

New Graduates Report on their Course Experience

A new report from Graduate Careers Australia (GCA), *Graduate Course Experience 2010*, shows that, in 2010, 93.2 per cent of bachelor degree graduates expressed broad overall satisfaction with their experience of higher education¹.

Almost nine in every ten bachelor degree graduates expressed broad satisfaction with the standard of teaching they received and more than nine-in-ten felt that their study had improved their generic skills.

The data come from the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) which forms part of the annual Australian Graduate Survey (AGS).

GCA Research Manager Bruce Guthrie said that all Australian universities and many private higher education providers participate in the AGS in order to monitor feedback from their graduates. They do so in order to ensure their graduates have a voice in the continual improvement of the educational experiences they offer.

"The CEQ results do not lend themselves to simplistic comparisons and rankings," he warned, adding that "when institutions make use of these CEQ results, they generally compare their results with previous years' figures and also benchmark themselves against like institutions, taking into account differences in aspects such as fields of education and the student body."

The 2010 CEQ also found that

- Bachelor degree graduates were highly positive about the intellectual motivation they experienced
- In tandem with the development of their generic skills, bachelor degree graduates were also very positive about their development of graduate qualities
- Bachelor degree graduates were most likely to express concern about the methods of assessment employed to gauge their progress.

Guthrie said, "These last figures are not surprising, as assessment periods are always stressful".

For further information please refer to the attached Media Backgrounder. Copies of the recently released report, *Graduate Course Experience 2010*, can be downloaded from the GCA website at <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports/GraduateCourseExperience/index.htm>

¹ See Table in media backgrounder attached.

Media Backgrounder: **Graduates'** **Experience**

Embargoed until 11:30 pm, Thursday, 18 August, 2011

The Survey

The Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) is conducted annually with all Australian universities, along with a number of smaller private institutions, participating. In the 2010 AGS, over 215,000 new graduates were invited to respond to the Course Experience Survey (CEQ) four months after they had completed requirements for their awards and over 113,000 did so, giving a national CEQ response rate of 52.6 per cent. (*See page 2 of the 2010 Graduate Course Experience report.*)

The CEQ

The CEQ itself is a psychometric survey instrument that asks respondents to indicate their level of disagreement or agreement with a range of questions concerning their experiences of higher education. These questions can be grouped together to form 'scales' which combine the responses to the constituent questions and increases the validity of the data. The scales include

- **Good Teaching Scale** (used by all participating institutions)
- **Generic Skills Scale** (used by all participating institutions)
- Clear Goals and Standards Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)
- Appropriate Workload Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)
- Appropriate Assessment Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)
- Intellectual Motivation Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)
- Student Support Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)
- Graduate Qualities Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)
- Learning Resources Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)
- Learning Community Scale (an optional scale used by some institutions)

There is also a single **Overall Satisfaction Item** which is used by all participating institutions

Caveats

CEQ results come from a psychometric instrument via complex statistical analysis and they are not suitable for simplistic rankings and comparisons. The higher education sector has worked with GCA to produce a Code of Practice governing the suitable uses of the CEQ data, which are, in short

The greatest value of ... [CEQ] data is likely to be derived when the data are used to examine change in outcomes over a period of years, within an institution, for the same field of education. Analysis over a period of time for a similar group of graduates can also be an effective use of the data, for example by identifying centres of good teaching practice via CEQ data.

AGS data are not suitable for making simplistic (i.e. unqualified) inter-institutional comparisons. Institutions can have vastly different histories, missions, geographic/socio-economic situations, enrolment profiles (including

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high percentages of mature-aged, part-time or employed students) and course mixes.

GCA does not release institutional results as we believe that institutions should have the responsibility to do so. Institutions are best placed to assess and examine their CEQ results, as an understanding of the particular study environment from which the data were gathered is vital in analysis of the survey data.

In line with the Code of Practice, GCA discourages the production of single CEQ figures that total the results for an institution. There are too many important explanatory variables which can mediate CEQ response and these can be hidden in such simplistic calculations.

The Table below, reproduced in part from the new report, is the source of the CEQ results quoted in the media release. 'Percentage in broad agreement' results reflect the aggregation of responses in three categories: a middle group that neither agrees nor disagrees, and groups that 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

*Table: 2010 CEQ descriptive statistics
(part), bachelor degree graduates*

Scale	Number	Percentage in Broad Agreement
Good Teaching	83,295	87.7
Generic Skills	83,229	93.2
Overall Satisfaction	83,051	93.2
Clear Goals	24,000	82.3
Appropriate Workload	4,364	68.4
Appropriate Assessment	9,750	75.6
Intellectual Motivation	8,052	93.3
Student Support	20,645	91.1
Graduate Qualities	59,457	93.7
Learning Resources	11,579	91.9
Learning Community	22,077	86.7