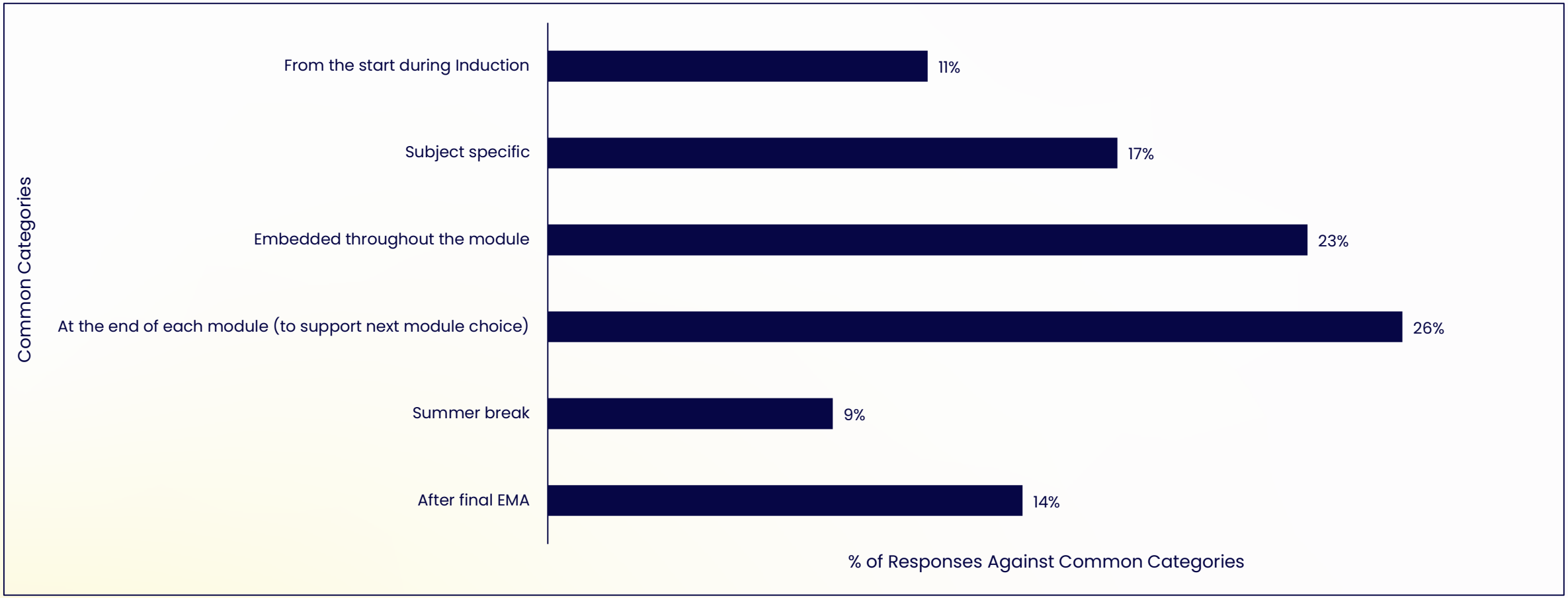
4b. How and where would that best fit in?



Careers and Employability Service – general discussion/comments

Internships opportunities were not subject specific

I would like a CES module (badged)

Some subject sectors need practical skills to help with employability eg laboratory skills

Students would like CES to be "Totally inclusive with inclusion having to be mentioned"

The CES website is hard to use, overwhelming and confusing

Information and guidance available to employers on employing someone with a disability eg Access to Work

Inconsistent embedding of 'Future You' across modules

Advertising campaign aimed at employers highlighting the unique attributes of an OU student

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General Comments And Common Themes

General comments

The number of years I was signing up to was very off putting

Didn't realise that financial help was available for residential schools and equipment

Great support from SST

Students were surprised that credit gained in the first year didn't count toward degree – they said it would have taken the pressure off had they known.

Knowing who the tutor will be on the next module in advance

Wonderful to receive printed module materials

Difficulty using SCONUL since COVID

When student told tutor that they were dyslexic tutor said 'but you speak so well', tutor didn't signpost to any additional help available. More training needed for tutors.

Registration process was confusing

Access to previous module resources for the entire duration of study

Complaints and Appeals webpage should signpost to OUSA Individual Rep service

Some modules need "in person" options eg lab schools

Would like a 'contract' between OU and student

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Common themes

- Lack of consistency regarding tutor interactions, levels of input and commitment, willingness to engage and quality of feedback
- Many participants expressed a lack of confidence in approaching their tutor – “bothering them”
- Across all questions the need for support and guidance on choice of next module was requested to include CES advice, previous student feedback, taster sessions, etc
- More face to face interactions to include online conversations with ‘cameras on’
- Request for a “personal tutor” to support a student throughout entire journey
- Lack clarity OU websites
- Option for students to purchase printed materials
- OU support and resources are good but overwhelming
- Students asked for a platform to encourage informal interaction amongst students
- OpenLearn format and resources were highly praised
- A glossary of OU terms and lingo
- Module start isn’t announced, its very passive – people who register early may miss the start

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