# Do particular groups face specific challenges?

Each student experiences the transition from high school (secondary school) to university differently. All students have a different combination of circumstances and life stories that make this process unique. However, according to the experience of the START project group, some challenges are more relevant than others for some groups of students. Explore the 9 specific groups that have been identified while considering that some students belong to more than one of these groups.

**First-generation students**

**Mature students**

**Working and/or Part-Time Students**

**Foreign students**

**Students with additional needs**

**Socially-Economic disadvantaged students**

**LGBTQ+ Students**

**Students from other marginalised groups**



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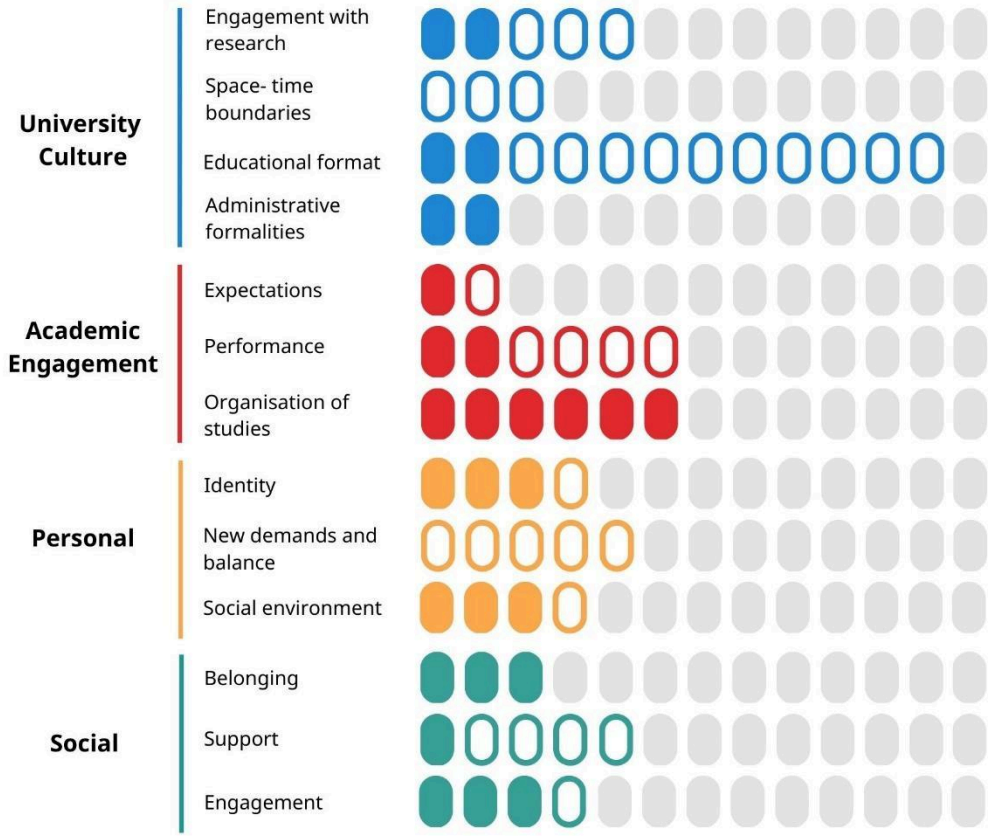
## First-generation students

First-generation students' **biggest challenges** are building and maintaining academic engagement, adjusting to the university culture, and building a new social context around them. The challenges under the Personal category are also present but to a lesser extent.
This group of students may find problems managing expectations about university learning and life **more than other groups**. Since they don't have a person at home that has talked to them about it, they may have a very different picture in their heads from what reality ends up being. While feeling "in between" worlds and not fitting in, students may also take some time to realise the things they don't know and need to learn about the academic culture.



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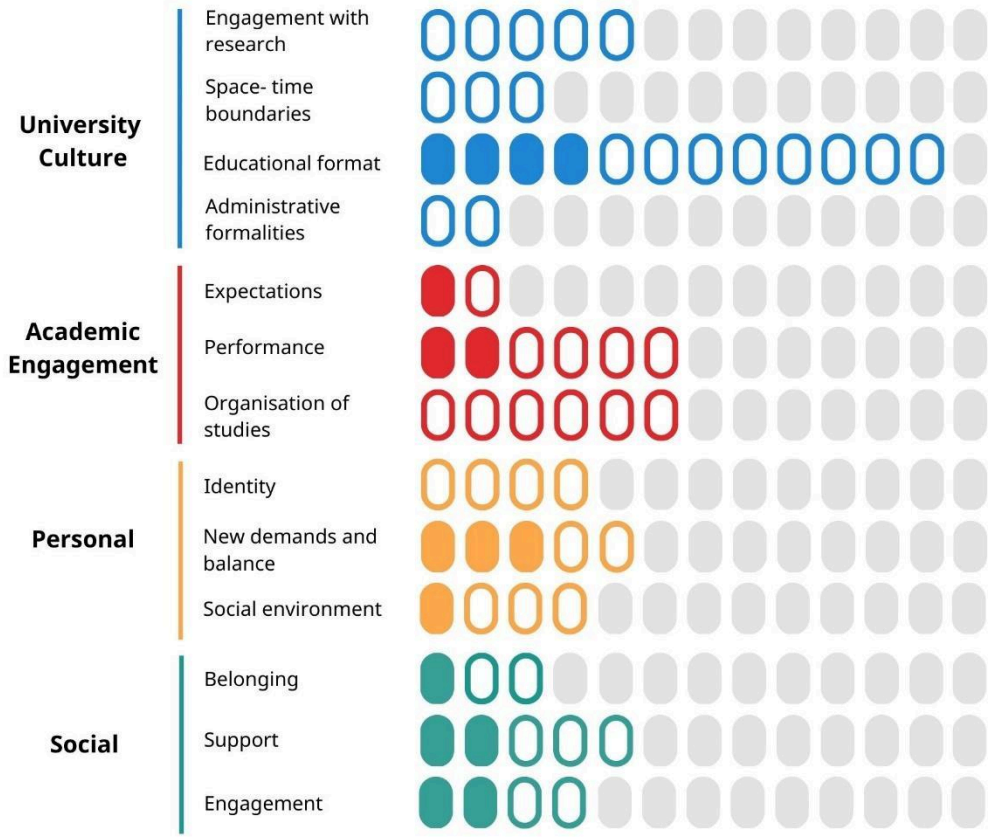
## Mature students

Mature students have a very different prior experience than other groups. Their **biggest challenges** are in the Personal and Social categories. They have consolidated their identity outside the school context. These students feel more confident to engage with their social environment. However, they may find intergenerational differences about the communication codes or, for instance, the use of digital devices challenging. Since they already have formed friendships in their life, it may not be a priority for them to create or integrate to social networks at the university. They are mostly focused on balancing their personal and student life.

Academic Engagement and University Culture are the less challenging categories for this particular group.



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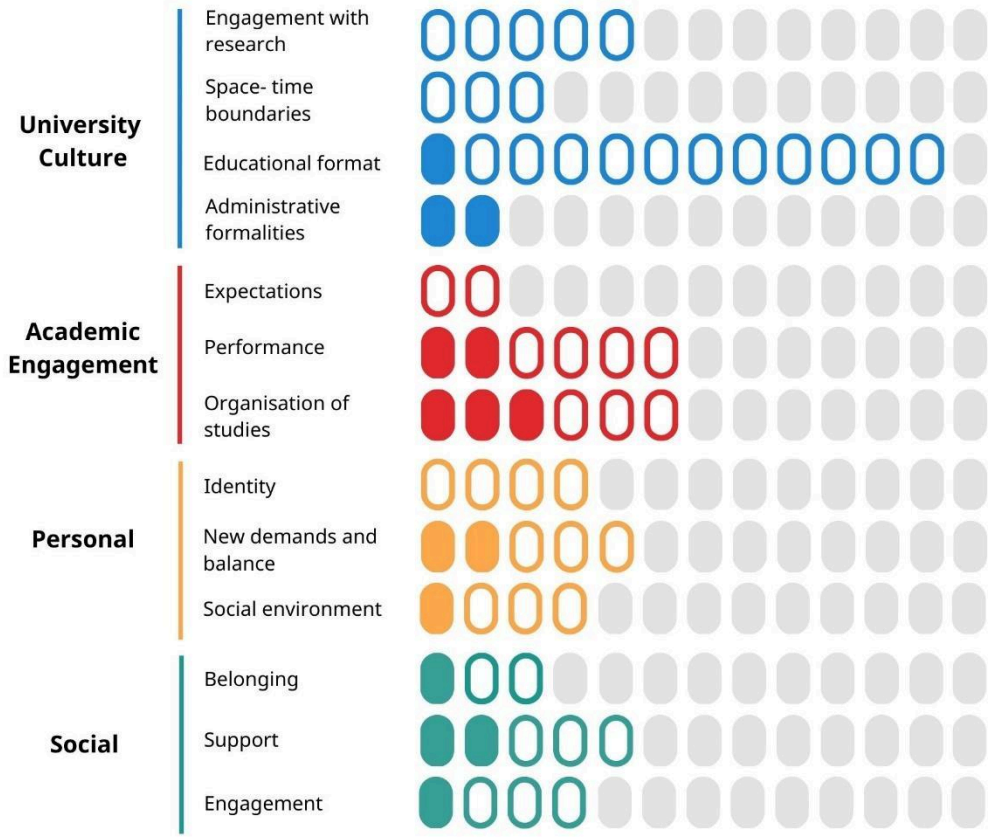
## Working and/or Part-Time Students

The **biggest challenges** of students working part or full-time can be found in the Academic engagement category: organisation of studies and performance. The second biggest challenges are social. Since working students have limited free time, they find it difficult to create a supporting network of peers and engage in the social university context. The Personal and University Culture categories of challenges are less identified in this group of students.

Working students may find it **more challenging than other groups** to create a supporting network of peers and build strong interactions with the academic staff.



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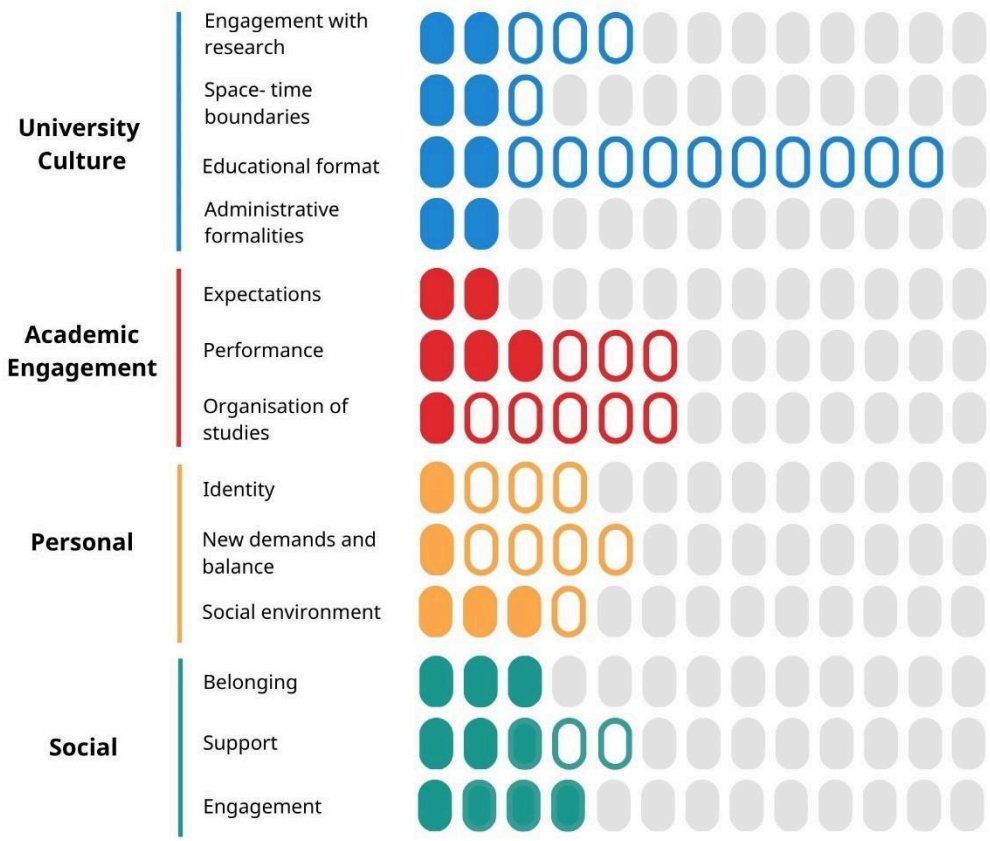
## Foreign students

For the purpose of this project, foreign students here are defined as all the international students that choose to go abroad. A different group has been created for migrants that study out of their country because they have no other option.

The **biggest challenges** that this group face belong to the Social and the University Culture categories. Communication problems, cultural differences (including administrative and academic cultures) and staying away from their social network are some of the elements that provide this group with challenges that shade their university experience. Personal and Academic Engagement categories of challenges are placed in a second level of importance.

International students may find it **especially challenging** to understand and use the local language. Therefore, crossing the language barrier will allow them to understand the university culture and create social connections.



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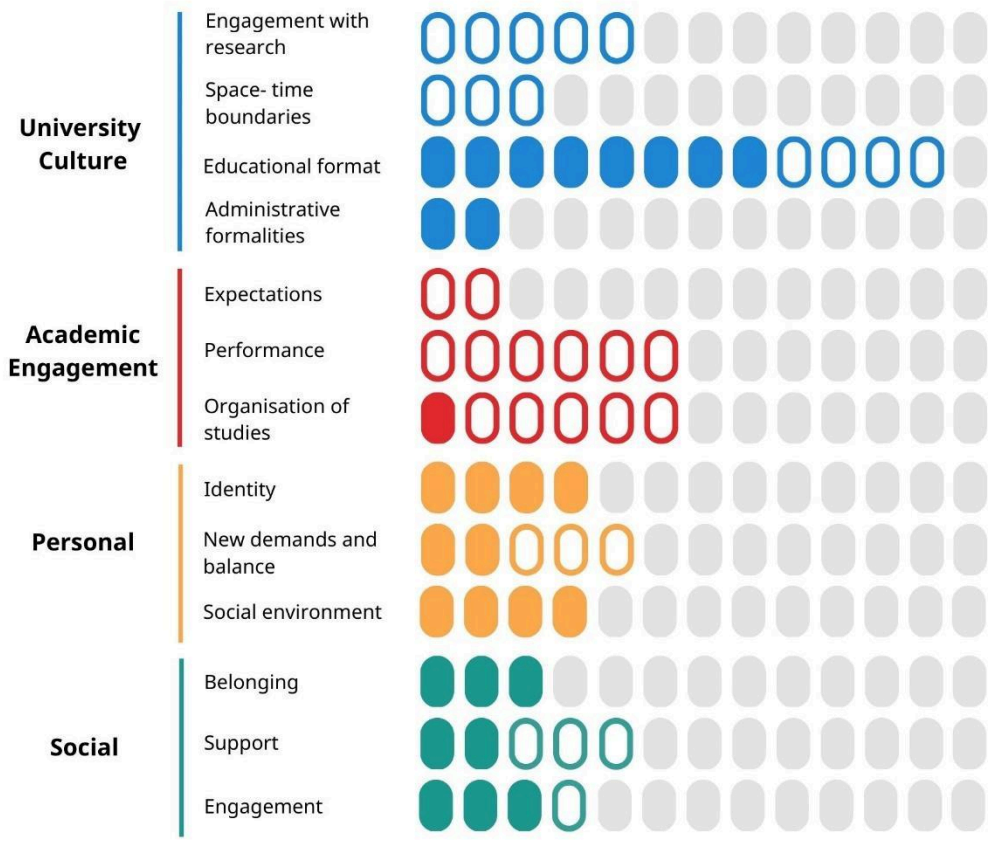
## Forced migrants

Students that have been forced to migrate and study have different needs than those who chose to study abroad.

The main challenges these migrants face centre on the Personal and Social categories of challenges. Trauma, different languages and different cultures are important elements to consider in their integration to university life. Even though these students usually come from a different education system, challenges in the University Culture and Academic Engagement categories seem to be important but to a lesser extent.

The **difference that forced migrants have from other groups** of students focused on the reasons why they migrate. Some of them must deal with major trauma, a sense of fear and loss arising from displacement, the effect of the experience of how they travelled to their host country, a lack of self-confidence and trust, and sometimes a lack of acceptance of the migration situation.



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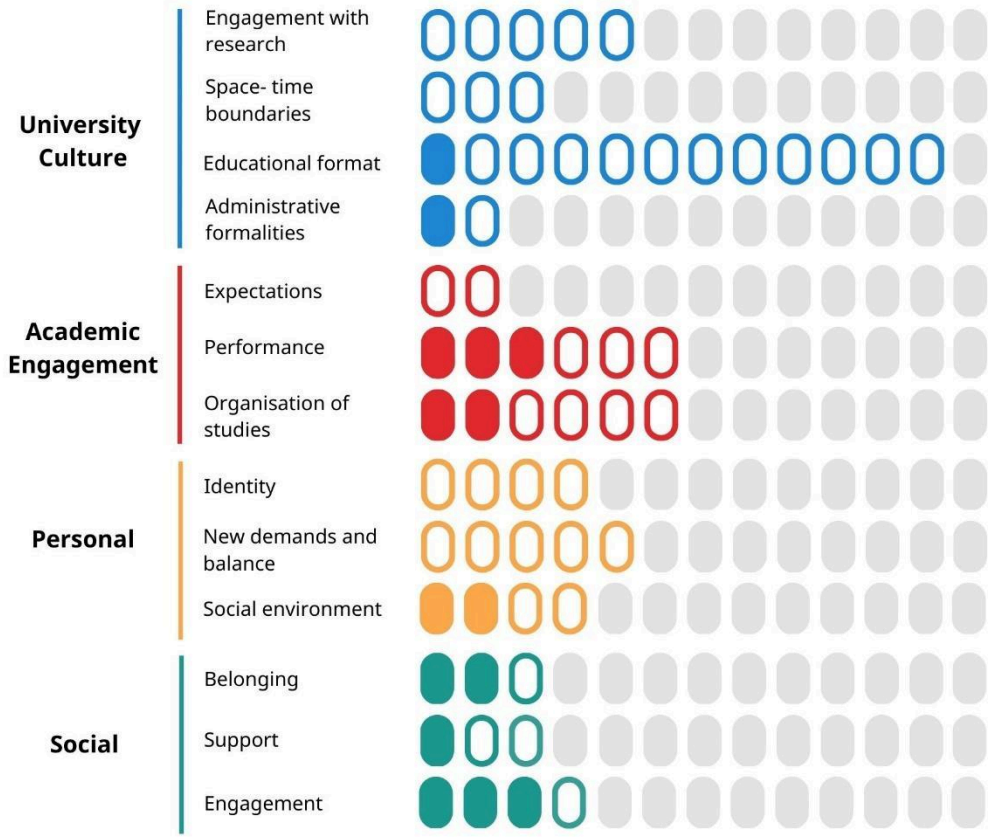
## Students with additional needs

The **biggest challenges** that students with additional needs face during the transition to university are to be found in the Social and Academic Engagement categories of challenges. University Culture and Personal categories are considered in a second level of importance. This group of students, **more than the other groups**, may find problems accessing lectures' resources online and in person.



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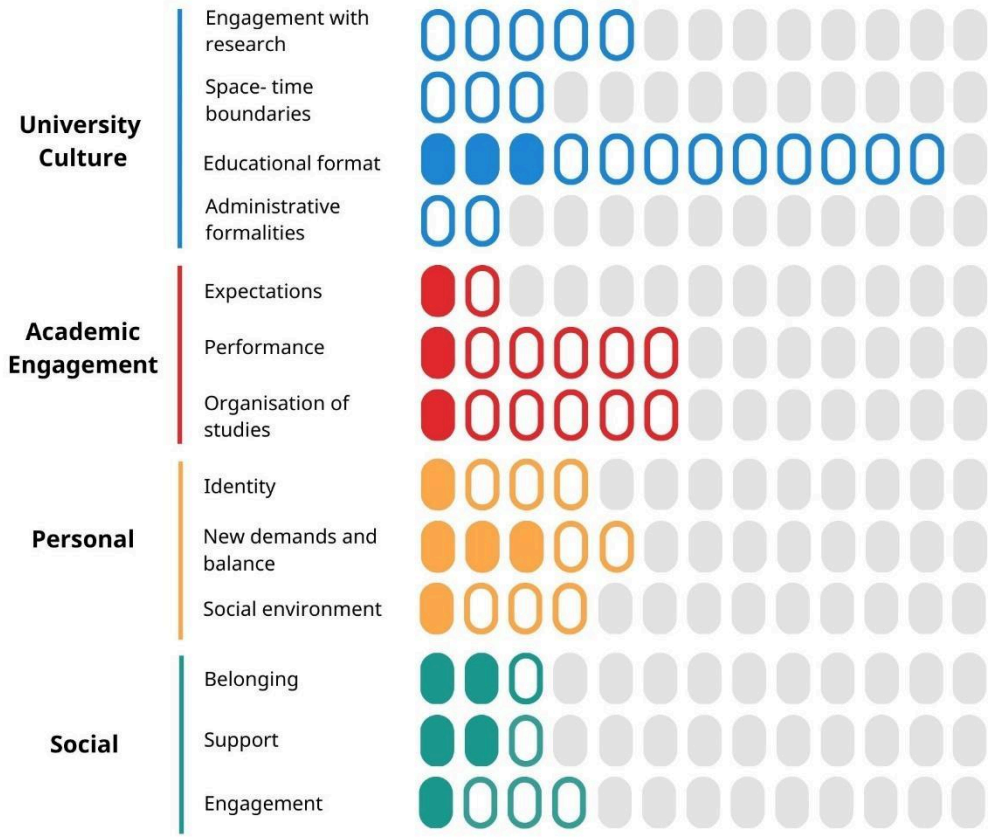
## Socially-Economic disadvantaged students

The group of students that have social and economic disadvantages find the challenges in the Social and Personal categories **more present** during their transition. Academic Engagement challenges is considered second in level of importance while University Culture is seen as the least important.
This group of students usually lack the skill to identify their own problems. Some strategies like asking students after the first failed exam to use a diagnostic tool might stimulate students to identify their problems and look for available resources and solutions before the problem becomes bigger.



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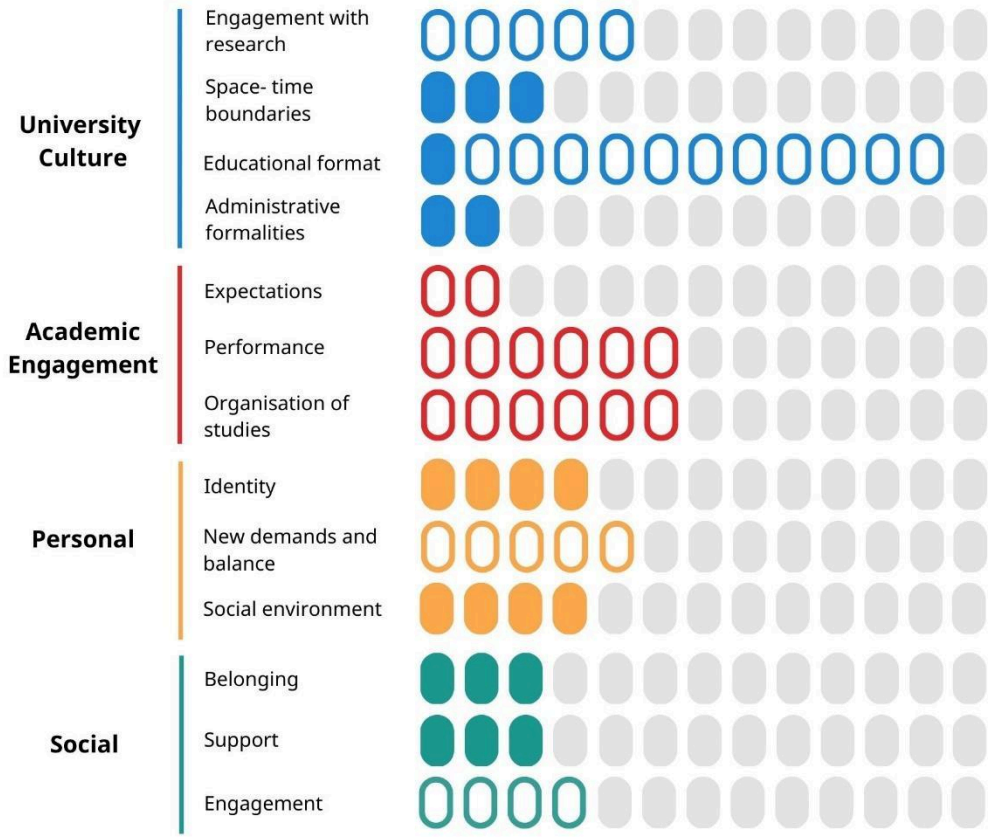
## LGBTQ+ Students

The **biggest challenges** that the LGBTQ+ students face during the transition are to be found in the Personal and Social categories. Students that are struggling with identity issues may have less mental space to dedicate to studies. Some of them take a new identity for the first time in their lives during the first year of university. The University Culture challenges come in a second place of importance while the Academic Engagement categories of challenges do not feature at all.

This group of students must often deal with the complexity of being discriminated against while trying to learn the new context boundaries and codes. Moreover, not every student can or wants to be identified in this group. Academics are not always sensitised to the struggles of this group of students and have no idea how to interact with them and the peer interaction that might bring in class.



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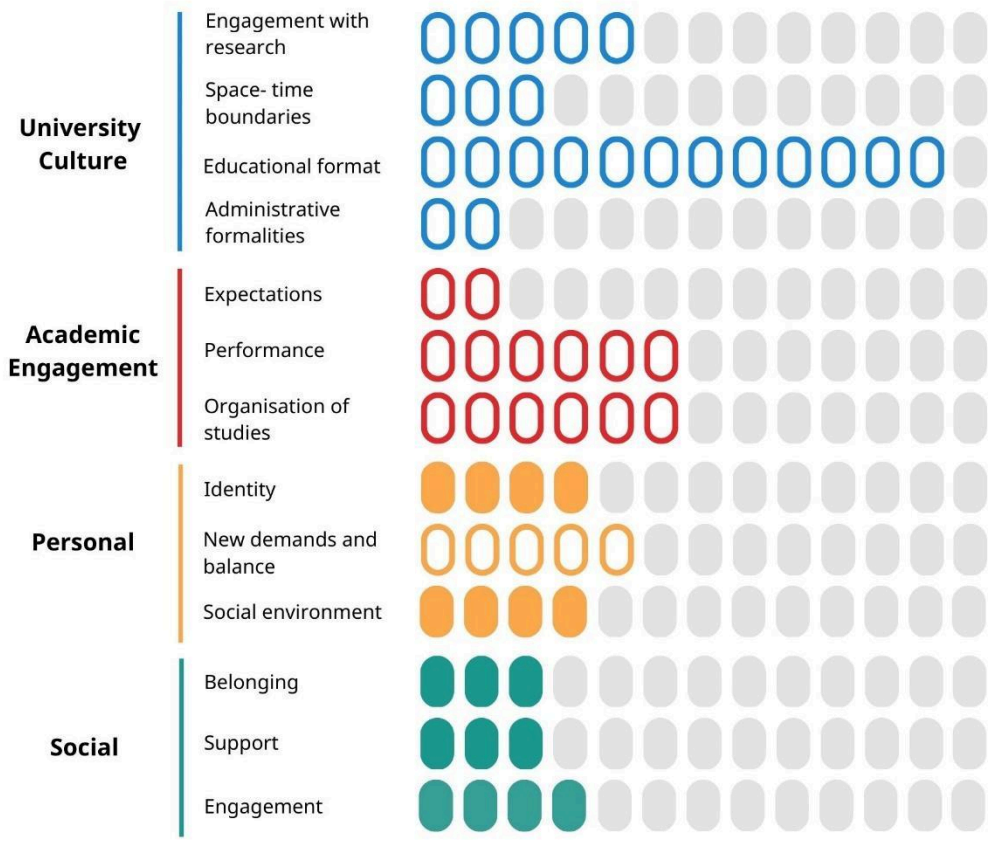
## Students from other marginalised groups

According to Charter For Compassion, a marginalised identity is anyone who feels or is, "underserved, disregarded, ostracised, harassed, persecuted, or side-lined in the community." The **biggest challenges** that students from marginalised groups find belong to the Social and Personal categories. University Culture and Academic Engagement seem to be less important factors.

For this group of students, **more than others**, personal safety and issues of prejudice are important to deal with during the transition.



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