



Australasian Survey of Student Engagement 2011 Institution Report





Introduction

Overview

This 2011 AUSSE Institution Report provides information that you can use to help enhance students' engagement with learning at your institution by providing evidence to help focus conversations on enhancing students' engagement in their education. We present the AUSSE Institution Report in a ring binder because it brings together a range of different materials on student engagement and want to invite you to use these materials in any way you see fit. We hope that this collection grows as your conversations about engagement take shape. The AUSSE is conducted by, for and with participating institutions. The intention is to provide institutions with new and significant perspectives for quality management and enhancement.

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AUSSE 2011 institutions

In total, 41 higher education and tertiary education institutions participated in the main 2011 AUSSE administration. This includes 24 universities, TAFEs and private higher education providers from Australia and 17 from New Zealand – one university, six institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) and ten private training establishments (PTEs). In addition to this participation in the AUSSE, ten institutions participated in the Staff Survey of Student Engagement (SSES). Eight institutions also participated in the Postgraduate Survey of Student Engagement (POSSE). These institutions are shown with '(SSES)' and '(POSSE)' in the following table.

Australian institutions

Australian Catholic University
Bond University (POSSE)
Charles Darwin University (POSSE) (SSES)
Charles Sturt University
Edith Cowan University
Flinders University

Griffith University
James Cook University
La Trobe University (POSSE) (SSES)
Macquarie University
Murdoch University
Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
Queensland University of Technology (POSSE) (SSES)
Southern Cross University (POSSE) (SSES)
University of Newcastle (POSSE)
University of Notre Dame (SSES)
University of Queensland
University of South Australia
University of Southern Queensland
University of Tasmania (POSSE) (SSES)
University of Technology Sydney (SSES)
University of the Sunshine Coast (POSSE) (SSES)
University of Wollongong

New Zealand institutions

AIS St Helens
AMES IT Academy
Avonmore Tertiary Institute
Bay of Plenty Polytechnic
Bethlehem Tertiary Institute
Catholic Institute of Aotearoa New Zealand
Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology
Computer Power Institute
Eastern Institute of Technology
ITTI
Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology
New Zealand Institute of Education

Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
Otago Polytechnic
Polytechnic West
South Pacific College of Natural Therapies
Victoria University of Wellington (SSES)
Wellpark College of Natural Therapies Limited

Review of this list indicates that it covers the range of Australia's universities and also includes some representation of private providers, TAFEs and institutes of technology and polytechnics. Although few New Zealand universities participated in 2011, many have chosen to participate biennially. The representativeness of the AUSSE data is important, as it facilitates the production of meaningful benchmarks and provides a solid foundation for cross-institutional conversations.

Acknowledgements

A very warm thanks is extended to students and staff who responded to the 2011 AUSSE, POSSE and SSES. Student and staff participation in the survey is vital, as without their responses, we would not be able to further our understanding of student engagement.

Engagement depends on institutions putting in place conditions that facilitate people's involvement in education. A huge thanks to those institutions that supported the 2011 AUSSE through participating in the administration and involvement in enhancement activities.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) team at Indiana University in the USA have played a highly supportive and significant role in the AUSSE. Particular thanks to Associate Professor Alexander McCormick, Professor George Kuh, Dr Robert Gonyea, Mr Todd Chamberlain, Dr Tom Nelson Laird, Dr Jillian Kinzie and Dr Judy Oimet among others. In addition to their more general guidance and support, items in questions 1 to 9, 11 to 12 and 15 to 17 in the AUSSE Student Engagement Questionnaire have been used with permission from The College Student Report, National Survey of Student Engagement, Copyright 2001–11 The Trustees of Indiana University. Items in the Staff Student Engagement Questionnaire have been used with permission from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, Center for Postsecondary Research, Copyright 2001-11 The Trustees of Indiana University.

AUSSE team and resources

A team of research and support staff manage the AUSSE at ACER. The team brings together individuals with considerable expertise in the design and management of large-scale surveys.

Since 2006, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) team at Indiana University in the USA has played a highly supportive and significant role in the AUSSE. Particular thanks goes to Associate Professor Alex McCormick, NSSE Director, for his support of the AUSSE and also to Professor George Kuh, Dr Robert Gonyea, Mr Todd Chamberlain, Dr Tom Nelson Laird, Dr Jillian Kinzie, and many other colleagues at Indiana University. In addition to more general guidance and support, items in questions 2 to 9, 11 to 12, and 15 to 17 in the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) and Postgraduate Student Engagement Questionnaire (PSEQ) have been used with permission from The College Student Report, National Survey of Student Engagement (copyright 2001-2011, The Trustees of Indiana University). Also, items in the Staff Student Engagement Questionnaire were used with permission from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, Center for Postsecondary Research (copyright 2001-2011, The Trustees of Indiana University). The items were adapted and validated for New Zealand and Australia by ACER.

A team of research and support staff manage the AUSSE at ACER. Associate Professor Hamish Coates is the AUSSE Director and Ms Ali Radloff manages the AUSSE. Other staff at ACER who have provided support and input into this report

include Ms Yan Bibby, Mr Jim Carrigan, Mr Ali Dawes, Dr Daniel Edwards, Ms Trish Freeman, Mr Craig Grose, Mr Rob Jinks, Ms Wendy McGregor, Mr Luis Macedo, Mr David Rainsford, Dr Sarah Richardson, Mr Xiaoxun Sun, Dr Ling Tan, Mr David Tran and Ms Karen Wilson.

This AUSSE Institution Report forms part of a suite of AUSSE resources. Other key resources include various national and international reports, including the Australasian Student Engagement Reports, various AUSSE Research Briefings, AUSSE Administration Manual, institutional data files, AUSSE Enhancement Guides, and workshops and meetings held to further our understanding of student engagement with learning.

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Background

A vital perspective

Introduction

Student engagement can be conceptualised as both students' participation in activities and conditions that research has linked to high-quality learning and outcomes and with how institutions support such engagement. Student engagement is increasingly being seen as a fundamental aspect of higher education.

The concept of student engagement provides a practical lens for assessing and responding to the significant dynamics, constraints and opportunities facing higher education and tertiary education institutions. It provides key insights into what students are actually doing, a structure for framing conversations about quality, and a stimulus for guiding new thinking about best practice.

Although central to many aspects of education, prior to the first administration of the AUSSE in 2007, information on student engagement had not been readily available to Australasian higher education institutions. Existing data collections tended to focus on satisfaction with provision and the broader aspects of the student experience. The lack of information on student engagement limited the potential to plan and improve key aspects of student learning and development.

Student engagement is an idea specifically focused on students and their interactions with their institution. The idea touches on aspects of teaching, the broader student experience, learners' lives beyond their institution, and institutional support. Students lie at the heart of conversations about student engagement; conversations that focus squarely on enhancing individual learning and development.

The concept of student engagement is based on the premise that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities. While students are seen to be responsible for constructing their knowledge, learning is also seen to depend on institutions and staff generating conditions that stimulate and encourage involvement.

This perspective draws together decades of empirical research into higher education student learning and development. In addition to confirming the importance of ensuring appropriate academic challenge, this research has emphasised the importance of examining students' integration into institutional life and involvement in educationally relevant, 'beyond-class' experiences.

Measures of student engagement provide information about individuals' intrinsic involvement with their learning, and the extent to which they are making use of available educational opportunities. Such information also provides information on learning processes, is a reliable proxy for learning outcomes, and provides excellent diagnostic measures for learning enhancement activities.

Key AUSSE benefits

Several characteristics distinguish the AUSSE as a highly valuable quality enhancement activity in Australasian higher education.

Robust technical properties

- Psychometrically validated instruments
- Efficient and robust sampling strategy
- High-quality analysis and reporting practices

Significant new perspectives

- Evidence on student learning processes and institutional supports
- Proxy measures of key learning and development outcomes
- 'Learner-centred whole-of-institution' perspective
- Index of students' involvement in study

Quality-assured approach

- One of the world's most advanced institutional research activities
- Central management and collaboration with institutions
- Standardised survey support materials
- Quality-assured administration strategy

New opportunities

- Cross-institutional benchmarking
- Cross-national comparison
- Data on the support provided by institutions for student learning
- Information for attracting, engaging and retaining students

Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)

Overview of the AUSSE

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) provides data that Australian and New Zealand higher education institutions can use to attract, engage and retain students. The AUSSE reports on the time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities and on students' perceptions of the quality of other aspects of their educational experience.

The AUSSE is a quality enhancement activity managed for Australasian higher education institutions by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). It builds on foundations laid by the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The AUSSE was conducted for the fifth time in 2011 with 41 institutions in Australia and New Zealand. By providing information that is generalisable and sensitive to institutional diversity, and with multiple points of reference, the AUSSE plays an important role in helping institutions monitor and enhance the quality of education.

The AUSSE measures student engagement through administration of the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) to a representative sample of first- and later-year

students at each higher education institution, and to a representative sample of students studying at levels three through seven at participating New Zealand Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) and Private Training Establishments (PTEs). With formative links to the NSSE which has been deployed at more than 1,450 universities and colleges across the United States and Canada, the AUSSE provides data that complement and extend current collections of data that focus on satisfaction with the quality of teaching and the learning environment. It thereby makes available to higher education institutions an important means for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

The AUSSE was developed to bring together existing work in the field and to leverage benefits from a collaborative, multi-institutional approach. It is critical that surveys involve validated instruments and processes so that they provide the kind of high-quality data that can be used to improve practice. Information on validation of the SEQ is summarised below. It is also critical to have meaningful points of reference such as cross-institutional and cross-national benchmarks to get the most value from reports, along with well-tested strategies for interpreting results and improving practice.

The cross-national comparisons facilitated by the AUSSE are important. While higher education is an increasingly internationalised activity, data limitations have to date constrained comparative analyses. Specifically, very little student-level and process- or outcomes-focused data is available. Through its links with the USA and Canadian NSSE, and with other collections in South Africa, China, Korea and Japan, the AUSSE represents a trend towards developing more educationally nuanced cross-national collections and interpretations. There has also been movement to begin collections in the UK and India in coming years.

The AUSSE is conducted by, for and with participating Australasian institutions. The intention is to provide institutions with new and significant perspectives for managing and enhancing the quality of education. Each participating institution is given an AUSSE Institution Report of its own results. The Australasian Student Engagement Report (ASER), AUSSE Research Briefings and other national and cross-national reports provide a broader cross-institutional and cross-national perspective of the results.

Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ)

The AUSSE survey instrument is called the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ). The SEQ is based on the College Student Report, the instrument used with over 1,450 institutions in the NSSE in North America. Close links between these two instruments provide a basis for benchmarking.

The SEQ is designed for administration to undergraduate students in under 15 minutes online or in paper form. To manage and reduce levels of item-level non-response, sampled students were randomly distributed one of 12 different online versions, each containing different orderings of the items. All students who submit an online form (over 90 per cent of all responses) are presented with an overview of student engagement and summary of key findings (see: <http://www.acer.edu.au/research/ausse/2010results>).

The survey instrument contains items that tap a range of key educational phenomena. A selection of these items group together psychometrically to measure these summary scales:

Academic Challenge	Extent to which expectations and assessments challenge students to learn
Active Learning	Students' efforts to actively construct their knowledge
Student and Staff Interactions	Level and nature of students' contact with teaching staff
Enriching Educational Experiences	Participation in broadening educational activities
Supportive Learning Environment	Feelings of legitimation within the institution
Work Integrated Learning	Integration of employment-focused work experiences into study

The SEQ also provides measurement of several outcome measures. The measure of average grade is captured through a single item on the SEQ. The other measures are composite measures which reflect responses to a group of items.

Higher-order Thinking	Participation in higher-order forms of thinking
General Learning Outcomes	Development of general competencies
General Development Outcomes	Development of general forms of individual and social development
Career Readiness	Preparation for participation in the professional workforce
Average Overall Grade	Average overall grade so far in course
Departure Intention	Non-graduating students' intentions on not returning to study in the following year
Overall Satisfaction	Students' overall satisfaction with their educational experience

ACER further developed and validated the College Student Report before deploying it in Australia and New Zealand as the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ). A range of new and redesigned items were included in the Australasian SEQ. Validation included focus groups, cognitive interviews, pilot testing and expert review. Psychometric and conceptual analyses were conducted. This work builds on the extensive validation in the USA of the College Student Report. The SEQ is a living

resource. Within Australasia it has been deployed in close to 200 institutional replications and to over 700,000 students. ACER is continually consulting with people on ways to improve the instrument, and conducts a wide-range of experiments and validity tests.

A critical feature of the SEQ is its foundation in empirically based theories of student learning. Items in the SEQ are based on findings from decades of research on the activities and conditions linked with high-quality learning. This foundation helps assure the educational importance of the phenomena measured by the instrument.

The SEQ will grow with further development of the AUSSE. The form is analysed on a continuing basis, and assessed through myriad institutional and cross-institutional consultations and reviews. Evolution of the instrument depends on evidence of the kinds of engagement that are linked with high-quality learning outcomes.

Postgraduate Survey of Student Engagement (POSSE)

Overview of the POSSE

The Postgraduate Survey of Student Engagement (POSSE) complements the AUSSE, and provides data that Australian and New Zealand higher education institutions can use to attract, engage and retain postgraduate coursework students. Like the AUSSE, the POSSE reports on the time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities and on students' perceptions of the quality of other aspects of their educational experience.

The POSSE builds on foundations laid by the AUSSE survey and was conducted as a pilot study for the first time in 2009 with a handful of institutions. The POSSE measures student engagement among postgraduate coursework students through administration of the Postgraduate Student Engagement Questionnaire (PSEQ) to a representative sample of postgraduate coursework students at each participating institution. The POSSE, like the AUSSE, provides data that complement and extend current collections of data that focus on satisfaction with the quality of teaching and the learning environment.

Postgraduate Student Engagement Questionnaire (PSEQ)

The POSSE survey instrument is called the Postgraduate Student Engagement Questionnaire (PSEQ). The PSEQ has close links with the SEQ, allowing for comparisons to be made between undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students' engagement with learning.

The PSEQ is designed for administration to postgraduate coursework students in under 15 minutes, and is administered online only. To manage and reduce levels of item-level non-response, sampled students were randomly distributed one of three different online versions of the PSEQ, each containing different orderings of the items. All students who submit an online form are presented with an overview of student engagement and summary of key findings upon submitting their survey

(see: <http://www.acer.edu.au/research/ausse/2010results>).

Like the SEQ, the PSEQ contains items that tap a range of key educational phenomena. A selection of these items group together to measure these summary scales:

Academic Challenge	Extent to which expectations and assessments challenge students to learn
Active Learning	Students' efforts to actively construct their knowledge
Student and Staff Interactions	Level and nature of students' contact with teaching staff
Enriching Educational Experiences	Participation in broadening educational activities
Supportive Learning Environment	Feelings of legitimation within the institution
Work Integrated Learning	Integration of employment-focused work experiences into study

Like the SEQ, the PSEQ also provides measurement of several outcome measures which are listed below:

Higher-order Thinking	Participation in higher-order forms of thinking
General Learning Outcomes	Development of general competencies
General Development Outcomes	Development of general forms of individual and social development
Career Readiness	Preparation for participation in the professional workforce
Average Overall Grade	Average overall grade so far in course
Departure Intention	Non-graduating students' intentions on not returning to study in the following year
Overall Satisfaction	Students' overall satisfaction with their educational experience

Following a pilot with four institutions in 2009, the POSSE was administered at 15 institutions in 2010 and with eight institutions in 2011. Over 12,000 postgraduate students across Australasia have responded to the PSEQ so far.

Staff Student Engagement Survey (SSES)

Overview of the SSES

The Staff Student Engagement Survey (SSES) complements the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE). In 2011, all institutions that participated in the AUSSE were invited to take part in the SSES. The SSES measures academics' expectations for student engagement in educational practices that have been linked empirically with high quality learning and development.

The SSES is a survey of academic staff about students. Technically, while academic staff are the respondents, the students that they teach remains the unit of analysis. The SSES focuses on:

- academics' perceptions of how often their students engage in different activities
- the importance they place on various areas of learning and development
- the nature and frequency of staff-student interactions
- how they organise their time, both in and out of the classroom.

The SSES builds directly on the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), a survey that has been run by Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research since 2004. To date, more than 140,000 academics from more than 600 universities have taken part in the FSSE.

Compared with student feedback, relatively little information from academic staff is collected in Australasian higher education. Such information can help:

- identify gaps between student engagement and staff expectations
- engage staff in discussions about student engagement
- provide information on staff awareness and perceptions of student learning
- enable benchmarking of staff responses across institutions.

The SSES is run as an online survey only. Emails inviting staff to take part in the survey are sent by each institution to their academic staff. Responses to the online survey are returned directly to ACER.

SSES reports follow those produced for the AUSSE. In summary, institutions are provided with a customised institution report containing staff response and norms (if possible given response characteristics), and a unit-record data file containing staff responses.

Ensuring the confidentiality of response plays a critical role in assuring the validity of survey outcomes. Only de-identified data and reports are provided to institutions. Where respondent numbers are very small, the data are made anonymous, which includes the removal of demographic data.

The SSES adds a new student-focused perspective to the data available for evidence-based quality enhancement of university education in Australasia. SSES data can be used in a range of ways to enhance educational practice, some of which are summarised in the AUSSE Enhancement Guides.

Staff Student Engagement Questionnaire (SSEQ)

The SSES survey instrument is called the Staff Student Engagement Questionnaire (SSEQ). The SSEQ is based on the instrument used for the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) that has been run since 2004 by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. Links between the two instruments, and between the SSEQ and the SEQ, provide a basis for benchmarking.

The structure and content of the SSEQ closely mirrors the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) that is used for the AUSSE. Results for most of the SSEQ items can be compared directly to those for the SEQ. Participating staff are to respond to questions about student engagement based on the first-, later-year or coursework postgraduate students that they have taught during the last two academic years.

The SSEQ is designed for online administration to academic staff in under 15 minutes. This same SSEQ form is used for all academic staff. The instrument contains items that tap a range of key educational phenomena. A selection of these items are grouped together to measure the six summary scales.

Academic Challenge	Extent to which expectations and assessments challenge students to learn
Active Learning	Students' efforts to actively construct their knowledge
Student and Staff Interactions	Level and nature of students' contact with teaching staff
Enriching Educational Experiences	Participation in broadening educational activities
Supportive Learning Environment	Feelings of legitimation within the university community
Work Integrated Learning	Integration of employment-focused work experiences into study

The SSEQ also captures staff perceptions on student outcomes, including higher-order thinking, general learning outcomes, general development outcomes, career readiness and overall satisfaction.

The SSEQ was administered for the first time in 2008. Prior to its deployment in Australia and New Zealand, ACER further developed and validated the FSSE instrument in 2008, with additional validation undertaken in the following years. A range of new and redesigned items were included following further validation. Validation has included pilot testing and expert review. A range of psychometric and conceptual analyses have been conducted. This work builds on the extensive validation in the USA of the FSSE instrument.

A quality-assured approach

The research and enhancement cycle

The AUSSE survey methodology is designed to be valid, efficient and innovative. It deploys approaches which hitherto have been rarely, if ever, used in Australasian higher education research.

The AUSSE reflects a collaboration between participating institutions and ACER. While largely centrally managed by ACER, key activities are conducted by institutions.

Preparation for the AUSSE is led by ACER. It involves refining and validating instruments and systems, securing any necessary approvals, liaising with participating institutions, drawing the student sample, and despatching materials to institutions. Institutions and the AUSSE Advisory Group play an important role in shaping key aspects of survey design and management.

The AUSSE is conducted according to the 2007 National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research¹ and the Australian Council for Educational Research Code of Ethics. ACER routinely collects sensitive test, evaluation and other data and has well established and tested procedures for protecting sensitive materials. Participating institutions are responsible for securing internal human research ethics or other approvals.

AUSSE fieldwork is designed to be efficient and produce valid results. It involves an iterative and multimodal approach, which is sequenced to maintain the momentum of student and faculty participation and survey returns. From late July to early September, materials are sent from institutions to students and staff, and completed responses are returned directly to ACER (paper forms via NZCER for New Zealand institutions). ACER prepares and analyses the AUSSE data, and produces the institutional and cross-institutional reports.

Interpreting, analysing and acting on survey results are the most significant components of the AUSSE. This institution report provides ideas for how institutions might use the data for quality enhancement and improvement. As with all data collections, it is important that AUSSE results are used in technically and educationally appropriate ways. The AUSSE is intended to provide a source of evidence for each institution's conversations about engagement.

A valid and efficient sample

In most institutions efficient and robust sampling strategies are used to identify students and staff who are invited to take part in the AUSSE, POSSE and SSES. Stratified systematic sampling strategies are deployed to produce powerful, generalisable and representative estimates of first- and later-year (and, where applicable, postgraduate coursework) student engagement. These sampling

¹ National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NHMRC, ARC, AVCC) (2007). *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. Canberra: Australian Government.

strategies are important, as they reduce the number of students and staff that need to be approached, and build in scientific techniques that help ensure the quality of results.

ACER's management of sampling and administration provides assurance of the validity of AUSSE results. In summary, institutions supply ACER with a de-identified list of students in the AUSSE and, if applicable, POSSE target population. ACER validates these lists, draws the sample (or census), and returns the sampled lists to institutions. Institutions re-attach student contact details to the lists and prepares them for survey distribution. This same selection process is repeated for the staff survey. This sample verification process, and the conversations that surround it, is a major form of quality assurance in the survey design and fieldwork. In previous years, this methodology has prevented administrative errors at participating institutions.

The target population for the AUSSE is not the same as the total Australasian higher education student population. In 2011, the target population included 77,411 first-year students and 114,216 later-year students, giving 191,628 students in total across the 40 institutions that participated in the AUSSE survey (one participating institution only conducted the SSES). In broad terms, for higher education institutions this population consisted of:

- on-shore students in their first year of an undergraduate qualification who have not previously been involved in or completed a higher education qualification
- on-shore students in their third year of an undergraduate qualification who have completed around five full-time equivalent semesters of an undergraduate degree.

For New Zealand Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) and Private Training Establishments (PTEs) this population consisted of:

- on-shore students currently enrolled in study from levels three to seven who have not previously been involved in or completed a higher education qualification.

Different sample sizes were defined for different sizes of institution. Institution size was based on the number of first-year students. Up to 1,000 first-year and later-year students were surveyed at institutions with fewer than 500 first-year students enrolled. Up to 2,500 first-year and later-year students were surveyed at institutions with 1,500 or fewer first-year students. Up to 3,000 students were surveyed at institutions with between 1,500 and 5,000 first-year students, and up to 3,500 students were surveyed at institutions with more than 5,000 first-year students. A certain amount of oversampling is built into these specifications to reduce the need for complex follow-up of replacement samples. In addition, an oversampling option was provided in 2011 to assist with the generation of estimates for specific demographic or institutional student subgroups. This expanded the sample size at many institutions, with a few conducting a census of all people in the target population.

Of the 191,628 students in the 2011 AUSSE target population, a total of 103,430 at 40 institutions were invited to take part in the 2011 AUSSE. A small number of mail and email surveys were undeliverable and returned to ACER and institutions. The actual target population might be conservatively estimated to be around 100,000. A link to the online survey form was sent to all sampled students. Around 22 institutions opted to conduct the AUSSE survey wholly online. For institutions administering the AUSSE using a mix of paper and online survey, the ACER sample design allowed for 19,076 of the sampled students to also be sent a paper survey form.

For the AUSSE in 2011, a total of 21,730 usable responses were received prior to production of the final data file. This included 1,707 (4,528 in 2010) paper and 20,023 (34,991 in 2010) online responses.

The sample design for the student collection included a target response rate of 20 per cent. The secured Australasian response rate, not adjusted for undeliverable contacts, was 20.9 per cent. The response rate varied from around 9.9 per cent at one institution (up from a minimum of 5.9 per cent in 2010) to 57.0 per cent (up from 49.8 per cent in 2010) at another. In total, 23 of the 40 institutions participating in the AUSSE secured over the 20 per cent target response rate. The middle 70 per cent of institutions received response rates ranging between 15.0 and 30.5 per cent.

By way of comparison, the average institutional response rate in 2011 in North America was 33 per cent (down from 37 per cent in 2010) for institutions. The average response rate was 34 per cent among institutions that administered the survey online only and 30 per cent among institutions that also administered paper surveys. Two-thirds of participating institutions in North America achieved a response rate of 30 per cent or higher.

Post-stratification weighting is used to ensure that responses represent the target population. As possible given available information, AUSSE weights account for year level, attendance type, and respondent sex.

The target population for the POSSE includes all on-shore postgraduate coursework students. In 2011, eight institutions chose to participate in the POSSE survey and the target population included 17,189 postgraduate coursework students.

Different sample sizes were defined for different sizes of institution. Institution size was based on the total number of postgraduate coursework students enrolled. Up to 500 students were surveyed at institutions with fewer than 500 postgraduate coursework students enrolled. Up to 1,000 students were surveyed at institutions with 500 to 1,500 postgraduate coursework students. Up to 2,000 students were surveyed at institutions with between 1,500 and 5,000 postgraduate coursework students, and up to 3,000 students were surveyed at institutions with more than 5,000 postgraduate coursework students enrolled. A certain amount of oversampling is built into these specifications to reduce the need for complex follow-up of replacement samples. In addition, an oversampling option was provided in 2010 to assist with the generation of estimates for specific demographic or institutional

student subgroups. This expanded the sample size at many institutions, with a few conducting a census of all students in the target population.

Of the 17,189 students in the 2011 POSSE target population, a total of 14,817 students at eight institutions were invited to take part in the 2011 POSSE. A small number of email surveys were undeliverable and returned to institutions, so the actual target population might be conservatively estimated to be around 13,500. The POSSE survey was conducted online only, and a link to the survey form was sent to all sampled students.

A total of 2,619 usable responses were received prior to production of the final data file. The sample design for the student collection included a target response rate of 20 per cent. The secured Australasian response rate, not adjusted for undeliverable contacts, was 17.7 per cent. The response rate varied from around 9.7 per cent at one institution to 29.1 per cent at another. In total, two of the 8 institutions participating in the AUSSE secured over the 20 per cent target response rate. The middle 70 per cent of institutions received response rates ranging between 17.8 and 20.3 per cent.

As with the AUSSE, post-stratification weighting is used to ensure that the responses are representative of the target population of postgraduate coursework students. Data are weighted by qualification type, sex and attendance type.

The target population for the SSES is not the same as the total Australasian higher education population of academic staff. In broad terms, it consists of: on-shore academic staff working in faculties with the exception of adjunct or honorary staff, however casual academic staff are included in the population. In 2011 the target population used for the SSES included 15,330 staff.

The sample size for the SSES was calculated by taking account of technical considerations, institutional requirements, analysis and reporting processes, and survey response contexts. In summary, depending on the number of staff to be surveyed, the design sought to secure responses from either 150 staff (based on a survey of up to 750 staff) or 300 staff (based on a survey of up to 1,500 staff). These yields assume a 20 per cent target response rate. It is preferable to secure responses from at least 50 per cent of academic staff if there are fewer than 750 at an institution, and so a number of participating institutions chose to run a census of their academic staff.

The secured Australasian response rate, not adjusted for undeliverable contacts, was 20.9 per cent (down slightly from 21.5 per cent in 2010). The response rate varied from around 9.1 per cent (down from a 2010 minimum of 13.8 per cent) at one institution to 45.4 per cent (down from a 2010 high of 59.6 per cent) at another. In total, responses were secured from at least 20 per cent of sampled staff at seven of the ten participating institutions.

Like the student collection, post-stratification weighting is used to ensure that responses represent the target population. As possible given available information, the SSES data is weighted by level and sex.

As with all large-scale surveys, the AUSSE offers indicative rather than definitive evidence of the phenomena being measured. Results should be treated with caution, especially when respondent sample sizes are small.



Reports

Reports

Overview

AUSSE results must be interpreted in educationally and technically appropriate ways. The AUSSE uses statistical procedures to ensure the representativeness of sample estimates. These adjust, as possible given data availability, for year level, attendance type and respondent sex. Several reports summarise different aspects of students' perceptions of their engagement with university education. Data files are provided to institutions via a secure ACER website to facilitate analysis and reporting.

Key reports

Executive summary	A high-level overview of key institutional results which is included in the front of this report.
Student report	A summary report designed for adaptation and wide-scale dissemination to students.
Student engagement briefing	This report summarises key facets of students' engagement, providing snapshot results that can be used or converted for institutional reporting.
Student engagement briefing	This report provides information on key educational outcomes. It provides results that can be used or deployed for institutional reporting.
Respondent characteristics	Summary information on response, student and course characteristics.
Response categories	The weighted percentage of responses to the different response categories of all survey items. Results for your students and staff (where applicable) are provided and for benchmark groups.
Item statistics	Weighted means that summarise item results. Institutional and benchmark group results are provided. This report includes a 'traffic light'.
Scale statistics	Weighted means that summarise scale results. Results are provided for students at your institution, for staff where applicable, and for several comparison groups.
Subgroup statistics	Weighted means are reported of summary AUSSE scale statistics for key student subgroups and comparison groups. Due to sample size these results are less reliable than year-level estimates. This report also includes a 'traffic light' report.
Annual scale scores	Weighted means that summarise scale results at your institution, and across Australasia for each year of participation in the AUSSE. Results are provided for engagement scales and for student outcome measures.



Respondent characteristics



Response categories



Item statistics



Scale statistics



Subgroup statistics



Annual scale scores



Enhancement

Enhancement



Evidence-based quality improvement

'Student engagement' provides a practical lens for addressing the significant dynamics, constraints and opportunities facing higher education and tertiary education institutions. The lens of student engagement provides key insights into what students are actually doing, and these insights provide a structure for framing conversations about quality, and a stimulus for guiding new thinking into practice.

Developing strategies to use engagement data for continuous quality improvement is an important part of the AUSSE. Information about student engagement can play a valuable role in enhancing the quality of higher education, if only by stimulating conversations about how students engage in high-quality learning or exposing students and teaching staff to lists of good learning practices.

Institutions must make informed, professional decisions about what particular student engagement data they will act on and about how to take necessary action. A series of AUSSE Enhancement Guides have been produced which present a range of ideas to help specific stakeholders and institutions make the most of their AUSSE data and interpret the results.

The AUSSE Enhancement Guides are available online at: <http://www.acer.edu.au/research/ausse/enhancement> and selected copies are provided in this report.

As the AUSSE Enhancement Guides suggest, information on student engagement can provide guidance to many different stakeholders at higher education institutions as they have the ability to affect students' engagement with learning. There is also a set of enhancement guides which indicate how student engagement information can be used to provide information to potential students, for internal and external quality assurance activities, to help academic staff target their teaching, to understand how students are interacting with institutional resources, to inform employers about student characteristics and growth, and to manage particular student cohorts. Most importantly, understanding student involvement can be used to attract, engage and retain students in higher education.

A growing resource

Collecting and documenting information about how institutions are using student engagement information is an ongoing process. We would very much like to hear about how you are using your AUSSE data so that we can share best practice across Australia and New Zealand.

If you would like to send us specific examples of reports or brochures highlighting AUSSE data, usage strategies, and particular activities you have undertaken in relation to improving student engagement, please use our contact details below. These examples will form a free, shared resource for universities and assist in our

continuing efforts to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience for all students.

Please email ausse@acer.edu.au or send hard copy material to the following postal address: AUSSE, ACER, Private Bag 55, Camberwell, 3124, Victoria, Australia.



Attachments



Australasian Survey of Student Engagement

