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NEW COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES (NCH)  
EVALUATION OF SUMMER SCHOOL 20/21:  
SUSTAINABILITY, TECHNOLOGY AND THE  
FUTURE

FINAL REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2021, The New College of the Humanities (NCH) conducted three week-long Summer Schools for students who had just finished their penultimate year of secondary education:

- *Culture, Crisis and the City*
- *Law*
- *Sustainability, Technology and the Future*

This report presents findings from the evaluation, through a pre- and post-programme student survey, of the *Sustainability, Technology and the Future* summer school.

41 students completed the pre-programme survey, with 30 responses to the post-programme survey.

In this report, we first present findings from the pre-programme survey, including demographic characteristics of respondents, pre-existing knowledge of NCH and aspirations for the future.

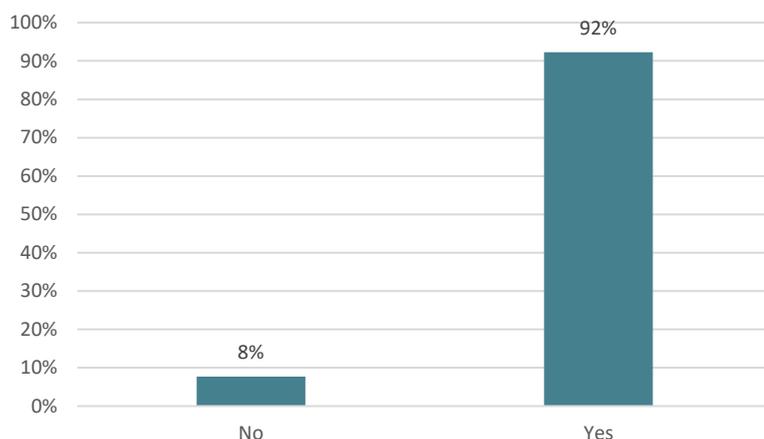
We then present findings from the post-programme survey, drawing parallels with pre-programme survey questions where comparable. Both sections also contain key findings from a thematic analysis of a variety of open-ended questions.

We conclude this report with a brief summary of findings and, where appropriate, recommendations for future practice.

## FINDINGS FROM THE PRE-PROGRAMME SURVEY

### PRE-EXISTING AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF NCH

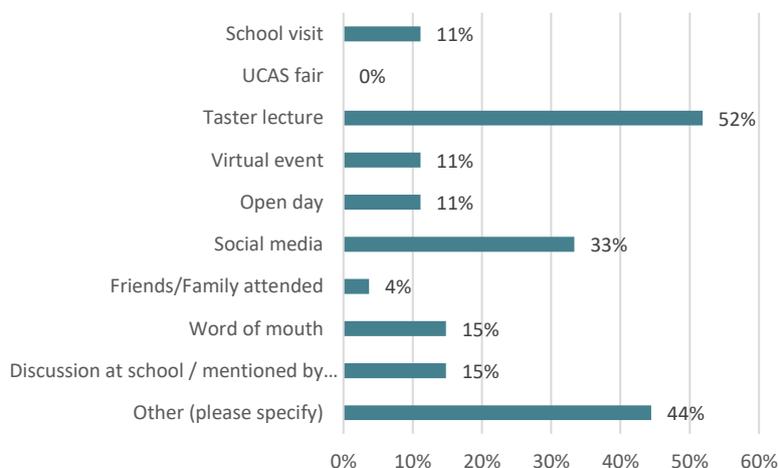
Before applying to the participate in the summer school, have you heard about New College of the Humanities before?



**Figure 1** Before applying to the participate in the summer school, have you heard about New College of the Humanities before?

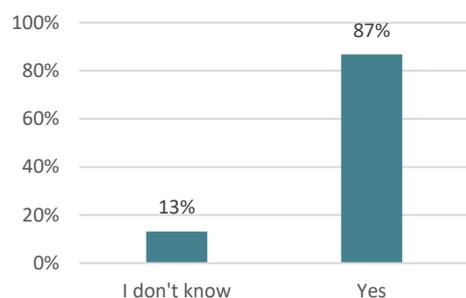
92% of respondents had heard of NCH prior to taking back in the summer school. Those 92% indicated they had heard of NCH through taster lectures, social media and, in selected 'Other', they specified through the NCH Essay Competition. Students also signalled school visits, virtual events and word of mouth, as well as other forms of engagement.

IF YES TO Q6In ways had you heard, or had experience with NCH before?  
Please select all that apply



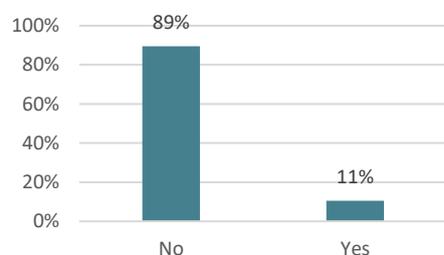
**Figure 2** IF YES TO Q6In ways had you heard, or had experience with NCH before? Please select all that apply

At NCH, is it possible to study a combined humanities degree?



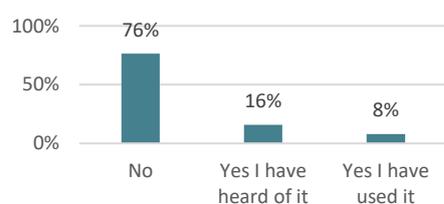
**Figure 3** At NCH, is it possible to study a combined humanities degree?

Have you heard of the NCH LAUNCH Programme?



**Figure 4** Have you heard of the NCH LAUNCH Programme?

Have you heard of, or used CANVAS before?



**Figure 5** Have you heard of, or used CANVAS before?

Most participants were aware that it is possible to study a combined humanities degree at NCH and a small minority were uncertain.

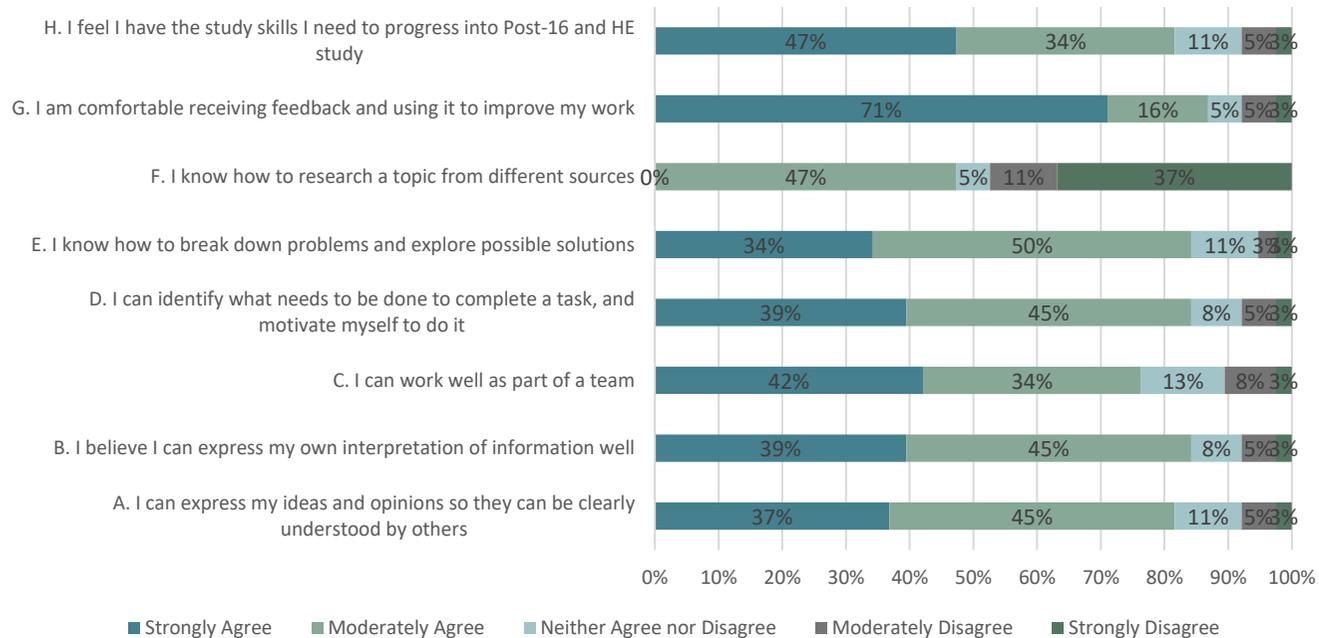
Conversely, only 11% of respondents had heard of NCH Launch. Those who were aware of the programme described it as an 'outreach scheme', 'an extra-curricular programme which teaches ethics, scientific literacy and business' and 'an opportunity for pupils going into university in the new few years to expand their knowledge as well as gain insight into how a university class functions.

Only 16% of respondents had heard of Canvas and 8% had used it previously. Those who were aware of Canvas described it as 'an online platform where you have access to online materials such as books and assignments', 'where all the information for the summer school will be held', and where you can 'submit work, get feedback, get course documents and get announcements from your classes'. Others mentioned it was like Google Classroom or Teams.

Students reported that the average week of teaching and learning at NCH would include lectures and seminars, tutorials, independent study, essay writing and reading; others were not sure. Students also reported that NCH was appealing to them as an institution because of its specialisation in Humanities, the combination of major and minor subjects, as well as the variety of courses. Students were also attracted to NCH's location, its high-quality teaching and the small size of the institution.

## STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS, COMPETENCIES, AND FUTURE HE PLANS

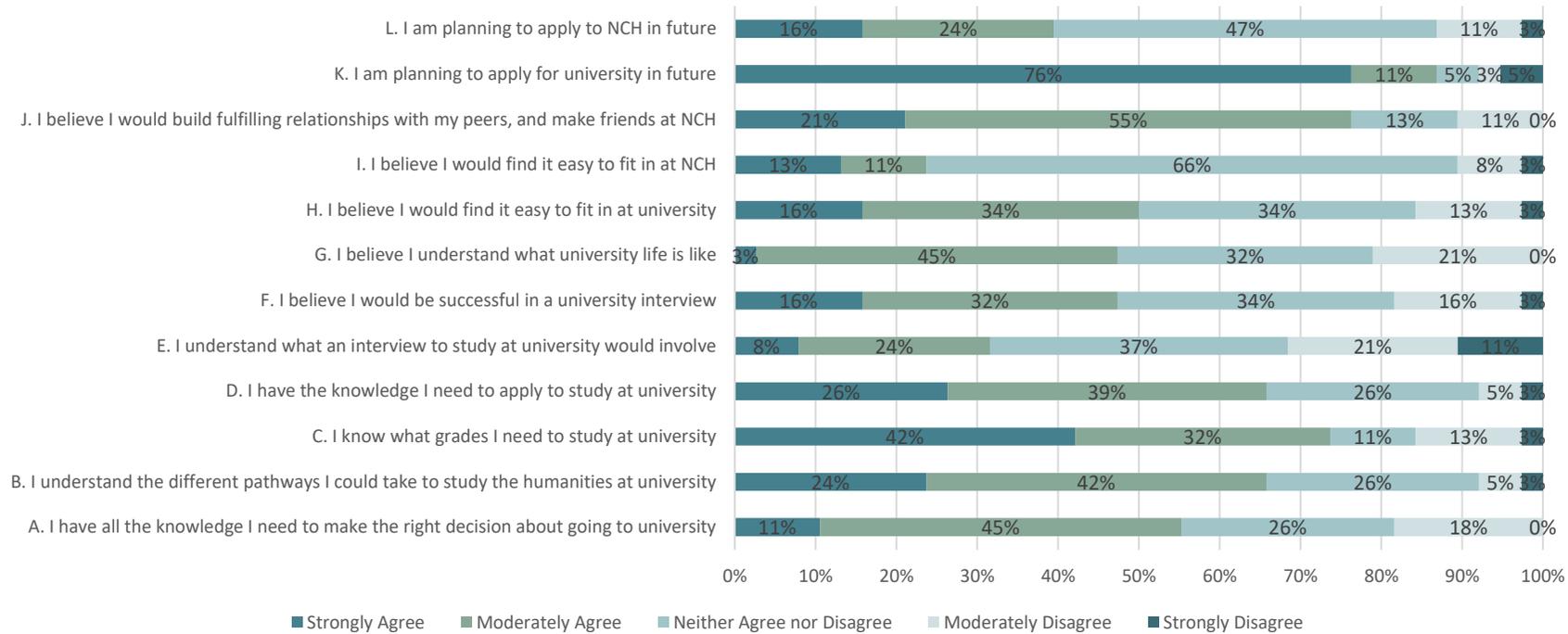
Thinking about how you feel about your current skills and knowledge; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:



**Figure 6** Thinking about how you feel about your current skills and knowledge; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

In most cases, students were confident about their current skills and knowledge, with over 80% agreeing strongly or moderately with most statements. Levels of comfort receiving feedback and using it to improve work were particularly strong, with 71% agreeing strongly with this statement. Students were less confident with researching a topic from different sources, with 37% of students disagreeing strongly with this statement, and 11% disagreeing moderately.

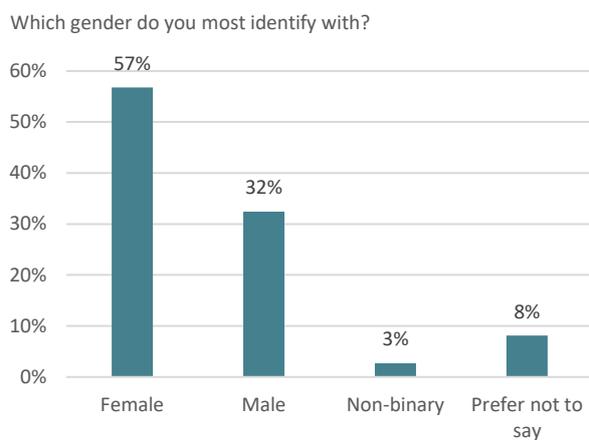
Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school / college; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:



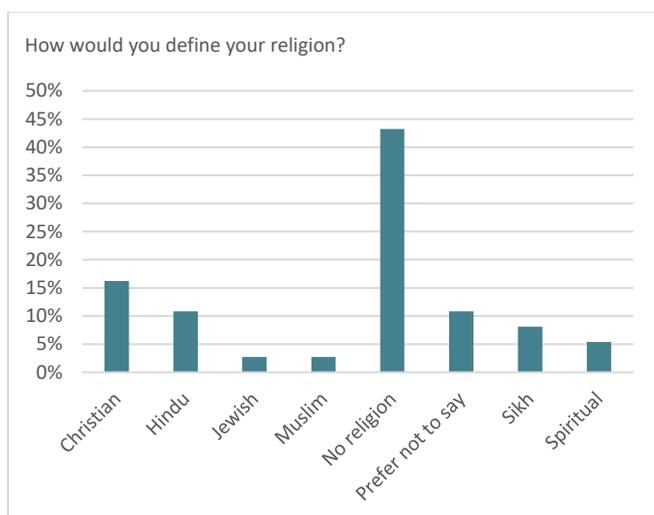
**Figure 7** Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school / college; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

Prior to taking part in the summer school, 40% of students agreed either strongly or moderately that they were planning to apply to NCH in the future; nearly 50% were ambivalent. The vast majority agreed either strongly or moderately that they were planning to apply to university. Students were more ambivalent about the extent to which they would fit into NCH, with some, albeit less, uncertainty about how well they would fit into university generally. Some students were confident in their understanding of what university life is like and their chances of success at interview, although there was considerable uncertainty in these areas. A minority of students were unsure about next steps in terms of going to university, including the grades that would be required at A level or equivalent.

## DATA PERTAINING TO ACCESS, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY



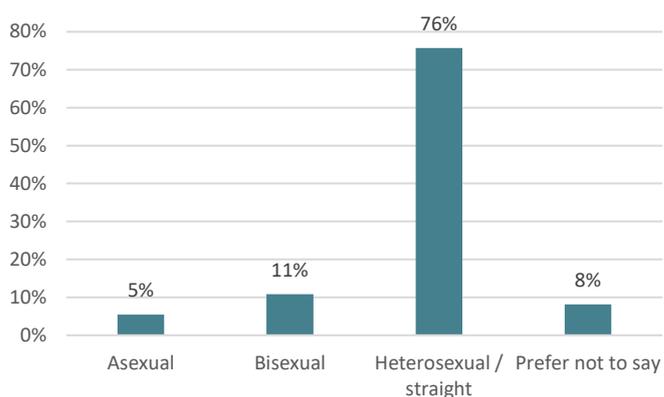
**Figure 7** Which gender do you most identify with?



**Figure 8** How would you define your religion?

57% of participants identified as female, with 32% identifying as male, 3% as non-binary and 8% indicating they preferred not to say. 43% reported that they had no religion, 16% identified as Christian, 11% as Hindu and 11% preferred not to say. There were also 3% who identified as Jewish, 3% as Muslim, % as Sikh, and 5% as spiritual.

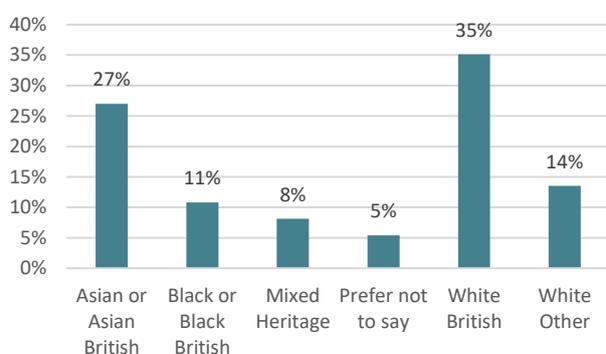
What is your sexual orientation?



76% of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, 11% as bisexual, 5% as asexual and 8% indicated they would prefer not to say.

Figure 9 What is your sexual orientation?

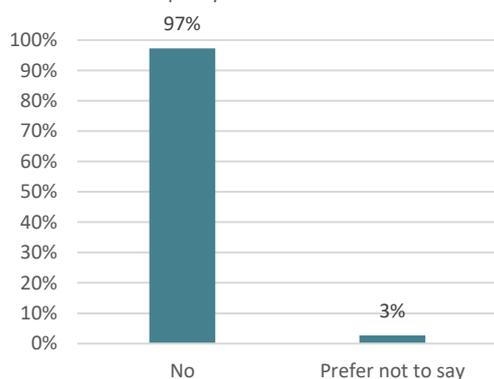
What ethnic group do you most identify with?



35% of respondents identified as White British, 27% as Asian or Asian British, 14% as White Other, 11% as Black or Black British, and 8% as mixed heritage. 5% indicated they would prefer not to say.

Figure 10 What ethnic group do you most identify with?

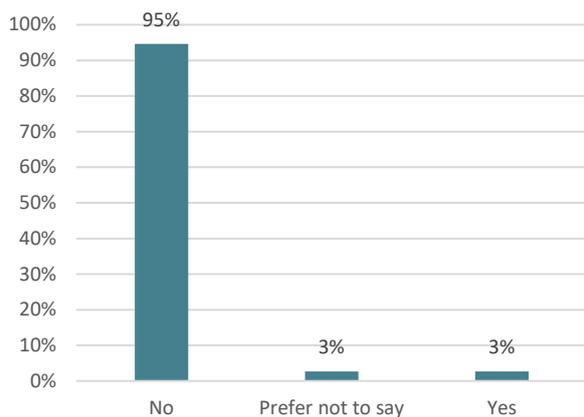
Do you consider yourself to be disabled\* under the Equality Act 2010?



97% of students indicated they did not consider themselves to be disabled under the Equality Act and 3% indicated they would prefer not to say.

Figure 11 Do you consider yourself to be disabled\* under the Equality Act 2010?

Do you have caring responsibilities for others?



3% of respondents reported having caring responsibilities for others, and 3% had experience within the social care system, or defined themselves as estranged from their family.

Figure 12 Do you have caring responsibilities for others?

Have you had experience within the social care-system? Or would you define yourself as estranged from your family?

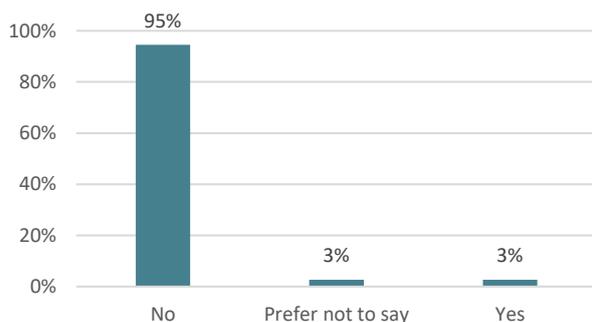
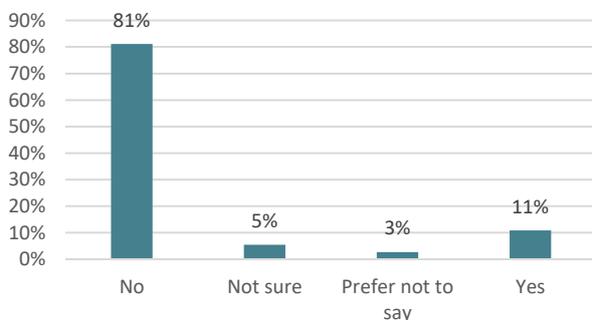


Figure 13 Have you had experience within the social care-system? Or would you define yourself as estranged from your family?

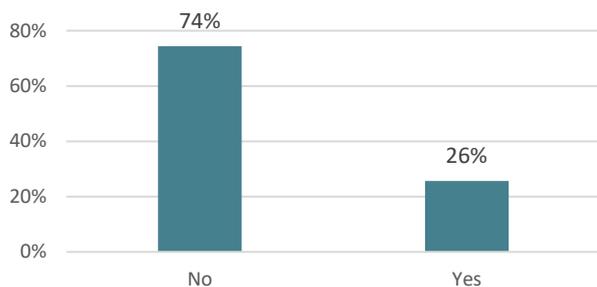
Have you, or your family been eligible to receive free school meals within the last 5 years?



11% of respondents reported that they had been eligible for free school meals within the last 5 years.

Figure 14 Have you, or your family been eligible to receive free school meals within the last 5 years?

Have you, or are studying Philosophy at A-level or GCSE level?



26% of respondents were taking A-level Philosophy, 59% were taking A level Economics, and 41% were taking A level Politics.

Figure 15 Have you, or are studying Philosophy at A-level or GCSE level?

Have you, or are studying Economics at A-level or GCSE level?

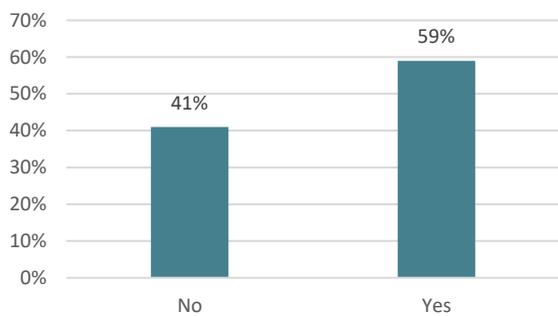


Figure 16 Have you, or are studying Economics at A-level or GCSE level?

Have you, or are studying Politics at A-level or GCSE level?

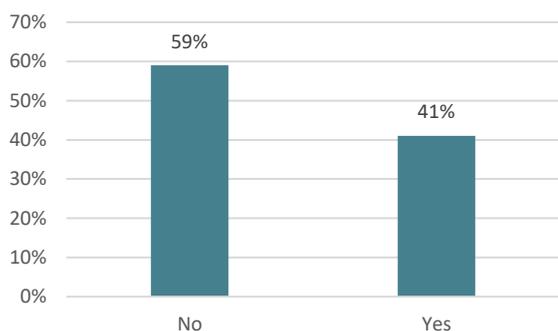
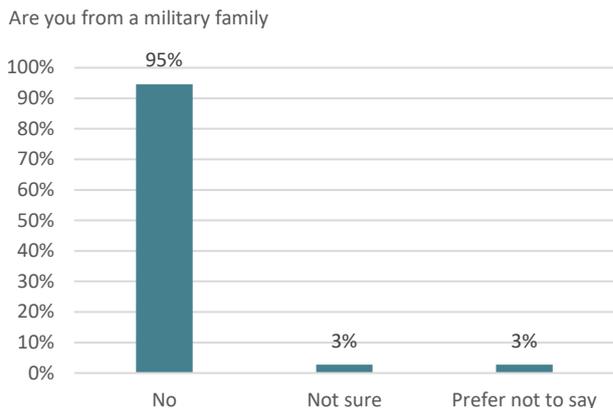


Figure 17 Have you, or are studying Politics at A-level or GCSE level?



No student reported coming from a military family although 3% indicated they were not sure and 3% indicated they preferred not to say. Similarly, no student reported having refugee status.

Figure 18 Are you from a military family

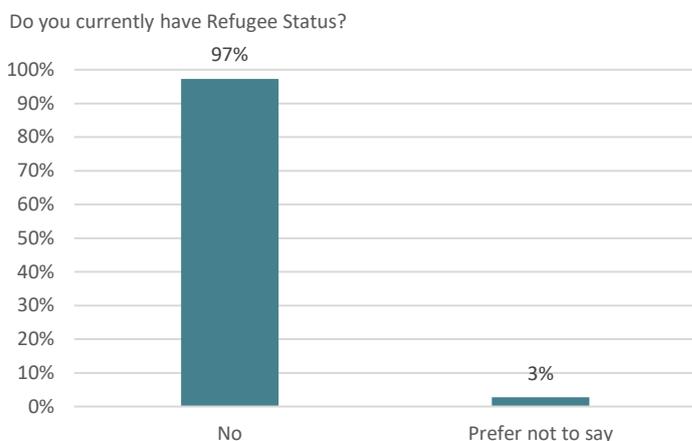
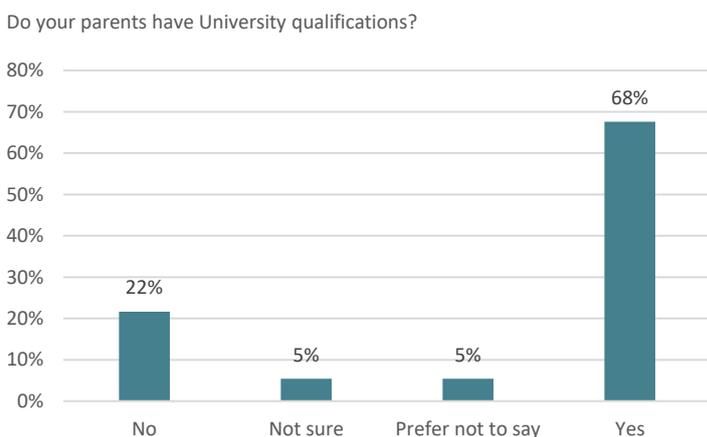


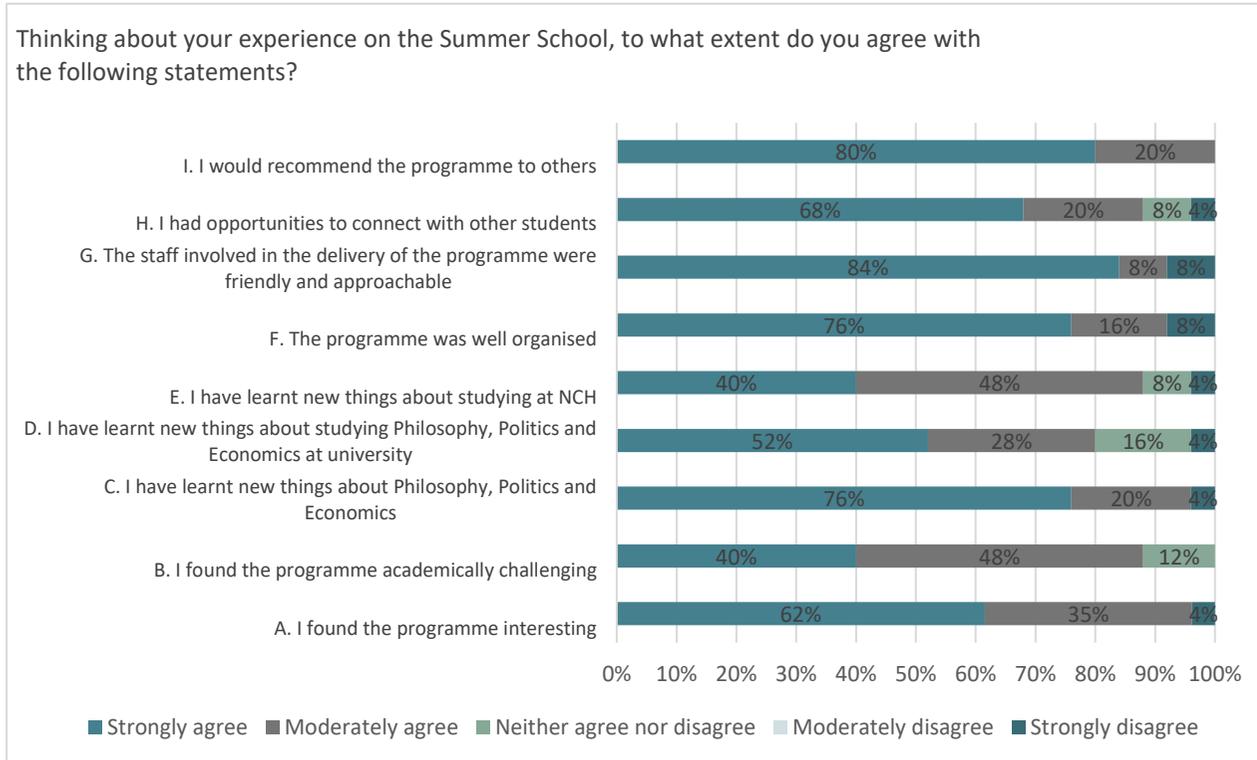
Figure 19 Do you currently have Refugee Status?



68% of students reported having parents with university qualifications, 5% were not sure, 5% preferred not to say and 22% had parents who did not hold university qualifications.

Figure 20 Do your parents have University qualifications?

## FINDINGS FROM THE POST-PROGRAMME SURVEY



100% of respondents indicated they would recommend the programme to others. 84% strongly agreed that the staff involved in the delivery of the programme were friendly and approachable, with 8% agreeing moderately. 88% agreed either strongly or moderately that they had opportunities to connect with other students, and 92% agreed either strongly or moderately that the programme was well organised.

Figure 21 Thinking about your experience on the Summer School, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

Feedback in other areas was also mostly positive, with over 80% of respondents either agreeing strongly or moderately with all statements. There are, however, small pockets of uncertainty and some instances of students disagreeing strongly (equating to one or two individuals).

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**OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS****What was your favourite part of the Summer School?**

Responses to the question above included discussions, listening to others, having viewpoints challenged and group presentations. Students enjoyed interacting with each other and meeting new people and found the lectures interesting.

**What do you think could have been improved in the Summer School?**

Responses to the question above included an increase in the number of sessions for 'more time for lectures and discussion'. One student added they would have liked 'more opportunities to connect with other students' and another felt the summer school would be improved if held in person. Another student reported,

*'sometimes things became very complex very quickly, which I think may have been difficult to follow if you haven't studied the subject previously.'*

**What will be your biggest 'take-away' piece of information/learning from your time at the Summer School?**

Students' responses to the above included 'economics of sustainability', and that 'you can't look at sustainability just from one perspective'. Other responses included the 'potential for AI', 'philosophical thought' and 'intrinsic and instrumental value'.

## STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school / college; to what extent do you agree with the following statements

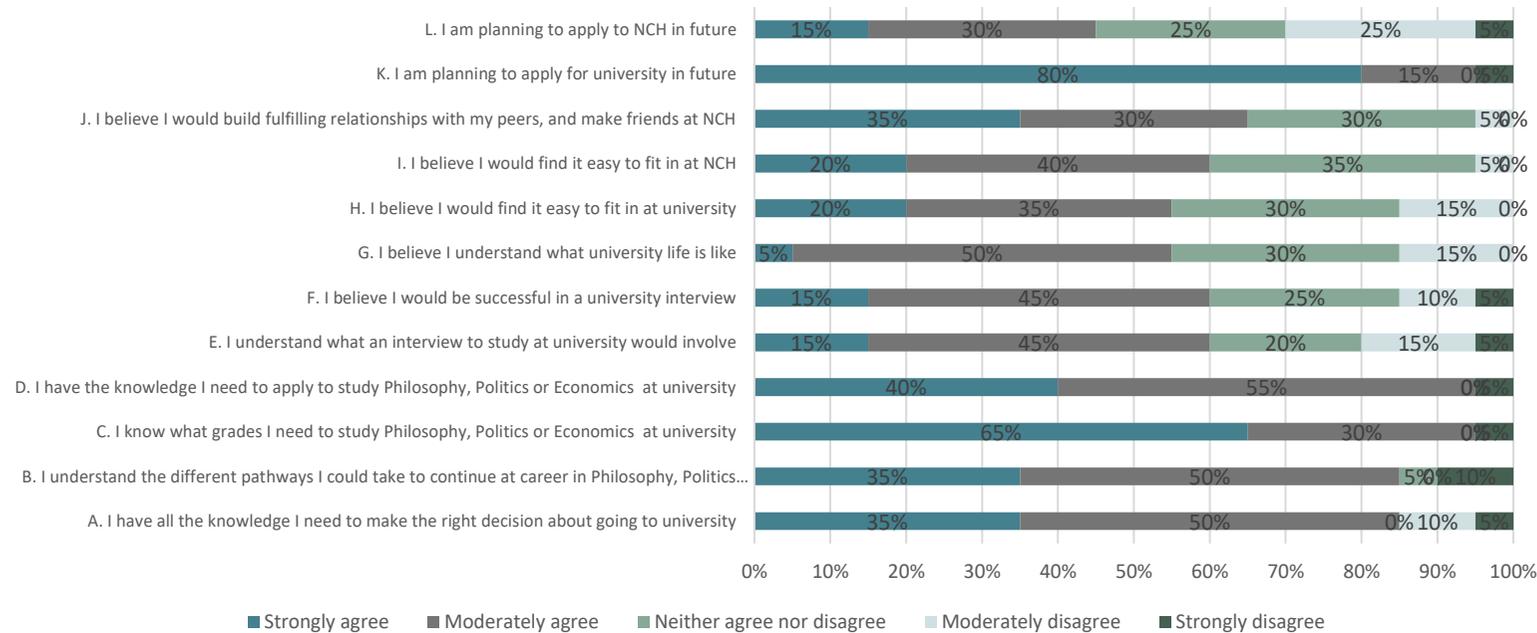


Figure 22 Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school/college, after your participation in the Summer School to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

Figure 22 shows responses to a set of statements, most of which were also part of the pre-programme survey. We have reproduced the pre-programme responses below (see figure 8 below) for ease of comparison. Post-programme findings show that participants were more likely to agree strongly or moderately that they were planning on applying to university in the future, although this level was already high pre-programme. Post-programme, a higher proportion of students agreed strongly or moderately that they would fit into NCH and fit into university more generally. Students also displayed higher levels of confidence regarding the university interview and an increase in knowledge required to make the right decision going forward.

The questions relating to Politics, Philosophy and Economics were not asked in the pre-programme survey, but figure 22 shows that the vast majority of students agreed strongly or moderately that they had the knowledge to apply to study these subjects at university, were aware of the grades required, and understood the different pathways they could take to continue a career in these subjects.

Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school / college; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

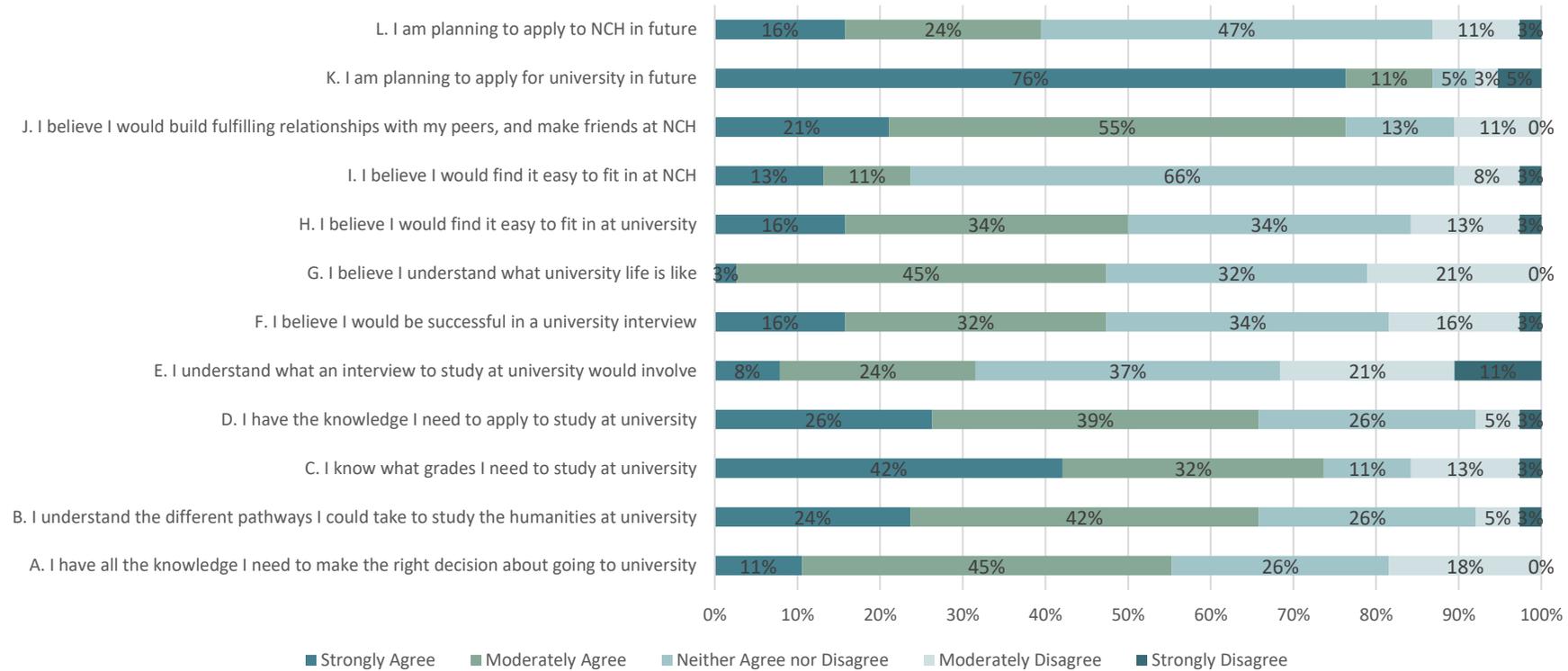


Figure 8 reproduced from pre-programme survey

## QUESTIONS ON COURSE CONTENT AND LEARNING

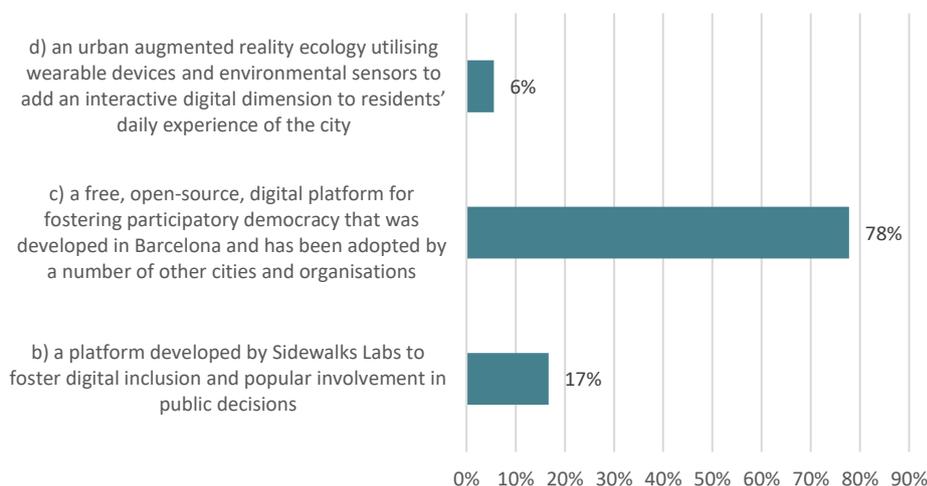
**Do you see technology as more of a contributing factor in the sustainability challenges that we face as societies and co-inhabitants of the earth or more as a source of answers to these challenges? How so?**

Responses to the question above were varied, with several students answered that they considered technology to be both a contributing factor and a source of answers. One student responded,

*‘technology is definitely helping us to answer questions about how to be more sustainable, however it does come at a very expensive cost and can cause more damage than help.’*

Some students felt technology to be more of a contributing factor, while another felt it depended on ‘the technology at hand’ and ‘how people use technology’.

What is Decidim?



**Figure 23** What is Decidim?

78% of students identified Decidim as a free, open-source, digital platform for fostering participatory democracy that was developed in Barcelona and has been adopted by a number of other cities and organisations.

### What is instrumental value?

Student response to the question above included ‘the value something has a means to an end’. Students gave examples including money, a car, a screwdriver, a laptop, and labour.

Which of these 3 AI would be classed as 'sustainable AI' according to Aimee van Wynsberghe?:

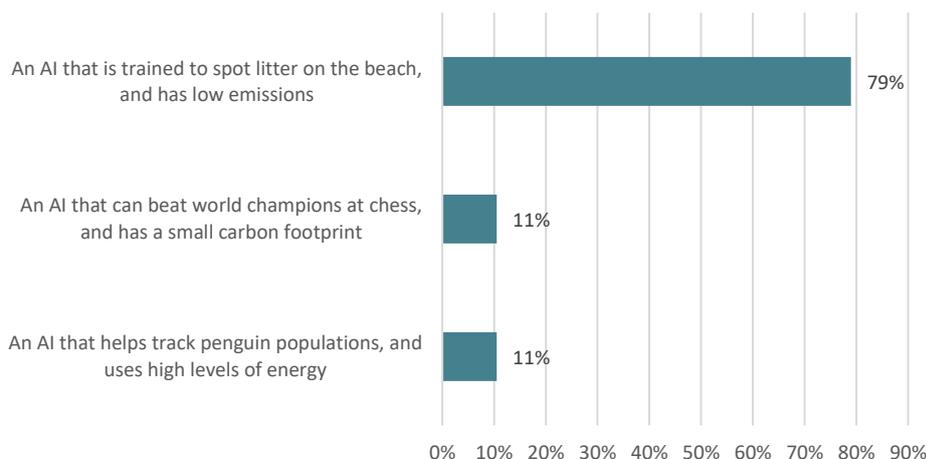


Figure 24 Which of these 3 AI would be classed as 'sustainable AI' according to Aimee van Wynsberghe?:

Students identified 'An AI that is trained to spot litter on the beach and has low emissions' as 'sustainable AI.

## REFLECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

Students were asked to write a reflective paragraph on what they had learned throughout the week. Several students commented on what they had learnt about sustainability including, 'that sustainability and the future must take an interdisciplinary approach and address any issues that are debated within these subject matters' and,

*'how it is vital to look beyond rational economic thinking in making the transition to a sustainable economy and take into account the danger posed by 'sustainable technologies', which may do more harm than good.'*

One student reflected on a shift in direction of study as the summer school had 'made me aware of the different pathways that exist'.

Students also reflected on the use of Canvas, which was found to be very useful although 'confusing at first' for some. Another spoke of wanting the course to have been longer.

## THREE GOALS

Students were asked to list three goals that they would like to set for themselves to achieve by the end of 2021. A number of students said that they wanted to achieve particular grades in their mocks and EPQs. Students also wanted to do extra schoolwork to ensure they were going to achieve the grades they wanted at A Level. Some students responded that they wanted to read a particular number of books and others wanted to have applied to and received offers from universities. One student wanted to improve their ability to play a musical instrument and another wanted to take part in a volunteer programme.

## CONCLUSION

Findings in this report show that students who took part in the NCH Sustainability, Technology and the Future Summer School found it interesting and informative. Staff were perceived as friendly and approachable, and all participants said they would recommend the programme to others.

Prior to taking part in the programme, most students had already heard of NCH through existing NCH outreach activities but also through the essay competition. Students are attracted to it because of the high quality of teaching, specialization in the humanities, the small size of the institution and the location.

Students taking part in the programme are already confident about their skills and knowledge, particularly in terms of academic attainment and in terms of HE decision-making. Nearly all participants were planning on applying to university prior to the programme, although they were less certain about applying specifically to NCH. After the programme, all students were planning on applying to university and more were planning on applying to NCH.

This cohort was reasonably diverse in terms of religion and ethnicity and a significant proportion of students do not have parents who attended university.

In terms of recommendations, we would suggest obtaining IMD and POLAR4 measures to further build the data picture of cohort composition. It would also be advantageous to focus more on opportunities for students to interact and connect with each other, which is arguably more difficult with online delivery. NCH may also want to reach out to students who are as able academically but perhaps less confident in their next steps or in their decision to apply to university, as the programme may have a bigger impact engaging with 'harder to reach' populations.