"It's very intimidating for internationals going into Dutch society"

Comparing the perceived barriers to accessing support services at the University of Groningen for internationals and native students

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Summary

This thesis compares international and native degree-seeking students at the University of Groningen in their perceived accessibility, and knowledge, of student support services. The study also compares experiences of formal 'hard' and informal 'soft' support services. Through a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative data for statistical analysis and qualitative data to give evidence to findings, this thesis seeks to answer the question:

"Do international students at the University of Groningen perceive, compared to native students, additional challenges in accessing university support services?"

Contrary to much prior research, this study finds that there is no statistical difference between international and native students when it comes to challenges in accessing university support services. There is, however, a statistical difference in perceived barriers to accessing soft and hard services: soft services are perceived to be significantly harder to access than hard services, especially among native students. This is thought to be because of a number of reasons discussed in the theoretical framework: while language and distance from traditional support networks play major roles in decreasing international's accessibility to support services, native students face cultural barriers particularly when accessing informal support. The study concludes with implications for future research and university policy: listening to the student body with compassion is key.

Cover image:

Assistant greets student at Student Service Centre, University of Groningen (SSC, 2019)

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

University life is an opportunity to explore your identity, broaden your horizons, and learn more about who you are and where your interests lie in the process. This is especially true for international students: attaining excellent grades across the Netherlands in relation to Dutch students (Rienties et al., 2012), many such students justify the journey by studying hard and partying hard too- something true even into the COVID-19 pandemic (Elfferic et al., 2021).

Despite, or perhaps because of, the independence that student life brings, loneliness and isolation are common to both international and native students. Loneliness and isolation, exacerbated significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic (Elfferic et al., 2021), compound the difficulties faced by international students especially in reaching their traditional support groups- family, home friends, and understood ways of doing things (Alam et al., 2021). Whereas beforehand it could have been prohibitively expensive to travel home, travel restrictions made visiting family almost impossible for almost two years for some students (StudyinHolland, 2021). This put pressure on the already-busy student support services offered by universities. Student services, created to "enhance student growth and development" (NASPA, 2021) by supporting students and offering advice, became overwhelmed across the planet; in Groningen, the message was clear (Fig. 1).

There is no appointment space in the searched 30 workdays. If you want to keep on searching then click again on the searchbuttonn.

Figure 1 "There is no appointment space", the response from the RUG 'find a counsellor' search function (2021).

Support services do not exclusively refer to student counsellors and university psychologists, however. While these established services (henceforth referred to as 'formal' and 'hard support services') can be a useful point of contact for students, their immense overuse has created a market for student-led and other association support. Such a network, known as 'informal' and 'soft support services' as defined by Hama et al. (2020), was also put under strain as a result of the pandemic- to the point that student-run initiatives, such as RUG Walks in Groningen, were legitimised by universities. Important to mention is that support services, particularly informal services, can also assist students in adjusting to their new life and be advantageous in integration, whereas hard support services perform a role as a mediator between bureaucratic services that require significant up-front knowledge (Padlee and Reimers, 2015). Despite this, hard support services still play an important role in accommodating student desires- in a Groningen-specific context, the Student Services Centre by the Harmoniegebouw is the only free organisation capable of providing some free psychologist referrals (SSC, 2019).

Yet, despite universities fronting both formal and informal support services particularly throughout the pandemic, international students utilise these services less than native students, especially informal services (Lanting, 2016). Perhaps language and culture act as a barrier to services, as Dueck (2012) proposes. It could be that international students are just less likely to access services because of busier schedules and fears of academic

and social ramifications (Rienties et al., 2012). Either way, all students want their needs met by the support services they may need, and as such broadening the discussion is important. With the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ravaging the mental health of students and faculty across the planet, and students reporting significantly higher instances of anxiety, depression, and particularly loneliness (Davies, 2020), inadequate student support services shift from a less discussed issue to an active public health crisis (BBC News, 2021; Lancet Group, 2021; Stix, 2021). This is worsened by the tendency for students to become more isolated than most other groups (Aucejo et al., 2020; De Man et al., 2021; Terada, 2020). Identifying what students do not like about the support services created for them is the first step towards creating more effective and efficient services that resolve isolation issues faced by many students. Determining what is and isn't working is key to happy, academically proficient students, and successful, attractive universities. As such, this thesis seeks to address the lack of literature in the field and serve as a framework for future research, while also promoting policy change.

1.2 Research Problem

The research goal aims to identify whether international students at the University of Groningen perceive, in relation to native students, additional challenges in accessing university support services. This culminates in the central research question:

"Do international students at the University of Groningen perceive, compared to native students, additional challenges in accessing university support services?"

Research sub-questions, each answering an aspect of this central research question, are:

SQ1: *"Do international students have barriers to accessing support services at universities across the globe?"*

SQ2: *"What support services do students, both international and native, believe they have access to at the University of Groningen?"*

SQ3: *"Do international students at RUG, from different parts of the world, perceive different barriers in access to services?"*

1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis will first discuss relevant theories to the topic of student support services, leading to the formation of a conceptual framework. This also enables an answer to the first sub-question. The research process will then be discussed, which will enable replicability in future research, as well as justifying a number of the decisions made in the research. The results chapter details the findings from the study in their minutiae, before a summary of findings and its implications for policy and future research are given in the conclusions. The final parts of the thesis are the bibliography and appendix, which includes raw data and copies of the survey and interview guide.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

Student support services are defined as the organisations, groups, and processes designed to promote student development, growth, and satisfaction within their study institution (Hama et al., 2020; NASPA, 2021). These services take different forms, as discussed earlier, but are brought together ultimately by seeking to improve the student experience (Shkoler et al., 2020).

Research exploring the differences between international and native students' access to support services, while successful in identifying a discrepancy, is inconclusive in identifying root causes and often does not fully measure every variable that could affect access. Accentuating this in the limited research that does explore causes is a preference for survey-based data collection (Huhn and Nikendei, 2018; Rienties et al., 2012), which anonymises and aggregates individual experiences. This deprives many respondents of the depth of their feelings (Hammarberg et al., 2016). However, all found research, from institutions across the planet but predominantly in the Western world, does explicitly mention the unique need of, and challenges presented by, international students' access to support services.

In this context, international students can be defined as "students who move abroad to obtain a degree" (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021). This definition is by nature exclusionary; exchange students, which make up significant proportions of the international student population, are not included in this study as they are expected to require less and different student services. This is especially the case as many exchange students only visit the University of Groningen for a semester (to a maximum of a year) during which time integration is not seen as a primary goal- they will, after all, return to their home university before long. Similarly, no distinction is made between EEA and non-EEA international students. As such, two subcategories identified in prior literature must also be defined: Other Western and non-Western (Rienties et al., 2012). Western non-EEA+ refers to students outside of the common EU framework but still culturally 'Western', and is relevant in the Dutch case because of the relative similarities between Dutch and other Western, non-EU culture (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021). Non-Western students refer to all other international degree-seeking students. Another definition must be identified for native students; the author chooses to define this category as Dutch nationals who also consider themselves proficient in Dutch, owing to the ease with which proficient speakers can integrate (Dueck, 2012).

Older (pre-2008) research examines individual factors that make up the defined 'access to services' (Cownie and Addison, 1996; Scheyvens et al., 2003). In contrast to this, more contemporary research approaches the topic from a more holistic perspective (Huhn and

Nikendei, 2018; Hwang et al., 2014; Riddell et al., 2018; Shkoler et al., 2020). However, results are broadly comparable: international students face a particularly challenging initial period of several weeks to several months adapting to a new environment, and continue to perceive challenges with regard to access to services for the continuation of their study period. These findings appear to be common in universities across the globe, although research primarily focuses on international students in English-teaching countries such as the US, UK, Australia, and Malaysia. While some integration-based programmes have seen success in diminishing the international-native dichotomy, in particular access to language tuition and support (Cownie and Addison, 1996), other programmes lauded as effective at countering significantly higher rates of mental illness caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, were not (Alam et al., 2021). Alam et al. (2021) argues that this is proof of demand for further investment; others (Hwang et al., 2014) disagree and instead suggest that international students already struggle to access services and that subsequent investment would only really increase access for native students, who face different challenges (Scheyvens et al., 2003). It is notable that, while Alam et al. (2021) argues for further investment in critical services, the study population of 402 international students in China may receive less modern mental health support and as such may be dissatisfied with older services, as suggested by Xiang et al., (2012).

It is notable that teachers with an international background are also susceptible to similar challenges (Cownie and Addison, 1996), which does provide evidence for- as Scheyvens et al. (2003) argue- systemic issues that cannot be fully accounted for purely by university support services. This suggests that, while students and faculty have some different needs when it comes to support services, better support services for one group results in a similar improvement in services for the other- at least when one service is not improved at the expense of another (Scheyvens et al., 2003).

While each of the selected articles does not discuss inequality or discrimination as a challenge faced by international students, it is worth observing that many of the problems highlighted- linguistic barriers, paperwork complications, financial barriers, uncertain futures- are at least tangentially related to discrimination, or perceived discrimination, particularly for non-proficient host national language speakers and BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) students (Kamara, 2017; Karuppan and Barari, 2011). Explicitly mentioned in every discussed paper (apart from (Huhn and Nikendei, 2018) is the fact that international students' academic performance and mental health are positively correlated (meaning poor mental health and low attainment are related), even more than when compared to native students, and the theories behind this- as presented by Kamara (2017)- stem from a loss of identity. In this case, identity can be taken to mean a sense of belonging deriving from social category or common cultural ground (Kroskrity, 1999). This finding once again appears to be common across countries, although papers examining identity are almost exclusively written about students in English-speaking countries. Internationals in the Netherlands, who broadly do not speak the native language, may therefore face further challenges integrating (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021). Given the importance of identity in relationships, it must be acknowledged in accounting for differences between group access to services- after all, individuals struggling with identity formation are likely to be particularly vulnerable and require specialised

support. This may explain why so many international students live together (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021).

A complicated issue, of native students disillusioned with predominantly native social settings, has only recently been described as suffering disproportionately by feeling out-of-place in internationally-dominated support services, particularly informal services (Shkoler et al., 2020). This situation, which is best remedied by broader integration of services to ensure services that adequately represent every student, may be compounded by a case-specific culturally-Dutch reluctance to ask for or accept help (Al Mazouni, 2021). The result of this is a small but unfortunate group of individuals who effectively seek to internationalise, or explore non-native concepts and groups, while being within their home country. In a Dutch context this creates students who feel out-of-place accessing support services, isolating them both from their fellow native students and the internationals who seem to access help more readily. This group of native students who seek support primarily offered by international-oriented support services may have disturbed the baseline of native students that this paper seeks to operate with (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021). This literature review therefore answers Sub-Question 1; international and native students across the planet do experience accessing student support services differently.

2.2 Conceptual Framework
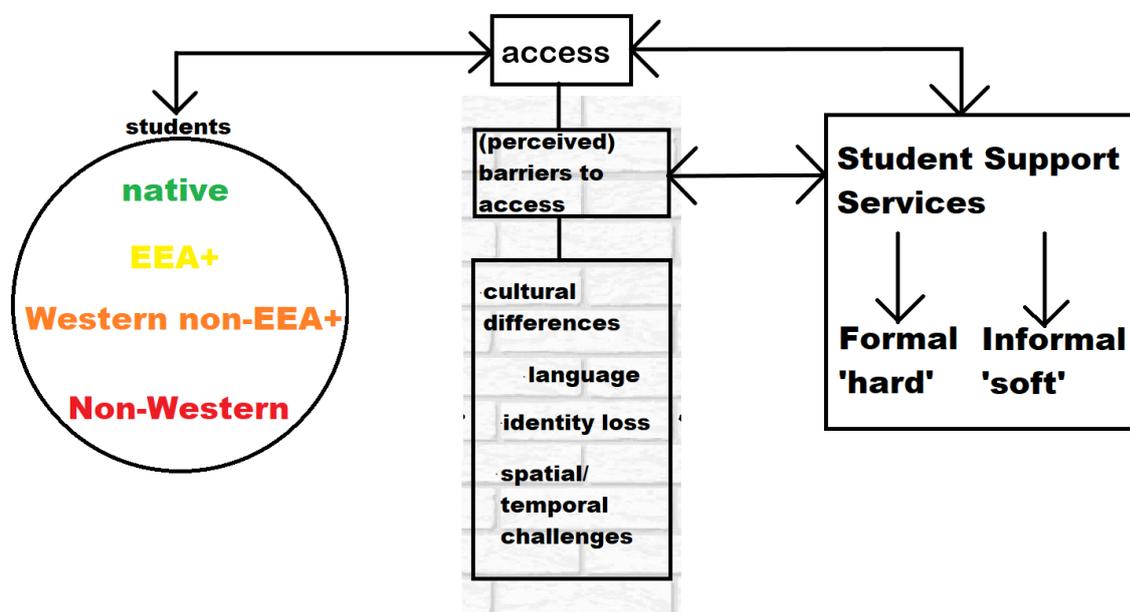
Figure 2 Conceptual framework for this bachelor's Project

Utilising the key variables identified throughout the theoretical framework, a conceptual framework that ties all factors together has been created. In this model, student support services are presented as behind a wall of accessibility barriers. These barriers are presented in no particular order; the different groupings of students are however

presented in groupings of varying cultural and bureaucratic distinction to the Netherlands (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021; Rienties et al., 2012).

2.3 Hypotheses

1H0: There is no difference in perceived access to university support services between international and native students in Groningen.

1H1: There is a difference in perceived access to university support services between international and native students in Groningen.

2H0: International students have equal variance to native students in perceived access to university support services.

2H1: International students have a significantly greater or lesser variance, compared to native students, in perceived access to university support services.

3H0: There is no difference in described dissatisfaction towards the University of Groningen between international and native students in terms of access to support services.

3H1: There is a difference in described dissatisfaction towards the University of Groningen between international and native students in terms of access to support services.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

This study's central research question requires quantitative data collection. However, qualitative data is also used (Punch, 2013). Quantitative data, which in this paper is used both to draw conclusions with emphasis provided by qualitative research and to make data collection easier, was collected through a survey which included primarily Likert-scale questions as well as several open questions. Limited interviews (n = 10) provide lived experiences, quantitative data concretely answers the Research Question. This paper therefore uses mixed methods. Qualitative data collection may have been rushed owing to the limited timeframe to collect data before COVID-19 measures were reintroduced.

The survey was released on 26 October 2021 and data collection ended on 23 November 2021. The survey was spread to personal contacts in the target group, of degree-seeking students at the University of Groningen, using online social media apps. Owing to a native respondent deficiency, some Dutch respondents were asked to share the survey with their friend groups, which yielded the majority of native responses. Sampling was therefore primarily convenience based. At its close, the survey yielded 96 responses. As a number of these were incomplete or outliers, this left 73 valid responses. As seen in Fig. 3, n ≥ 30 for the sum international and native groups, which empowered more powerful parametric testing. An independent-samples T-test was conducted between international and native students for their total mean accessibility rankings for services described in the survey, as well as any additional services they mentioned. To ensure the validity of this independent-sample T-test, its non-parametric alternative, the Mann-Whitney U test was also performed. Because the number of non-EEA+ international students was not high (n = 6), non-parametric alternatives to the preferred ANOVA were used: the Kruskal-Wallis test was favoured over the Jonckheere-Terpstra test as there was no temporal element in data collection (of pre- post service access) (Bewick et al., 2004).
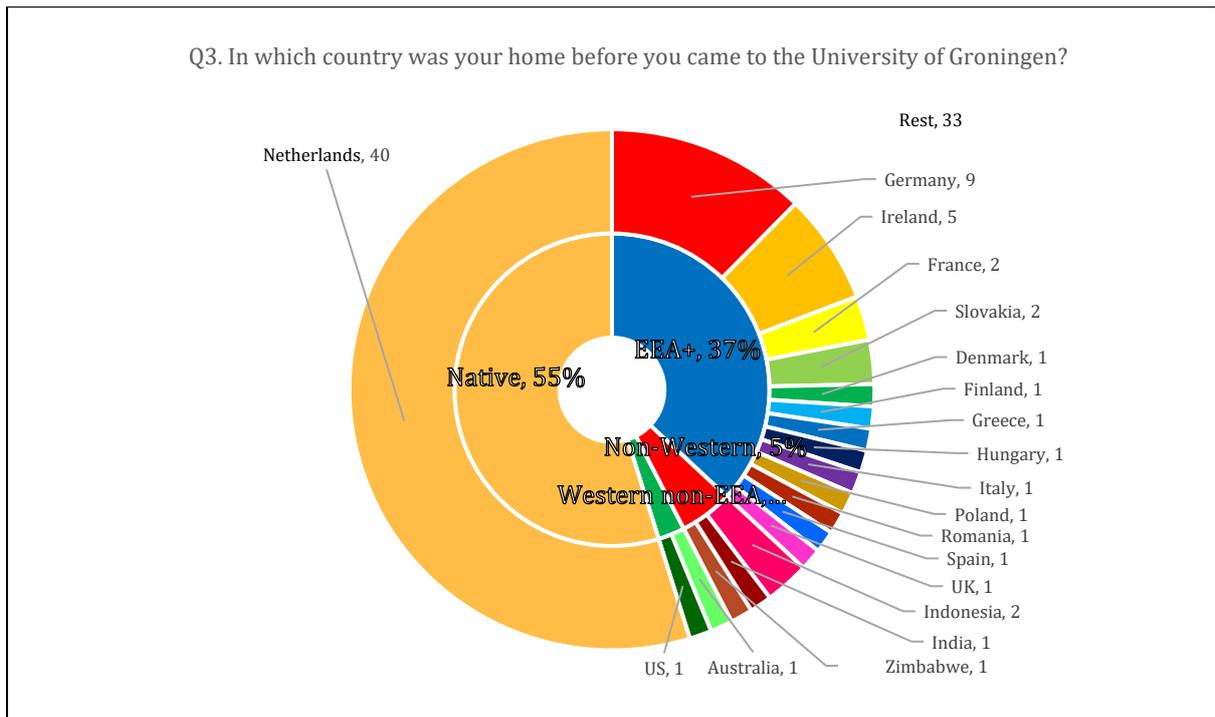
Figure 3 Above: Valid respondents by previous country of residence

Survey questions themselves presented a challenge; it was unfeasible to ask students for their opinions about every single student support service at RUG. As such, only six student support services- three soft and three hard- were involved. After presenting respondents with this, they were given the opportunity to provide examples of further support services they might have used. Only five did. Responses to whether individuals had any knowledge of student support services at all was fruitful, with a majority of those asked reporting at least some knowledge of services. Although not explicitly measured, based on age and study year a vast majority of respondents are bachelor's students, with only two other responses.
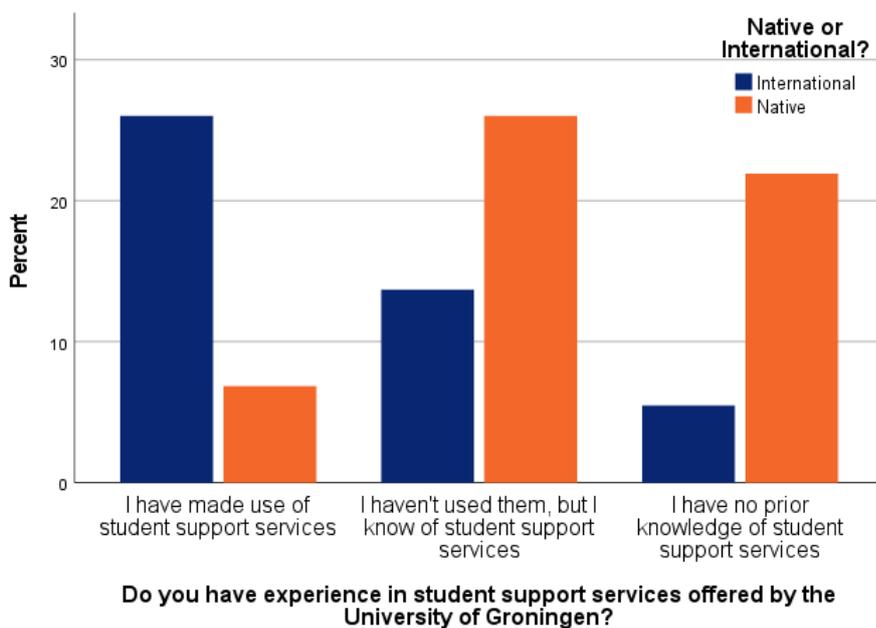
Figure 4 Above: Q7. Whether students have some experience of support services by international or native status

Qualitative data collection primarily used purposive sampling by asking respondents of the survey to self-enrol if they wanted to discuss student support services at the UG. This was intentional; extreme findings bolster conclusions. However, this approach introduces bias, hence why interview data is not intended to provide an alternative interpretation of results but rather emphasise findings. Ten subjects were interviewed; five native. All five international student respondents were from EEA+ countries, which does mean that an important demographic is entirely absent in interviews.

3.2 Ethical considerations

While I am an international, Bachelor-seeking student at the University of Groningen, which does affect my positionality, it would have been challenging to collect such a quantity of survey data without being part of the target group itself. Double-checking the research process at every opportunity with my supervisor minimised any positionality in question formulation.

While every effort to anonymise survey data has been taken, interview transcripts may contain enough detail to determine the respondent's identity. This privacy issue cannot feasibly be mitigated while relaying the transcripts. Given the at times deeply personal nature of the interviews themselves, this comes with risks to respondents, who were fully aware and signed the consent form in the hopes that their comments will improve student support services for subsequent generations of students.

One interviewee explicitly mentioned, after the interview's conclusion, that the interview process was intimidating for them. This should not drastically affect the results of the paper, however, as the intimidation factor does not come into play in the survey data that forms the backbone of the statistical analysis.

4. Results

4.1 "it's the University's obligation"- services and anticipation
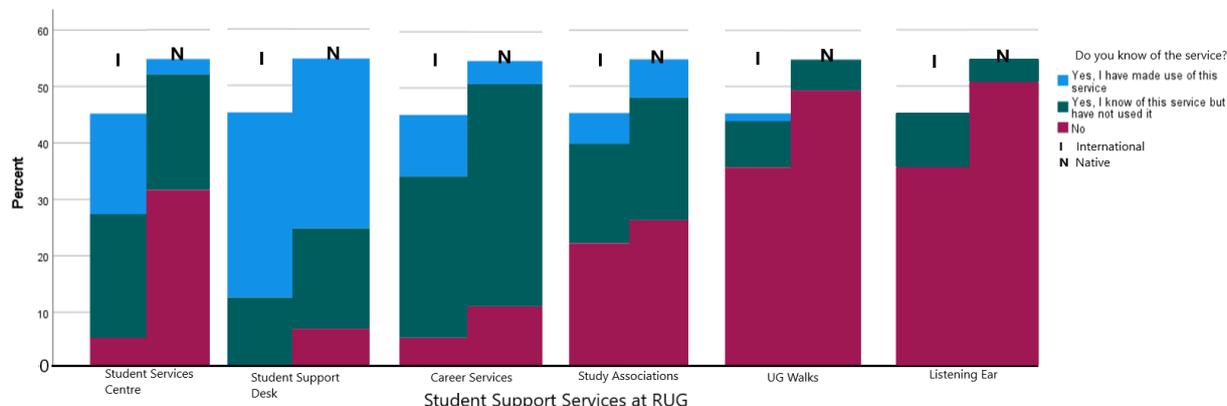
Figure 5 Above: Native and international student's reported knowledge of different services (as % of total respondents)

Students, both international and native, showed different acknowledgement of access to services (Fig. 5). The most significant difference is in knowledge of the Student Services Centre, which less than 10% of internationals report not knowing of as compared to the 60% of native students. Anticipating the increased need for internationals to access support services (Hwang et al., 2014), ESN Groningen- the largest international student organisation in Groningen- conducts tours to the SSC as part of its welcoming week (Milian, 2021). This promotes help that the Centre provides- namely, therapy referrals, group support sessions, and assistance in legal and financial matters (SSC, 2019).

The only service which no student had first-hand experience of is also the newest service asked about, Listening Ear. Nevertheless, owing to the success of other similar programmes in other cities, it was surprising to see little recognition of the programme in Groningen. Students in general reported less knowledge of soft services; interviews revealed that these informal services were often only heard about second- or even third-hand, although this was deemed preferable by some interviewees: "I think the whole ear to ear thing works. Sometimes better. Like look at Tony's Chocolonely. They're doing great." (Respondent 5). The fact that informal services are not necessarily accredited by the University also means that they do not always have physical locations and staff; at the time the survey data was collected, UG Walks and Listening Ear were purely online. This reinforces findings by Hama et al. (2020); the lack of physical interaction means that informal services can be easily ignored.

Four of the five international interview respondents expressed that they would turn to the SSC if they felt it necessary- mentioning that they had friends who received psychological support- compared to just two of the five native students- both of whom explicitly stated that they had at some point needed professional mental health support through the University. Fang and Van Liempt (2021) describe a uniquely Dutch push-factor for student support services, which may describe the general apathy by native

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students- conformity. Such a concept was mentioned by both Dutch interviewees who sought help from the SSC- Interviewee 10 stated:

"I think it's also something in a Dutch culture or something. Like we said, it's a Dutch phrase, like, niet zeiken*. Like, don't complain about anything you. You have to manage? Yeah. So just keep pushing. And I think that's also a Dutch thing…"*

While native students may find it easier to access services owing to Dutch language proficiency, cultural values can make it more challenging for students to reach out for help when they need it. International students, many of whom expect support services to be easily accessible (Cownie and Addison, 1996), do not understand *doe normaal* (or act normal), a limiting factor for native students' access to support services. It is plausible that, by catering services to the needs of internationals, a positive feedback loop has inadvertently been created where fewer Dutch students access services: "I always felt like [support services] were not meant for me, because I am Dutch…" (Interviewee 8). This sense of services inequality, between an international student base who demand and require services in excess of the native student population, is thus far not discussed in literature and presents a unique challenge.

Test Statistics^a

	Native or International? - Soft Support Services Mean Score	Hard Support Services Mean Score - Native or International?
Z	-5.634[b]	-7.386[c]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
b. Based on positive ranks.
c. Based on negative ranks.

Figure 6 Above: Mean differences between perceived access to hard and soft support services

To determine whether there was a significant difference between international and native perceived student support service access for both formal and informal services, a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was performed (Fig. 6) which, with $p<0.05$ for both services, is significant. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a significant difference between native and international students' perceived access to both soft and hard student support service accessibility at RUG.

Question 23 asked respondents to provide any improvements to student support services at RUG that they could think of. Many responses to this optional question were very detailed. A WordCloud (Fig. 7) lists concepts algorithmically determined to be frequently mentioned. This includes accessibility preferences for a better-designed Nestor (student portal) system (mentioned three times, under 'UG Website', 'Nestor', and 'separate page'), more informed and present study advisors (5), and regular emails providing sources for help (8 mentions). Email communication was explicitly mentioned in multiple interviews: "put it in the corona emails, but like, once a month, hey, this is your mental health check-up" (Interviewee 1). Sub-Question 2 can therefore be answered: knowledge of both soft and hard services among students at RUG are low; particularly soft support services.

Figure 7 Responses to Question 23: What could services do to improve their accessibility?

4.2 "…and if you need help, boohoo"- soft and hard services

Much prior research examines the difference between soft and hard support services. This is also experienced in Groningen, where many students report a difference in their experiences of services. Interviewee 2 described hard services as "turn[ing] into a bit of a factory line where students have to go through", whereas soft services can feel more empathetic because "the threshold to approach another student is maybe lower than to approach a teacher or professor or something…" (Interviewee 10). These differences agree with Alam et al. (2021)'s observation that soft services function as compassionate resources to a formal service's administrative function. A Paired-samples T-test (Appendix 1.3) was performed to determine whether there exists a statistical difference between 'hard' and 'soft' support services; as $p < 0.05$ there is likely to be a difference between services.

Combined with this T-test, error bars reveal that, while interviewees reported soft services as more 'compassionate', in real terms they are perceived as less accessible (Fig. 8). Soft services are less well understood (Alam et al., 2021), particularly by native students partly thanks to aforementioned cultural emphasis on *doe normaal* (Shkoler et al., 2020). Hard services can also call upon the full resources of the university and are not entirely student-run. There are also, however, differences between native and international students- while statistical tests were not suitable in this case owing to too

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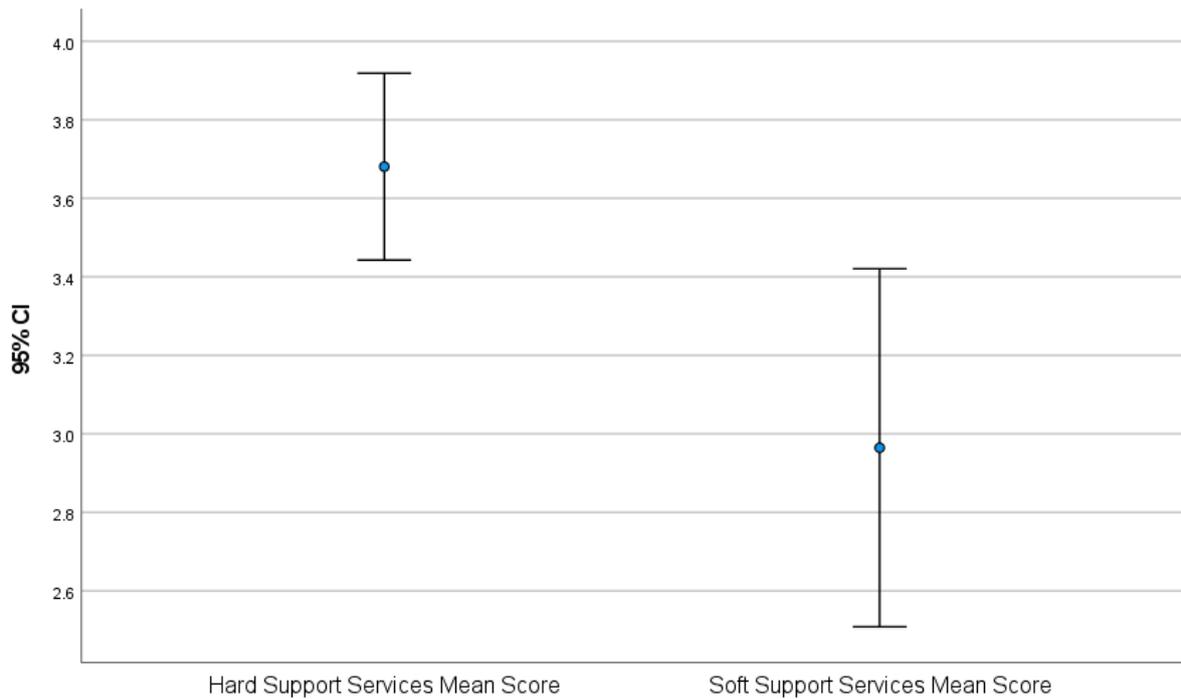
Figure 9 Above: Hard vs. Soft support service accessibility for all respondents- from 1 (inaccessible) to 5 (very accessible)

Figure 8 Below: Hard vs. Soft support service accessibility between natives and internationals- from 1 (inaccessible) to 5 (very accessible)
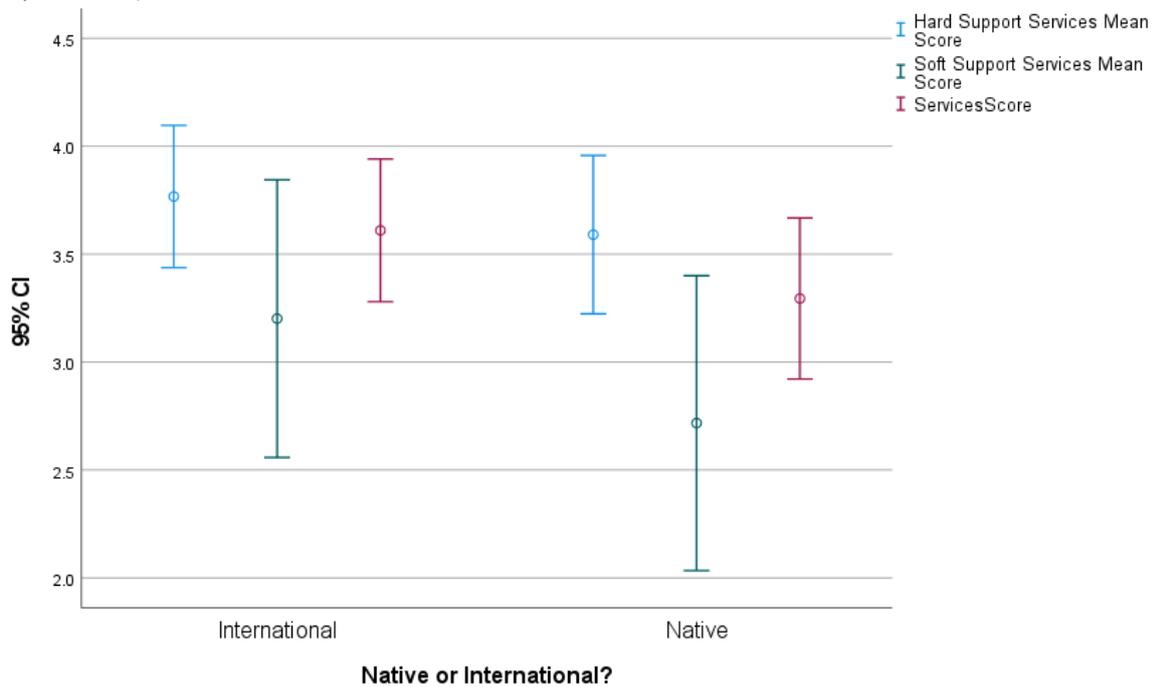
few cases, it is clear (Fig. 9) that at least in this sample international students perceived soft and hard services more equally, as compared to a much more varied and broadly lower native experience with accessing soft services. This could be linked to the need for international students to form new support networks in host countries where they are far from their homes (Hwang et al., 2014), resulting in internationals creating and subsequently using soft services as a replacement for now hard-to-reach family and home friend networks, thus rating them more consistently high than native students who

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expect different results- as Interview 8 stated, "18 year olds [are] literally moving from one country to another". It is notable that, while the upper quartiles are consistent, variance is higher for soft services. This suggests that the better organisation of hard support services contributes to a more consistent experience at the UG.

Sub-Question 2 can therefore be answered; students at the UG report greater difficulty accessing soft than hard support services. This disagrees with much prior literature (Riddell et al., 2018; Scheyvens et al., 2003; Shkoler et al., 2020). It is plausible that suspicions discussed earlier regarding the Netherlands as a unique international case study and separate to most English-speaking literature come into play here more strongly than expected (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021).

4.3 "Maybe they feel secluded altogether"- differences among internationals

Given the limited response rate from non-EEA+ respondents, statistical analysis for different international groups is highly limited. Even less powerful non-parametric methods are likely to provide meaningless results. Because non-Western students in other research have faced significantly higher barriers to accessing services than other students (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021; Rienties et al., 2012), it would have been interesting to have a high enough n to thoroughly analyse these groups. Literature discussed the barriers to service access being so high between culturally distant groups that entirely separate services are sometimes created, solely catering to non-Western students (Singh, 2021). The sampling strategies of this research may not have been thorough enough to reach such groups, perhaps explaining why non-Western populations are underrepresented here.

Test Statistics[a,b]

	ServicesScore	Hard Support Services Mean Score	Soft Support Services Mean Score
Kruskal-Wallis H	.633	.002	1.580
df	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.426	.963	.209

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Internationals non-EEA+

Figure 10 Left: Kruskal-Wallis readout for international students' mean scores of student support services accessibility, and for hard and soft support services.

To determine whether intra-international differences exist, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed. Because n for the Western nin-EEA+ group was so small, all non-EEA+ respondents were grouped. All 33 valid, non-outlier results were included to determine whether there exists a difference in place of origin before coming to the University of Groningen and mean service accessibility scores (Fig. 10). With a p-value of 0.426, we can conclude that there is likely no statistically significant difference in the mean rank assigned to student support services by students of differing international backgrounds (Fig. 10).

The same test was performed for both hard and soft student support services. The result of this (Fig. 10) demonstrates that there is no statistically significant difference between different international groups for either their hard or soft mean support service score (with p-values of 0.963 and 0.209 respectively).

International interviewees, who were all EEA+ students, did however report a sense that they were privileged in comparison to non-Western respondents. Interviewee 8 stated:

"I have this girl in my programme, she's from Peru, like, that's literally the other side of the world. And these people like, aside from like, racism, or you know, like proper discrimination forms, like, maybe they feel like secluded from that society altogether, because of the cultural differences…".

Sub-Question 3 can, however, be answered: there are no statistical differences between different groups of international students.

4.4 "everything was in Dutch"- internationals and natives

These prior results all uncover differences between international and native groups, and, while they do not demonstrate statistical differences between international groups, they do reveal different perceptions of needs for different groups. Therefore, to determine whether there is a significant difference between international and native students' perceived access to support services, an independent samples T-test was performed (Fig. 11). With equal variances not assumed, p = 0.728. There is therefore no difference between international and native students' perceived access to student support services at RUG. A Mann-Whitney U test, performed to check this result, retrieved a p-value of 0.672 (Fig. 12). We can therefore accept that the distributions of both international and native student populations for perceived student accessibility ranks are equal.

Figure 11 Below: Independent Samples T-test between international and native students' perceived accessibility

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Services Score	Equal variances assumed	.272	.604	.354	71	.725	.0692983	.1958570	-.3212295	.4598262
	Equal variances not assumed			.349	63.822	.728	.0692983	.1985897	-.3274516	.4660482

Figure 12 Below: Mann-Whitney U result for the difference between international, native students' perceived service access

			ServicesScore
Mann-Whitney U			622.000
Wilcoxon W			1442.000
Z			-.424
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)			.672
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig.		.767[b]
	95% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.670
		Upper Bound	.864
Monte Carlo Sig. (1-tailed)	Sig.		.315[b]
	95% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.209
		Upper Bound	.422

a. Grouping Variable: Native or International?

b. Based on 73 sampled tables with starting seed 2000000.

These findings disagree with similar studies that identified a difference between international and native students in the context of student support (Huhn and Nikendei, 2018; Kamara, 2017; Padlee and Reimers, 2015). However, this may not be a fault of the data collection process- all identified studies are conducted with master's and Doctorate students (Shkoler et al., 2020), and not as this thesis examines predominantly Bachelor-seeking students. Further analysis reveals that neither hard nor soft support service accessibility differs with national origin (both Mann-Whitney U tests, with p = 0.685, n = 72 and p = 0.259, n = 48 respectively).

There is still the chance of a type 2 error (Frost, 2017). Considering the stark contrast in interview responses between international and native students, this may be the case. Four of ten interviewees reported that no change to the structure of support services was necessary- three Dutch and one international. The only interviewee who stated that university support services were fully adequate was a native student: "I think for every problem, there is a solution at the university" (Interviewee 7). This is in stark contrast to often extreme stories of objective neglect that some respondents, predominantly internationals, described: from two student service desk experiences which could be described as discriminatory (Respondents 4 and 8), to appointments with counsellors that left the subject in tears (Respondents 2 and 4). The only Dutch interviewee with an equivalently negative response was Interviewee 9, who experienced significant pressure from a tendency in Dutch culture to avoid discussing one's financial status and had relied on friends for support. These experiences do, however, pertain to specific services- in particular services from the SSC and Faculty of Law student support desk. This is likely a case of extreme case self-selection, as those who had the most compelling experiences wanted to discuss them. However, while some Dutch respondents felt out-of-place asking for help in a cultural context- or even like impostors in some services- international students reported greater barriers in terms of finances and legal complications, minor language and cultural barriers to understanding, and a significantly harder time integrating into Dutch society while maintaining their pre-university community.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Key takeaways

This thesis sought to uncover whether international students, compared to native students, at the University of Groningen perceived additional challenges in accessing university support services. This topic, ever more important given international students' unique position in universities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, is chronically understudied. As such it is hoped that this thesis both clarifies pre-existing research and offers a framework for subsequent analysis.

Despite some prior research suggesting a discrepancy might exist (Elfferic et al., 2021; Karaffa et al., 2020), there is no significant difference between international and native students' perceived access to student support, at least among this sample population. This means that the answer to SQ1, namely that prior literature identified a difference between native and international students, has not been borne out in this research project. However, this does not mean that the perceived challenges to service access are identical across groups- merely that the sum of all perceived challenges to service accessibility are roughly equal for natives and internationals. The central research question can therefore be answered: international and native students' net perceived access to student support services do not differ.

If a difference between international student groups' access to support services exists, as hypothesised in SQ3, this project did not find evidence in favour. While some international respondents voiced concern for non-Western respondents' ability to receive support at university in the Netherlands, no non-anecdotal data exists. It was disappointing that, because of low response rate, all non-EEA+ international responses had to be aggregated. Whether further categorising this group is valid is still debated (Fang and Van Liempt, 2021), but higher response rate could have provided more detailed results. This answers the third sub-question: international students do not, as far as this research has identified, significantly differ in their support services accessibility.

Despite these findings, a difference between perceived accessibility of soft and hard service is reported- 'hard' formal services are more accessible to all students than 'soft' informal services, which are also much less recognisable to both groups. It is possible that the greater resources that come with being university-affiliated, as well as having employees involved in their operation, benefit formal support services here. This does somewhat disagree with prior literature that has identified informal support services as being more compassionate than soft literature (Hama et al., 2020; Padlee and Reimers, 2015).

Of further note is that international students are more likely to have actually accessed or heard of support services at the University than native students, particularly when it comes to the Student Services Centre. This is thought to be due to concepts identified in the literature, thus tying SQs 1 and 2 together- prior research (Scheyvens et al., 2003;

Shkoler et al., 2020) may have identified greater knowledge among all students of student support services, but in a Dutch context the international (English-speaking) precedent does not apply. As discussed earlier, culture and language both facilitate and obfuscate accessing support services for Dutch students, who must transgress a cultural norm to access help but have an easier time accessing the help available through sharing a common language and understanding of what to expect. International students, on the other hand, are separated culturally and linguistically from the support services but are at least anticipated and actively encouraged to access resources available. International students do, however, find themselves uniquely challenged in having to create an entirely new social network from scratch, which is a challenge in itself. Dutch students who do not have such an established network are instead increasingly isolated with little support that accommodates them. This answers the second sub-question.

5.2 Societal implications

Most importantly, significantly more research is needed in the field. Conducting comparable large studies with a high n for each category of international students will clarify findings or lack thereof identified in this thesis. It is likely that, as support networks differ across universities, the most effective approach would be to conduct either quantitative or qualitative studies in each university before conducting a meta-analysis to identify themes beyond the scope of a case study. This paper has also highlighted the importance of qualitative research when it comes to personal issues such as mental health and university support- although many findings show no difference between international and native respondents, even one student without access to support is one too many. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative research, with an outlook for both statistical analysis and case-specific answers, is necessary.

Most respondents to both the survey and the interviews reported difficulty in accessing at least one service. Students also had diverse responses in how to improve such a system. University policy on student support services must reflect this desire for improvement; offering a transparent feedback mechanism which has clear and noticeable results in actual policy will lead to better services for all students. If service provision for a particular student request is unfeasible, a compassionate and helpful response is extremely important both to justify the university's decision but also to provide alternatives. At every stage of any support service, students must be respected and listened to. Although beyond the scope of this paper, many interviewees reported dissatisfaction with the services available at the University of Groningen. Consultation with students about what services are required is therefore essential.

5.3 Evaluation

This thesis was a complicated undertaking. Identifying relevant literature for a topic that is both highly relevant and severely understudied was time-consuming. The skew that pre-existing literature presents, towards US-based international graduate and postgrad students, has affected the study type- in effect sacrificing reliability for replicability. This resulted in a dearth of content for SQ3; perhaps adjusting this research question to also include native students would have resulted in more compelling results.

The survey itself was also difficult to create. Initial complications with question phrasing and survey flow were relatively remediable, however the limitations of collecting almost exclusively Likert-scale data did damage the analysis methods available. Using scales was necessary, but perhaps adjustable continuous scales would have been more effective. This would, however, have hindered mobile responses- which were by far the most common response types collected. Interview data was, on the whole, easy to collect given that the interviewees were intended to be the most extreme cases. This did lead to some data being collected in excess, as interviews were sometimes very difficult to steer back on topic, but simply collecting more interview data and having a second interviewer could remedy this. Alternatively, discussing student support services in a group setting could be beneficial too, as it would enable respondents to work off of each other.

One interviewee commented that they felt I as a researcher was intimidating, and found the interview process difficult because of this. While it is expected that, being in the study group, I would identify closely with student, this was not as compelling as I had hoped in eliciting a detailed response from all interviewees. In this case, while being positional may have improved data collection more than a stranger, it was not fully beneficial.

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Appendices

1. Survey data

1.1 Questionnaire

Q26 Welcome to a Bachelors Thesis survey on Student Support Services. Thanks for taking the time to respond!
The researcher (me) is Jacob Leman, and I can be reached at j.b.leman@student.rug.nl. My thesis supervisor is Prof. Paul van Steen, who can be contacted at p.j.m.van.steen@rug.nl. By continuing with this survey you accept that your answers will be collected and analysed by Jacob Leman. At any stage of the research you may contact me to be excluded from the study, under GDPR. If you have further interest in the project, at the end there is an email submission box if you are interested in being asked to elaborate on your answers.

Q1 Are you a (Bachelors'/ Masters') degree-seeking student at the University of Groningen?

    Yes (1)

    No (2)

Skip To: Q25 If Are you a (Bachelors'/ Masters') degree-seeking student at the University of Groningen? = No

Skip To: Q2 If Are you a (Bachelors'/ Masters') degree-seeking student at the University of Groningen? = Yes

Q25 This survey is only for degree-seeking students at the University of Groningen. Thanks for your time and stay safe!

Skip To: End of Survey If This survey is only for degree-seeking students at the University of Groningen. Thanks for your t... Is Displayed

Q2 What is your current study year?

    _____

Q3 In which country was your home before you came to the University of Groningen?

    _____

Q4 Do you consider yourself proficient in Dutch?

    No (1)

    Somewhat (2)

    Yes (3)

Q6 This research looks at what students at the University of Groningen think about the student support services available to them. Student support services are services that cater to the specific needs of students and helps to support them throughout, and after, their studies in a number of ways. These services can either be formal, i.e. established by the university, or informal, i.e. established by students themselves. This survey will mention student support services and their accessibility frequently, so please bear this definition in mind when answering further questions.
Because of the content of this study, there is a chance you may need mental health support. At the end of the survey there are resources available for you, should you need them.

Q7 Do you have experience in student support services offered by the University of Groningen?

    I have made use of student support services (1)

    I haven't used them, but I know of student support services (2)

    I have no prior knowledge of student support services (3)

    None of the above (4)

Q8 The following questions will ask for your thoughts on a selection of student support services at the University of Groningen.

Q9 Do you know of the Student Services Centre (referrals to counsellors/ workshops)?

    Yes, I have made use of this service (1)

    Yes, I know of this service but have not used it (2)

    No (3)

Skip To: End of Block If Do you know of the Student Services Centre (referrals to counsellors/ workshops)? = No

Q10 Do you think that the service is:

  probably impossible to access (1)

  difficult to access (2)

  possible to access (3)

  relatively easy to access (4)

  very easy to access (5)

  None of the above (6)

Q11 Do you know of your Faculty's Student Support Desk (study advisors etc.)?

  Yes, I have made use of this service (1)

  Yes, I know of this service but have not used it (2)

  No (3)

Q12 Do you think that the service is:

  probably impossible to access (1)

  difficult to access (2)

  possible to access (3)

  relatively easy to access (4)

  very easy to access (5)

  None of the above (6)

Q13 Do you know of the Career Services?

  Yes, I have made use of this service (1)

  Yes, I know of this service but have not used it (2)

  No (3)

Q14 Do you think that the service is:

  probably impossible to access (1)

  difficult to access (2)

  possible to access (3)

  relatively easy to access (4)

  very easy to access (5)

  None of the above (6)

Q15 Do you know of the services offered by various Student Associations (Ganymedes, ESN, Vindicat etc.)?

  Yes, I have made use of these services (1)

  Yes, I know of these services but have not used them (2)

  No (3)

Q16 Do you think that the services are:

    probably impossible to access (1)

    difficult to access (2)

    possible to access (3)

    relatively easy to access (4)

    very easy to access (5)

    None of the above (6)

Q17 Do you know of the UG Walks programme?

    Yes, I have made use of this service (1)

    Yes, I know of this service but have not used it (2)

    No (3)

Q18 Do you think that the service is:

    probably impossible to access (1)

    difficult to access (2)

    possible to access (3)

    relatively easy to access (4)

    very easy to access (5)

    None of the above (6)

Q19 Do you know of Listening Ear?

    Yes, I have made use of these services (1)

    Yes, I know of these services but have not used them (2)

    No (3)

Q20 Do you think that the services are:

    probably impossible to access (1)

    difficult to access (2)

    possible to access (3)

    relatively easy to access (4)

    very easy to access (5)

    None of the above (6)

Q21 Do you know of any other student support services?
If so, please list them here, along with whether you believe the service is (1) probably impossible to access, (2) difficult to access, (3) possible to access, (4) relatively easy to access, (5) very easy to access.

_____

Q22 Do you believe you face hardships in accessing student support services with the University of Groningen?

    No (1)

    Yes (2)

Q23 What do you think student support services could do to improve accessibility?

_____

Q24 If you're interested in discussing your answers to this survey in an interview setting and talking about your experiences and perceptions, please enter your email address below. If not, you are welcome to leave this box blank.

_____

1.2 Responses

Response id	R_QcwmgV4fg22 c9KF	R_3oXDyZzxFOn 07	R_3tqJmq3RLXv ef	R_3lYsjq3YbPfma ffu	R_1HntASIDQh5B x1Bo6	R_2YWhNZ4CUX dOV	R_1bdKR5Bgro4 nWrA	R_2X5tHm4dP53 oVz	R_1FKtjv5WwHHZ B2rV	R_2XlCRqWPkCZ Raz	R_278pg5imYVzC Baz
Q23	They need to be far more clear with Non-EU students that we have to send our first years living money in advance. We got one email in April, halfway through, that mentioned this, even though we were reminded about tuition monthly.	No	No	No	Yes	Give more information about access to services such as counseling, study advisors etc and who to reach out to and how to do it	No	Be more well known. Apparently there are still a lot I haven't heard of yet.	Be clear about opening hours, who to reach for what and what the email addresses and phone numbers are.	No	No
Q22	The only accessibility-related problem with these services is how well-known they are; a reminder (bi-annual/each block maybe?)	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Q21	ISD- Immigration Service Desk Very easy to access			difficult to access			Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access		Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access
Q20	possible to access						No	No	No		No
Q19	Yes, I know of these services	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	3	Yes, I know of these services very easy to access
Q18	relatively easy to access	very easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	possible to access	possible to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	No		relatively easy to access
Q17	Yes, I have made use of this relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I know of this service but this service but access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this access		Yes, I have made use of this access
Q16	Yes, I have made use of this relatively easy to access		No	No	No	No	No	No	No		No
Q15	No	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of this service but these services	Yes, I know of these services	No	No	No	No		3	Yes, I know of these services very easy to access
Q14	possible to access	relatively easy to access	possible to access	very easy to access	No	possible to access	possible to access	No	very easy to access		very easy to access
Q13	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but	No	Yes, I know of this service but use of this access		Yes, I have made use of this
Q12	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	very easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access		relatively easy to access
Q11	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this		Yes, I have made use of this
Q10	possible to access	possible to access	possible to access	possible to access	possible to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access		relatively easy to access
Q9	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but access	No	No	Yes, I know of this service but this service but access	Yes, I have made use of this access		Yes, I know of this service but this service but access
Q7	I haven't used them but I know of student	I have made use of student	I have made use of student	I have no prior knowledge of student	I have no prior knowledge of student	I have made use of student	I have no prior knowledge of student	I have made use of student	I haven't used them but I know of student		I have made use of student
Q4	No	No	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Q3	France	United States	Netherlands	Zimbabwe	Germany	The Netherlands	Netherlands	Germany	Indonesia		Indonesia
Q2	3rd	3rd	3	3	Third	3	3	Third	3	2	2
Q1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

This page is a single large rotated spreadsheet of survey responses. Each column is one respondent (identified by the ID code at the bottom); the rows are the survey fields. The legible content is transcribed below.

Field	R_3GjF0CkNF0c20Bn	R_1laSIojXy2xwiESXz	R_2B42PtEEx1WjSXz	R_2B8IUL64ML01Re	R_3jY9H6PTr36r0t	R_0kZipfTjLcQdLeHum	R_2Xnxh9w7pxnKWB	R_UG9JLxfZxw8nOmxTQ	R_2ASHLEoWAYDSwl	R_2EFOPpmlFDTmnO	R_2yaoM1ehtzlEmnO	R_SC8LYi05E1VYnw7
Open comment	Send round emails, introducing themselves or talking about certain upcoming events like the careers service does	I would make it mandatory to have some sessions with a university/private therapist	I dont know since I've never used them	I don't know	Some of them (the non faculty ones) are a bit hidden in the UG website, they could be better integrated			I get the feeling that the problem in accessibility isn't in the promotion of these services, I think the student support services advertise	Co-operation with health care institutions - better direction and faster referrals.	2. Programme flexibility (sometimes support that is needed is so extensive, that study programmes require flexibility to access the	More English based clubs,association s, etc. so as not to exclude internationals More mental health support More advertising	
Open comment 2	Ensure there are no long waiting list											
Referral / other		Friends (5)	I'm afraid not.	no	No		No		No	No	No	n/a
Accessibility	possible to access	relatively easy to access	No	No	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	possible to access	possible to access	No	difficult to access	No	relatively easy to access
Awareness	Yes, I know of these services	No	No	No	Yes, I have made use	Yes, I know of these services	No	Yes, I know of these services	No	No	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of these services
Use of service	Yes, I have made use of student	I have made use of student	I haven't used them but I know	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Somewhat	I have no prior knowledge of	Yes
Satisfaction	Somewhat	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Somewhat	Yes
(Yes)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	3	6	3	third year	3rd Year of Bachelor	3rd	3rd	3	Third year	3	3	3rd
Country	Germany	Australia	Slovakia	Germany	Spain	Italy	Ireland	NL	Hungary	Finland	Romania	Ireland

More visibility on How to contact them and more opportunity to meet in real time (so via phone, zoom or in a real life meeting)	Yes	No		No	No		No		No			
Make more clear what students can expect/Make it easier to initiate contact via e-mail	Yes	No										
(access)	possible to access			No	Yes	No	No		No			relatively easy to access
Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of these services	No	Yes, I know of these services	No	Yes, I know of these services	No	No	No	No	No	Yes, I know of these services
very easy to access	possible to access	relatively easy to access	No	probably impossible to access	relatively easy to access	possible to access	No	No	Yes, I know of these services	very easy to access	difficult to access	Yes, I know of these services
Yes, I know of this service but access	Yes, I have made use of this	No	Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access	No	Yes, I have made use of this	No	No	No	No	Yes, I know of this service use of these	No	Yes, I have made use of these
Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access	this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	No	this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but use of these	Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access
Make themselves more visible and accessable to everyone. Offer everyone a session from the get go not only upon request or when a problem is occurred. It should be an obligatory first meeting to see every individual and accustom their needs as well as make...	Yes, I have made use of this	difficult to access	difficult to access	Yes, I have made use of this	this service but use of this	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made	possible to access	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this
Make a clear(er) overview of where to go for which services so students know where to go and don't have to all around	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	possible to access	possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made	Yes, I have made	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this
More psychologists and a longer duration of therapy	No	No	No	very easy to access	No	No	No	No	No	difficult to access	very easy to access	Yes
Country	Netherlands	Greece	Nederland	The Netherlands	Germany	Uk	India	Denmark	Romania			Ireland
Year	3rd year	3rd	4	3	3rd	3	First year	Second	3			Third
Respondent ID	R_3nTyWjyWe54EhSA	R_2ZYxriEufyzpgl6J	R_1jxFy4VPXCt0uoVk	R_12hD4biyFPeTuoR	R_WJOi6K7YyrbNYrP	R_3ElHMxHDd0lJRlJ9	R_24x8wDGdpm8AfYO	R_2clQbJeoTT5Lenup	R_25ue55A06gw2Wh	R_3qNC4tdAoVl2iP3	R_9Rml008fo3NJVxo9	R_rcoNgVDmYaKVxo9

Other free-text / answer fragments visible:
- "I have no prior knowledge of them but I know" / "I haven't used them but I know"
- "I have made use of student" / "I have no prior knowledge of student"
- "Somewhat" / "No"

Survey response data (rotated table). Each column is a respondent (Response ID at the bottom); rows are survey items.

Item	R_2EzvJegbVwT6Zss	R_3e8ki5JixPr2ASn	R_1lFsOGEnpMo8DiX	R_3s6v2MRdiNOkF7I	R_2QXTWZrdCa8RaF9	R_31ZSU5eUCWreKZI	R_rJdvrmhlhGKaF9	R_0vQXW6ssYNzLQI9	R_AtXpXWHAlExoHA	R_2dFMQcGchoJ09zC	R_1OSJGcI2Asph	R_1GNTWaAUIM iHENK
Open comment / suggestion	"There could be a widget on Nestor which shows you the available student support services, with links to their respective webpages. It would make people more prone to actually use them, for example last year in Corona time, I think most of us felt very..."	"more advertisement i think? letting us know they exist AND how to reach them"	"I didn't know about most of them so maybe more publicity?"	"Not sure, i see them being active on social media"	-		"Decrease work pressure on study advisors"	"Honestly right now I'd just say a more adamant..."				"The support services should offer the services actively and regularly (e.g., not just during the introduction week), instead of passively waiting for students to reach out. The fact that this survey is conducted indicates a possible problem of the service..."
Additional open comment	"The student psychologists, I know that they..."	No		No	No	"Yes"	No	"Sorry, none"	No			No
	No	No	No	No	"Yes, I know of these services"	"Yes, I know of this service but use of this"	No	No				No
	No	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of these services	No	"All student councils or difficult to access"	possible to access	No	possible to access	No	No	No	relatively easy to access
	No	possible to access	possible to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I have made use of this	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	No	No	No	Yes, I know of these services
	No	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	very easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	very easy to access	relatively easy to access	very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	relatively easy to access
	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I have made use of this	possible to access	Yes, I have made use of this	possible to access	Yes, I have made use of this	very easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	relatively easy to access
	Yes, I know of this	very easy to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	very easy to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	relatively easy to access
	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	possible to access	relatively easy to access	this service but use of this	this service but use of this	this service but use of this	this service but use of this	very easy to access	this service but use of this	this service but	Yes, I have made use of this
	Yes, I know of this service but	No	No	No	Yes, I know of this service but	No	No	No	Yes, I have made use	No	Yes, I have made use	No
Country	The Netherlands	Ireland	Netherlands	Slovakia	Netherlands	The Netherlands	The Netherlands	Netherlands	The Netherlands	France	Indonesia	Somewhat
Year of study	Second year	3	3	Final	Third	3	4th year studying 1st	3	3	3	3	I have no prior knowledge of
Participated / consent	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Response ID	R_2EzvJegbVwT6Zss	R_3e8ki5JixPr2ASn	R_1lFsOGEnpMo8DiX	R_3s6v2MRdiNOkF7I	R_2QXTWZrdCa8RaF9	R_31ZSU5eUCWreKZI	R_rJdvrmhlhGKaF9	R_0vQXW6ssYNzLQI9	R_AtXpXWHAlExoHA	R_2dFMQcGchoJ09zC	R_1OSJGcI2Asph	R_1GNTWaAUIM iHENK

Field	R_27UJJLcJsxSOgwi	R_2QVAw2HAUFvO1MR	R_3HRIWRWurz42noR	R_v6LxGewuskl7oRz	R_2z8Sj2KHXCfTloR	R_Qm3iTf06ke2AO7	R_26ILik5gXTjCCcGT	R_3OqZZOYpglPecGT	R_2zClxdP5NckETLnH	R_R4y2XCjDzHdTLnH	R_pbg5Kiv45ueD1M9	R_6xItSZXl8Mop34R
Suggestion (open response)	It could be advertised more widely	No	The study advisors are the only support service i have any sort of experience with. I believe it would help greatly if these same more…	I've heard from other students that the answers that can be expected from study advisors are very much predictable and are not too helpful in most of the cases. There is little that actually can be changed to suit the specific needs of the student.	No	I do not know how many student support systems	Maybe send emails, but I feel you should reach out if you need something from them	No	Repeat the fact that there is such a thing as student support services a thing as student as there are so many that it is hard to distinguish which service does what	Try to promote what they do and what they are for with all the different Student support services	I have never used any student support systems more. Keep reminding students that there is such a thing. You could do this through mail or it can be adressed more in lectures.	Have an independent site with all the different Student support services listed, and a small summary of what they are for + a link to their separate page/site.
Awareness / access	No	No	Yes, I know of this service but	No	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of this service but	No	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but
	No	No	relatively easy to access	No	relatively easy to access	possible to access	relatively easy to access		relatively easy to access	very easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access
	No	No	No	No	No	No	No		No	No	No	possible to access
	No	No	possible to access	No	No	No	No		No	No	No	No
	Yes, I know of this service but	No	Yes, I have made use of access	possible to access	Yes, I have made use of access	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I have made use of access		Yes, I have made use of access	Yes, I have made use of access	Yes, I have made use of access	Yes, I have made use of access
	possible to access	No	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	very easy to access	difficult to access	very easy to access		very easy to access	very easy to access	very easy to access	relatively easy to access
	Yes, I have made use of this	possible to access	Yes, I have made use of this	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this		Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this
	relatively easy to access	No	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of these services	relatively easy to access		relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access
Prior knowledge / use	I haven't used them but I know of student	I have made use of student	I have made use of student	No	I haven't used them but I know of student	I have no prior knowledge of	I have no prior knowledge of	No	I haven't used them but I know	I have no prior knowledge of	I haven't used them but I know	I haven't used them but I know
Satisfaction	Somewhat	No	No	Somewhat	No	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country	Netherlands	Netherlands	Ireland	Poland	Germany	Netherlands	the Netherlands		The Netherlands	Netherlands	The Netherlands	The Netherlands
Year	2		3rd	2	2	4	3	Year 3	Third year	3	3	3
Consent	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

	R_xfnrEYKniHaoIOR	R_urFspVfNidwt3F7	R_1lioMQoGrmjXmX	R_t01VJ8MzSwimrHz	R_2tMxwKeSmBxchNv	R_2D1uMHYUfdy4IlQll	R_1n7vq585j0qsNJ5	R_1pzp4VaqWL2vZro	R_2V89nybqUr1WvAi	R_1GPoCXLvKEG8VoD	R_1qW11nQ2QzirlTr0	R_2WwXEAy4HKGIJMW
Year of study	3	Third	3rd	2	3	3	2021	2	4th	3	3	3th year bachelor
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country	The Netherlands	Germany	The Netherlands	Netherlands	Netherlands	The Netherlands	The Netherlands	Germany	Netherlands	Netherlands	The Netherlands	The Netherlands
	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Somewhat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	I have no prior knowledge of them, but I know	I haven't used them but I know	I have no prior knowledge of	Yes	Yes	I have no prior knowledge of them, but I know	I haven't used them, but I know	I have made use of student	I haven't used them, but I know	Yes	I haven't used them, but I know	I have no prior knowledge of
	Yes, I know of this service but this service but	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	No	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to	Yes, I have made use of this access
	Yes, I know of this service but possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	very easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	No	Yes, I know of these services, very easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this very easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to access
	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	No	No	No	no	No	None	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Have social media	No	No	relatively easy to access	No	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of these services	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of these services	relatively easy to access	No
Do more advertising so more students are familiar with them	No	this service but this service but	No	No	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I know of this	possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but	No	No
Hand out flyers or have an information stand	No	this service but this service but possible to access	possible to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I know of this	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to	No
Have a list of all services with links and contact information to each.	No	this service but possible to access	this service but use of this	Yes, I have made use of this access	possible to access	No	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this	possible to access	Yes, I have made use of this access	No
more in person & lectured information	No	this service but	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	No	No	No	Yes, I have made use of this use of this	possible to access	No	relatively easy to access	No
More outbound services themselves contact from the	No	this service but	possible to access	No	Yes, I have made use of this	No	No	No	Yes, I have made use of this	No	Yes, I have made use of this	No
I don't really know as i never really searched for them, maybe use more social media.	No	relatively easy to access	No	No	Yes, I know of this service but	No	No	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	No	Yes, I know of this service but relatively easy to	No
Promote themselves more themselves and show how you can access them	No	No		Yes	No		No		No	No	Yes, I know of this service but access	No
	Yes	No	No	No				No		No	No	No

Below is a transposed survey data table (the page is rotated). Respondent IDs appear as column headers; each row is a survey item. Some cells are blank in the original.

Item	R_12PfQfh9MdMkCbR	R_1KKfQDJVJCktjP3	R_20UGZyBDnGmSuCh	R_3D74aupt82hmvnT	R_3HXqeRD1s04NocT	R_sbVZJO6vCoBQw9i	R_bwQfTIRo26toJNi	R_1C3mCUzX6c6AC7e	R_ZHJuNnmNVTJ1vr	R_29Sf3vn732CyPb8I	R_2nVXKLBveNnK2v	R_3ozN2eDLYtOnK2v
Advertise it better	No	Yes	No			No						
Not clear where/when you can access them			No	Nothing	No							
More promotion! I only know about them because a friend told me about them.	No	No	No	No								
Always make it possible to make an appointment online via a form (so without having to send a personal email or make a call)												
"Overwin je faalangst" – SSC (4)	No											
	No	No	No	No	No							
	No	No	No		No	No						
	No	No										
	difficult to access	relatively easy to access	No	No								
	Yes, I know of	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of these services	Yes, I know of	No	Yes, I know of these services						
	relatively easy to access	difficult to access	possible to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access						difficult to access	
	Yes, I know of this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but access	Yes, I know of this service but access	No						Yes, I know of this service but access	
	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	very easy to access	very easy to access	relatively easy to access						Yes, I know of this service but access	
	Yes, I know of this service but access	No	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this access	Yes, I have made use of this			Yes, I have made use of this			relatively easy to access	
	relatively easy to access	No	possible to access	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access			relatively easy to access			possible to access	
	No	No	possible to access	No	No		No				Yes, I know of this service but access	
	Yes, I know of this service but access	No	Yes, I know of this service but access	No	Yes, I know of this service but access		Yes, I know of this service but access				Yes, I have made use of this	
	Yes, I have no prior knowledge of them but I know	I have no prior knowledge of them but I know	I have made use of student	I have made use of student	I haven't used them but I know	No	I haven't used them but I know	Yes	I haven't used them but I know		I have made use of student	
	Yes	I haven't used them but I know	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat	
	Netherlands	NEtherlands	Nederlands	Netherlands	The Netherlands		Netherlands		Netherlands	romania	Germany	
	3	4th	2	3rd	3		3		Third year	3	3	
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The following table reproduces a rotated (landscape) survey data export. Respondent IDs are in the left column; each subsequent column is a survey question. Many cells are blank.

Response ID																	Place a message on Nestor with walk in hours	Make it more visible in Nestor and also lecturers could give it attention once in a while in a course. About how to access but also what kind of services there are.
R_2ZQaVM4qIbwrRaZ	No										No		relatively easy to access		No			
R_0Ihpc9p29fSXo9b	Yes																	
R_2qrDUjmiIAWILOD	Yes	5th	Netherlands	Yes	I have no prior knowledge of them but I know	Yes, I know of this service but	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of access	very easy to access	No	Yes, I know of these services	No	No	Yes, I know of these services	No	No
R_3irrClw3YzDKAoT	Yes	3	The Netherlands	No	I haven't used them but I know of student	Yes, I know of this service but	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made use of this	very easy to access	Yes, I know of access	No	No	No	No			
R_1HqwMU1QcQIM8n3	Yes	3	Netherlands	Yes	I have made use of student	Yes, I know of this service but	relatively easy to access	relatively easy to access	Yes, I have made	very easy to access	Yes, I know of access	No	No	No	No			
R_3PXNRxjaEnyRAA	Yes	4th at rug	Netherlands	Yes														
R_1BPEdpYgMmsOG7m	Yes	3	Netherlands	Yes	I haven't used them but I know	Yes, I have made use of this	difficult to access	Yes, I know of these services	No	No								
R_3j1IQrI370hzwZr33	Yes																	
R_2xIQsWvyGv8RlKN	Yes	3	Netherlands	Yes	I haven't used them but I know	No	relatively easy to access	Yes, I know of access	No	No	No							
R_eg7X5468nhRMD7	Yes	3rd	The Netherlands	Yes	I haven't used them but I know	No	No	No	No									
R_2rH7Ql3ayu6jB:P	No	3rd	Netherlands															
R_2EvqITU07SEQBrP	Yes	3rd	Netherlands	Yes	I have no prior knowledge of	Yes, I know of this service but	Yes, I know of this service but	No	very easy to access	Yes, I know of this service but	No	possible to access	Yes, I know of this service but	No	possible to access	Yes	I don't think so	Yes

No
very easy to access
Yes, I know of these services
No
No
No
very easy to access
No
very easy to access
Yes, I have made use of this
very easy to access
Yes, I have made use of this
Yes, I have made use of this
very easy to access
Yes, I have made use of this
No
of student
I have made use
Yes, I have made use of this
No
Germany
2
Yes
R_zVxF2pmPfCLjaOF

1.3 Soft and hard T-test

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Hard Support Services Mean Score	3.680851	47	.8106178	.1182408
	Soft Support Services Mean Score	2.964539	47	1.5537613	.2266394

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Hard Support Services Mean Score & Soft Support Services Mean Score	47	.386	.007

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Hard Support Services Mean Score - Soft Support Services Mean Score	.7163121	1.4486646	.2113094	.2909682	1.1416559	3.390	46	.001

Paired Samples Effect Sizes

			Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Hard Support Services Mean Score - Soft Support Services Mean Score	Cohen's d	1.4486646	.494	.189	.795
		Hedges' correction	1.4606096	.490	.187	.789

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.
Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

2. Interview data (Transcripts redacted for privacy)

2.1 Interview guide

Interviews were free-form conversations and as such were expected to deviate somewhat from the list of guidelines below.

- What support services do you know of offered by the University of Groningen, and where did you find out about these?
  o What do you think these support services should do for you?
  o Do the support services require prior experience with *anything*?
  o How could these support services be better espoused?
- In detail, what do you believe the challenges are/ are not to your access to university support services?
  o Do you find yourself relying on friends when you think another group/ service should bear the responsibility?
  o If you've accessed or considered accessing university student support services, how was your experience and how does it compare to other support services you may have used?
  o Do you think international students and native students face different challenges in accessing support? What are these challenges, and is there variance within international groups?
- How could these perceived challenges be mitigated, and by whom?
  o Does the University have a responsibility here, or do 'informal' student support services solve the problem better?
  o What would you do with unlimited budget, and why do you think this isn't being done?

2.2 Consent form

Consent form for Jacob Leman's Bachelor research project 'How do international and native students at RUG perceive access to student support services?'.

Data will be recorded and processed using machine learning software according to GDPR. Only the researcher will have access to recordings, which will be stored on a separate encrypted device. My rights under GDPR were explained to me before the interview was conducted. I received advice for where to receive support.

I fully understand the research project, following its explanation by the researcher (Jacob Leman). I was able to ask questions and any questions I had were clearly answered. I had enough time to decide to participate in the research.

My participation is completely voluntary. I can withdraw from the research at any time, without having to give a reason.

I give my permission for using the interview data for educational research purposes.

I agree to participate in this interview.

| Signature: | Name: | Date: | Nov 2021 |

I declare that I have informed the research participant about the research. I will notify the participant about matters that could influence his/her participation in the research.

| Signature: | Name: | Date: | Nov 2021 |