

# SHADOWING SCHEME 2022 IMPACT REPORT

JULY 2022

CAMBRIDGE SU



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	3
<b>Introduction</b>	4
<b>Scheme Design</b>	5
Key Themes	5
Working Online	6
Working with Student Volunteers	7
Mentors	7
Access Officers	7
Session Leaders	7
Content and Timetable	8
<b>Challenges</b>	12
Moving Online	12
Communication	12
Shadow Engagement	12
Volunteer Recruitment	12
<b>Changes for next year</b>	13
Online Delivery	13
Resource Development	13
Letting Students Lead	13
<b>Evaluation</b>	14
Survey Results	14
Future Plans	14
Knowledge About Admissions	17
Confidence and Belonging	18
Perceptions of Cambridge	20
<b>Shadow Applications and Selection</b>	22
<b>Attendee Profile</b>	23
Widening Participation Flags	23
<b>Applicant Destinations 2020/21</b>	24

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## FOREWORD

For the last two decades, the annual SU Shadowing Scheme has welcomed prospective university students from underrepresented backgrounds to attend a residential in Cambridge and shadow a current university student. In 2022, the Scheme was delivered entirely online for a second year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The format was kept the same as last year's Scheme, with a range of virtual sessions including student life and admissions talks, academic workshops, social events and college-based activities. Following the Scheme, participants continue to have access to a safeguarded online communications platform to send messages to their Mentor, which this year will be available for shadows and Mentors to stay in contact up until December 2022.

Feedback from this year's Shadows remained overwhelmingly positive despite needing to move the Scheme online, and our final session of the Scheme highlighted examples of where Mentors and volunteers have made a real difference to Shadows' perceptions of higher education and life at the University of Cambridge. The Scheme relies on this enthusiasm and creativity from Cambridge students, and we're hugely appreciative of everyone who volunteered their time to be involved.

The delivery of the Cambridge SU Shadowing Scheme would not be possible without the vital funding from the University of Cambridge's Widening Participation Project Fund. We are also extremely grateful for the support from university and college staff who gave time to support the logistical delivery of the Scheme.

Looking ahead to 2023, we will explore an approach to delivering both online and in-person sessions to improve access to Scheme content and support applicants throughout the year. We learned a lot from this year and are excited to apply this knowledge to continue to develop the Scheme for 2023.

**Zaynab Ahmed**

Undergraduate Access, Education and Participation Officer, 2021-2022

**Oli Gray**

Activities Manager

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Cambridge SU Shadowing Scheme matched 153 prospective students with undergraduate Mentors and offered them a programme of free online activities over a three-week period, from 2nd February to 29th February 2022. Shadows had the opportunity to meet virtually with their Mentors via online messaging and online group activities.

Despite this being the second year that the Scheme has been delivered completely online, 70% of Shadows reported that they plan to apply to Cambridge, which is a similar proportion to those who attended the in-person Scheme in 2020. Furthermore, 88% of Shadows agreed they understood the Cambridge application process, compared to 30% of Shadows before the Scheme began.

In order to inform improvements to the Shadowing Scheme over time, this annual report evaluates the delivery of this year's Scheme using data captured from participants before and after the Scheme, as well as feedback from stakeholders. The report also includes data from the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) to show the number of applicants and offers made to attendees of last year's Scheme.

The 2022 Shadowing Scheme report raises the key challenges faced by this year's Scheme, what can be learned from them, and what can be done differently in next year's Scheme. This review process enabled us to continually develop the Shadowing Scheme to ensure it is beneficial for both applicants and university stakeholders.

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## SCHEME DESIGN

In designing the 2022 Scheme, we sought to return to an in-person Scheme, but also hoped to incorporate the successes of the 2021 online Scheme to ensure maximum engagement and impact. Due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the latter half of 2021, the Scheme design was ultimately moved to an exclusively online model.

The 2022 Shadowing Scheme utilised the model set out last year and aimed to build and improve upon this. The 2021 Shadowing Scheme sought to replicate the in-person Scheme as much as possible via online delivery whilst remaining immersive. The aim was to be engaging, and still provide the important knowledge and student interactions despite the Scheme being online.

Last year's Scheme was hugely successful in terms of giving Shadows contact over a longer period of time. Mentors and other student volunteers also had the opportunity to [design and lead much of the Scheme's content](#), which is one of the things we're proudest of at Cambridge SU.

### Key Themes

To offer a high-quality online Scheme comparable to the in-person version, we were led by principles that reflect the experiences we generally expect Shadows to have. The overall aim of the Scheme is to make it more likely that disadvantaged students will receive and take up offers at top Universities.

Our intermediary aims to achieve this goal are:

1. Help Shadows feel part of a community
2. Support Shadows to make strong university applications by developing their application and study skills
3. Provide the opportunity for Shadows to develop their academic interests
4. Enable Shadows to make informed decisions about University by telling them about life at Cambridge

The following table illustrates where Colleges (including JCRs) student societies, SU Campaigns, Admissions staff, and Mentors, (with support from SU officers and staff) delivered sessions that fulfilled each aim.



	COLLEGES	STUDENT SOCIETIES/REPS	SU CAMPAIGNS	MENTORS	ADMISSIONS STAFF
COMMUNITY					
LIFE IN CAMBRIDGE					
SKILLS					
ACADEMIC INTERESTS					

## Working Online

The two main platforms we used this year were MentorNet and BlueJeans. We continued to use the MentorNet system to facilitate safe one-to-one conversations between Mentors and Shadows; this system had oversight from the SU Activities Manager, as well as a process for flagging any inappropriate questions or language. So far this year, 667 messages have been sent using the platform, with 312 of these from Mentors and 331 from Shadows, which shows a good balance of online conversations between Mentors and Shadows.

In addition to this, BlueJeans was the main platform used for delivering the Scheme, where participants could join secure links to video calls/sessions, without revealing identifying data, such as last names or emails. There were a total of 8 DBS checked SU staff who supervised online sessions, in addition to 3 SLOs who assisted in supervising the College Life sessions.

To support the 70 timetabled online sessions, 166 online meetings were scheduled using BlueJeans (this is a higher number due to the use of breakout groups to increase interactivity and encourage discussion). Aside from the mandatory Welcome Session and Closing Ceremony, the most popular sessions in this year's Scheme are detailed in the table below:

Session	Total Attendees
Studying Sciences: from School to Cambridge	77
Medical Society, CamWAMS & Clinical Society: Applying for Medicine at university	69
Academic Session: Biological Sciences with Unlock Biology	46

As expected, mandatory sessions were also well-attended; the Student Life Talks had 121 attendees across 3 sessions and the Admissions Talks had 98 attendees across 3 sessions. Hosting these core sessions online and making recordings easily accessible was a key advantage to delivering the Scheme online.

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## Working with Student Volunteers

Student volunteers are key to the success of the Shadowing Scheme. By letting students lead sessions and conversations, volunteers were able to present a personal and authentic image of the University to Shadows, as well as share knowledge they (would have) found useful as prospective students.

All volunteers were invited to training to prepare them for their role in the Scheme. These were tailored to the specific groups (mentioned below) of volunteers, and covered: using the online platforms; the code of conduct; incident reporting; key ideas and themes to discuss with Shadows.

Our three main groups of student volunteers were: Student Mentors, Access Officers and session leaders.

### Mentors

Mentors were a key point of contact for Shadows. As with previous years, Shadows were paired with a current student who is studying a subject they're interested in. Where possible, Shadows and Mentors were also paired based on extra-curricular interests and/or shared characteristics. The aims of pairing are twofold:

1. Mentors would provide Shadows with subject-specific information, such as useful super-curricular activities to pursue
2. Where Shadows and Mentors had lived experiences in common, Shadows would be able to see that they would belong in a university/Cambridge environment, and mythbust the idea of the 'typical' Cambridge student. Shadows and Mentors interacted through College Life sessions on BlueJeans and over MentorNet. Some Mentors who were particularly engaged also attended Student Life and Admissions talks as panellists.

### Access Officers

A key point of contact throughout the Scheme was college Access Officers. Their role involved developing and running College Life sessions, as well as liaising with Mentors in their college. To address previous matters raised regarding Shadow cohort size, each Access Officer this year was paired with an Access Officer from another college. This allowed for a reduced and shared workload regarding both the size of sessions and the amount of preparation for each session. After the Scheme, Access Officers fed back that this was a good decision and allowed conversation in college sessions to flow much more naturally (particularly in an online context).

### Session Leaders

26 students in total were recruited as sessions leaders; for many this was their first engagement with access work at Cambridge University, who had little prior knowledge of access work. Sessions were run from a variety of students, inclusive of societies, academic reps and members of the SU Campaigns. These sessions gave Shadows a flavour of an assortment of the different aspects of Cambridge life, varying from social, cultural and academic.

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## Content and Timetable

Sessions were delivered between 6.00 pm - 9.00 pm to accommodate Shadows attending school, as well as 9.00 am - 12.00 pm on Saturday. There was a wide variety of academic and social sessions for Shadows to attend, with College Life sessions book-ending the week.

An element that was notably missing due to the Scheme moving online was the opportunity for Shadows to experience lectures and contact hours. To mitigate this, academic reps and academic societies ran subject-specific sessions, with a cross-curricular focus to attract/appeal to/support Shadows interested in a range of subjects.

[A plaintext version of the timetable can be accessed here.](#)



# WEEK 1 TIMETABLE



FEB	WEDNESDAY 2ND	THURSDAY 3RD	FRIDAY 4TH	SATURDAY 5TH
6pm	Welcome to the Shadowing Scheme	African Caribbean Society: Q&A and Social	Class Act Campaign: Q&A and Social	9am
6.30pm			Medical Society, Cam WAMS & Clinical Society: Applying for Medicine at Uni	Robinson College & St Johns College
7pm	Robinson College & St Johns College	Disabled Students' Campaign: Q&A		10am
7.30pm	Christ's College & Jesus College	Student Life Talk #1		10.30am
	King's College, Magdalene College & Sidney Sussex College	UN Association Model United Nations Debate		11am
8pm	Murray Edwards College & Newnham College		Arts & Crafts Society Origami Social	Admissions Talk with Dr Sam Lucy #1
8.30pm	Corpus Christi College & Downing College		Bangla Society, Pakistani Society & Arab Society: Q+A and Social	11.30am
				Corpus Christi College & Downing College
				King's College, Magdalene College & Sidney Sussex College

**Core events you should attend. The student panels, student life talks and admissions talks repeat, you should aim to attend one of each.**

**College-led events. You can only attend the events run by your College.**

**Sessions led by societies and campaigners. Sign up at [cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22](https://cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22)**

**Academic sessions. Sign up at [cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22](https://cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22)**

# WEEK 2 TIMETABLE



**SU** SHADOWING SCHEME

FEB	WEDNESDAY 9TH			THURSDAY 10TH			FRIDAY 11TH			SATURDAY 12TH			
6pm	Robinson College & St Johns College	Christ's College & Jesus College		Law Society: Applying for Law at University	Cambridge Footlights: Comedy Workshop	Intro to Climate Justice at Cambridge	Academic Session: Arts and Humanities	Medical Society, Cam WAMS & Clinical Society: Applying for Medicine at Uni	Cambridge SU Social: Online Quiz	9am		Murray Edwards College & Newnham College	King's College, Magdalene College & Sidney Sussex College
6.30pm										9.30am	Admissions Talk with Dr Sam Lucy #2		
7pm	Student Life Talk #2	Murray Edwards College & Newnham College	King's College, Magdalene College & Sidney Sussex College	RPG & Tabletop Gaming Society: Role Playing Games		Academic Session: Biological Sciences with Unlock Biology	Cambridge Union: Debating Workshop			10am		Robinson College & St Johns College	Christ's College & Jesus College
7.30pm					LGBT+ Campaign: Zine-making Social					10.30am			
8pm	Corpus Christi College & Downing College			BME Campaign: Q&A and Social		Studying Sciences: From School to Cambridge		Studying Humanities From School to Cambridge		11am	Corpus Christi College & Downing College		
8.30pm										11.30am			

**Core events you should attend.** The student panels, student life talks and admissions talks repeat, you should aim to attend one of each.

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Academic sessions. Sign up at [cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22](https://cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22)

# WEEK 3 TIMETABLE



**SU** SHADOWING SCHEME

FEB	WEDNESDAY 16TH			THURSDAY 17TH			FRIDAY 18TH			SATURDAY 19TH			
6pm	Murray Edwards College & Newnham College	King's College, Magdalene College & Sidney Sussex College		Academic Session: Humanities and Social Sciences	Intro to SU Campaigns		Hawks & Ospreys: Sports at Cambridge Talk	Intro to Decolonisation at Cambridge		9am	Murray Edwards College & Newnham College	Corpus Christi College & Downing College	
6.30pm										9.30am			
7pm	Admissions Talk with Dr Sam Lucy #3	Corpus Christi College & Downing College			BME Campaign: Q&A and Social	Studying Sciences: From School to Cambridge	Academic Session: Maths	Studying Humanities: From School to Cambridge	93% Club: Q&A	10am	Robinson College & St Johns College	Christ's College & Jesus College	King's College, Magdalene College & Sidney Sussex College
7.30pm										10.30am			
8pm		Robinson College & St Johns College	Christ's College & Jesus College	Cambridge Footlights: Comedy Workshop	Student Life Talk #3		Cambridge SU Social: Virtual Games Night			11am	Scheme Farewell		
8.30pm										11.30am			

**Core events you should attend. The student panels, student life talks and admissions talks repeat, you should aim to attend one of each.**

College-led events. You can only attend the events run by your College.

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Academic sessions. Sign up at [cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22](http://cambridgesu.co.uk/surveys/prescheme22)

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# CHALLENGES

## Moving Online

The spike in Covid-19 cases across the UK over the Autumn-Winter of 2021 led to the decision to move the Scheme entirely online for the second year. Moving the Scheme online at such short notice was a challenge, despite our contingency planning. There were also participants (both Shadows and Mentors) who withdrew their application as they had expected to participate in an in-person Scheme.

## Communication

Feedback received from university stakeholders (including college staff and Access Officers) identified the issue of delayed communication between the SU and stakeholders. In some cases, this led to colleges withdrawing from the Scheme. All withdrawn colleges were contacted directly by the Deputy CEO or Activities Manager to identify their concerns and ensure they'd be addressed in subsequent Schemes.

We worked to address communication issues during the Scheme for the colleges that remained involved, but understand that the delayed clarification itself was a challenge for many stakeholders. Therefore, we will focus our changes for next year (see below) on addressing the challenges of this year's Scheme.

## Shadow Engagement

Engagement with the content of the Scheme was low this year; this was evidenced in a number of Shadows not turning on their camera, asking questions or speaking up in interactive elements. This made it difficult for sessions to remain interactive; as a result of this session leaders were not always certain their content was absorbed or enjoyed.

## Volunteer Recruitment

The subject distribution of Mentors continues to be a long-term challenge for the Scheme, the attendee profile on page 23 shows the high proportion of Shadows interested in Medicine and Law. Mentors in these subjects are typically more difficult to recruit given their workload and commitments, and so this year we continued to match Shadows to Mentors studying a similar subject (e.g., with a Biological Natural Scientist where a Shadow expressed an interest in Medicine), but we still aimed to match based on non-academic hobbies and interests where possible.

As a long term aim of the Scheme, we will introduce Shadows to a wider variety of subjects; this year we began to do this through cross-curricular academic sessions, run by students from a range of Faculties.

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# CHANGES FOR NEXT YEAR

## Online Delivery

Keeping some aspects of the Scheme online can add value to Shadows and make core content, such as the compulsory Admissions and Student Life Talks more accessible, especially when Shadows begin their university applications. This year we were unable to deliver in-person elements to the Scheme, but we are still committed to develop future iterations of the Scheme with a hybrid approach, and plan to stream a small number of sessions online for next year's Scheme, with recordings available to all attendees afterwards.

## Resource Development

To address concerns around how we communicate logistical aspects of the Scheme to various stakeholders, we will create a 'Scheme timeline' for the 2023 Scheme to manage the expectations of stakeholders and ensure relevant information is circulated in a timely manner.

We will also look to formalise new role descriptions for student volunteers, to improve clarity on what is required, and what support they can expect from the SU. We believe this will help address communication issues, as well as the challenges of volunteer recruitment by being clearer around what students are signing up for.

As part of our SU-wide strategic review of training (led by our Director of Student Advice & Employee Experience), we will revise all training delivered to students in the lead up to the Shadowing Scheme, to ensure all volunteers are suitably trained and equipped for their roles.

## Letting Students Lead

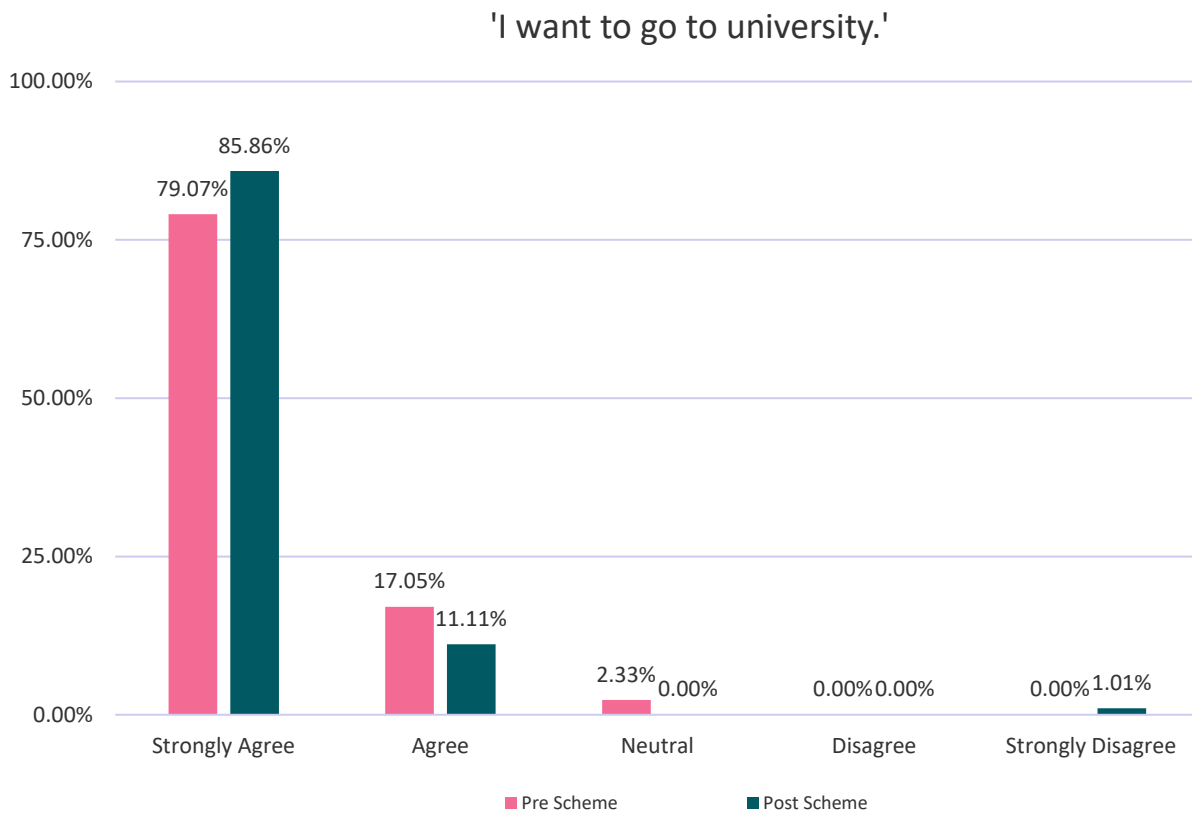
The past two years of running the Shadowing Scheme online has allowed students to lead large parts of the Scheme's content. Students have demonstrated incredible creativity and shown the types of academic, social and political knowledge they find valuable in access work. Moving forward, whether the Shadowing Scheme takes place in-person, online or a combination of both, working closely with student volunteers to develop a Scheme which gives Shadows the best experience of Cambridge possible will be vital to the Scheme's success.

# EVALUATION

## Survey Results

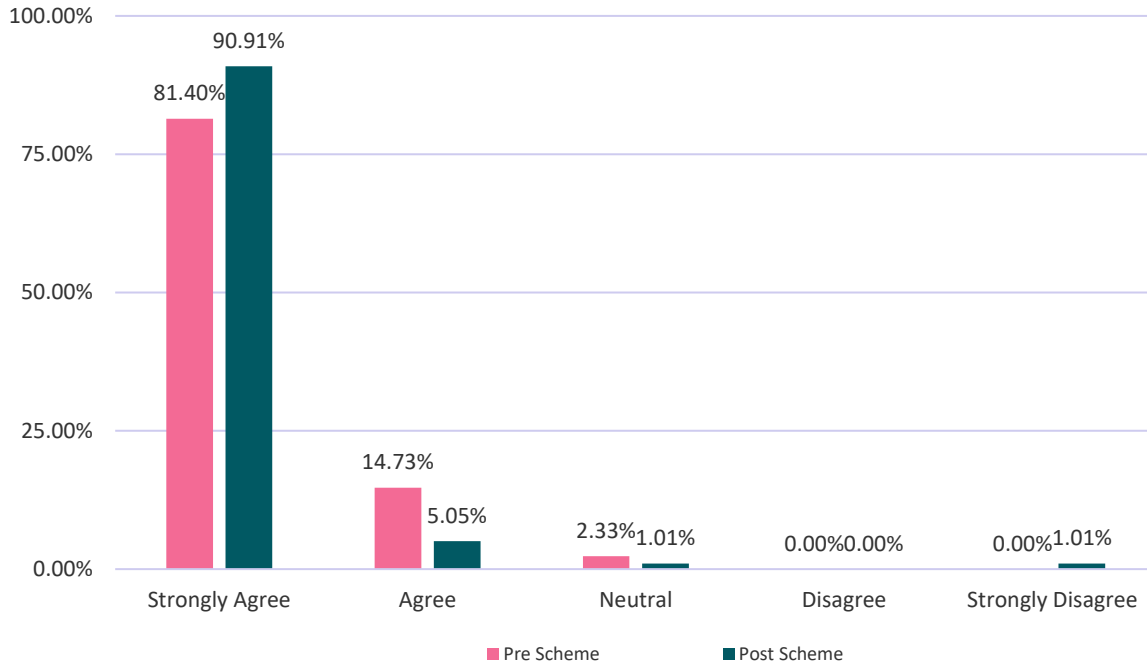
Shadows were surveyed before the Scheme started, and again once the Scheme had ended. 127 shadows completed the pre-Scheme survey, and 97 completed the post-Scheme survey. Shadows' self-identification with statements about future plans, knowledge about admissions, sense of belonging and perceptions of Cambridge before and after the Scheme are compared below.

### Future Plans

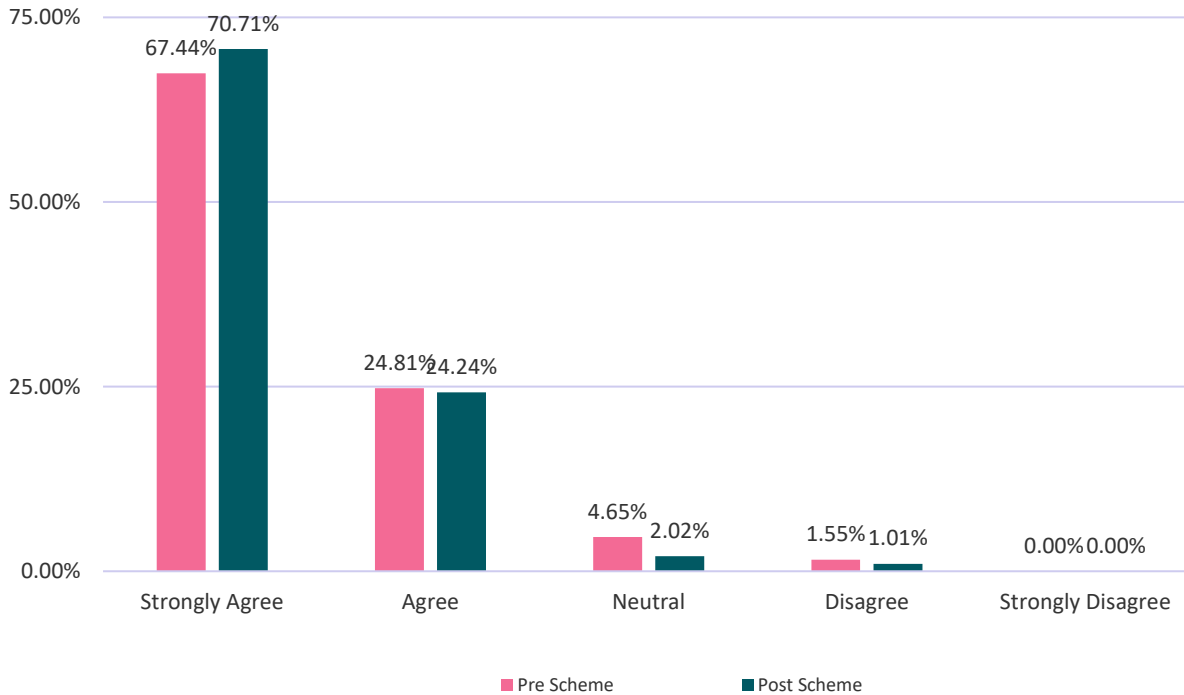




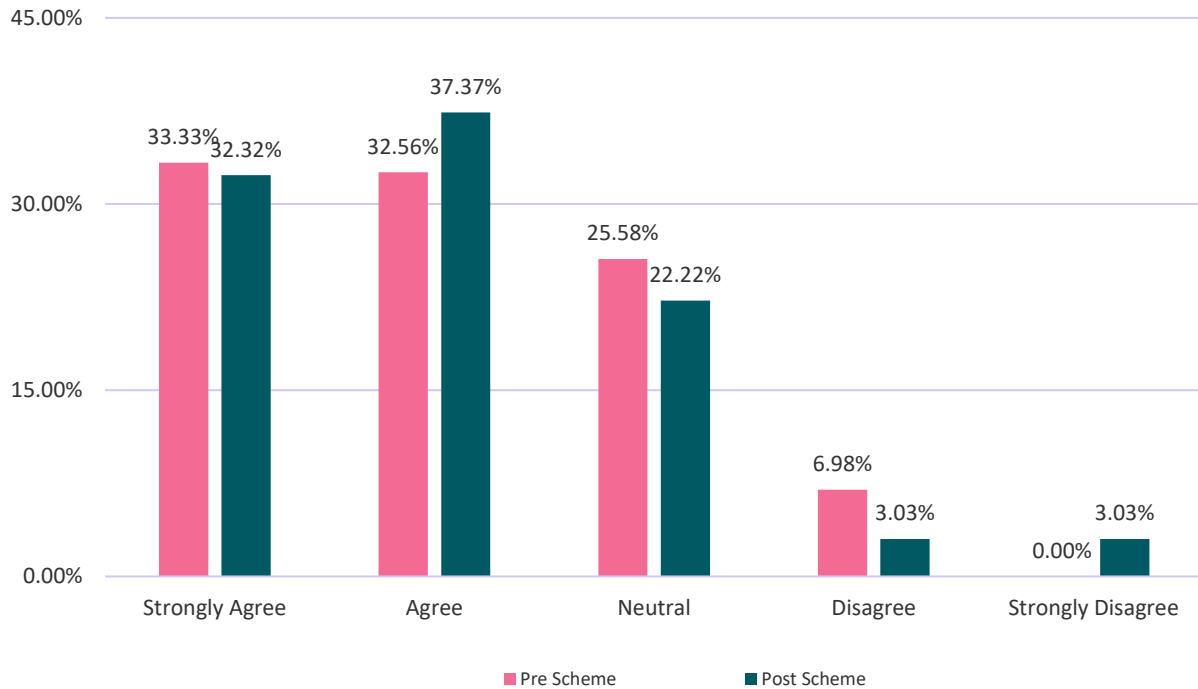
### 'I plan to apply to university.'



### 'I plan to apply to a top university.'



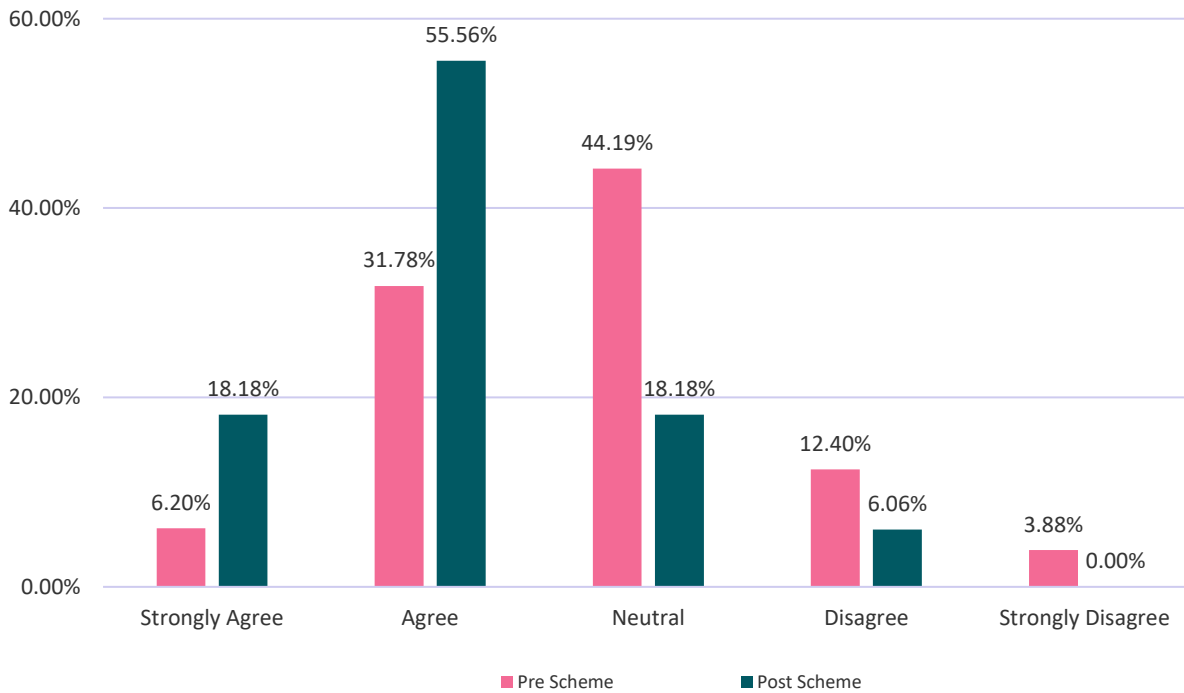
### 'I plan to apply to Cambridge'



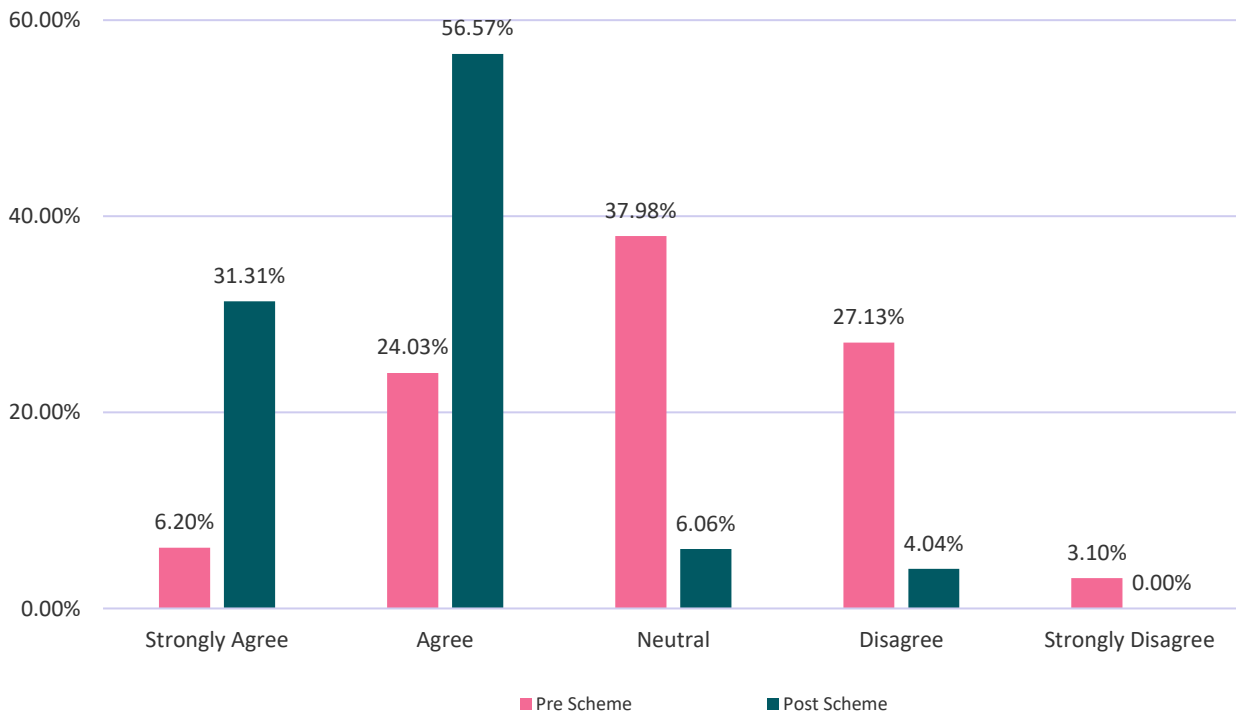
The above data shows that the majority of attendees planned to apply to university (and a top university) before they attended the Scheme. After the Scheme, an increased amount of shadows agreed they plan to apply to Cambridge. Collectively, these responses indicate that raising aspirations is not the primary function of the Shadowing Scheme, as a high number of shadows plan to apply to top universities before the Scheme.

## Knowledge About Admissions

'I understand the UCAS admissions process.'

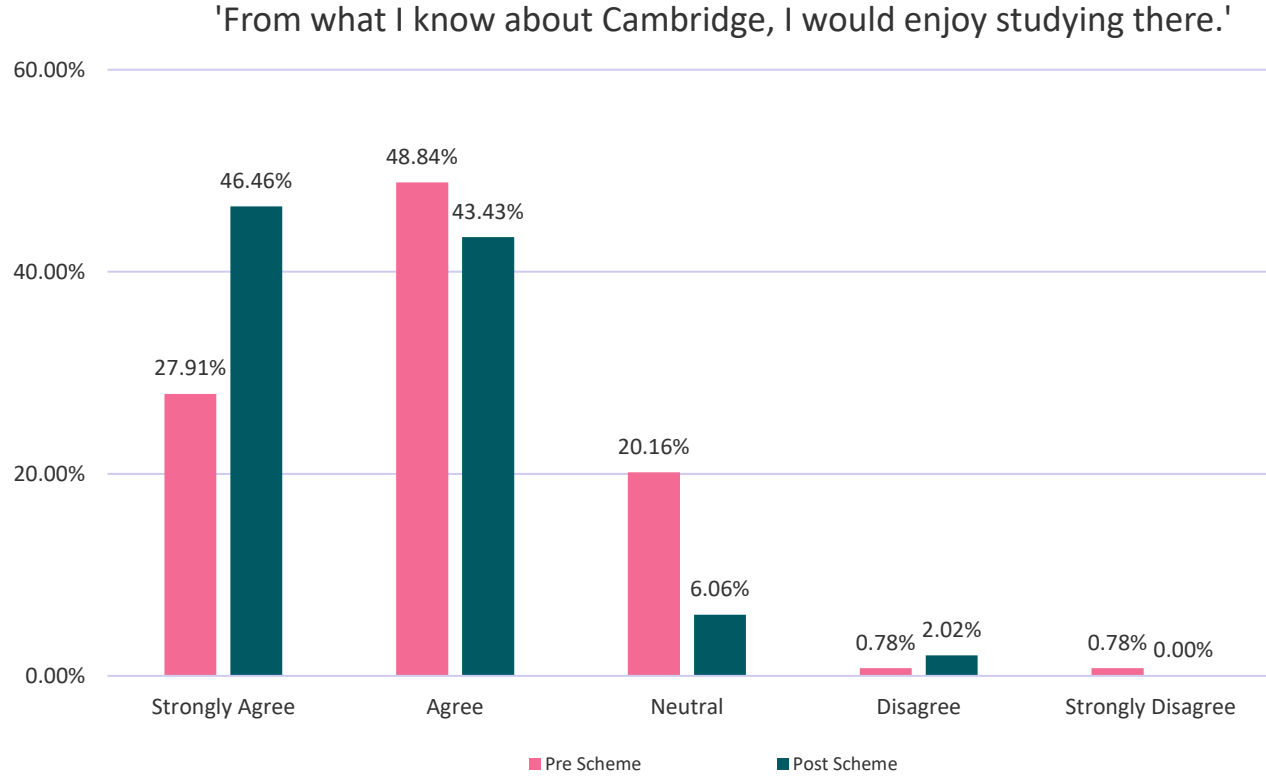


'I understand the Cambridge admissions process'

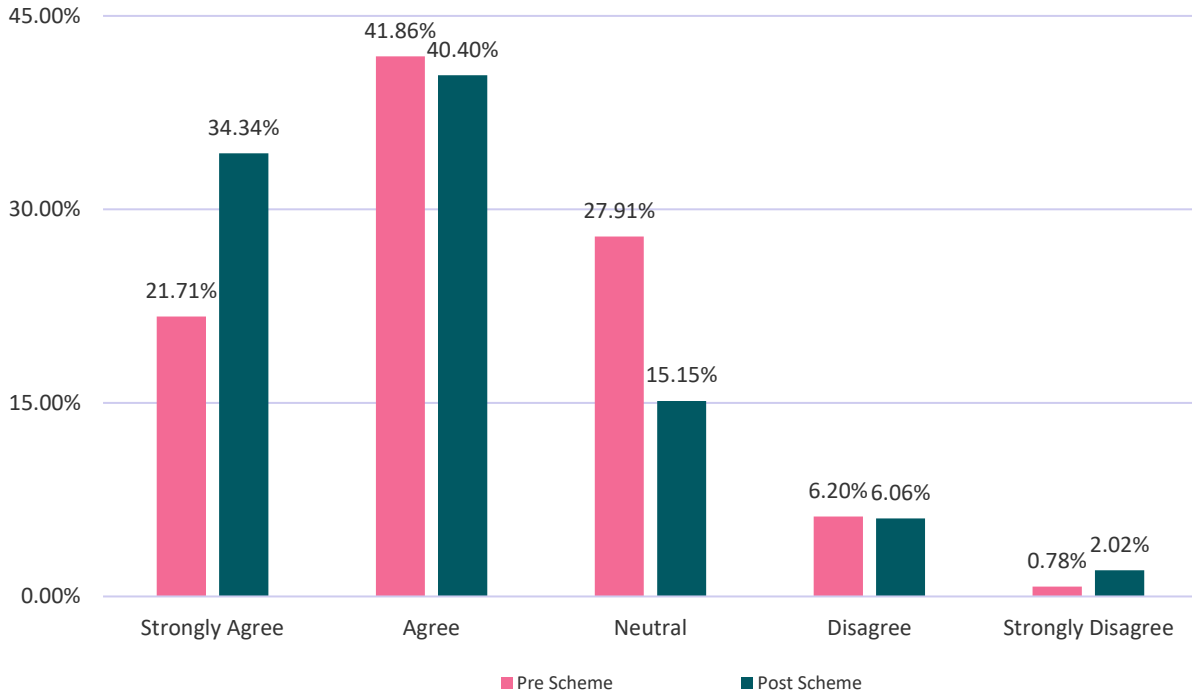


Considerably more shadows agree or strongly agree that they understand admissions processes after the Scheme, with the highest rise in relation to Cambridge admissions. Notably, 20% of shadows said that they agree that they understand Cambridge’s admissions process before the Scheme.

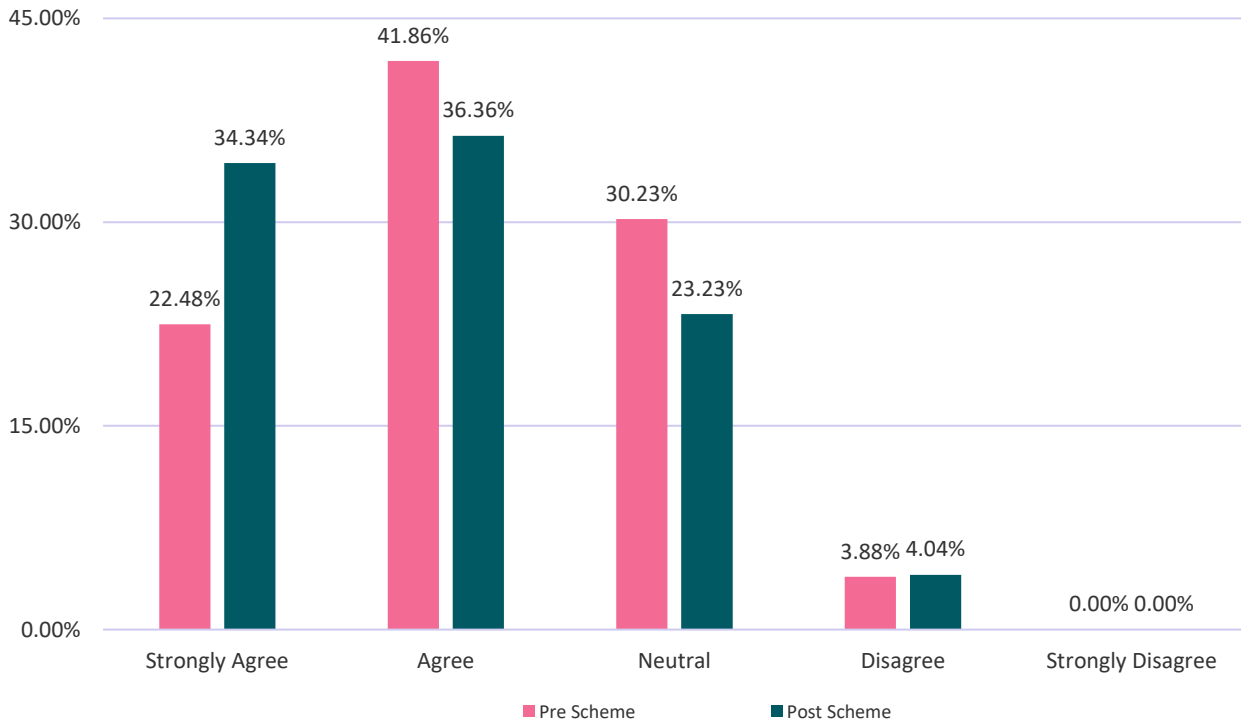
### Confidence and Belonging



### 'I can see myself studying at Cambridge.'



### 'I would be a strong applicant to Cambridge.'









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## SHADOW APPLICATIONS AND SELECTION

We received a total of 1632 applications for the 2022 Shadowing Scheme. In order to select participants, we firstly exclude those for whom we have not received the consent of their parent or guardian. This year 224 applicants did not receive the consent of a parent or guardian. We have noted WP flags among this group to monitor how much of an obstacle obtaining consent is. Of those failing to get consent, 10 were care experienced, 15 were young carers, 2 were refugees, 2 selected that they were estranged and 50 were eligible for free school meals.

Other ineligible applicants are then identified, including those attending independent schools, those who have not received a teachers' consent, those with family members who have attended Oxbridge, and those who do not have 8 or more GCSEs or will not have 3 or more A Levels or equivalent. These applicants are excluded, except in specific circumstances, for example those with fewer than 8 GCSEs who are care experienced or have refugee status.

Eligible applicants with WP flags were then selected automatically, including 6 care experienced applicants, 22 applicants with caring responsibilities, and 3 refugees. Remaining applicants are then selected based on a WP score, and an academic score. The academic score is determined by GCSE performance, and the WP score by scoring a range of WP flags in addition to POLAR Quintile and FSM eligibility. First, applicants in the top quartile for both WP and Academic score are selected and matched with a Mentor, and then applicants in the upper half for WP score and the top quartile for academic score are selected and matched. We then look at those who are in the top half for both scores and match them with the remaining Mentors, selecting the applicants with the highest WP scores first.

Shadows are paired primarily based on the courses they express an interest in, and secondarily on other preferences like a BME Mentor or same gender Mentor. We also consider their home region and extracurricular interests when matching. As with previous Schemes, we had a large number of applicants wanting to study Medicine, who tended to put other popular subjects as their second choice. 492 applicants wanted a medicine Mentor (30% of all applicants) and 221 applicants wanted a Law Mentor. We also find that the highest scoring students (across attainment and WP flags) disproportionately select very popular subjects.

The average academic score of eligible applicants was 23. Applicants get 3 points for every 8/9 grade at GCSE, 2 for each 7 and 1 for each 5/6, meaning the average eligible applicant had roughly 9 - 10 grade 8/9 GCSEs. The average academic score of shadows is 30, suggesting most had one grade 8/9 GCSE or two grade 7 GCSEs more than the average applicant.

# ATTENDEE PROFILE

## Widening Participation Flags

Of the 127 shadows surveyed, 120 were eligible for free school meals, 83 were first generation students, 3 were refugees, 5 had experience of local authority care, and 14 had caring responsibilities.

Attendees by Course Interest	Percentage of Attendees
Archaeology	0.4%
Architecture	1.1%
Chemical Engineering	2.5%
Classics	0.4%
Computer Science	4.4%
Economics	5.8%
Education	0.7%
Engineering	4.7%
English	3.3%
French	0.4%
Geography	1.5%
History	2.5%
History of Art	0.4%
HSPS	3.6%
Law	8.4%
Linguistics	0.7%
Maths	6.9%
Medicine	34.7%
Music	0.7%
Natural Sciences	8.4%
PBS	4.7%
Philosophy	0.7%
Spanish	1.5%
Theology	0.4%
Veterinary Medicine	1.1%

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## APPLICANT DESTINATIONS 2020/21

Using the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) we can now see the destinations of shadows who participated in the 2020 Shadowing Scheme. The below table shows applications to Cambridge, and offers from Cambridge for students in that cohort. The number of students applying and receiving offers, as well as applications and offer rates, is included for key groups of participants. POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 students are those from neighbourhoods with relatively low progression rates to Higher Education. Those who are Free School Meal (FSM) eligible are from low-income households, and those who are First Generation would be the first in their immediate family to attend University.

	Participants	Applications	Offers	Application Rate	Offer Rate
Total	313	107	37	34.2%	34.6%
POLAR Q1	64	24	10	37.5%	41.7%
POLAR Q2	72	21	9	29.2%	42.9%
FSM Eligible	61	33	11	54.1%	33.3%
First Gen HE	185	62	24	33.5%	38.7%

We are pleased to see the continued trend that over a third of shadows apply to Cambridge, with an increased offer rate this year of over 1 in 3, compared to 1 in 5 of last year's applicants receiving an offer from Cambridge.

This data represents applicant destinations from the first online-only Shadowing Scheme in 2021. We look forward to sharing information about the destinations of the 2022 shadows in next year's report, where we will be able to compare data between the two online-only Schemes.