

Free to use under [CC BY 4.0](#): credit Mindmapi.ai and link to mindmapi.ai/research/degree-workload-by-subject, where every source is linked.

Which Degrees Are the Most Work? UK Student Workload by Subject (2026)

By [Kashish Mustafa](#), Co-founder, Mindmapi · Last reviewed 29 October 2026

A student on a degree allied to medicine, such as nursing, physiotherapy or pharmacy, puts in about [39.4 hours](#) a week on their course. A Psychology student puts in [23.1](#). That gap of more than 16 hours is roughly two extra working days, every week of term.

The figures come from the Student Academic Experience Survey 2026, run by HEPI and Advance HE, which asked [10,065](#) full-time UK undergraduates how they spent a typical week. Most of the difference between subjects comes from time in class and on placement. Independent study barely changes from one subject to the next, and it has fallen for almost everyone.

Degree Workload by the Numbers

How UK undergraduates spend a typical week of term, 2026

MOST AND LEAST WORK

39.4 hrs

a week for Subjects allied to Medicine, the highest of 21 subjects

23.1 hrs

a week for Psychology, the lowest

IN CLASS

15.3 hrs

of timetabled classes attended by Medicine and Dentistry students

9.8 hrs

attended by Psychology students

STUDYING ALONE

11.1 hrs

of independent study a week, the lowest since the survey began measuring it this way

15.4 → 11.9

Mathematical Sciences students' weekly independent study, 2024 to 2026

STUDY PLUS PAID WORK

44.2 hrs

a week of study and paid work for students with jobs

65%

of full-time undergraduates have a paid job during term

Sources: HEPI and Advance HE, Student Academic Experience Survey 2026; totals are Mindmapi's sum of the published figures.

Top Picks

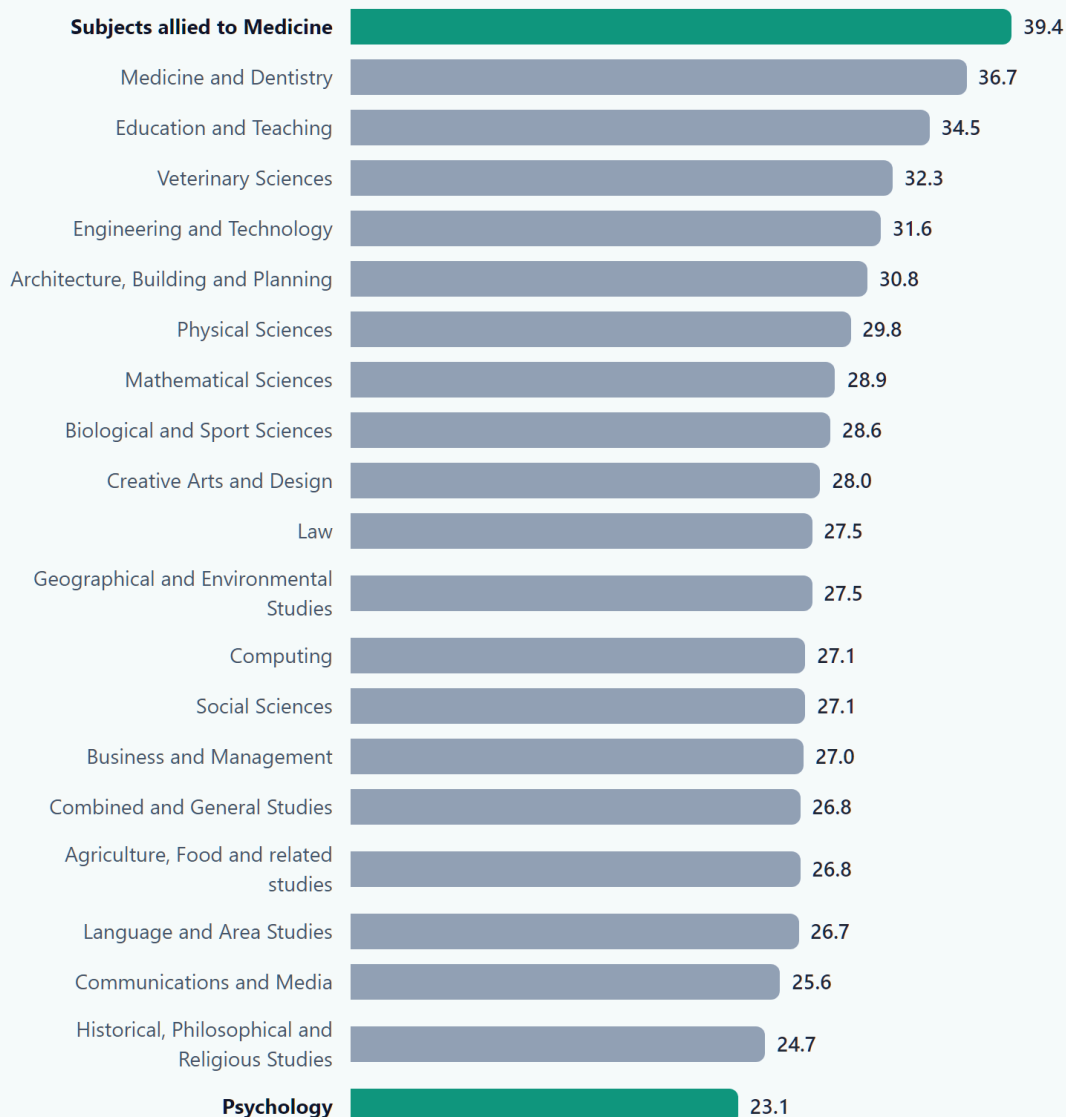
- **Heaviest weekly workload:** Subjects allied to Medicine, [39.4 hours](#), then Medicine and Dentistry, [36.7](#), and Education and Teaching, [34.5](#)
- **Lightest weekly workload:** Psychology, [23.1 hours](#), then Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, [24.7](#)
- **Most time in class:** Medicine and Dentistry, [15.3 hours](#) a week, against [9.8](#) for Psychology
- **Most time on placement or fieldwork:** Subjects allied to Medicine, [13.6 hours](#) a week, against [2.1](#) for Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies
- **Average independent study, all students:** [11.1 hours](#) a week, down from [15.7](#) in 2021
- **Study and paid work combined, students with jobs:** [44.2 hours](#) a week, more than the [36.6](#)-hour average full-time job

Which Degree Subjects Have the Biggest Workload?

Degrees that lead into the health professions take up the most time. Subjects allied to Medicine come top at [39.4 hours](#) a week, with Medicine and Dentistry second at [36.7](#). Both combine heavy timetables with long placements. Education and Teaching is third, at [34.5](#), largely because of time spent in schools.

Weekly workload by degree subject

Hours in a typical week of term: timetabled classes attended, independent study, and placements or fieldwork



Source: [HEPI and Advance HE, Student Academic Experience Survey 2026](#) (totals summed by Mindmap*i*).

[mindmap*i*.ai](#)

The full breakdown for all 21 subject groups:

Rank	Subject	Total (hrs/week)	In class	Independent study	Placements & fieldwork
1	Subjects allied to Medicine	39.4	14.7	11.1	13.6
2	Medicine and Dentistry	36.7	15.3	11.8	9.6
3	Education and Teaching	34.5	14.0	10.5	10.0
4	Veterinary Sciences	32.3	15.1	10.5	6.7
5	Engineering and Technology	31.6	13.8	11.5	6.3
6	Architecture, Building and Planning	30.8	14.0	11.6	5.2
7	Physical Sciences	29.8	13.1	11.4	5.3
8	Mathematical Sciences	28.9	12.9	11.9	4.1
9	Biological and Sport Sciences	28.6	12.5	11.5	4.6
10	Creative Arts and Design	28.0	13.9	10.7	3.4
11	Law	27.5	12.8	10.9	3.8
12	Geographical and Environmental Studies	27.5	11.3	11.9	4.3
13	Computing	27.1	11.8	10.8	4.5
14	Social Sciences	27.1	11.7	11.6	3.8
15	Business and Management	27.0	12.1	10.7	4.2
16	Combined and General Studies	26.8	11.1	10.2	5.5
17	Agriculture, Food and related studies	26.8	11.0	8.5	7.3
18	Language and Area Studies	26.7	11.5	12.0	3.2
19	Communications and Media	25.6	11.3	10.6	3.7
20	Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	24.7	10.3	12.3	2.1
21	Psychology	23.1	9.8	10.3	3.0

“In class” is timetabled hours that students say they attended, not the hours scheduled. Totals are the sum of the three columns. All figures are averages across every student in the subject, including those who spent no time on an activity.

Which Degrees Have the Most Contact Hours?

Medicine and Dentistry students attend the most timetabled teaching, [15.3 hours](#) a week. Veterinary Sciences is close behind at [15.1](#), then Subjects allied to Medicine at [14.7](#). Psychology students attend [9.8 hours](#), the fewest of any subject group and [5.5 hours](#) less than medical students.

Creative Arts and Design stands out among non-science subjects, at [13.9 hours](#) of attended classes a week, more than Engineering and Technology ([13.8](#)).

How Much Independent Study Do Students Do in Each Subject?

Far less variation here. Every subject group falls between [8.5 hours](#) a week (Agriculture, Food and related studies) and [12.3](#) (Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies). The humanities, with some of the shortest timetables, report some of the most independent study: Languages are second at [12.0 hours](#).

What has changed is the amount. In most subjects, independent study is well below where it was in 2024:

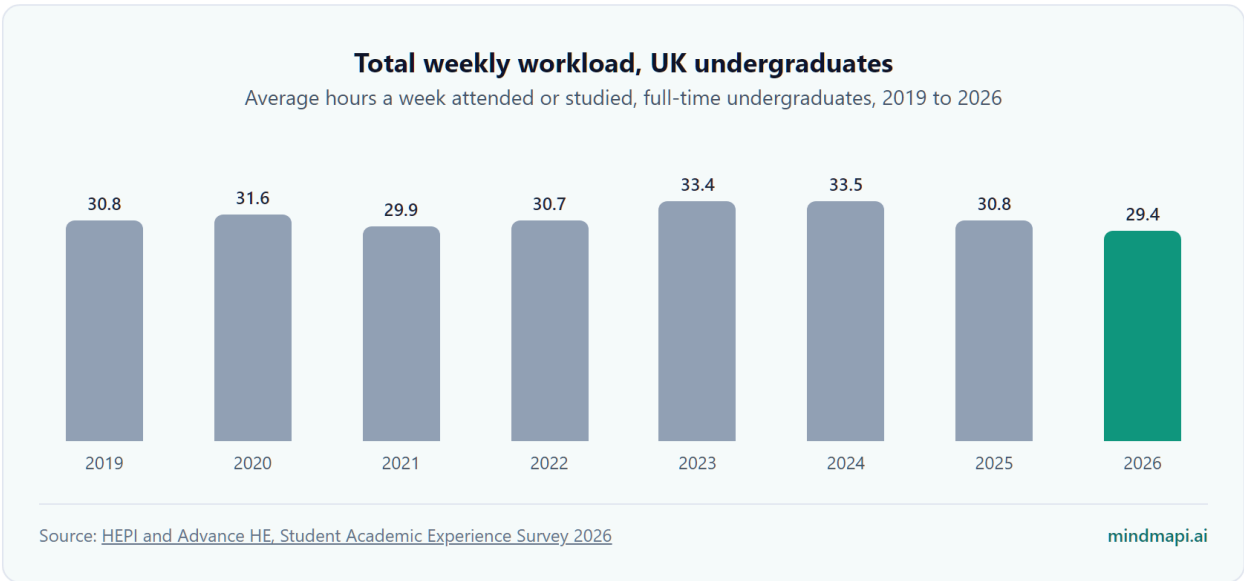
Subject	2024 (hrs/week)	2026 (hrs/week)	Change
Language and Area Studies	15.3	12.0	-3.3
Mathematical Sciences	15.4	11.9	-3.5
Architecture, Building and Planning	15.7	11.6	-4.1
Subjects allied to Medicine	14.1	11.1	-3.0
Psychology	12.4	10.3	-2.1

Subjects as selected by the survey's authors. Change is Mindmapi's calculation.

Architecture students lost more than four hours of independent study a week between 2024 and 2026, the largest fall among the subjects reported.

Are Students Studying Less Than Before?

Yes. Across all subjects, independent study fell to [11.1 hours](#) a week in 2026, the lowest since the survey began measuring it this way. Total workload, including classes and placements, dropped to [29.4 hours](#), from a peak of [33.5](#) in 2024.



The report's authors point to two possible causes: paid work, and AI tools that may be speeding up parts of independent study. They note that whether faster is always better is still being debated.

How Many Hours Do Students Work Alongside Their Degree?

[65%](#) of full-time undergraduates had a paid job during term time in 2026. Five years earlier, fewer than four in ten did. Those with jobs worked just under [14 hours](#) a week on average, and around [9% to 10%](#) worked more than 20.

Study and work combined

- **All full-time undergraduates:** [38.4 hours](#) a week of study and paid work, down from a peak of [41.7](#) in 2024
- **Students with a paid job:** [44.2 hours](#) a week, almost the same as 2025 ([44.3](#)) and below 2024 ([50.1](#))
- **Average full-time job in the UK, for comparison:** [36.6 hours](#) a week (Office for National Statistics, as cited in the survey)

A working student, in other words, puts in more than seven hours a week beyond a typical full-time job. The survey also found that students with jobs did slightly more independent study than those without, though the authors could not say whether that was by choice or necessity.

Conclusion

The subject a student picks decides how much of their week is timetabled. A future nurse or doctor can expect around 37 to 39 hours a week, much of it fixed, while a Psychology or History student has nearer 23 to 25 and far more of it to organise alone. Across every subject, though, independent study is shrinking, squeezed by paid work and possibly sped up by AI.

With fewer hours to spare, how students use their independent study time matters more. Methods with strong evidence behind them, such as testing yourself and spreading revision over weeks, get more out of each hour than rereading notes. Our [mind map and study statistics](#) report covers that evidence.

How to cite this page

This report and its charts are free to use under [CC BY 4.0](#): credit Mindmapai.ai and link to this page. For example:

Mustafa, K. (2026). Which Degrees Are the Most Work? UK Student Workload by Subject. Mindmapai.ai. <https://mindmapai.ai/research/degree-workload-by-subject>

For the original data, please also cite the study or report linked from each figure.

How We Put This Together

All figures come from the Student Academic Experience Survey 2026 by Jonathan Neves, Rose Stephenson and Charlotte Armstrong (HEPI and Advance HE). Savanta surveyed 10,065 full-time

undergraduates across the UK between 6 January and 7 April 2026, and the results were weighted to represent the student population. The authors give a margin of error of plus or minus 1% for the full sample; for individual subjects, which have smaller samples, it will be wider. Subjects follow the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS). Subject totals and changes are our own arithmetic on the published figures.

Sources

- [Neves, J., Stephenson, R., & Armstrong, C. \(2026\). Student Academic Experience Survey 2026. HEPI and Advance HE. Sections 6 \(paid employment\) and 10 \(teaching intensity\).](#)
- [Office for National Statistics \(2026\). Average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers \(seasonally adjusted\), series YBUY, as cited in the Student Academic Experience Survey 2026.](#)

About the author

Kashish Mustafa, Co-founder, Mindmapi

Kashish was predicted 3s and 4s in her GCSEs. Studying on her own, she mind mapped everything, maths included, and came out with 7s and 8s. She went on to graduate with a 2:1 in Business Management and now works in marketing. She co-founded Mindmapi to give every student the study method that worked for her.

[Kashish on LinkedIn](#)