

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tertiary students report high levels of satisfaction

Tertiary study is a largely positive experience for the vast majority of first year students, a new report released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) shows.

The study investigated the experiences of just over 4000 young Australians who had been in Year 9 in 1998 and commenced study at a university or TAFE in 2002, immediately after completing Year 12. It examined the satisfaction levels of students and identified difficulties they had faced during the first year of study.

Among the report's key findings is that a large majority of students reported that they liked being a student (94 per cent), tertiary student life suited them (87 per cent), they enjoyed the atmosphere on campus (88 per cent) and they had made close friends at their tertiary institution (89 per cent). A significant majority (82 per cent) felt that the experience had lived up to their expectations.

The national study examined the first-year experiences of both university and TAFE students together. TAFE students appeared to be just as satisfied with their experiences as university students with very little difference in satisfaction levels between the two groups.

About one fifth of students reported that their first year had been relatively trouble-free reporting no real areas of difficulty. For students who had experienced some difficulties, juggling work and study commitments was the most commonly reported challenge with more than one in four students nominating this as their main obstacle.

ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters said that although the findings were largely positive for most students, for some the transition from secondary education had been more difficult.

"While the overall picture painted by students of their first year experience is largely positive, there are some groups of students for whom satisfaction with aspects of their tertiary experiences was lower and who reported greater difficulty in their transitions from school."

Students studying at regional universities were more likely than other students to report that paying fees and other study costs was their main difficulty.

Indigenous students were more likely than non Indigenous students to report conflict between study and caring for children or other family members, as well as financial difficulties.

Professor Masters said careful monitoring of the experiences, difficulties and first year outcomes of some students, particularly students from an Indigenous Australian background, is required.

Further information and additional findings are contained in the report, *The first year experience: The transition from secondary school to university and TAFE in Australia* by Kylie Hillman, research report 40 in the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) program. LSAY is conducted jointly by ACER and the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

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LSAY background information is available on the ACER website at www.acer.edu.au