

A focus on students' engagement

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) is a quality enhancement activity managed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Student engagement is an idea focused on learners and their interactions with university. It rests on the premise that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities, and on how institutions and staff generate conditions to stimulate involvement.

Assessing students' involvement with activities and conditions that research has linked with high-quality student outcomes provides data for framing conversations about quality, and a stimulus for guiding new thinking about best practice.

Population and sample summary

29 institutions participated in the 2008 AUSSE, growing from 25 in 2007. 769 institutions took part in the 2008 USA National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The AUSSE 2008 population includes

83,720 first-year and 83,736 third-year on-shore bachelor degree students.

A systematic random sample of 1500 first-year and 1500 later-year students was drawn at Australasia University. 900 students responded in total, giving an overall institutional response rate of 30 per cent. The response sample was weighted to ensure that results reflect your institutions' population as a whole.

Key results

Six key areas of student engagement are measured by the AUSSE survey instrument, the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ): Academic Challenge, Active Learning, Student and Staff Interactions, Enriching Educational Experiences, Supportive Learning Environment, and Work Integrated Learning. Scale scores are reported using a metric that runs from 0 to 100.

Figure 1 presents results for first- and later-year students at Australasia University, for your benchmark group, for Australasia, and for the USA. It is best to compare results across groups within each scale, rather than make comparisons across scales. In general, a difference of five scale points may be considered a meaningful educational effect.

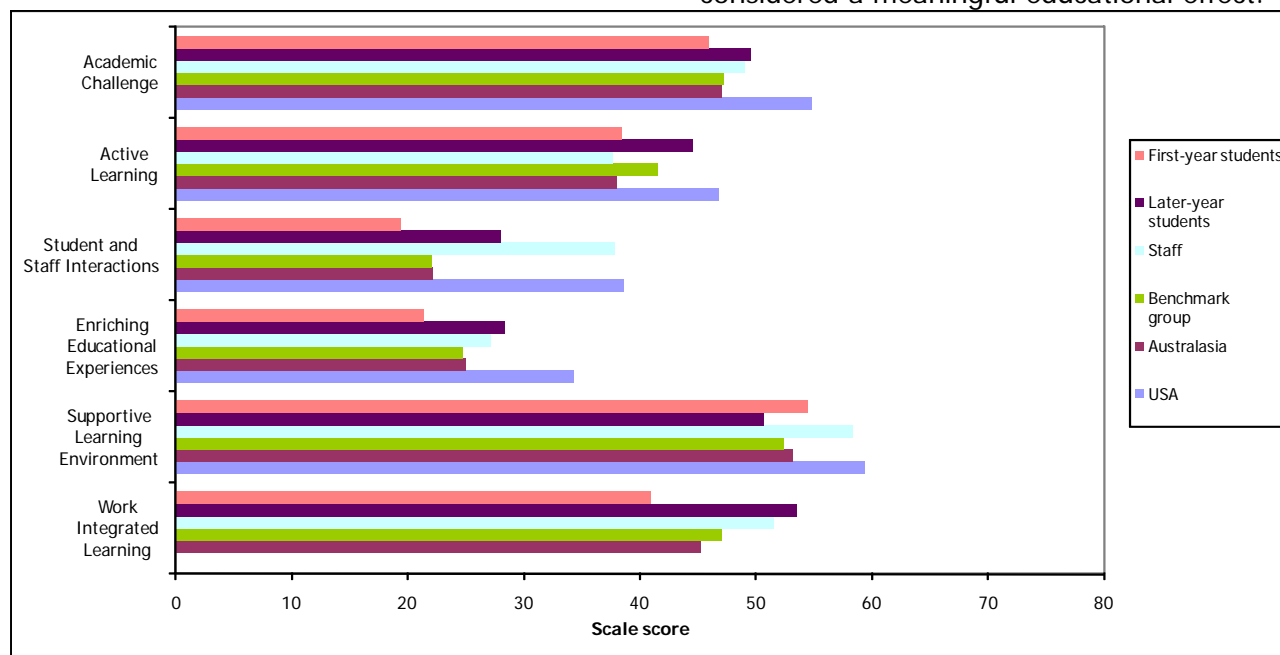


Figure 1 Summary student engagement report

The Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) measures six key outcomes: overall

satisfaction, student retention intentions, average overall grades, general development

outcomes, general learning outcomes, and higher-order thinking outcomes. Figure 2

reports average scores on the 0 to 100 point metric.

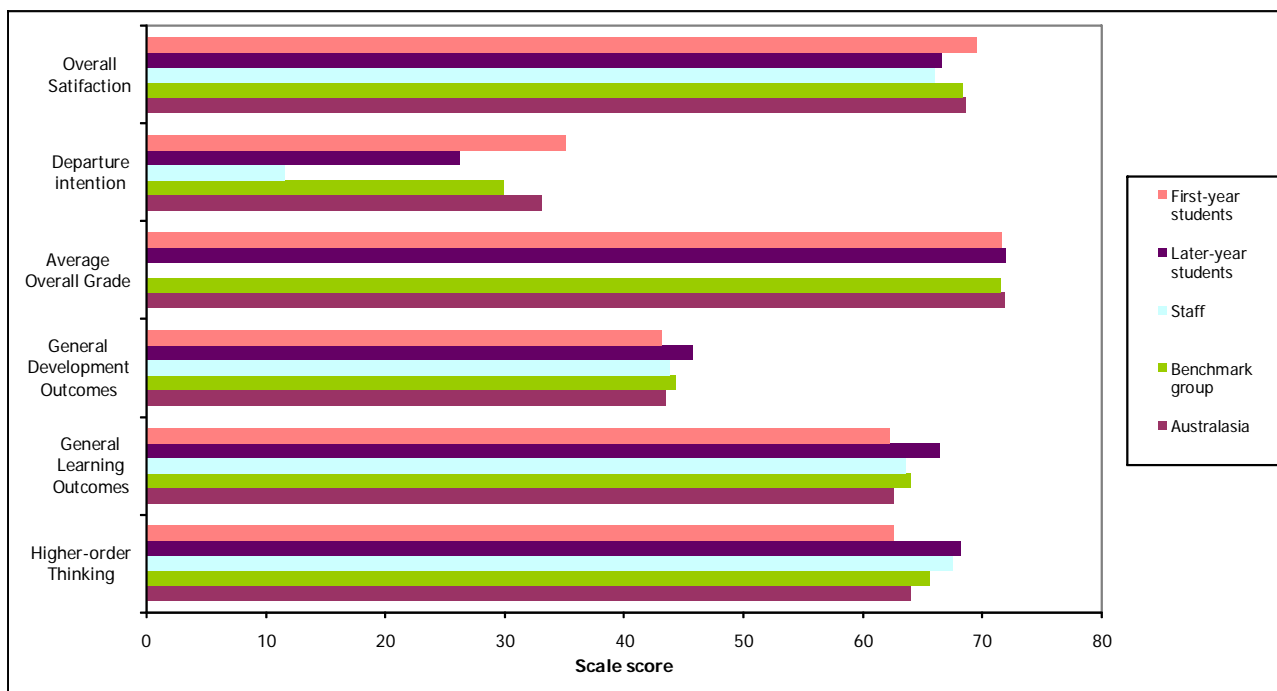


Figure 2 Summary student outcomes report

Around 100 specific learning activities and conditions are measured in the AUSSE. Table 1 summarises the areas in which Australasia

University is performing above and below the national average. These items are not ordered.

Table 1 Performance above and below national average

Performance below national average
Spent on campus including classes
Careers advice
Examinations challenged to do best work
Learning community/study group
Spent on campus excluding classes
Relationships with teaching staff
Memorising facts
More than an hour
Participating in extracurricular activities
Subject related assigned texts

Performance above national average
Working for pay off campus
Made presentation
Worked with students during class
Worked with students outside class
Used email or a forum to communicate with teaching staff
Industry placement or work experience
Working effectively with others
Using computing and information technology
Practicum/internship
Discussed grades with teaching staff

Summary subgroup results

Engagement varies across groups of students. The average age of respondents in Australasia University's sample was 22. 67 per cent were female, 12 per cent were international, 1 per cent were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin and 1 per cent were of Maori or Pacific Islander, 21 per cent spoke a language other than English at

home, and 55 per cent were the first in their immediate family to attend higher education.

Most students in Australasia University's sample studied in the Management and Commerce and Health fields of education. In total, 88 per cent studied on campus and 86 per cent were mainly full time. 85 per cent reported doing more than half of their study online, and 2 per cent living on campus.

While only 12 per cent of students worked for pay on campus, 39 per cent spent more than 15 hours in off-campus paid work per week. Australasia University students spent on

average 6 hours per week travelling to campus, 10 hours preparing for class, 15 hours on campus, and 4 hours participating in 'extracurricular' activities.

Table 2 and Table 3 report engagement scale and outcomes measure average scores for key subgroups

Table 2 Summary engagement scales by subgroup

Engagement scale	Australasia University	Over 20	Equity student	Part time or external	International	First in family
Academic Challenge	48	49	50	47	48	47
Active Learning	42	43	43	40	41	41
Student and Staff Interactions	24	26	24	22	28	24
Enriching Educational Experiences	25	26	26	25	25	25
Supportive Learning Environment	52	50	52	53	51	51
Work Integrated Learning	48	51	51	53	42	46

Table 3 Summary outcomes measures by subgroup

Outcomes measures	Australasia University	Over 20	Equity student	Part time or external	International	First in family
Higher-order Thinking	66	67	67	66	63	64
Learning Outcomes	65	65	65	64	64	64
Development Outcomes	45	45	47	45	46	45
Average Overall Grade	72	72	70	70	66	71
Departure Intention	30	28	37	32	39	37
Overall Satisfaction	68	66	67	68	66	67

Opportunities for change

AUSSE results provide a foundation of evidence for planning and monitoring change.

A range of resources are available to assist individual institutions, including:

- AUSSE 2008 Institution Report, which includes a copy of your institutions' unit-record data file
- student engagement enhancement guides.

So far, institutions have used their data to:

- run seminars with students, managers and teachers
- benchmark results between institutions
- prepare reports for specific divisions
- run student focus groups and interviews
- enhance teaching practices and learning space designs
- hold institution-wide meetings to address problem areas
- integrate student management activities.