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The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth: Second Annual Post-18 Survey of Students

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Summary of Findings

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the second annual survey of those members of NAGTY who had completed their secondary education and were leaving NAGTY as alumni. The purposes of the survey are to enable NAGTY to gain a picture of its students' views on their involvement with NAGTY, and to capture data about their educational attainments and post-school destinations.

They were asked about their career/education destinations. September 2005 saw the first large scale cohort of alumni ($N = 1,046$) and these were sent a short questionnaire. This report discusses the findings for the second cohort, surveyed in September 2006. This group of alumni may be unrepresentative of those coming through in future years due to their relatively short periods of membership (maximum period was 3 years, minimum 6 months).

Method

- NAGTY distributed the survey to all of its student members who had turned 18 by 31st August 2006 and who were no longer in secondary education ($N = 4,502$).
- 1,828 students responded giving a 41% response rate.
- The responses to the eight questions asked were considered for the full student cohort and also analysed in more detail for the following sub-groups;
 - Students going to Russell and non-Russell Group universities
 - Period of membership and level of engagement
 - Geo-demographic (ACORN postcode) categories.
- A box was provided for any additional comments, with 1,387 students (76%) providing additional comments and these were analysed for consistent themes.

Results

Full Student Cohort

Eighty seven percent of students are going straight on to continue their education at university ($n=1,591$). A small number of students (8%) are planning to take a gap year before going into higher education ($n = 148$), with most of the remainder staying at school or going into FE. 87% of students on whom data on destinations was available ($n = 1,554$) are going to an old university, while 7% ($n = 126$) are going to a modern university. 63% are going to Russell Group Universities ($n = 1,130$), and 16% to Oxbridge ($n = 294$). The most popular choice was Cambridge ($n = 169$), followed by Oxford ($n = 123$), Durham ($n = 111$), Manchester ($n = 101$), Warwick ($n = 82$) and Nottingham ($n = 81$). The vast majority of respondents are aiming for a BA or BSc degree, though over 21% are aiming for a Masters level degree, and just over 3% for an LLB. The most popular courses were medicine ($n = 190$, including combined courses in which medicine was the lead subject), mathematics ($n = 130$, including combined courses in which maths was the lead subject), English, history ($n = 87$, including combined courses in which these were the lead subjects) and law ($n = 84$, including combined courses in which law was the lead subject).

Responses to the eight questions are displayed using bar graphs and the results are presented in two ways: Figure 1 shows the proportions of students responding that membership of NAGTY had had some impact against those saying there had been no impact; Figure 2 shows the finer breakdown into the five response categories.

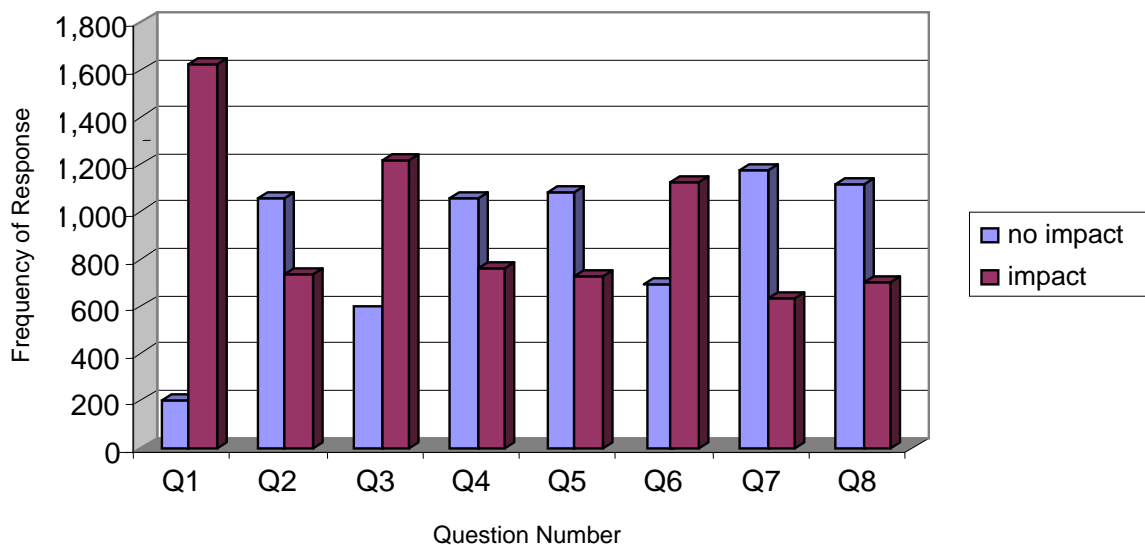


Figure 1: Impact of NAGTY, abridged scale data (1 = not at all [no impact], 5 = extremely [impact]).

- Q1 How important to you personally was being identified as gifted/talented by NAGTY?
- Q2 How far has involvement with NAGTY sponsored activity helped in your learning?
- Q3 How far has being a member of NAGTY helped raise aspirations for your development?
- Q4 How far has being a member of NAGTY helped you achieve things that you would not otherwise have achieved?

- Q5 How far has being a member of NAGTY encouraged you to engage in socially/ethically worthwhile action?
- Q6 How far has being a member of NAGTY improved your motivation for learning?
- Q7 How far has being a member of NAGTY been taken into account by your school in planning teaching and learning for you?
- Q8 Looking back at your A-level/school-leaving results, how far do you think your membership of NAGTY has contributed to your performance?

From this figure it is clear that there was a majority positive response to three questions; the importance of being identified as gifted/talented by NAGTY; the ability of NAGTY membership to raise aspirations for development; and the ability of NAGTY membership to improve motivation for learning. In the 2005 survey, the same variables were found to have had a positive impact from NAGTY.

Full data are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Impact of NAGTY, abridged scale data.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
No Impact <i>n</i>	199	1,060	603	1,055	1,086	695	1,173	1,112
%	10.92	58.92	33.17	58.06	59.80	38.25	64.81	61.37
Impact <i>n</i>	1,624	739	1,215	762	730	1,122	637	700
%	89.08	41.08	66.83	41.94	40.20	61.75	35.19	38.63
<i>N</i>	1,823	1,799	1,818	1,817	1,816	1,817	1,810	1,812

As can be seen in Table 1, almost 90% of respondents claimed that NAGTY had a positive impact in terms of being identified as gifted and talented, and over 60% claimed a positive impact on motivation for learning and raising aspirations. NAGTY was seen as having least impact on A-level performance. A majority of respondents also did not feel that the school had taken account of NAGTY membership in planning teaching and learning.

The following commentary analyses the responses to each question in more detail according to the five categories on the questionnaire (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*). Results are also given in numerical form in Table 2, and in graphical form in Figure 2.

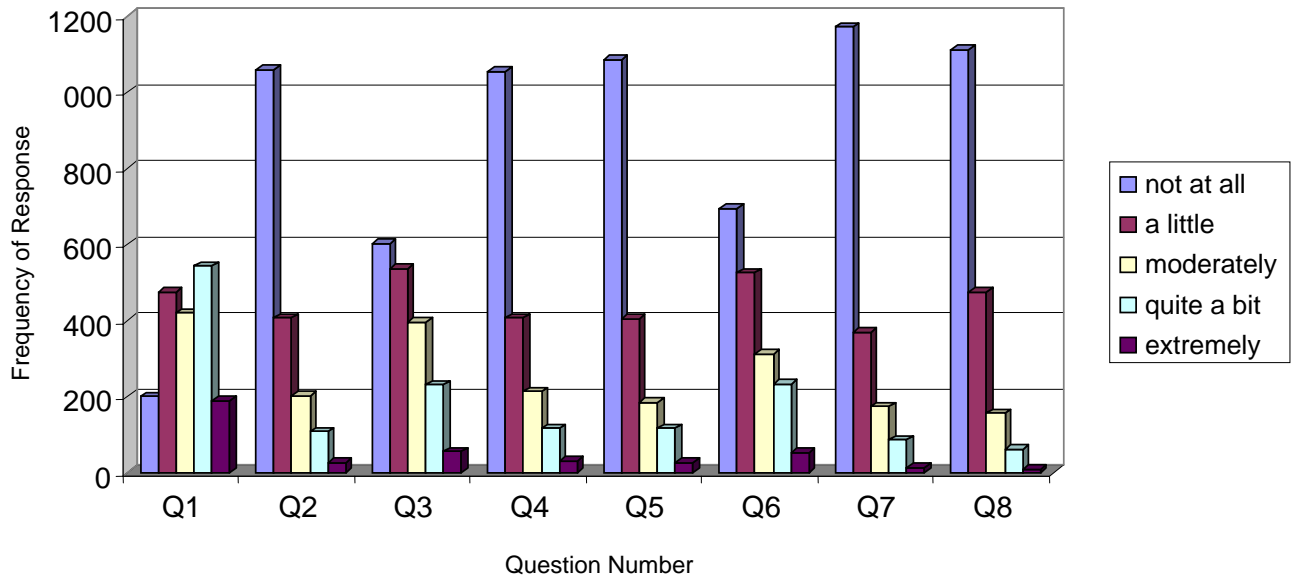


Figure 2: Impact of NAGTY, full scale data.

Table 2: Impact of NAGTY, full scale data.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Not at all <i>n</i>	199	1,060	603	1,055	1,086	695	1,173	1,112
%	10.92	58.92	33.17	58.06	59.80	38.25	64.81	61.37
A little <i>n</i>	474	407	537	406	405	526	369	475
%	26.00	22.62	29.54	22.34	22.30	28.95	20.39	26.21
Moderately <i>n</i>	420	201	394	212	185	312	172	156
%	23.04	11.17	21.67	11.67	10.19	17.17	9.50	8.61
Quite a bit <i>n</i>	543	106	230	115	115	231	84	61
%	29.79	5.89	12.65	6.33	6.33	12.71	4.64	3.37
Extremely <i>n</i>	187	25	54	29	25	53	12	8
%	10.26	1.39	2.97	1.60	1.38	2.92	0.66	0.44
<i>N</i>	1,823	1,799	1,818	1,817	1,816	1,817	1,810	1,812

The data confirms that the strongest positive response was to question 1 (How important to you personally was being identified as gifted/talented by NAGTY?) Over 40% of respondents said that this mattered quite a bit or extremely, a far higher percentage than for any other variable. The high positive response to this question results in part from the fact that all students have been identified and therefore the question is targeting an audience who have all been affected by the variable, but is nonetheless a strong endorsement of the value of identification to these students.

In all other questions, the number of respondents answering 'quite a bit' or 'extremely' was below 20%, with only Questions 3 (How far has being a member of NAGTY helped raise aspirations for your development?) and 6 (How far has being a member of NAGTY improved your motivation for learning?) producing more than 10% of respondents in this category. The modal value (the most frequent response) for all questions other than 1 was 'not at all', chosen by between 30% and 60% of respondents for these questions. This indicates that a substantive proportion of the sample did not appear to see a strong impact for NAGTY on their learning and achievement, other than the impact achieved through identification. This is reinforced

by the fact that the second most common value for all variables is 'a little', endorsed by between 20% and 30% of respondents.

Nevertheless, there is some indication that a substantial minority do see at least a moderate impact of NAGTY on these variables. Over 30% see at least a moderate impact on raising aspirations and motivation for learning, and the proportion of respondents seeing at least a moderate impact is over 10% for all variables.

Students Going to Russell Group and non-Russell Group Universities

There were no significant differences in the responses to questions if students were planning to attend a Russell Group university.

Period of Membership and Level of Engagement

In their additional comments students demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with events that they do engage with, but overall engagement levels appear to be low probably as a result of age on entry and relatively short periods of membership. 15% of respondents had attended at least one outreach event, 7% had attended at least one Summer School, and 10% had taken part in online events. A series of tests were therefore run to ascertain if students who had been members for longer, or who had engaged in NAGTY activities, were more likely to respond to questions positively.

Firstly, Spearman's rho rank order correlation was run for period of membership and response. Membership periods were calculated to the half year and ranged from 0.5 to 3.0 years. Some significant relationships were found. Respondents who had been members of NAGTY for longer were more likely to feel that involvement in NAGTY sponsored activities had helped their learning (Rho = .27, $p < .001$), and that NAGTY membership had helped them achieve things they otherwise would not have (Rho = .22, $p < .001$). Longer term members were also more likely to feel that NAGTY had helped them engage in more socially/ethically valuable activities (Rho = .12, $p < .001$), had helped them do better at A-levels (Rho = .11, $p < .001$) and had raised their aspirations (Rho = .10, $p < .001$). While relations were weak, there was also a tendency for longer term members to respond more positively to the other items.

Cross tabulations and Chi Square tests were used to look at the relationship between participating in events and views on NAGTY. Respondents who had participated in outreach events were significantly more likely to feel that NAGTY had helped their learning (Chi Square = 356.5, $p < .001$), raised their aspirations (Chi Square = 24.2, $p < .001$), helped them achieve things they would not otherwise have achieved (Chi Square = 135.8, $p < .001$), encouraged them to engage in socially worthwhile activities (Chi Square = 74.2, $p < .001$), improved their motivation for learning (Chi Square = 27.0, $p < .001$), and helped improve A-level results (Chi Square = 38.4, $p < .001$).

Respondents who had participated in Summer School events were significantly more likely to feel that NAGTY had helped their learning (Chi Square = 292.0, $p < .001$), raised their aspirations (Chi Square = 79.9, $p < .001$), helped them achieve things they would not otherwise have achieved (Chi Square = 244.4, $p < .001$), encouraged them to engage in socially worthwhile activities (Chi Square = 163.8, $p < .001$), improved their motivation for learning (Chi Square = 67.5, $p < .001$), and helped improve A-level results (Chi Square = 76.1, $p < .001$).

Respondents who had participated in online events were significantly more likely to feel that NAGTY had helped their learning (Chi Square = 77.3, $p < .001$), raised their aspirations (Chi Square = 11.4, $p < .05$), helped them achieve things they would not

otherwise have achieved (Chi Square = 61.6, $p < .001$), encouraged them to engage in socially worthwhile activities (Chi Square = 34.2, $p < .001$), improved their motivation for learning (Chi Square = 19.6, $p < .001$), and helped improve A-level results (Chi Square = 13.4, $p < .01$).

There were no significant differences for the impact of identification, or the extent to which schools took NAGTY membership into account in planning teaching and learning.

Overall, these findings suggest that while general findings on impact of NAGTY are not impressive, the longer and more intensively respondents are engaged with NAGTY the more positively they assess its impact. Of the events probed, the impact of Summer School was strongest, and that of online events weakest.

Geo-demographic (ACORN Postcode) Categories

A geo-demographic analysis of postcodes was carried out for the respondents using the ACORN categories. These categories give not only a good indication of socio-economic profile of the respondents, but are also a good proxy for cultural capital. For the purposes of this study, the five broad descriptive categories were thought to be sufficient.

In Table 3 distribution of the respondents is compared to both the total NAGTY population and the total national population for the five broader ACORN categories. This shows that the geo-demographic background of the respondents to this survey moves towards over-representation of the 'wealthy achievers' and under-representation of those with who are 'hard pressed'.

Table 3: Distribution of ACORN categories (in %).

	Post-18 Survey responses	NAGTY population	Population England 2005
1. Wealthy Achievers	50	44	26
2. Urban Prosperity	8	9	8
3. Comfortably Off	29	29	27
4. Moderate Means	8	10	16
5. Hard Pressed	5	8	23

Spearman's rho rank order correlation was run for ACORN category and response and ACORN groups and response. There was a tendency on most questions for lower SES categories and groups to respond more positively. However, while the relationships were statistically significant in a number of cases due to the large sample size, the effect size was negligible, correlation coefficients being below .09 in all cases (this suggests an explained variance of less than 3%).

Overall, these results suggest that where NAGTY membership has had an effect – in identification, raising aspirations and motivation – it has done so across the social divide, affecting the disadvantaged as much as the advantaged.

Open-Ended Comments

Students were asked to write a brief note to NAGTY about what they had valued most about being a member, and what they had found least positive. These comments were notable for their consistency with both the same positive and negative themes being raised by a large proportion of the respondents. 1,387 of the 1,828 respondents provided comments and many of these reinforced the fact that many of this cohort of students had not attended NAGTY events, or felt particularly engaged with NAGTY due to their age on joining.

In the main respondents felt very positive about the following:

- Events that they did attend, with Summer Schools and other residential courses as well as online activities coming in for particular praise.

'Hugely enjoyed the short courses I've been on.'

'I most valued the outreach events that allowed me to broaden my knowledge and interests.'

- Having been identified as gifted and talented and becoming a member of NAGTY, which they labelled a 'prestigious' organisation.

'A sense of pride was the most positive value.'

'..bragging rights!! :))'

- The practical benefits that membership would afford them in terms of university entrance and improving their CVs.

'A really good thing to have on my CV and UCAS application.'

'I have valued most the chance to show employers why I should be their chosen candidate for a job.'

- Giving them more confidence and improved self-esteem and motivation.

'Positive aspect is to realise that you have recognisable talent and skills, which you may not have fully realised previously.'

'Being identified as gifted raised my self-esteem.'

- The opportunity to interact with likeminded individuals.

'Belonging to a group of individuals who are in the same situation as myself and are able to relate to me.'

'It was comforting knowing I had a group of like-minded individuals that I could be involved with.'

What students found least positive were the following:

- Joining post-16 and finding that activities are geared towards younger members.

'By the time I joined all the courses advertised were for younger members, therefore too basic.'

'I found it quite hard to attend lots of events since most are aimed at 14 year olds.'

- A perceived elitism.

'Being clever should not entitle you to membership of an exclusive club. Gifted people do not have more in common with each other than with the rest.'

'I am not an advocate of elitism and therefore was cynical about joining from the outset.'

- Some felt the activities were not suitable.

'Afraid to say NAGTY gave me nothing. None of the activities were relevant to me.'

'The workshops never addressed humanities enough, and the focus appeared to be on science.'

'Least positive was not having a relevant summer school topic to attend.'

- Concern that activities could be too costly, were not regionally spread, and that the demands on their time often also prevented engagement.

'I found that the course and lectures were quite far from Bristol.'

'I have disliked the cost and awkward location of some of the events.'

- Schools were often singled out, students saying that they did not support NAGTY membership in any way, nor did NAGTY influence what was done in their schools.

'Activities on the Internet are good but the school does not do anything for NAGTY members.'

'There has been little encouragement from the school to get more involved.'

- Information about the events and NAGTY generally was criticised by some.

'Least positive thing would be information given about the courses.'

Discussion

Five main points arise from the findings of this survey.

In the first place, there is a very high level of agreement with the previous survey, conducted a year ago, which, taken with the higher response rate this year, suggests that the findings are quite robust, even though the response rate was modest. It is clear from the qualitative evidence, moreover, that respondents were not mainly those with a positive view of membership.

Secondly, the findings need to be put into context. These students were members in the final stage of their secondary education, when there was very strong pressure to concentrate on examination courses to the exclusion of opportunities for wider schooling, such as those offered by NAGTY and its partners. It remains unclear whether provision made by other partners on behalf of NAGTY is recognised as such, given that it is not necessarily badged as such.

Third, as last year, there was little significant difference by social background in these students' views of the impact of membership, suggesting that once enrolled and actively participating students from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit as much as any other students from NAGTY membership.

Fourth, the findings might be used to review the nature of NAGTY provision related to the needs of older students – those in the 16+ age range – bearing in mind the demands made upon them, as indicated above, in this stage of the schooling.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the section on pages 5 and 6 about length of membership and engagement in NAGTY activities provides a consistent and systematic picture of the impact on students of NAGTY membership. The longer they are members, and the more they engage in the learning opportunities provided, the greater the impact. These findings are at high levels of statistical significance, (though effect size is modest) and all in the same direction. It is particularly important to note that these students attributed part of their excellent A-level results to NAGTY membership, in contrast to those who were members for a short time or had not participated in NAGTY's learning opportunities.

As with all such surveys, there is need to exercise some caution in interpreting the findings. In particular, it is likely that the non-responders would have answered differently from the responders, and as indicated above, effect size was generally modest. Nonetheless, where engagement has been active, and with those students whose membership is relatively long term, membership of NAGTY is seen as having had a very positive impact on their self concept and their learning, including their performance in national examinations.



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