

# Case Study

## Institution

University of Portsmouth

## Project title

Understanding Stakeholder Perceptions

## Background/Context

The Faculty of Science and Health, which has seven schools, was seeking to improve student recruitment and the level of applications for 2022/23 and needed to achieve a deeper understanding of the choices made by students and the motivations behind them.

The Faculty leadership was seeking a bespoke piece of combined quantitative and qualitative research to provide richer insight about what was looked for and valued by prospective undergraduates and their teaching staff, and use this to inform future offer and recruitment strategy.

## Solution

Advance HE conducted research with two key student audiences.

A-level students who were applying to study Science and Health degrees at various institutions, alongside a complementary sample of first year undergraduate students who had opted to study selected science and health subjects at other universities. This took the form of a survey-based approach to identify the key issues affecting choice, at both overall and individual subject-area level.

This was followed by qualitative research to investigate the application journey and choices made in more detail, again with A-level students and undergraduates. This was carried out through focus groups and some one-to-one interviews, recruited through the survey process.

Advance HE also carried out qualitative research with teachers, targeting A-level or BTEC teachers at sixth forms or college in science and health subjects within a specifically defined catchment area as agreed with the client. The teacher point of view was crucial to add further detail to the picture in the form of the influence of the schools and parents on student decisions.

## Outcomes

The research uncovered key factors in student choices, and helped identify the relationship between course, institution and wider locational factors within the decision making of prospective students.

The results of the research enabled Advance HE to make recommendations and the University of Portsmouth to consider how best to position its offer to reach a range of stakeholders as effectively as possible.

**Associate Dean (Students), Faculty of Science and Health, University of Portsmouth Kirsten Farrell said:**

***“Advance HE’s support in evaluating student and teacher perceptions of the Faculty of Science and Health at the University of Portsmouth has been a very useful and enjoyable exercise.***

***“From the outset, the Insights team at Advance HE displayed a remarkable level of professionalism and dedication to understanding our specific needs and objectives. They took the time to listen carefully to our requirements and developed a tailored approach to the evaluation process, ensuring that it accurately captured the unique aspects of our institution.***

***“Throughout the project, Advance HE demonstrated a deep understanding of the intricacies of higher education. Their expertise in survey design and data analysis, in addition to their external networks, resulted in a comprehensive report that shed light on critical areas for improvement, as well as highlighting the faculty's strengths.***

***“Working with Advance HE has been a pleasure. Their friendly and approachable manner made the collaboration seamless and the team always made themselves available to address any questions or concerns promptly.***

***“I highly recommend Advance HE to any higher education institutions seeking support in bespoke evaluative projects or any other HE-related initiatives.”***