

QUEENS' JCR LENT WEEK 0 SURVEY



Released: 20th January (9 am)

Closed: 21st January (9 am)

Responses: 302

- 232 residing at their home address
- 41 residing in Queens' accommodation
- 21 residing in Cambridge accommodation (other)
- 8 others (e.g. house of a friend or partner)

Results

Indicate your agreement with the following statements

		Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	N/A (%)
I will cope this term - academically	Home	3	32.3	32.3	23.3	9.1	0
	Cambridge	6.5	51.6	16.1	14.5	9.7	1.6
	Other	12.5	12.5	37.5	25	12.5	0
I have the equipment/material I need	Home	14.7	48.7	19.8	15.9	0.9	0
	Cambridge	21	54.8	14.5	6.5	3.2	0
	Other	0	50	0	50	0	0
I understand how Lent will work - academically	Home	14.7	56	15.5	11.2	2.6	0
	Cambridge	22.6	43.5	14.5	9.7	8.1	1.6
	Other	25	62.5	0	12.5	0	0
I will cope this term - personally	Home	0.4	22	36.6	28	12.9	0
	Cambridge	4.8	32.3	25.8	25.8	11.3	0
	Other	0	25	25	37.5	12.5	0
I have people I can turn to for support	Home	15.5	58.2	15.1	8.2	3	0
	Cambridge	9.7	64.5	12.9	6.5	6.5	0
	Other	25	25	37.5	12.5	0	0

Comments

80 comments were made (26.5% of responses) under *General Comments & Elaboration*. 6 comments exceeded 150 words, with one exceeding 500 words. Average word count was 63.

Contact the JCR for further details or quantitative data on comments.

Major themes encountered in comments are listed below.

1. JCR members expressed upset at the **Queens' returns policy** (on behalf of themselves or others). Comments expressed frustration with the system of relying on tutors, and the decisions made by them. 4 comments challenged tutor decisions on their own rejections for return. The main concerns were:
 - 1.1. tutors requiring evidence (frequently expressed as “not believing” students) of mental health issues, or not allowing self-evaluation by students;
 - 1.2. discrepancies between colleges and associated fairness issues;
 - 1.3. students sharing homes with clinically vulnerable or older people not being considered for return to Cambridge;
 - 1.4. the perception that Queens' is harshly interpreting, or going beyond the University conditions (“without access to appropriate study spaces or facilities” and “health or safety reasons”)¹ and expectations² for return;
 - 1.5. student unwillingness to divulge personal (or “secret”) details to tutors or to appeal decisions to the Senior Tutor, especially having heard second-hand accounts from others and from the nature of general communication;
 - 1.6. delays on responses to requests to return³.
2. JCR members are concerned that **workloads have not been reduced**, despite several reasons given for student capacity to work (at home address typically) being reduced such as motivation, study space, home environment, supervisor and director of studies availability due to childcare, work-life balance, screen time and mental wellbeing.
3. JCR members are concerned about **examination fairness**, uneven playing fields and policies between those of different home environments and colleges. Some expressed concerns at being disadvantaged when in master's applications.
4. Students wanted to know whether the college would be allowing returns when government guidance changed. Others wanted clarity on whether the college will allow returns **if guidance changes mid-term** to allow return or partial return.
5. Many (usually longer) comments explained that students considered themselves to be in more fortunate circumstances (regarding home environment, mental wellbeing and study spaces) than peers, but were concerned about **motivation, deteriorating quality of work, falling behind, and sadness**.

Less common features of comments are listed below.

- Some students labelled **emails to all students** as “hostile”, contributing to perceptions of “not caring” and anxiety in approaching tutors.

¹ <https://www.cam.ac.uk/coronavirus/students/guidance-for-all-students/january-2021-return-for-lent-term>

² <https://thetab.com/uk/cambridge/2021/01/13/mental-health-and-no-internet-are-permitted-reasons-to-return-to-cambridge-toope-confirms-143746>

³ 3 comments mentioned 2-week delays.

- Students were concerned that the University/college requirement for **registration with a Cambridge GP** would now cause them issues, or that they didn't know if they now needed to reregister at home.
- Students who are in Queens' and are alone in their households asked if the **visitor policy would be amended for members of support bubbles**.
- Students asked if the college would also not be charging **utilities bills** for the time that students are not in residence.
- 2 comments expressed **gratitude to individual tutors** for their support, including financial support.

JCR Committee Comments

It is clear from the comments and the actions taken so far that nobody doubts the seriousness with which Queens' considers public health. It is widely accepted that the current national state of play will not change for some time. We also note the usefulness of the Student Support Fund in mitigating technological and material inequalities among students and in assisting with online learning.

The two main challenges facing the undergraduate body at Queens' are thus not financial but rather wellbeing and academic. The JCR Committee deeply regrets that some its members believe the tutor system of returns has failed them, and we note that this is the case in other colleges [1] [2] [3]. Our primary concern is for those students who maintain a need to return. We continue to encourage these students to appeal decisions. We encourage Queens' to consider the way its communication, while fast to respond, may exacerbate the primary concerns raised in this survey.

JCR Recommendations

As well as continuing to consider appeals and requests for returns to Cambridge compassionately and recognising the concerns that have been raised.

1. In future communications:

- a. acknowledge the frustrations and upset caused by the returns policy;
- b. justify the Queens' position relative to other colleges;
- c. outline the position on returning to accommodation, in the context of case rates in Cambridge, testing capacity in the University, and future changes to government guidance whether during or after Lent term;
- d. adjust the tone of communication.

2. Clarify:

- a. whether utilities bills (heating and electricity) will be charged while students are away from residence;
- b. college positions on support bubbles, and specifically whether the guest policy can be amended for support bubbles;
- c. assistance the college can give with managing workloads, rebalancing the playing field, and ensuring fairness for assessments and examinations – across different backgrounds and home environments.