

Current and Potential Future use of Facilities on the Crichton Estate

by

**Students Attending Academic Institutions
located on, and adjacent to, it**

Independent evaluation

by

Crichton Institute

January 2018



Crichton Institute

Crichton Institute

This study was commissioned and funded by the Crichton Trust and undertaken by researchers based in the *Crichton Institute*, Annie Wild and David Clelland.

Crichton Institute is an integral part of the University of Glasgow School of Interdisciplinary Studies which is situated on the Crichton University campus in Dumfries. *Crichton Institute* is a one-stop hub for all aspects of research and development and for Knowledge Exchange relative to the social, economic and cultural regeneration of rural areas, including South-West Scotland. Its staff work in collaboration with a range of academic and strategic partners who have a locus on the Crichton campus and with wider national and international partners. It is interdisciplinary in its approach to understanding issues and offering solutions.

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Executive Summary

- I. There are clear indications that students registered with the academic institutions on/adjacent to the Crichton Estate¹ wish to see new and enhanced facilities on-site and provided they meet student-identified needs and preferences they will be well used and encourage students to spend more time onsite. To achieve this it will be important to fully engage with the student-body as any proposal for new facilities or enhancements to existing facilities is taken forward.
- II. Many students are unaware of the range of existing facilities on the Estate and unsure of which they are permitted to use. This is one cause of under-utilisation that could be remedied through an appropriate *awareness raising strategy*. Students also identify the need for *improved signage*.
- III. A *student-focussed café with extended opening hours* emerges as the most sought-after improvement. Students are clear that they require ease of access to a wider range of catering options offering better value for money, good quality, affordable food and refreshments. They exhibit a strong preference for catering facilities to be located within the educational institution they attend or buildings in which they are taught.
- IV. There is a level of demand for a student bar that is worthy of consideration although the case is not clear-cut. Significant proportions identify a need and preference for a bar contained within a dedicated Student Union-type facility. Others are looking for new or improved social and study spaces, more options for places that are quiet, comfortable, have longer opening hours, lend themselves to small study groups and are additional to the café and bar discussed. Some of these elements could potentially be taken forward by the individual institutions.
- V. There is a surprising lack of awareness of, but significant level of interest in, outdoor facilities for sport and physical activity (e.g. football, cricket, green gym, walking, jogging, and cycling) with evidence that a strategy to raise awareness of the existing infrastructure for outdoor physical activity would increase its use. Students are also seeking expansion of existing gym facilities. This could take one of two forms; a) expansion of the DGCol gym (e.g. equipment and opening hours with a streamlined induction) or, b) a new, stand-alone facility.
- VI. There are indications that students' use of campus facilities is linked to both the cost and scheduling of public transport. The Crichton Trust may wish to consider a lobbying role with, or on behalf, of the students and/or in collaboration with the Universities and Crichton Campus Leadership Group for the enhancement of public transport options to and from the campus.
- VII. A range of minor changes with potential to deliver speedy enhancement of the student experience have been identified. These include: a cash-line and facility to use credit/debit cards in catering outlets; outdoor seating; quiet study space; improved access to the swimming pool.
- VIII. Affordability is paramount.

¹ Notably the University of Glasgow, University of the West of Scotland and Dumfries and Galloway College. Scotland' Rural College is not included in this analysis by institution attended as the sample / overall number of students (3fte) is too small to provide meaningful percentages.

Introduction

Set in a 100-acre (40 ha) park the **Crichton Estate** in Dumfries incorporates a business park; a university campus (which serves as a remote campus for the University of Glasgow (UoG) and the University of the West of Scotland (UWS)); is home to Scotland's Rural University College Dairy Research and Innovation Centre; provides a base for the Open University in Scotland (OUIs); and, includes an hotel, conference centre and the Crichton Memorial Church. In 2008, Dumfries and Galloway College relocated from their previous site to a new purpose-built building on land adjacent to the Crichton campus.

The Crichton Business Park is currently comprised of 73 businesses which collectively employ over 1,000 individuals. The FE and HE institutions have close to 7,000 students (*Table 1*).

Image 1: The Crichton Estate

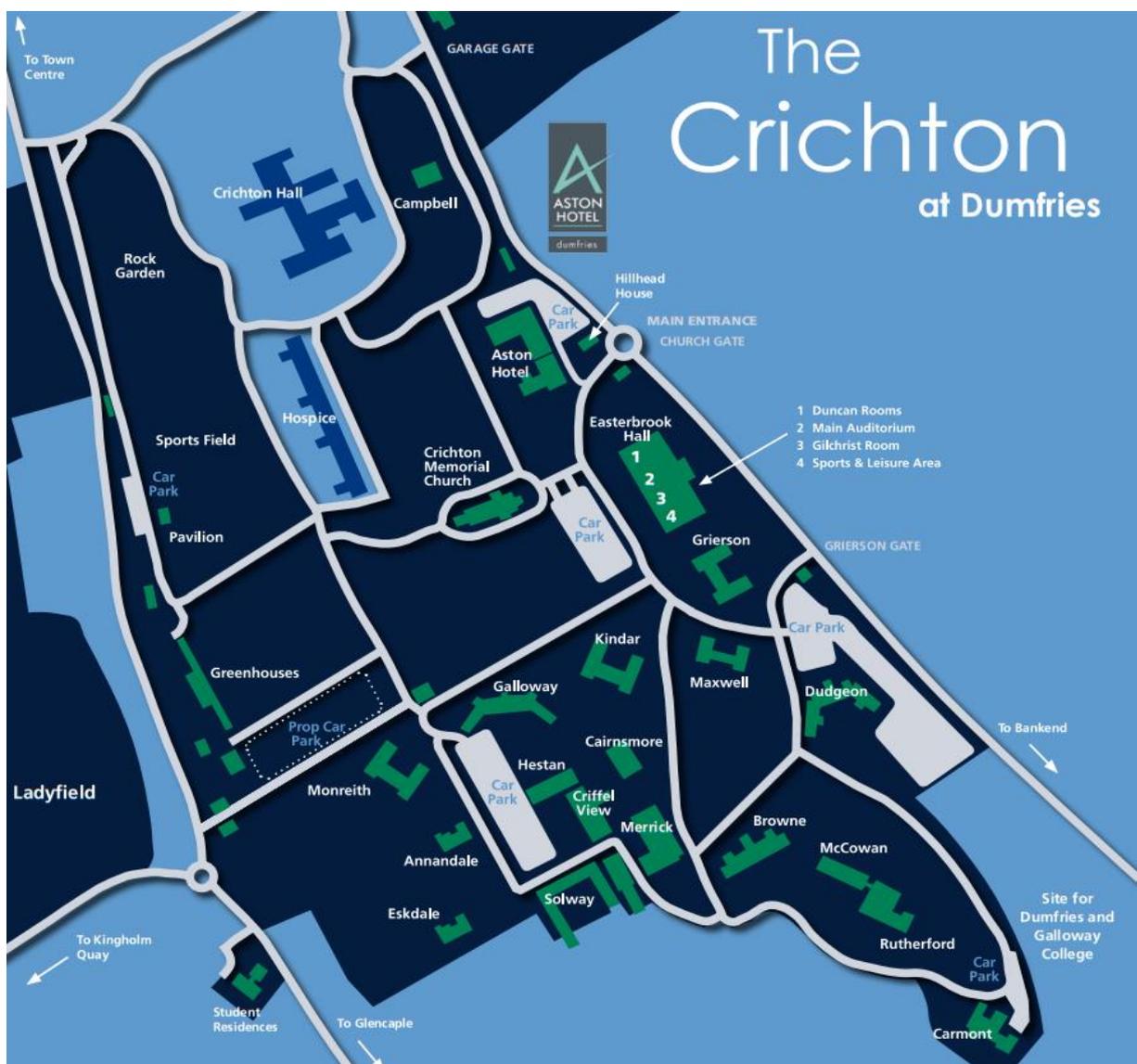


Table 1. Students registered for study on the Crichton campus in academic year 2015-16

FE/HE Institution	Number of Students 2015-16
Dumfries & Galloway College	5,376 (725 HE)
Scotland's Rural University College	4 (PG)
Open University in Scotland	446
University of Glasgow	344
University of the West of Scotland	639
Total number of students registered to study	6,811

While the Local Authority retains ownership of the site it is managed by the Crichton Trust. The Trust holds the lease and is responsible for the sustainable development of the estate in line with its mission "To preserve, enhance and interpret the historic character of the Crichton and develop it with a clear identity as a place of educational, commercial, recreational, cultural and artistic excellence taking account of accessibility and stakeholder and community needs for the benefit of Dumfries and Galloway as a whole".

In addition to its role as Landlord the Trust operates a range of facilities on the site. These include:

- **Fresco's café:** Open from 11am to 2pm Monday to Friday. Offers a wide range of snack lunches e.g. soup, coffee and filled rolls. Small indoor seating area and two benches outside.
- **Neuro's Bar, Restaurant and Spa:** Food served from 10.30am to late afternoon except at weekends when food is available until 08.30pm. Swimming pool and spa.
- **Easterbrook Hall:** live entertainment and conference venue.
- **Parkland & Walking Routes:** 85 acres of open access parkland including a rock garden, arboretum and rose gardens.
- **Football pitch.**

These facilities are complemented by others located in buildings occupied by the academic institutions and run by them e.g:

- **University of Glasgow/University of West of Scotland:** Small *Coffee Bar* serving a range of confectionary and snack lunches in the Rutherford-McCowan building. Limited opening hours.
- **Dumfries and Galloway College:** Cafés (including a *Costa* Coffee concession) and a small gymnasium open during College open hours.
- **Crichton University Campus Students' Association (CUCSA)** organises and runs student social activities, including Freshers and Refreshers Weeks. Office and meeting space provided by UoG in Maxwell House; CUCSA Officer post jointly funded by UoG and UWS.

The student body is recognised as the key user group for these facilities.

Ease of access to a range of recreational and social facilities is increasingly recognised as an important factor for individuals when making decisions about where to study and in relation to the quality of the student experience. Recognising this and reflecting that part of its mission which directs the Trust towards developing the Crichton campus as a place of 'academic excellence', the Trust commissioned the *Crichton Institute* to undertake an independent assessment of the level of

students' usage of existing social and recreational facilities on the estate, to identify and ascertain the level of demand for additional facilities and their likely usage by students attending the academic institutions located on and adjacent to the Crichton Estate.

Data Collection and Survey Sample

Data was gathered using a bespoke survey administered on-line and face-to-face, and with the consent of the education institutions involved. Ethical approval for the study was granted through the University of Glasgow Ethical Approval Process.

The use of 2 sampling methods ensured representation from the 3 educational institutions with significant student numbers studying on the Crichton estate (*Table 2*) and made the questionnaire accessible to those who are less engaged with their educational institution via online channels.

Analyses of the quantitative data were undertaken using a spreadsheet created in 'excel'. Qualitative text was first reviewed to ensure a level of consensus, triangulated and used to illustrate the findings from the quantitative analysis.

As is generally the case with research of this nature, findings come with a health warning. Based on headcount (as opposed to student fte) the response rate was low. Also, participation was voluntary and the possibility that students with particularly strong affiliation to the campus, or interest in its future development, were over-sampled is recognised. This means that no guarantee that the sample is statistically representative of the entire student population can be given. In addition, since asking individuals to predict *future behaviour* in a questionnaire inevitably has greater scope for error than asking about *existing behaviour*, variables addressing future use of facilities should be interpreted with a degree of caution. However, even when taking these moderating factors into account, the data evidences sufficient levels of interest in proposed facilities to inform future planning by the Crichton Trust and the academic institutions.

Table 2. Educational Institution attended on Crichton campus (student headcount)

Educational institution	Online Responses	Pen and Paper Responses	TOTAL
Dumfries and Galloway College	33	27	60
University of Glasgow	110	0	110
University of the West of Scotland	7	15	22
Scotland's Rural College	3	0	3
Not Known	15	0	15
All Educational Institutions	168	42	210

As discussed, to maximise the response rate and ensure a strong response from each of the educational institutions based on the campus the survey was administered both on-line and in person, and encompassed a diversity of students at all stages of their academic career (*Table 3*). As shown in *Table 2*, 210 students responded. These comprised 60 from Dumfries and Galloway College; 110 from the University of Glasgow; 22 from the University of the West of Scotland; 3 from Scotland's Rural College; and, a further 15 who chose not to identify which institution they were registered with.

Table 3. Students participating in the survey - by year of study

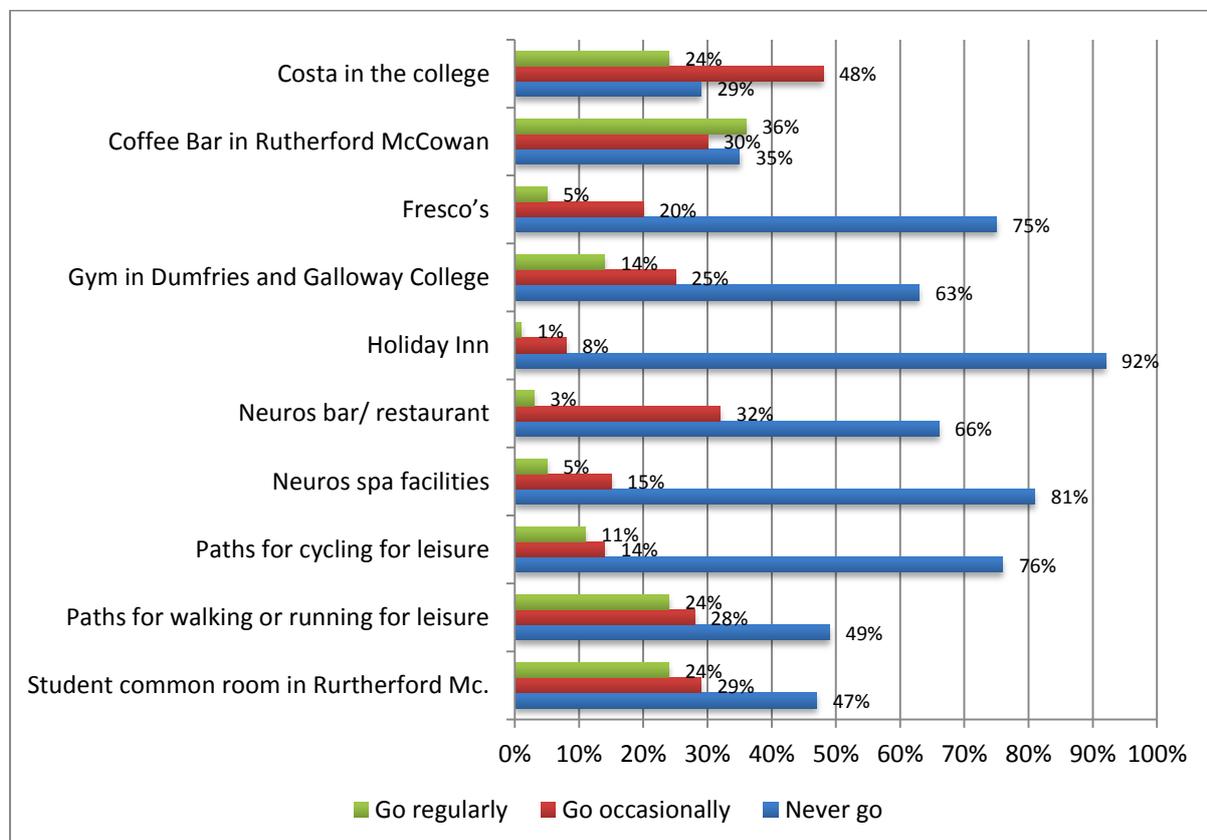
Year of Study	Responses	Response Percent
1 st Year	82	39%
2 nd Year	50	24%
3 rd Year	26	12%
4 th Year	27	13%
Year of Study not Identified	25	12%
Total	210	100%

The majority of respondents live in reasonably close proximity to the campus during term time: 57% living in the DG1 and DG2 postcode areas (east and west Dumfries); 10% in DG12 (Annan and surrounding area); 10% in DG7 (Castle Douglas and surrounding area); and, 9% in DG11 (Lockerbie and surrounding area). 7% reported staying in student halls of residence, 40% in private rented accommodation and 39% with family. Around 50% of the sample have their own transport a further 36% stated that they did not. The remaining 14% opted not to respond to the question.

Survey Findings

Current use of existing facilities on the Crichton Estate

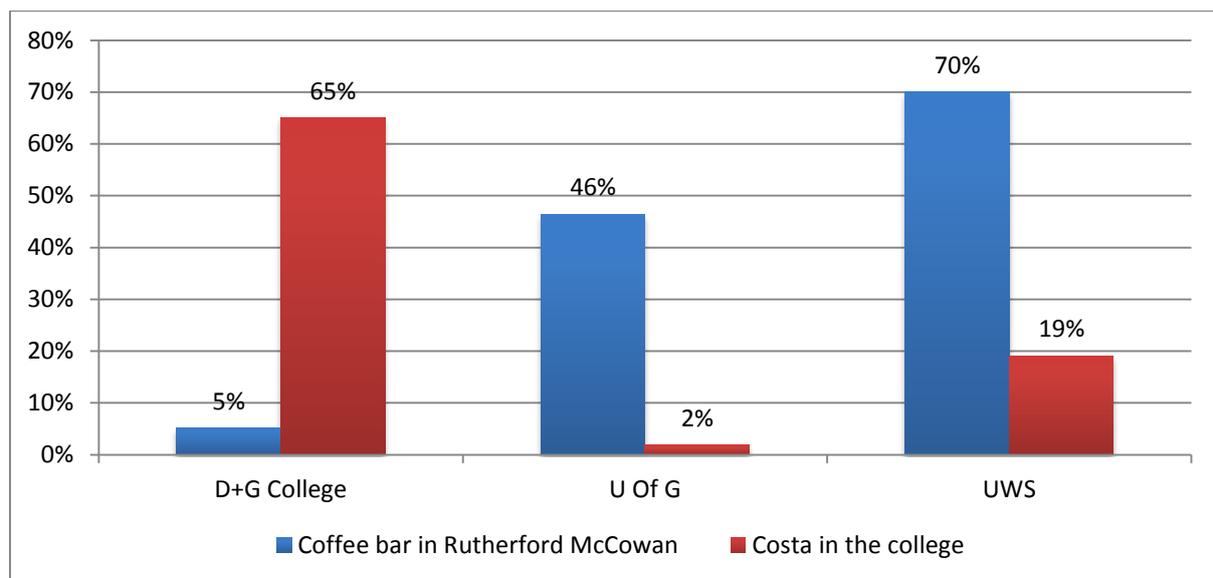
Figure 1. Use of current facilities on the Crichton Estate



The survey provided respondents with an opportunity to express their views in free text. In these qualitative comments students typically highlight the “lovely campus setting” while noting that “there isn't a lot to do during breaks or free time”. That view manifests in *Figure 1* which demonstrates a) paucity of use of on-site facilities by students and b), that those located within either the DGCol building adjacent to the site or in UoG’s Rutherford-McCowan building attract the greatest footfall. For example, 36% of students make regular use² of the *coffee bar* in the Rutherford McCowan building and 24% the *Costa Coffee* in DGCol but only 5% make regular use of *Fresco* and a substantial 75% have never used that facility. *Neuros* and the *Holiday Inn* are rarely used, with only 3% and 1% of students reporting regular use.

Respondents exhibit a strong preference for catering facilities located within the educational institution they attend or buildings in which they are taught i.e. 65% of DGCol students report frequent use of *Costa Coffee* in the DGCol building; 46% of UoG students make frequent use of the *coffee bar* in Rutherford McCowan as do 70% of the students attending UWS, of whom only 19% make regular use of *Costa Coffee*. This is seen in *Figure 2* which shows the frequency of use of these facilities by attendees at each of these 3 educational institutions³.

Figure 2: Regular use of the Coffee Bar in Rutherford-McCowan and Costa Coffee in DGCol

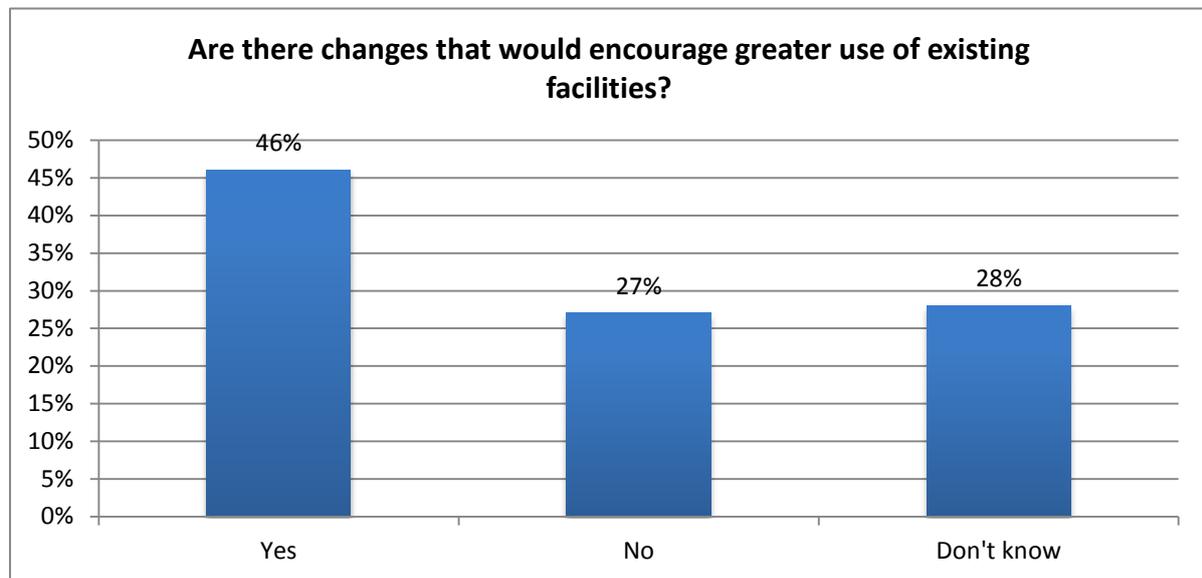


² Throughout this report attending a venue ‘regularly’ is defined as a student going half the days they are on campus or more frequently. ‘Occasionally’ is defined as anyone reporting they have been at least once but typically less than half the days they are on campus. ‘Never’ includes those who had not heard of the venue.

³ SRUC is not included in analysis by institution attended as the sample, and indeed overall number, of students is too small to give a meaningful percentage.

Potential for increased use of facilities

Figure 3. Whether changes would encourage greater use of existing facilities



When asked 'Are there any changes that could be made which would encourage you to use the existing facilities on the Crichton Campus more often?' 46% of students responded 'yes' and a further 28% responded 'don't know'. This is shown in *Figure 3* and suggests **there is potential for making changes that would encourage students to spend more time on campus.**

Figure 4. Potential for change to increase student usage of existing facilities

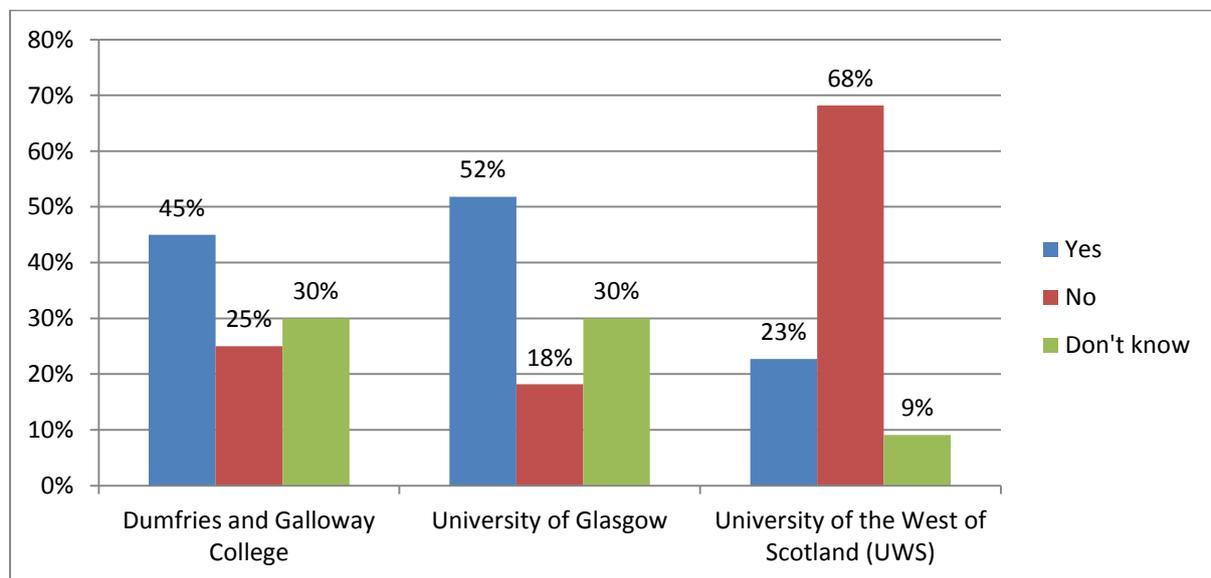


Figure 4 presents analyses of responses to the same question by educational institution attended and shows that just under half of DGC students (45%) and just over half of UoG students (52%) feel that **changes could be made which would encourage greater use of the existing facilities.** 23% of UWS students feel the same way. Respondents who felt that 'no changes could be made which would encourage their greater use of facilities' were asked why this was the case.

Figure 5. Why changes to existing facilities would not increase their usage (derived from multiple response options)

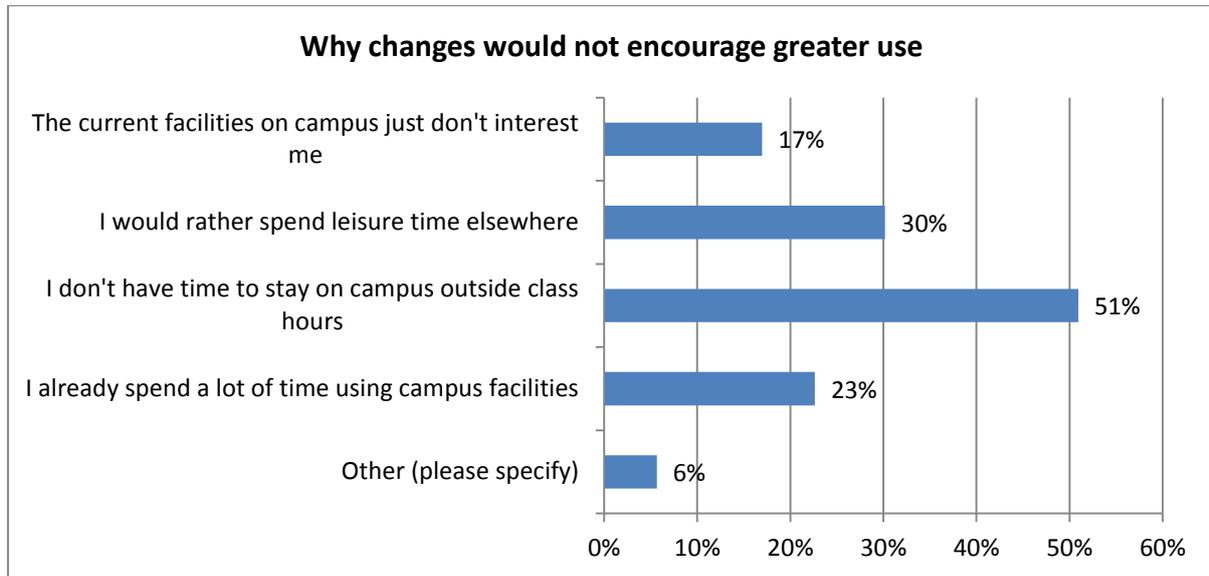


Figure 5 shows that for just over half (51%) of those who felt that ‘no changes could be made which would encourage their greater use of facilities’ time is an issue. As one student put it:

‘Campus facilities are great but due to travelling between [] during schooldays, I have no extra time to use anything else but Costa or the Cafe in Rutherford/McGowan.’

Whilst such structural barriers are beyond the control of the Crichton Trust the 30% of respondents who indicated that they ‘would rather spend leisure time elsewhere’ together with the 17% who said ‘the current facilities on campus just don’t interest me’ suggests **there may be a cohort of students who would spend more time on-campus if new or enhanced recreational / catering facilities that addressed their needs were opened**. Typically, these students did not entirely exclude themselves from further usage and expressed the following views:

‘A student bar or café that had longer hours would be great, particularly if the building open hours was longer as well, it would encourage students to spend more time on campus.’

‘Comfy seating area, better choice of places for food and refreshments, or lunchtime activities, perhaps fitness classes.’

Figure 6. Would changes to existing facilities encourage student usage - by age cohort

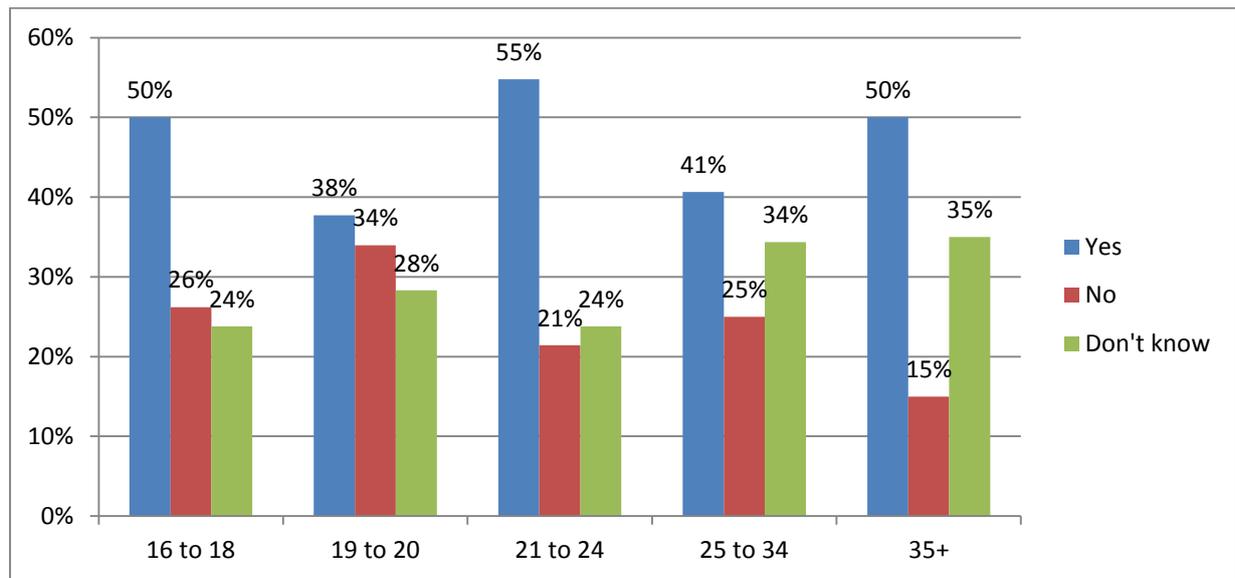
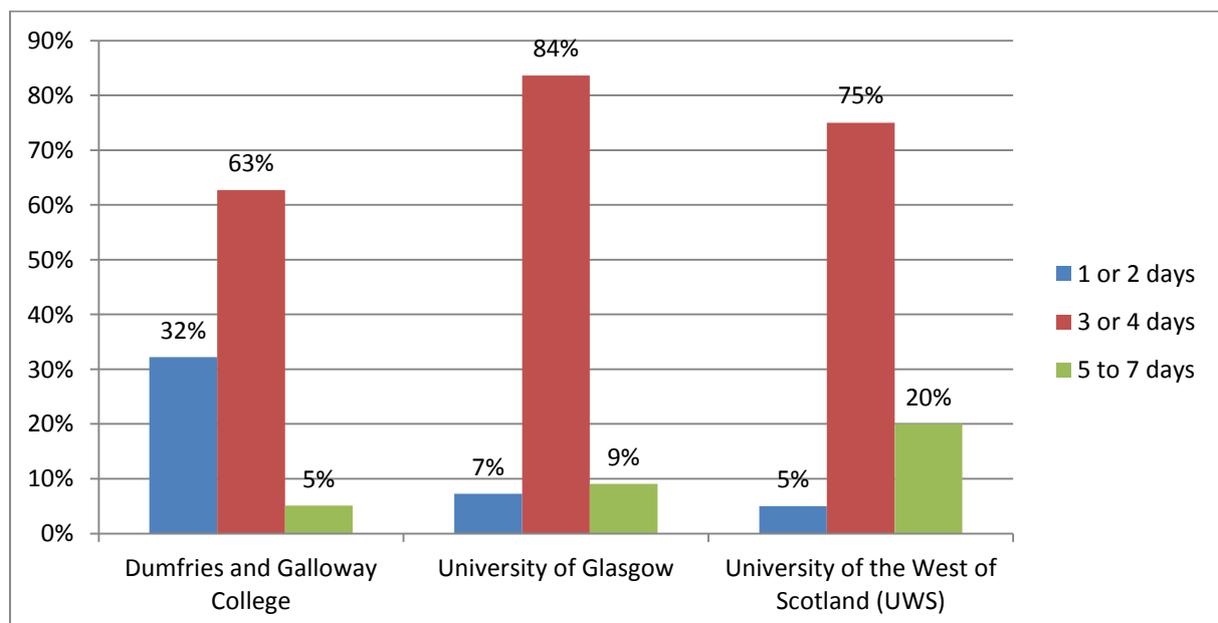


Figure 6 shows the breakdown of responses to the question 'are there any changes that could be made which would encourage you to use existing facilities on Crichton campus more often' by respondents' age and that **in each cohort the majority believe that changes to existing facilities would encourage greater use.**

To acquire a more nuanced understanding of students' use of existing facilities, their views on the need for changes and the potential to increase their use in the future, respondents were asked how many days per week they are on-campus.

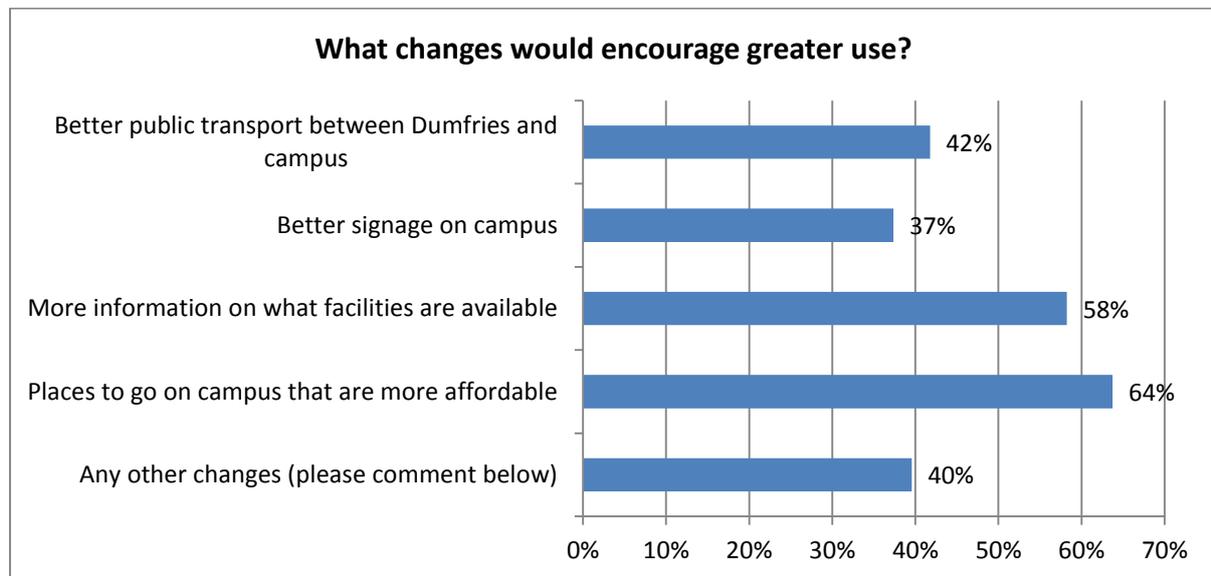
Figure 7. Days per week students are on campus - by educational institution



Time spent on-campus is, in part, conditioned by each Institution's teaching calendar and the requirements of an individual's programme of study. For example, there are institutional variations

in 'term time' and many students (across institutions) are required to undertake placements off-campus. However, as *Figure 7* shows, a majority of students from all 3 institutions are on-campus on 3 or 4 days per week (UoG 84%; UWS 75%; DGCol 63%) while a further 5% - 20% attend 5 to 7 days per week. DGCol students generally spend the least number of days on campus with about a third (32%) attending on only 1 or 2 days per week.

Figure 8. Changes that would encourage greater use of existing facilities



Students who expressed the view that changes to existing facilities would encourage them to spend more time on campus were asked (via a multiple-choice question) what those changes might be and, as *Figure 8* shows, 58% highlight the **need for more information about the facilities that are available** and 37% the **need for better signage**.

For a majority (64%), **affordability is paramount** with respondents typically expressing the following views:

'Food cafe in Rutherford McGowan is good but very expensive for a campus'

'No idea why the healthy salad bar is so expensive'

'More food options that are affordable within the campus'

'Café in Rutherford-McCowan is over-priced'

'Prices within the College seem steep considering it's for students'

Assuming the sample to be representative of the student body as a whole, a significant proportion (at least 36%) have no access to private transport and are reliant on the public transport system. A significant 42% selected 'Better public transport between Dumfries and the Crichton Campus/ Dumfries Campus' when asked what changes would encourage their greater use of facilities (*Figure 8*). A number highlighted **the desirability of free bus passes/reduced fares for university students and / or a more regular bus service to and from the town of Dumfries e.g.**

‘Free buses or more buses to the university as unlike the college we don't get free transport despite being in the same area’

‘Mostly public transport between the town centre and The Crichton, the buses are too infrequent.’

‘Special bus prices for students. It’s very expensive to take the bus.’

Figure 9. Students unaware of existing facilities on the Crichton Estate

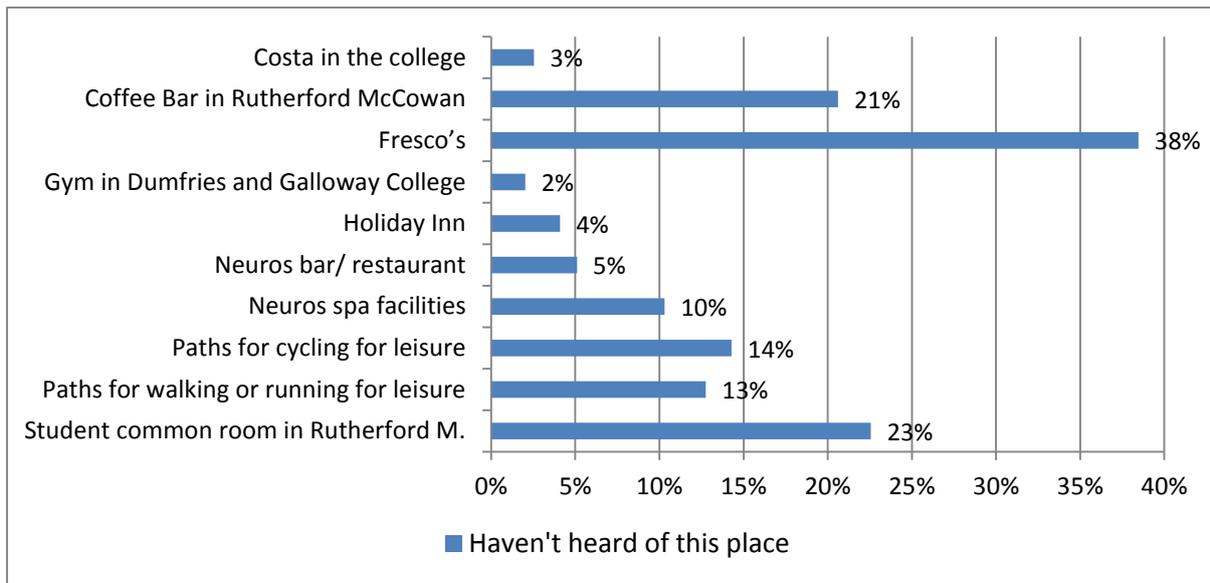


Figure 9 presents the responses from students who selected ‘Haven’t heard of this place’ to a set of questions designed to uncover their current use of facilities⁴ on the site. It shows that 38% were unaware of Fresco’s, despite recent promotion of the café, and sizeable minorities unaware of the Coffee Bar in Rutherford McCowan (21%), the Student Common Room (23%), or Neuro’s spa (10%). Students across the Institutions also expressed uncertainty about which facilities they could use. This is seen in the following comments:

‘I would like a clearer indication of what facilities are available to the College and University students and what is available to both. I think that’s part of the problem, being a College student I don't wish to explore too far and have the embarrassment of being turned away.’

‘I think half the limitation is not knowing what facilities you can use at other institutes e.g. gym at Dumfries & Galloway College when you don't attend that institute.’

‘We aren't told much about the facilities in the Uni, only the College really.’

Some requested facilities that are already available e.g.

‘Choice of places to eat/ drink such as Costa.’

⁴ Data in Figure 9 is taken from the same set of variables as Figure 1. In the first of these graphs, those responding ‘Haven’t heard of this place’ were included within the percentages for having ‘never’ visited a particular facility.

‘A restaurant on Campus open until late, in fact any restaurant would be good.’

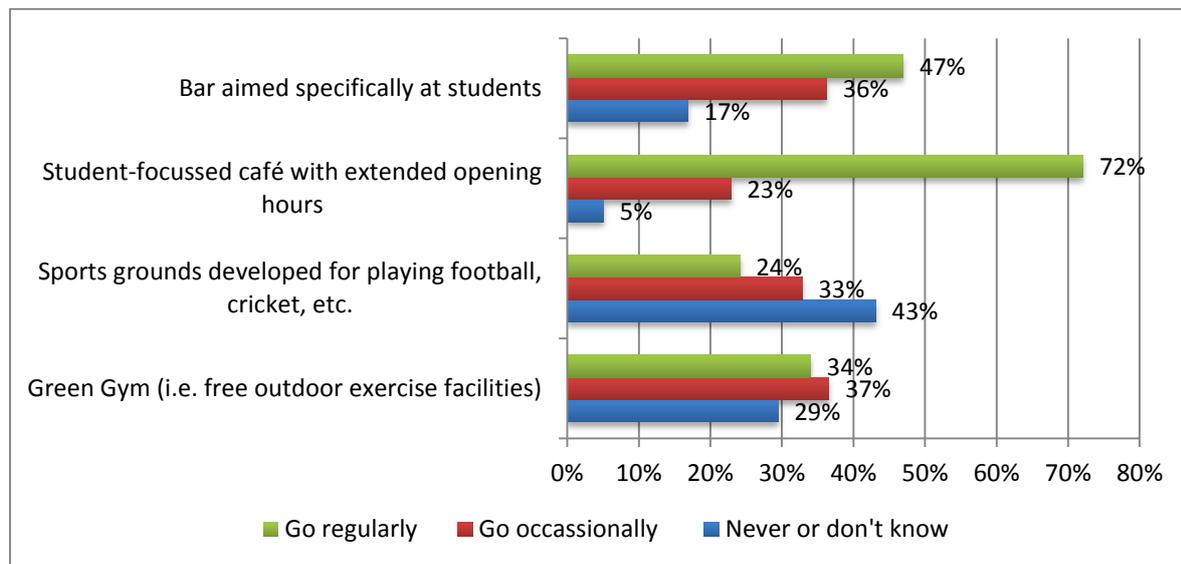
‘Late opening computer facilities.’

‘A swimming pool’

These views suggest the potential to **enhance the use of existing on-site facilities by distributing information to students identifying their nature and location.**

New Opportunities

Figure 10. Predicted use of proposed new facilities on the Crichton Estate



From participants’ responses to questions inviting them to reflect on how often they would use the 4 examples of potential future on-campus developments shown in *Figure 10*, a **‘student-focussed café with extended opening hours’ emerges as the most sought-after improvement**; 72% of students predict they would use such a facility regularly and a further 23% that they would use it occasionally. Students clearly articulated their **wish for easy access to a wider range of catering options offering better value for money, good quality, affordable food and refreshments and extended opening hours**. For some, the paucity of options for those on special diets, particularly those who are vegan, is an issue as is the poor labelling of vegetarian options. The following comments are representative of the views expressed:

‘Loads more food options [needed] instead of the same thing every day’

‘Better food in the canteen. We get a late lunch and what is left is not of great quality.’

‘Need longer opening hours into the evenings and to be available more at the weekend, currently very limited access apart from Neuros’

‘Need to have somewhere to get a meal/snack after 2pm that's not a formal restaurant - even a coffee bar of some sort.’

‘Having a larger, cosier student room/cafe with extended opening times and working Wi-Fi would make all the difference. Students would be able to meet and work on projects and studies in a safe environment and have the capabilities to do so. Currently, the cafe is lovely - it is however expensive and throughout the campus the WIFI is very poor. Often dropping when you are trying to get work done - that is one of the main reasons why students don't spend much time on campus itself.’

‘I would like to emphasis the idea of student cafe. It would be great to have a cozy, affordable place on campus where students could go to discuss group work, meet with staff and other students, work on assignments or just chat’

Confirming the findings set out on page 8, respondents emphasised the **importance of the location of catering services** and a preference for facilities to be set up specifically for/by/in their institution.

‘Ideally, [a new café] would be close to all academic facilities, otherwise it might not get a lot of visitors as breaks for students are often short and everyone is generally busy.’

‘Cafe and student facilities - gym, etc. - Uni based instead of College’

Other suggestions include the installation of coffee vending machines in Brown and Maxwell House; the ability to use credit/debit cards,

Potential for new or enhanced student facilities on the Crichton Estate

Student Café

Analysed according to the academic institution they attend, their age, and by their place of residence *Figures 11,12 and 13* identify the cohorts of students who are most interested in a student café.

Figure 11: Potential use of student-focussed café with extended opening hours - by educational institution

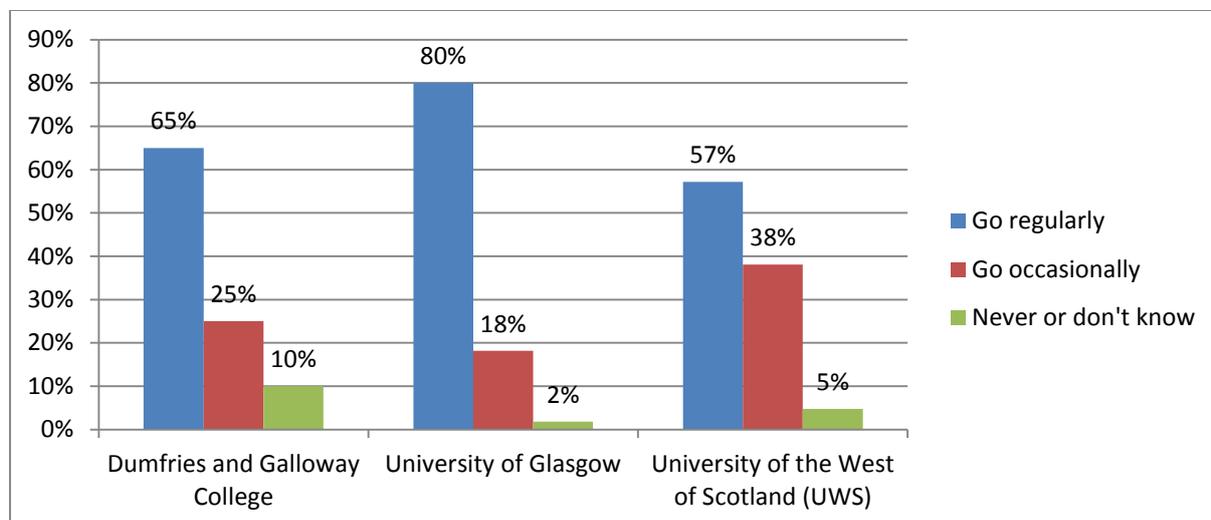


Figure 11 shows that 80% of UoG students expressed the view that they would make regular use of a 'student-focussed café with extended opening hours'. The same is true of 65% of DGCoI students and 57% of those attending UWS. A small proportion of students (2% -10%) are unlikely to make use of such a facility.

Figure 12. Potential use of student-focussed café with extended opening hours - by age

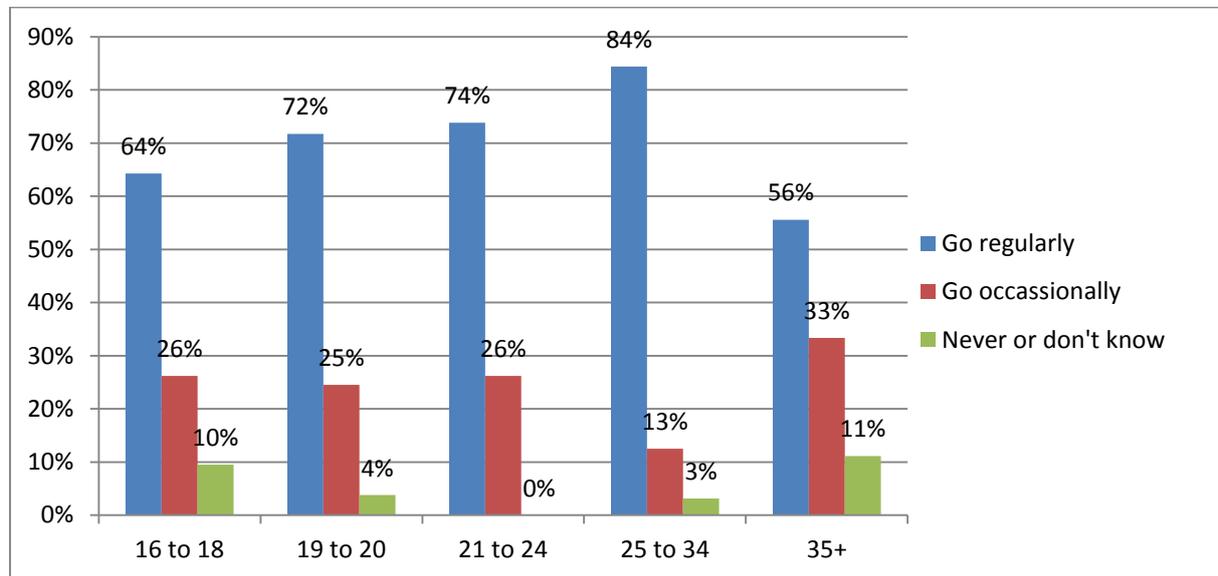
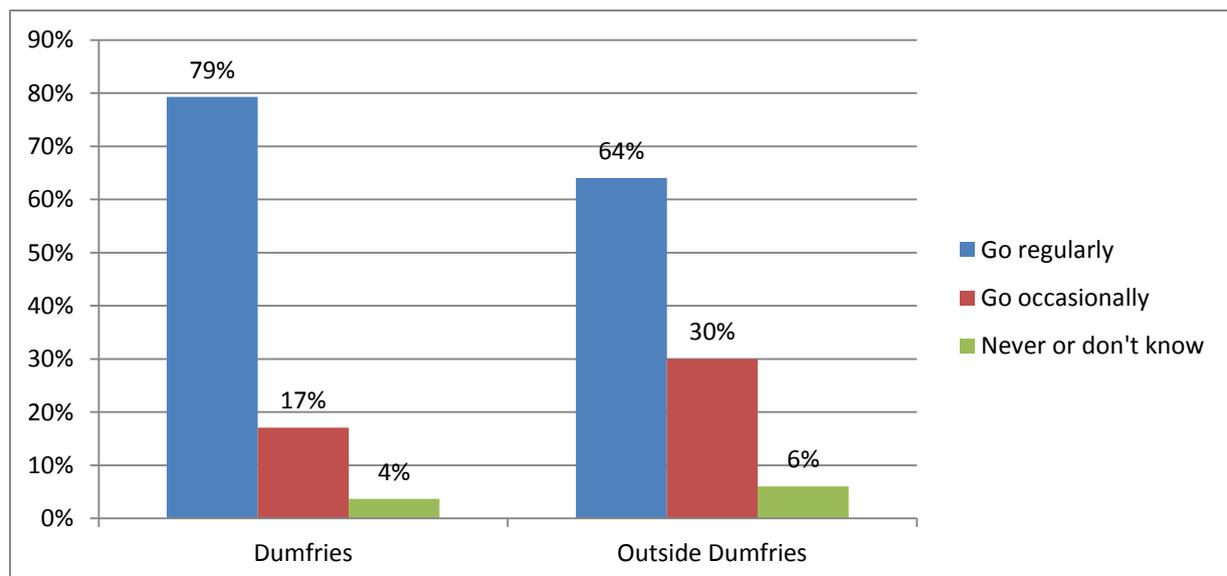


Figure 12 provides an analysis of the likely use of a 'student-focussed café with extended opening hours' by students' age. It shows the strongest interest coming from those aged 25 to 34, followed by those aged 21 to 24. The age 35+ cohort is least likely to make use of such a facility although even here, 56% claim they would use it regularly.

Figure 13. Potential use of student-focussed café – by place of residence



As might be expected, those who live furthest from the campus are likely to spend less time on-campus than their peers who live in closer proximity. However, as Figure 13 shows, the impact of 'distance' is less than might be expected i.e. 79% of students living in Dumfries during term time say

they would make regular use of a student-focused café – as do 64% who live outwith Dumfries. In both categories small proportions say they would ‘never use’ or ‘didn’t know if they would ever use’ such a facility.

Student bar

Figure 10 also shows not insubstantial demand for a *student bar* i.e. 47% of respondents believe they would ‘make regular use of a student bar’, 36% ‘occasional use’ and a small but important minority favour the introduction of a ‘non-alcoholic bar’. Though lower than the proportions showing interest in a student-focused café these figures do indicate **a level of demand for a student bar that is worthy of consideration**. As one student put it, ‘Alcohol. A bar on Campus would be ideal’. Others expressed the **need and preference for a bar contained within a dedicated Student Union-type facility**. These students typically asked for:

‘A Student Union with a bar, TV, pool tables.’

‘A Student Union. A dedicated student bar/leisure establishment for socializing and relaxing.’

‘For undergraduate students a social union, more aligned with other universities.’

‘a student bar or café that had longer hours would be great, particularly if the building open hours was longer as well, it would encourage students to spend more time on campus. It would also increase the number of jobs for students on campus.’

Others sounded a note of caution related to location with one student suggesting that:

‘a student bar might be better placed in town somewhere if that would be easier for students to get home from after’

Figure 14: Potential use of a student bar – by educational institution

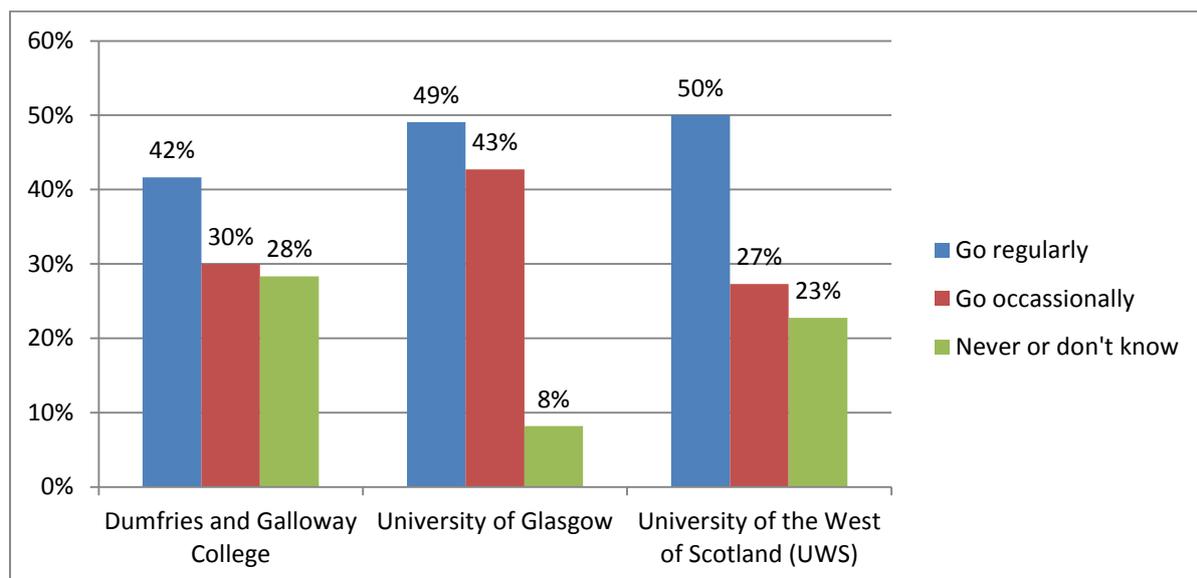
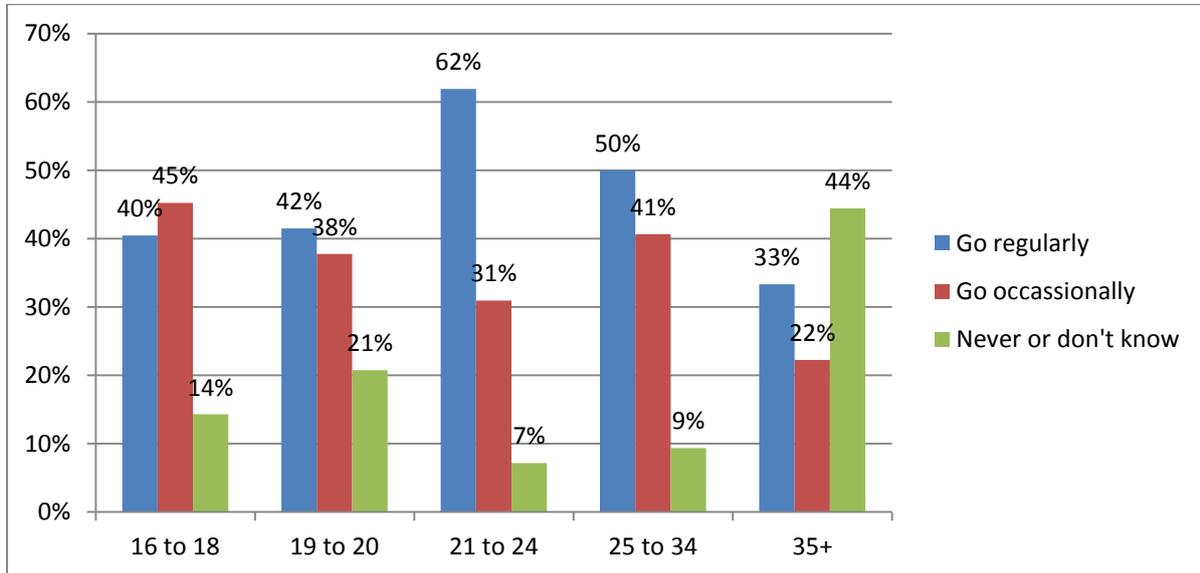


Figure 14 shows that the strongest interest in a student bar is from UoG students of whom 49% say they would ‘go regularly’, a further 43% say they would ‘go occasionally’ and only 8% that they would ‘never or didn’t know if they would ever’ use the facility. The majority of DGCol and UWS

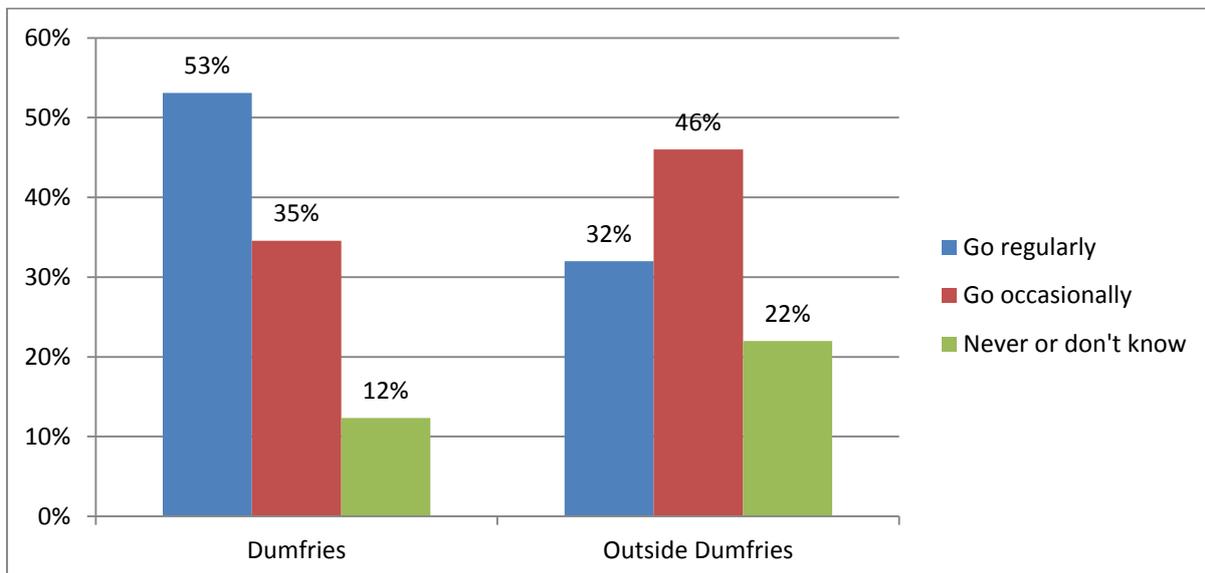
students also expressed interested in a new bar although roughly a quarter of each group report that they would 'never' or 'didn't know if they would ever' use such a facility. In the case of DGCool this is a not unexpected finding given the age demographic of its students.

Figure 15: Potential use of a student bar - by age



The relationship between a student's age and their likely use of a student bar is set out in *Figure 15*. This indicates high/moderately high use by all age cohorts. Those aged 35+ expressed the least interest in a student bar but even amongst this cohort 33% said they would make regular use of it.

Figure 16: Potential use of student bar - by place of residence



As discussed on page 15, a student's place of residence has the potential to impact on their usage of on-campus facilities although in practice, the impact is less than might be anticipated. *Figure 16* presents an analysis of the likely use of a student bar by those living in, and those living outwith, Dumfries. It shows that almost twice as many students living outwith Dumfries, compared to those living in Dumfries, are unlikely to use a student bar located on-campus. However, those percentages

are relatively small (Dumfries 12%: ex Dumfries 22%). More significantly, location based analysis of those who would use such a bar shows that 78% of those residing outwith Dumfries and 88% of those living in Dumfries would make occasional or regular use of it.

Indoor and outdoor facilities for sports and physical activity

24% of respondents indicate that they would make regular use of sports grounds for playing football, cricket etc. and 34% a Green Gym if developed on the Crichton estate. A further 33% and 37% would use them occasionally (*Figure 10*). Though lower than those for the café or bar (72% and 47% opting for regular use) these figures indicate **interest in new or improved outdoor facilities for sport and physical activity.**

Participants were also questioned about their use of the estate's paths for walking, running and cycling (see *Figure 1*). Their responses show that currently, 24% of students make regular use of the paths for walking or running and 11% for cycling. However, when asked if they use the paths for 'walking or running for leisure', 13% selected 'Haven't heard of this place' and 14% said the same in relation to 'cycling for leisure'. As one student put it:

'I didn't know there were special places to run and walk around the campus.'

This suggests that **a strategy to raise awareness of the existing infrastructure for outdoor physical activity would increase its use.**

The view that **expanding the DGCool gymnasium and refreshing the Induction processes would increase its use by students** is also strongly articulated with some calling for a wider range of equipment, others feeling disenfranchised when encountering difficulties in booking the mandatory induction, and still others unsure if they are permitted access to it. The following are typical of their comments:

'I personally really enjoy using the College Fitness Suite and think that this is a very good facility to have here.'

'Found it impossible to get a gym induction at college.'

'Easier access to the gym without hassle trying to get an induction.'

'Having a gym that you can use without a limit on the equipment would be great and would actually be used by many.'

'The college is overused and very restrictive in use weights and machines.'

Social areas and additional facilities identified by students

In addition to responding to set questions the survey afforded participants the opportunity to express their own thoughts about on-campus facilities. From this, a clear demand for new or improved social and study spaces, more options for places that are quiet, comfortable, have longer opening hours, lend themselves to small study groups and are additional to the café and bar discussed above, has emerged. As one respondent put it:

‘Having a larger, cosier student room/ café with extended opening times would make all the difference. Students would be able to meet and work on projects and studies in a safe environment and have the capabilities to do so. Currently the café is lovely – it is however expensive and throughout the campus the WIFI is very poor often dropping off when you are trying to get work done – that is one of the reasons why students don’t spend much time on campus itself.’

Others highlighted the lack of outdoor seating:

‘[] an outdoor seating area, not just random benches but an area to sit as a group outside and relax between lectures.’

‘I think the campus could do with more benches in the grassy areas for students and staff to sit outside and have a sandwich or just relax’

There are also advocates for ‘a card machine in one of the university buildings’; ‘extended library opening times’; ‘more places to fill up water bottles’; ‘a roof over the bike stall in Rutherford-McCowan’; basketball court’; and, ‘an area for performing arts/cinema.’

Conclusions

This study provides evidence based analyses of students’ current use of a range of facilities on the Crichton Estate, their potential use of proposed new facilities and identifies a number of future developments sought by students. The key findings uncovered through this work are summarised as follows:

An important barrier to greater student use of the full range of facilities on the Crichton estate is their lack of awareness of what is available to them. Their expressed preference is for facilities located within the educational institution with which they are registered – or in the building they most frequently attend – rather than those within other educational institutions, or unassociated with a college or university. To an extent, this preference is conditioned by time constraints shaped by domestic responsibilities, public transport timetables, class scheduling and a liking for facilities that are designed specifically by/for them.

The distance between a student’s term time accommodation and the Crichton Estate impacts on their current and predicted use of existing and new facilities with those further away reporting less use than those living in Dumfries. However, the difference is not as substantial as might have been anticipated.

There is evidence of demand for additional social areas - both indoor areas that lend themselves to study groups and outdoor seating. There is also significant interest in enhanced sports facilities – most notably gym and green gym facilities – and indications that use of the swimming pool would increase were it less costly and perceived to be welcoming to students. An awareness raising campaign has the potential to increase usage of the pathways for walking, jogging and cycling.

The proposal for a new student-focused café was very well received by the majority of students at all Institutions and of all ages who predict frequent use IF it is carefully tailored to students’ needs. E.g.

if it is inexpensive, delivers value for money and a varied menu that accommodates those with particular dietary requirements; is located in or close to buildings in which classes take place, is comfortable and has reliable WIFI. The notion of a student bar also proved popular though less so than a student-focused café and suggestions for a student union-type facility with extended opening hours and combining social space, a coffee-bar, catering options, a bar, dance floor and gym are worthy of consideration.

This report offers ample evidence of demand for improved student-focussed facilities. However, it is clear that students have strong views on what form those improvements should take and may exercise the option not to use new/improved facilities that is not truly 'student friendly'. In the event of any proposals for new facilities, or enhancements to existing facilities, being taken forward it would be prudent to engage with the student body at the earliest possible stage.



Crichton Institute