

The Maths café at Brunel: a year-long experience of effective maths support and assistance for students

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A drop-in service 6-8 hours per day for two weeks over the revision period and the exam period



The set-up of the Maths café

- Location
- Advertising
- Set-up of the room
- Staff
- Opening times and timetables



Location of the Maths Café

The location of the café is important and needs to be situated somewhere central and visible to students.



Advertising of the Maths Café



The event was advertised via:

- Email
- Web pages
- Various plasma screens distributed around the campus
- A banner advertising the Café was loaded onto the VLE
- Leaflets and posters



Bring along your Maths questions and receive one-to-one help:

- Any foundation or first year student
- Paper based resources and online material available
- Tea, coffee and snacks available free of charge

When: 10.00 - 18.00
on 27th and 28th April
and 3rd - 6th May

Where: LC003



Maths Café 2013
22nd April - 26th April
29th April - 3rd May

10:00 - 16:00

Library Seminar Room
Library Second Floor

Brunel
UNIVERSITY
L O N D O N



Set-up of the room



- Paper-based resources



- 4-5 laptops were set out for students to access online learning resources.



Staff

Committed staff: friendly, highly student centric and willing to help

➤ 6 to 8 staff needed:

- full-time staff
- part-time staff
- maths PhD students



➤ One administrator to collect data and provide catering arrangements

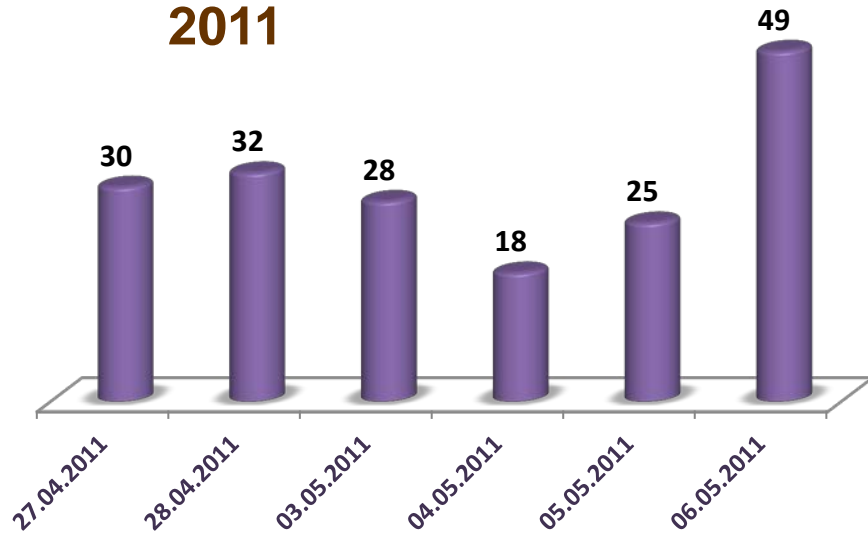


Opening times and timetables

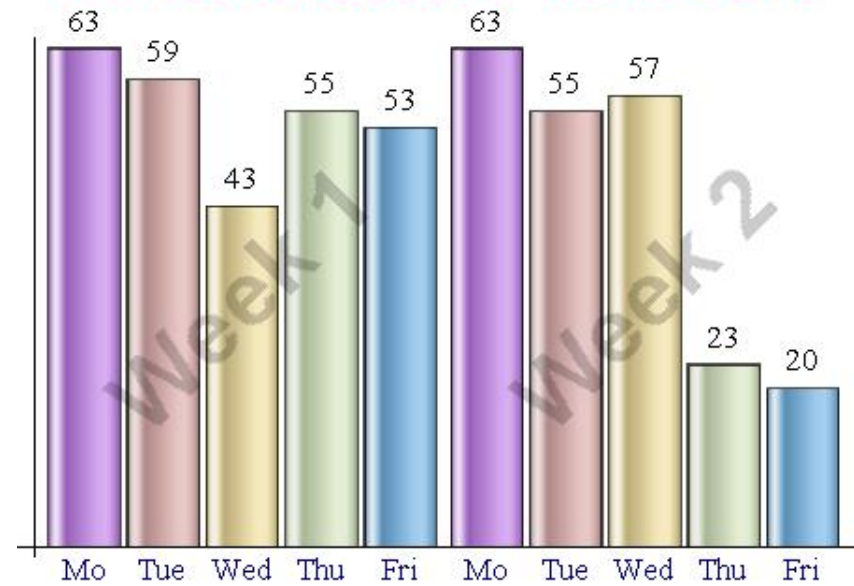
- ✓ 2.5 hour slots for tutors
- ✓ The café was open from 10 am to 4 pm (or 6:30 pm)
- ✓ An administrator was available from 9:30
- ✓ 2 tutors and PhD student were available at all times
- ✓ Experts in maths and statistics were available most of the time



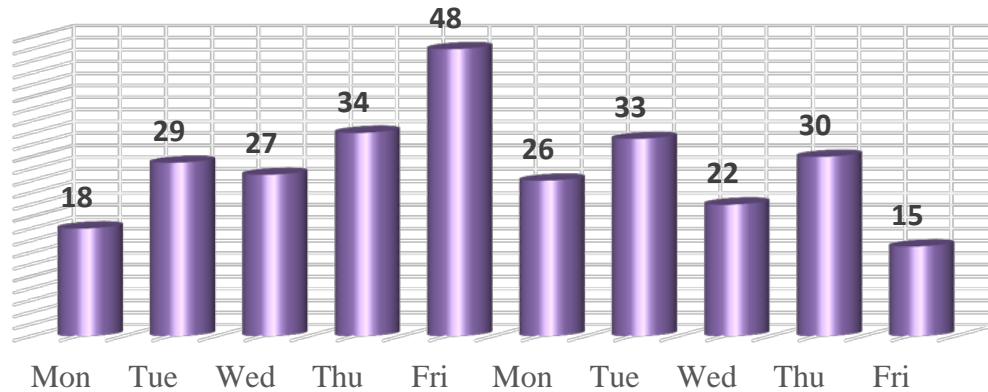
2011



Number of student visits 2012



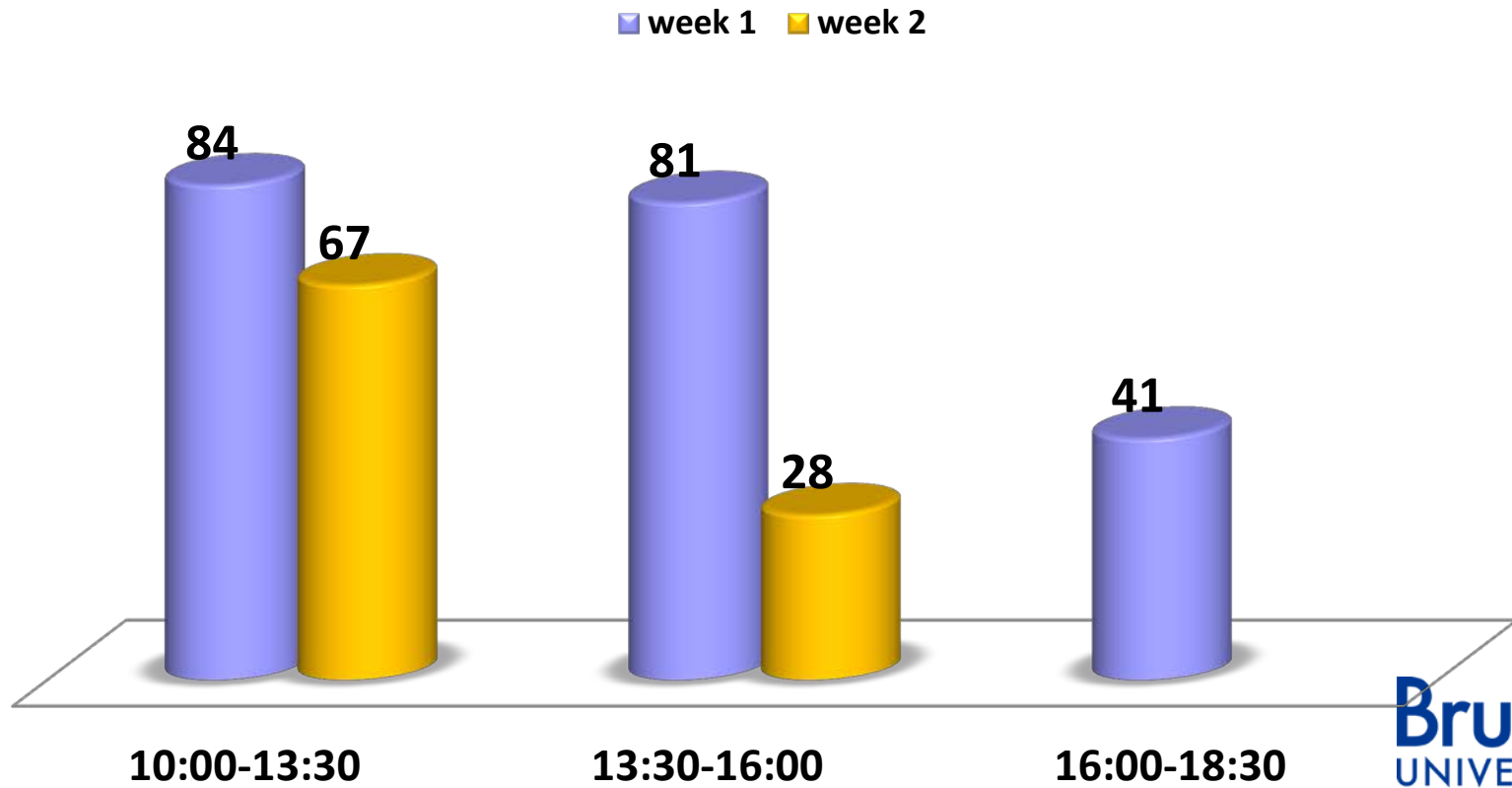
2013



**Never
a dull moment!**

Maths Café 2010

Distribution students through the day



Evaluation of the Maths Café

Evaluation Form

The information collected in this evaluation will be kept strictly confidential and no personal information will be passed to any Schools or course leaders.



Student name: _____

Student number: _____ Date: _____

Previous Maths Grade: GCSE AS A Level

Please state/describe the maths problem you would like help with:

Gender:	M	F			
Status:	Home	EU	International		
Level:	FO	1	2	3	MA/MSc PHD
Attendance:	Full Time		Part Time		
School:	LAW	ARTS	Sport/Ed	SHSSC	
	ISCM	SSS	Eng/Design	BBS	

Feed back about us

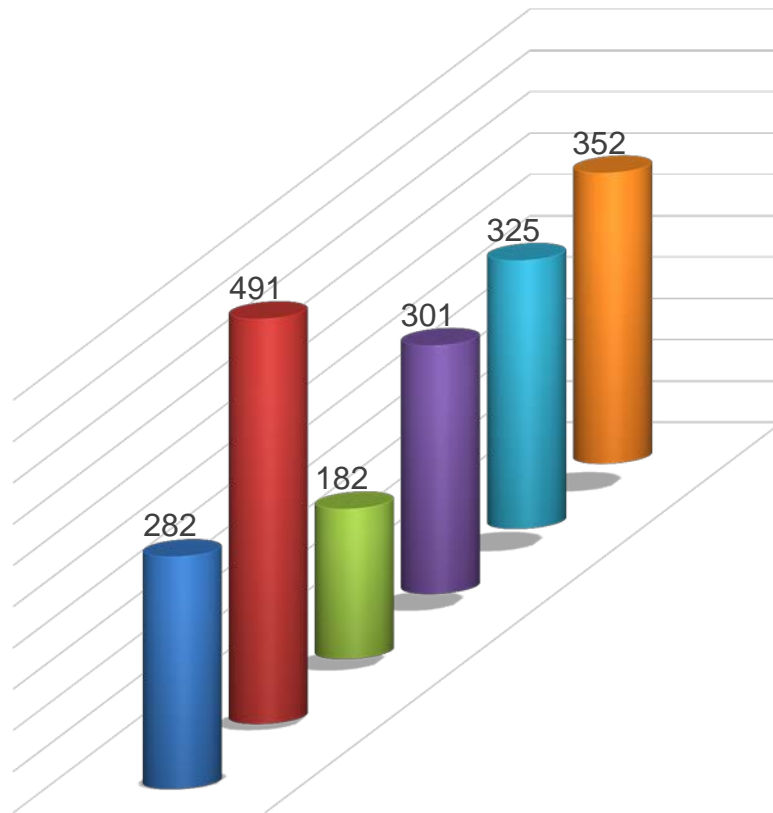
How useful did you find the advice/support given: (please circle one)

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not useful	Not very useful
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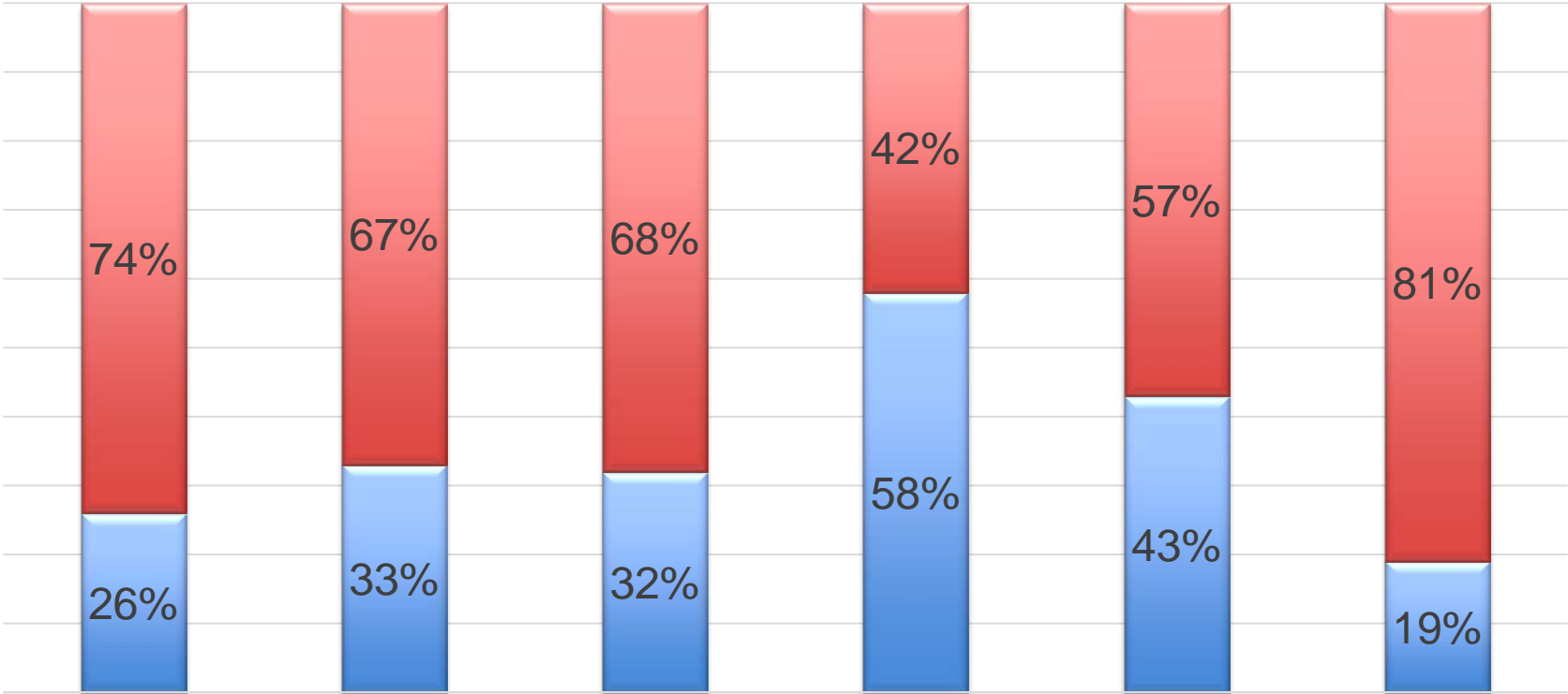
How could the café be improved?



Number of student visits



Distribution of students attending the Maths café by gender



2008

2009

2010

2011

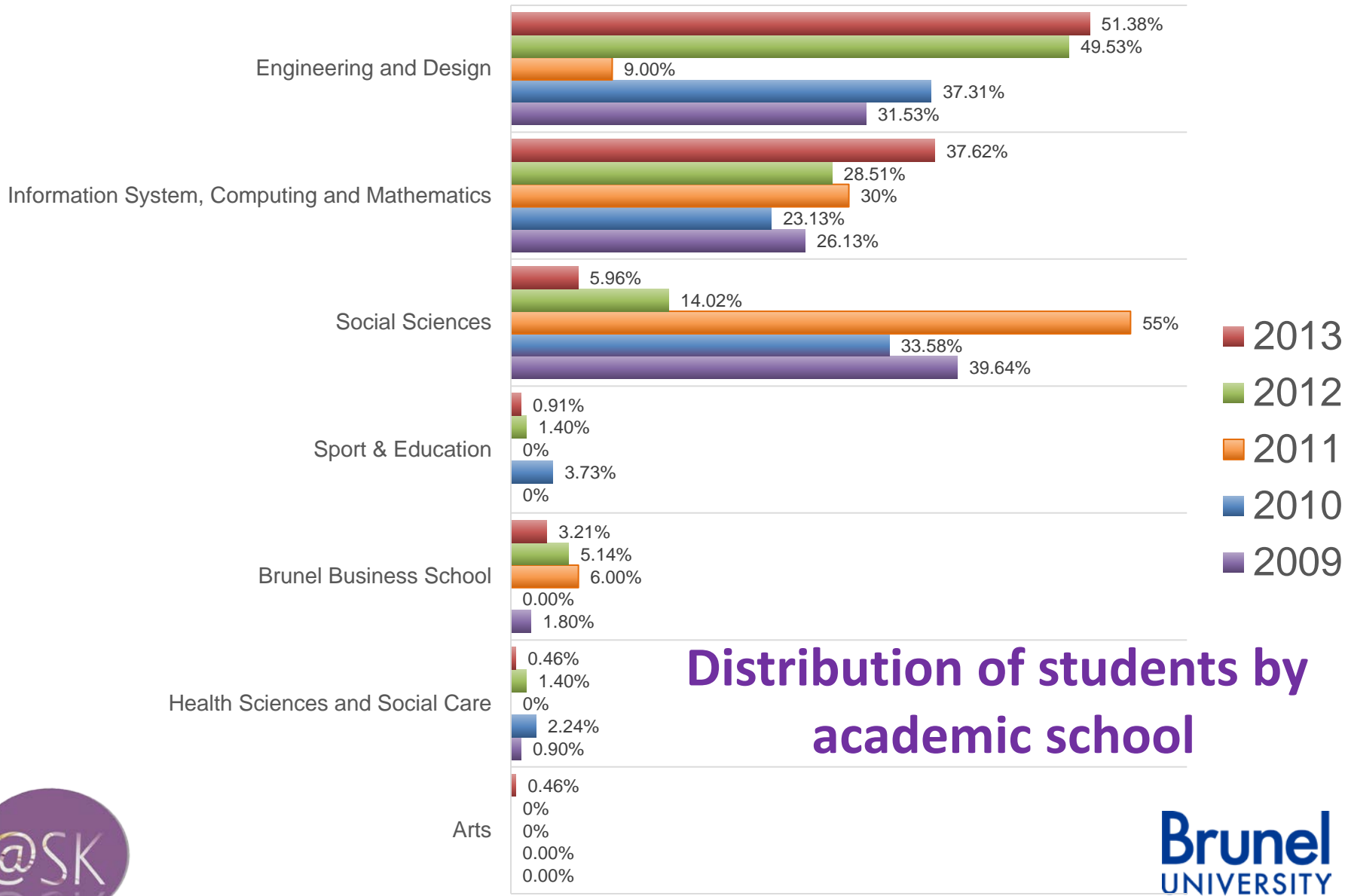
2012

2013

■ Female

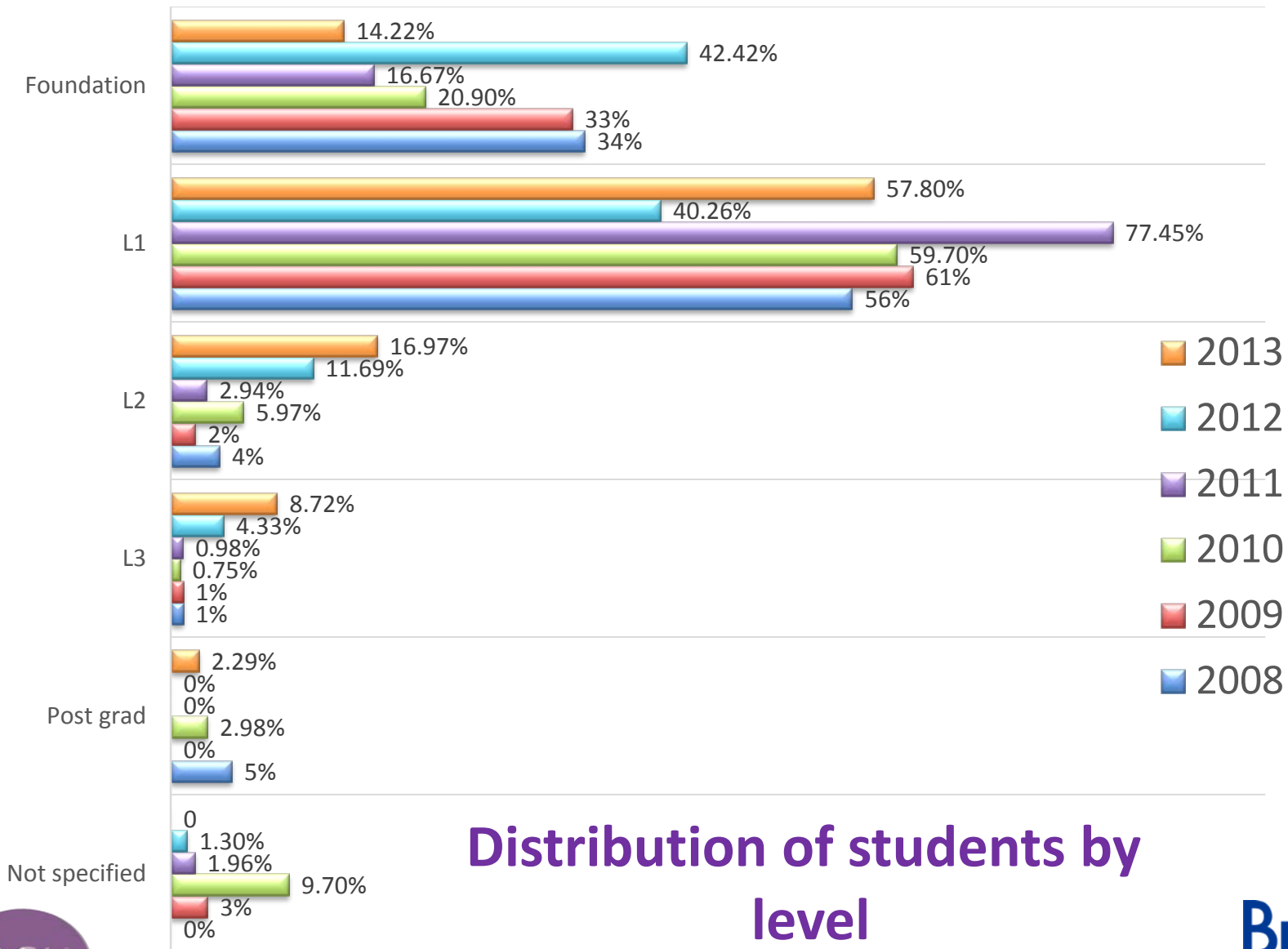
■ Male





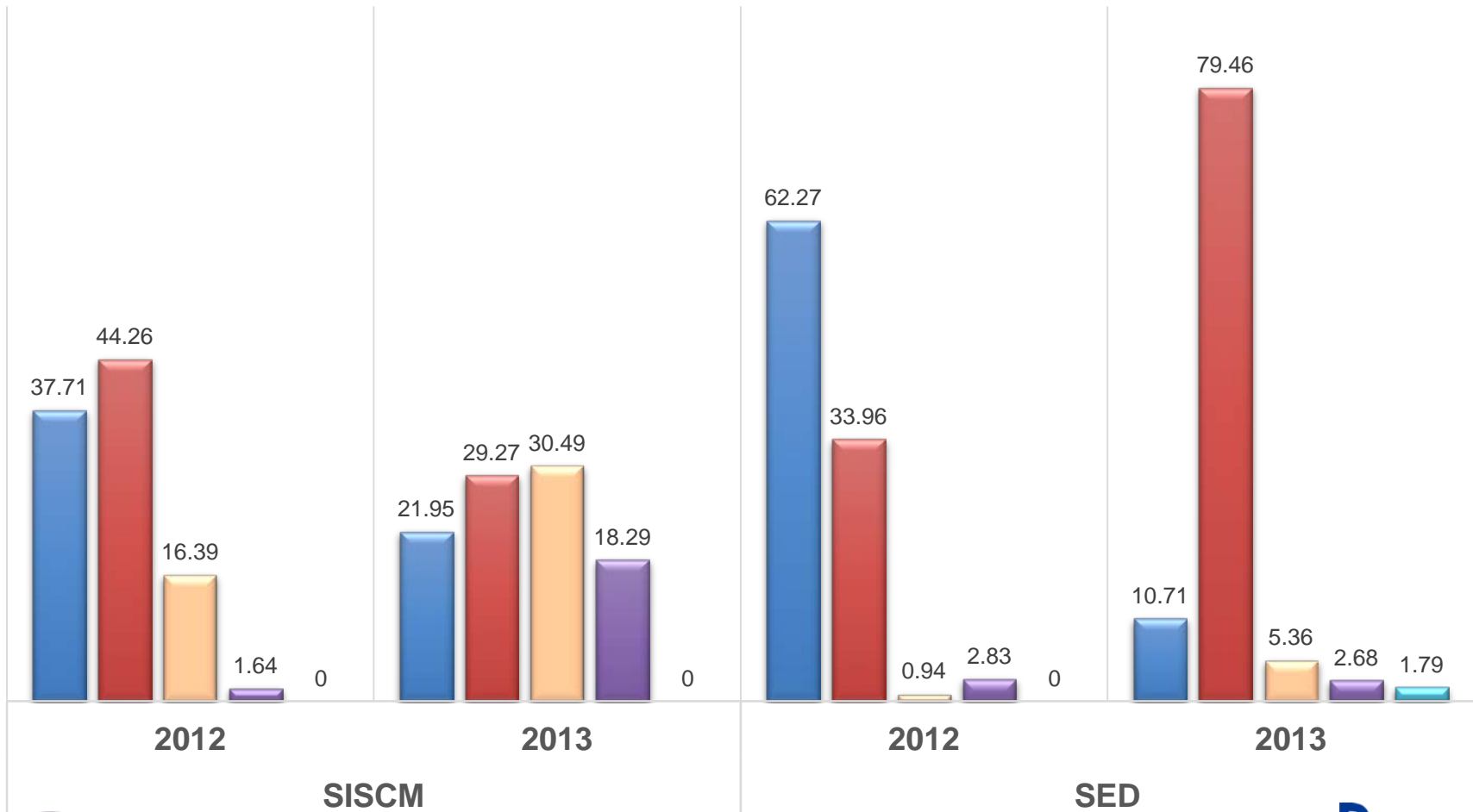
Distribution of students by academic school





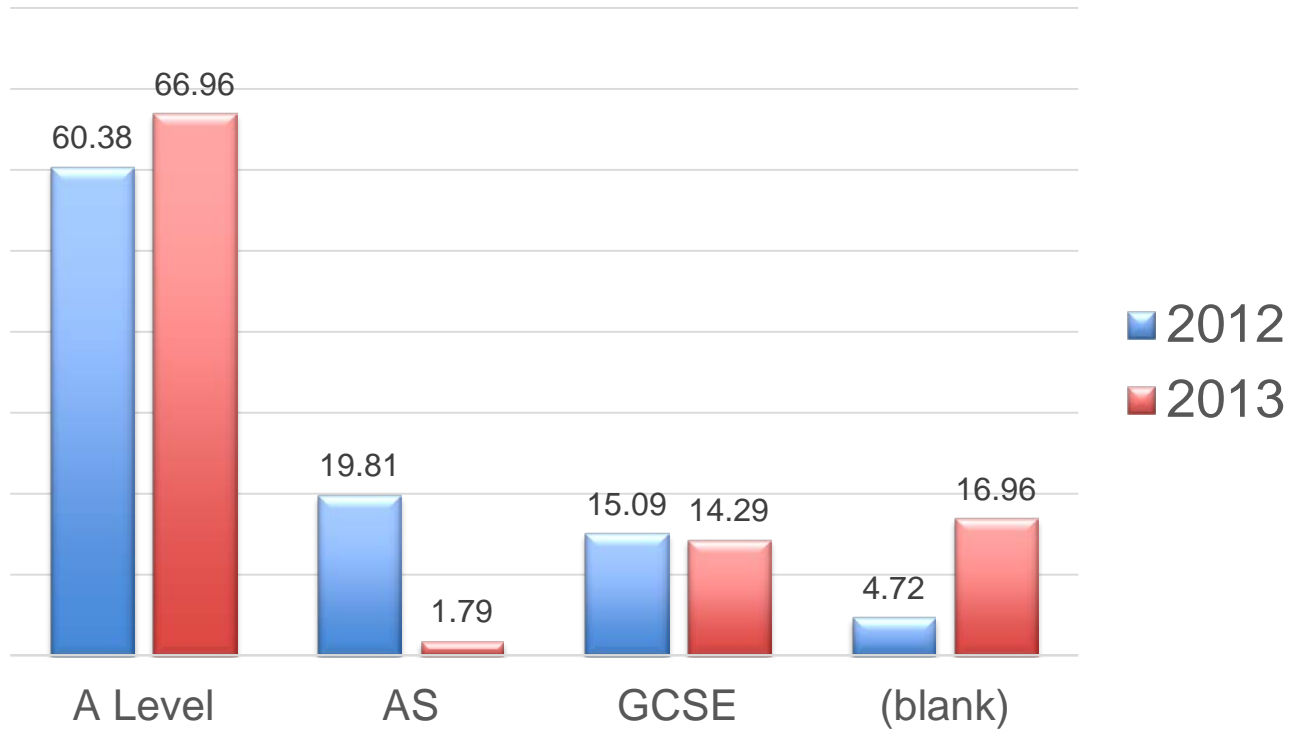
Student visits (%)

■ Foundation ■ Level 1 ■ Level 2 ■ Level 3 ■ Postgraduate

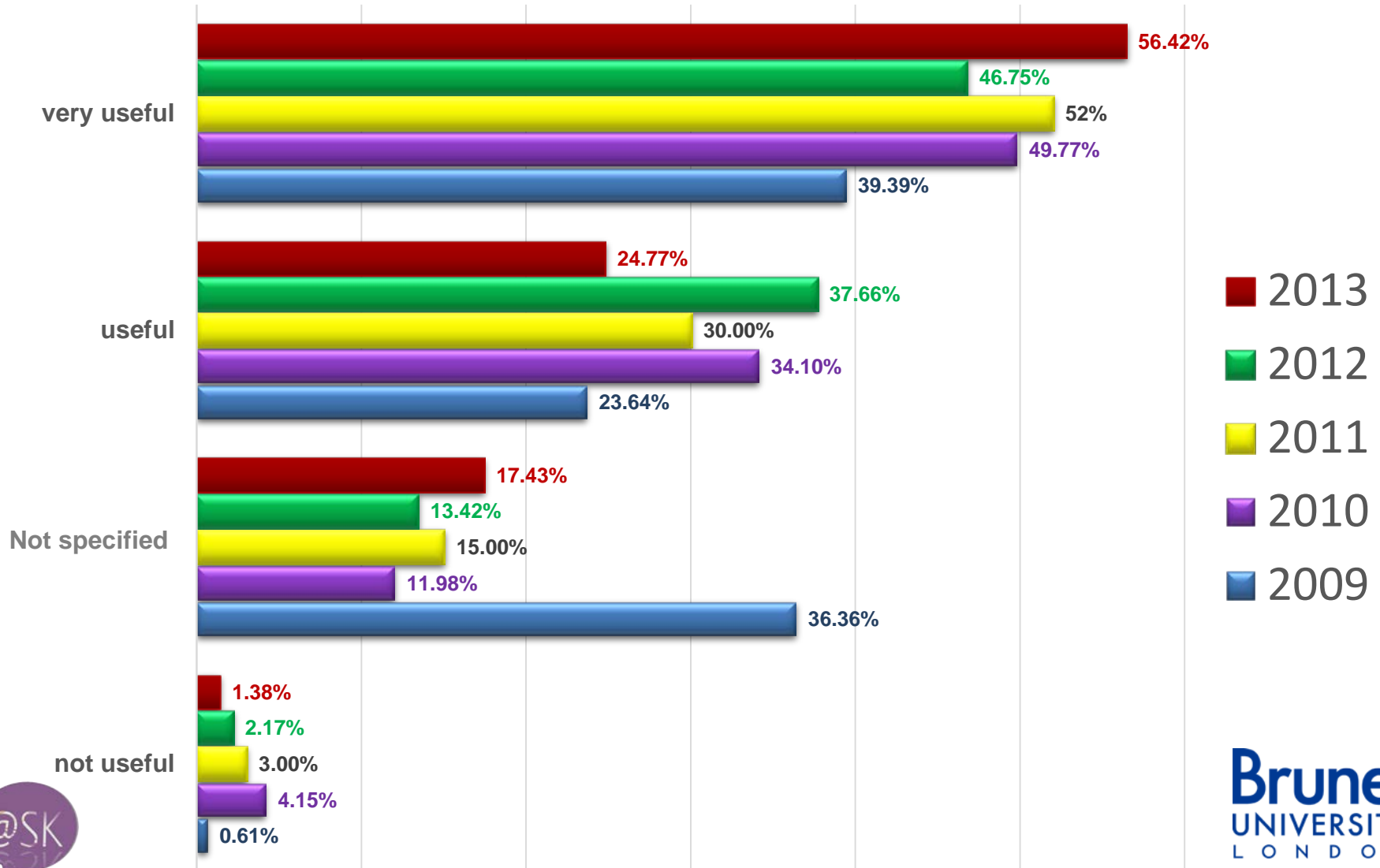


Who attended?

School of Engineering and Design



How useful you find the advice/support you given?



Was it worth it?

- ✓ *“Very good, Extremely helpful”*
- ✓ *”This was a great help and would definitely use this service again”*
- ✓ *“It was my first time here, the environment is beneficial through”*
- ✓ *”Wish there were more math’s Café during the term”*
- ✓ *“Teacher explained well and took a lot of time to help. Thank you”*



Students benefit from the Maths Café because:

- It provides a good opportunity for students to receive one-to-one support from experienced staff
- There is no assessment process, no judgments are made and students come at times that are convenient to them and as often as they wish



Students benefit from the Maths Café because:

- Some students can use the Café as a learning space and work on their own (or in small groups). This further encourages students to drop in and help each other.
- There are plenty paper resources available for students to take away if they are too busy to drop in.



Observations

- The Maths Café should be a part of the maths provision of any well-run university.
- The information received from the evaluation forms allows the construction of a more effective and useful support program throughout the academic year by including topics which are most popular at the Maths Café.



Observations

- It would be better if the tutors involved in Maths Café have solutions of exam papers from previous years. This would allow them to answer the student questions more quickly, use the terminology that is familiar to students, and give the solutions in a form required for each particular module.
- The dates of the Maths café need to take into account exam timetables



Observations

- The involvement of maths PhD students in teaching gives them good teaching experience and is cost-effective.
- It is a good practice to have a student admin helper.



Observations

- In spite of the Maths Café being very popular and provide a good support for students, it is necessary to encourage students to use the maths and statistic support service throughout the academic year.
- It should look more like a cafe – snacks, some food and tea/coffee could be supplied. It is important to provide a welcoming atmosphere that is different to the usual teaching sessions.

