

## **Introduction**

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) is a survey undertaken annually by students enrolled in universities in Australia and New Zealand. It is closely linked to the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

Student engagement is an idea focused on students 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.

The AUSSE is important because it provides an indication of students' involvement in activities and experience of conditions that research has linked with high-quality student outcomes. As such, it provides data for framing conversations about quality and a stimulus for guiding policy to improve the educational experiences and outcomes.

The AUSSE collects information about:

- the experiences and activities of students in relation to their studies;
- the experiences and activities of students outside of their formal education;
- the personal interactions students have with staff and fellow students at their university;
- the future study intentions of students;
- students' perceptions of the values and quality of their institution; and
- socio-demographic information about students.

The AUSSE is managed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in close collaboration with participating institutions. The results of the AUSSE are discussed in a variety of reports. Each institution receives a detailed Institutional Report that includes a range of results and benchmarks. The Australasian Student Engagement Report provides a high-level public discussion of findings, and the AUSSE Research Briefings provide more detailed discussion and analysis of the engagement of specific groups of students.

This Executive Summary Report complements the more detailed Institutional Report. Each institution-specific report provides information relating specifically to the engagement of students at the institution who took part in the 2009 AUSSE. The reporting shows the outcomes for this institution in relation to students from a number of aggregated groupings, including Australasia, North America and selected 'like' institutions within Australia and New Zealand.

Student engagement measures at the institutional level are generally divided into two groups – first-year students and later-year students. Subgroup information is also provided in this Executive Summary Report and in the more detailed Institution Report.

Further information about the AUSSE and the publications that result from this annual collection can be found at the following website: [www.acer.edu.au/ausse](http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse)

## Population and sample summary

In 2009 35 institutions participated in the AUSSE, growing from 25 in 2007 and 29 in 2008. The AUSSE 2009 population includes 104,137 first-year and 119,392 third-year on-shore bachelor degree students. Comparisons are made in this report with the results from the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In 2009, 643 institutions from the USA and Canada took part in the NSSE.

Based on instructions provided by Australasian University in early 2009, a systematic random sample of 1,500 first-year and 1,500 later-year on-shore students was drawn from the total population. This sample was designed to yield 600 responses. As shown in Table 1, 800 students responded in total, giving an overall institutional response rate of 26 per cent. For the results that follow in this Executive Summary Report and the more detailed Institutional Report the response sample has been weighted to ensure that results reflect the institution’s population as a whole.

**Table 1: Population and response statistics**

	Australasian University		All institutions	
	First year	Later year	First year	Later year
Respondents	400	400	14879	15743
Target population size	1500	1500	66249	57711
Response rate	27	27	22	27

## Areas of Performance scores

Around 100 specific learning activities and conditions are measured in the AUSSE. Table 2 summarises the areas in which Australasian University is performing above the Australasian average, and areas in which scores are below the average.

**Table 2: Performance above and below average**

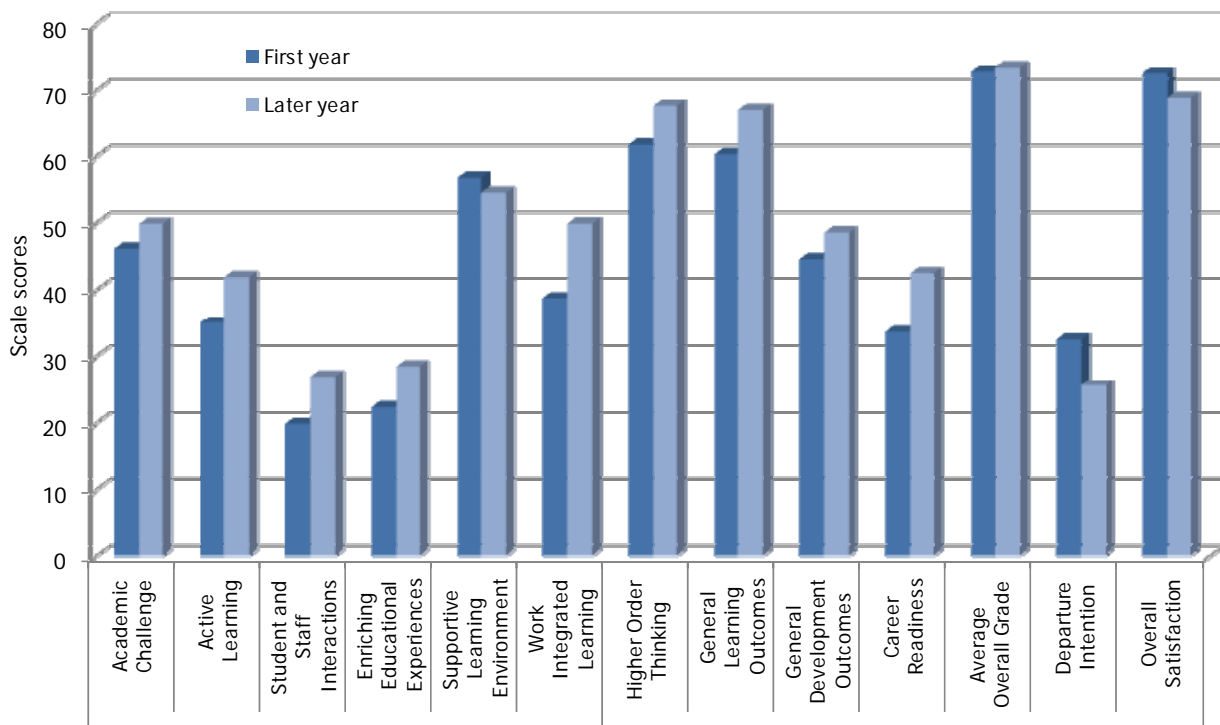
Performance below average	Performance above average
Working for pay off campus	Relationships with teaching staff
Providing care for dependents	Spent on campus including classes
Relaxing and socialising	Spent on campus excluding classes
Analysing quantitative problems	Relationships with other students
Blended academic learning with workplace experience	Careers advice
Synthesising and organising ideas	Relationships with administrative personnel and services
Using computing and information technology	Examinations challenged to do best work
Used an electronic medium for assignment	Learning community/study group
Explored how to apply your learning in the workforce	Paid work relationship to study
Asked questions	Learning effectively on your own
Received feedback on academic performance	Developing a personal code of values and ethics
Assignments between 1,000 and 5,000 words	Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds

## Engagement scale scores

This Executive Summary Report provides information about the responses to the 2009 AUSSE at Australasian University. It shows the engagement and outcomes of students as measured on a number of core scales. Scale scores are reported using a metric that runs from 0 to 100.

The engagement scales measured by the AUSSE include: Academic Challenge, Active Learning, Student and Staff Interactions, Enriching Educational Experiences, Supportive Learning Environment and Work Integrated Learning.

Figure 1 displays the differences in both the engagement and outcomes scales for first-year and later-year student respondents from Australasian University. It is interesting to compare the outcomes of students at these two points in time in order to identify areas of gain and decline.



**Figure 1: Engagement and outcome scores for Australasian University by year level**

Engagement of first-year students is crucial for a range of reasons. It is important that new students adjust to university life so that their chances of success, likelihood of completing and contribution to the institution can be enhanced. Figure 2 displays the engagement scores of first-year students from this institution alongside those from a number of benchmark groups.

In Figure 3, the engagement scale scores of later-year students are compared with the benchmark group and overall scores for Australasia and North America. Examining these responses can provide further insight into the relative levels of engagement of students in this institution. These later-year figures are important because they provide an indication of the perceptions and experiences of students accumulated over the years they have spent at the institution.

Comparing institutional results against a range of other measures enables universities to assess their relative level of student engagement for this student cohort. 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. Note that the Work Integrated Learning scale is not administered in the NSSE and therefore there are no comparisons with the USA results for this scale.

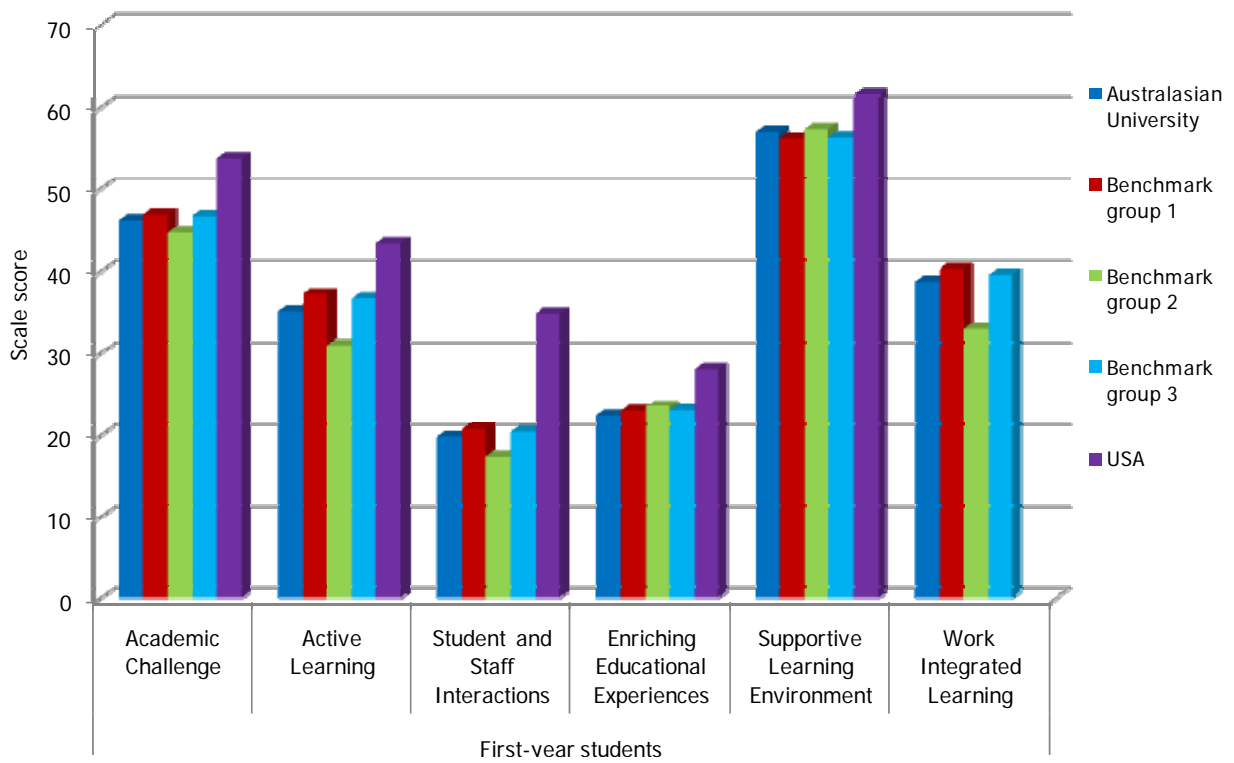


Figure 2: First-year student engagement scale scores

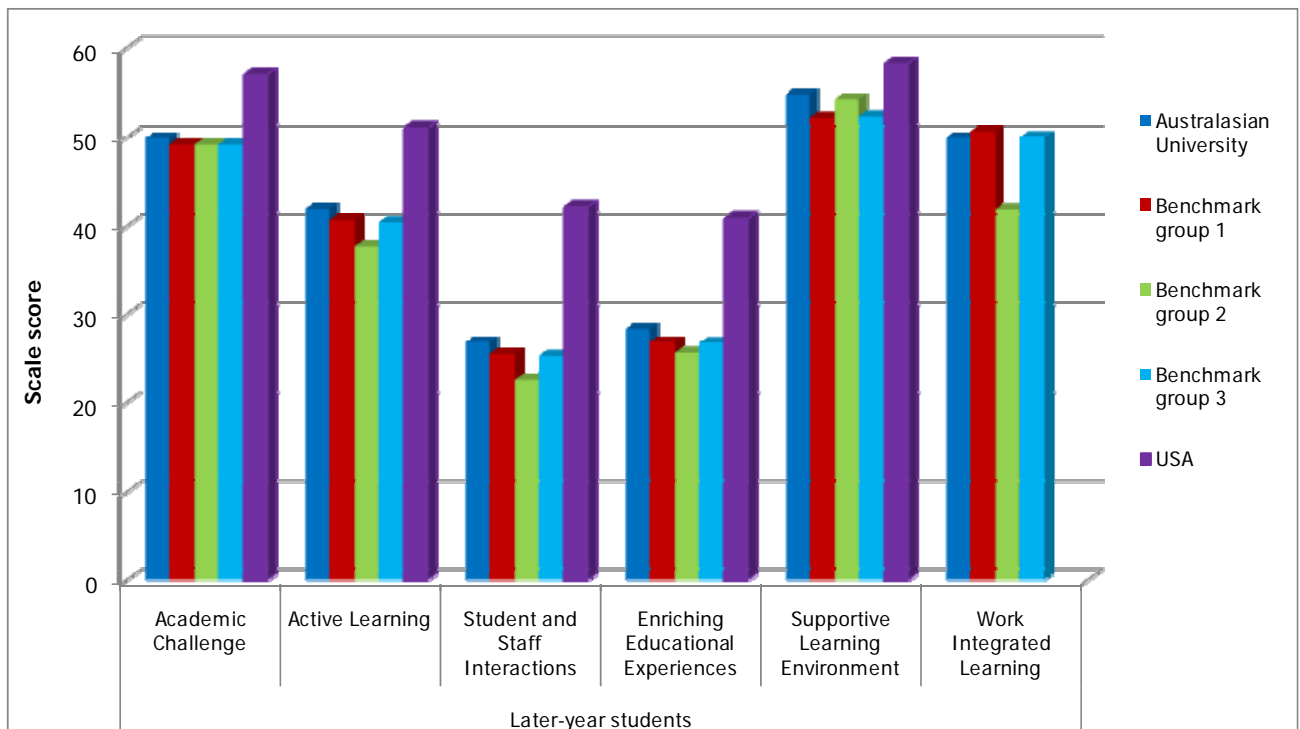
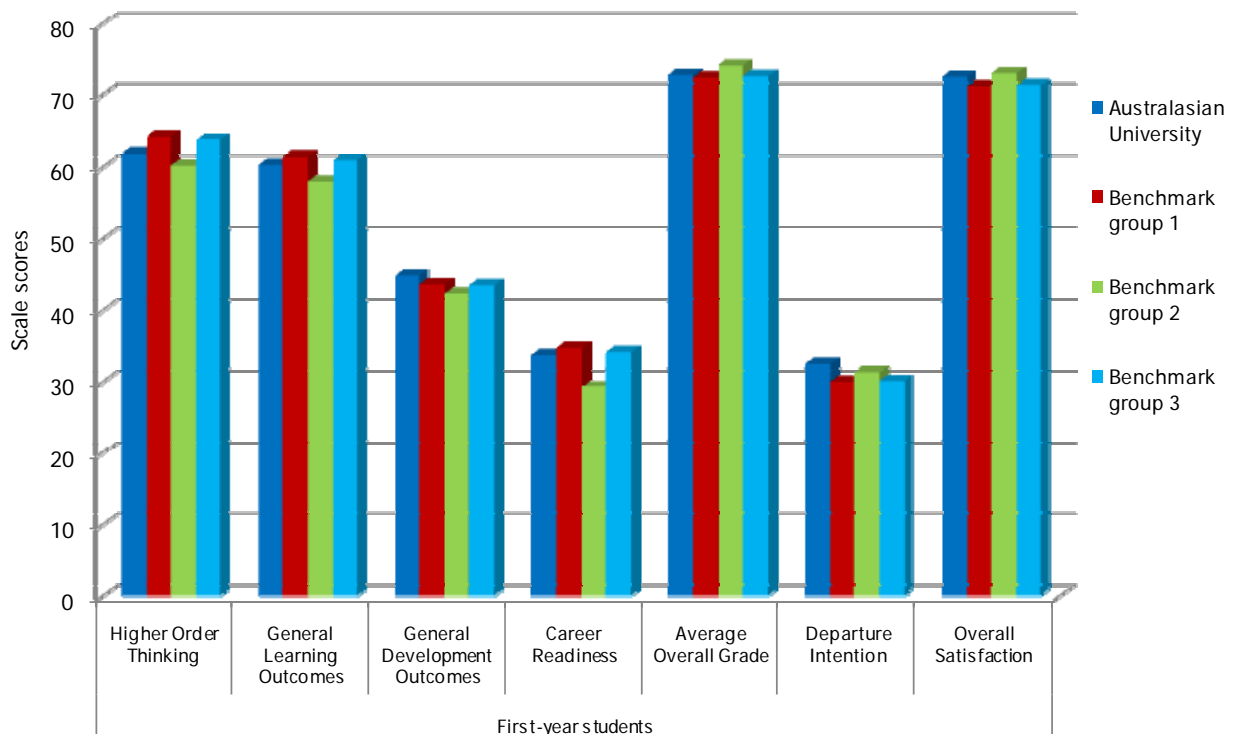


Figure 3: Later-year student engagement scale scores

## Outcome scale scores

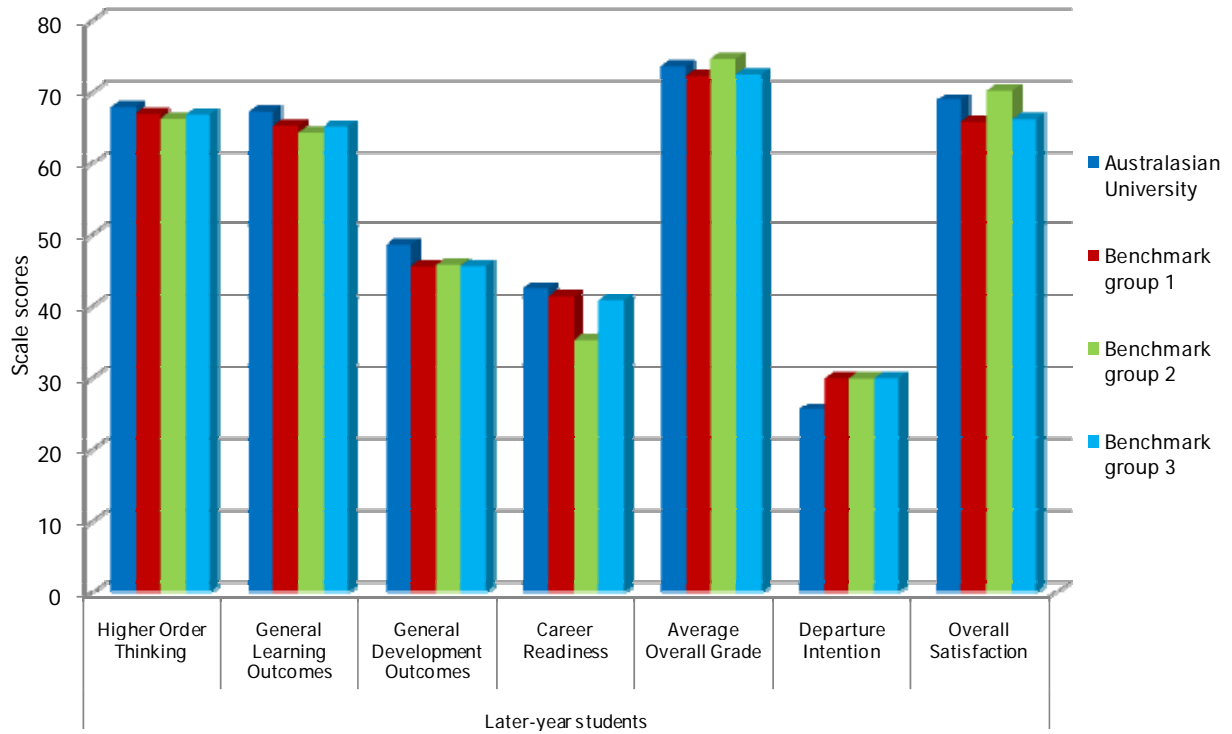
Several educational outcomes are measured in the AUSSE. The outcomes scales are: Overall Satisfaction, Departure Intention, Average Overall Grade, General Development Outcomes, Career Readiness, General Learning Outcomes, and Higher-order Thinking.

The outcomes measures from the first-year cohort of AUSSE respondents are displayed alongside several benchmarks in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: First-year student outcome scale scores**

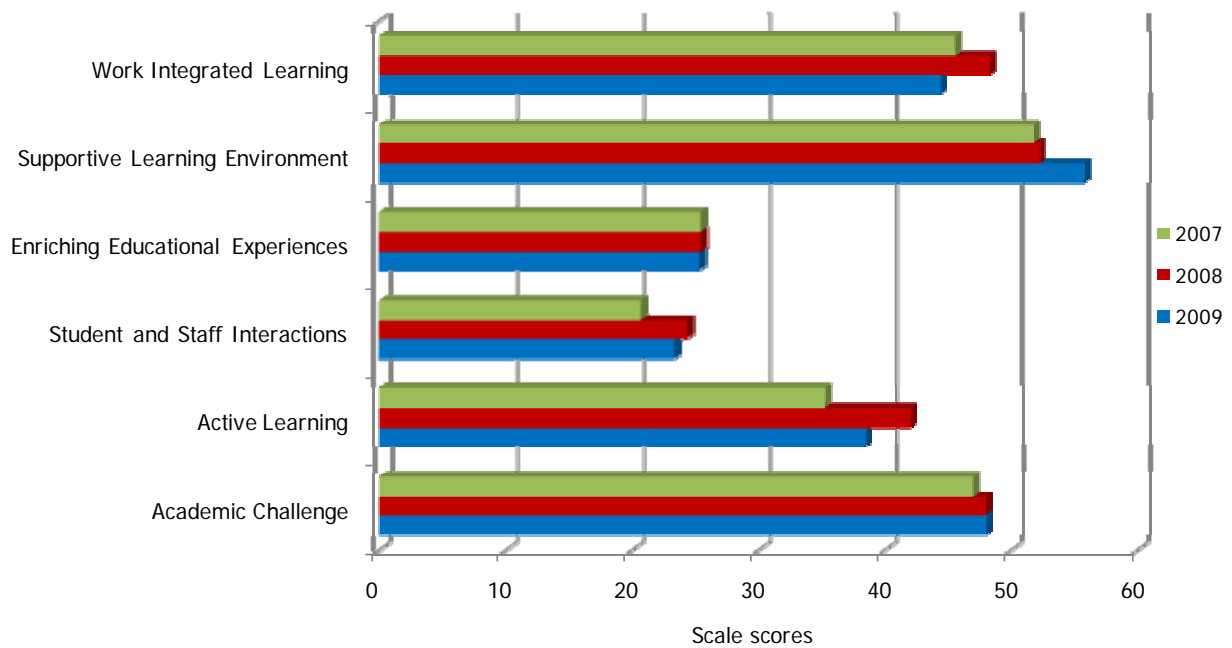
Similarly, Figure 5 shows the outcomes scale scores for the final-year cohort of this university, with scores from the institution’s benchmark group and the overall Australasian score providing contexts for the institution-level results.



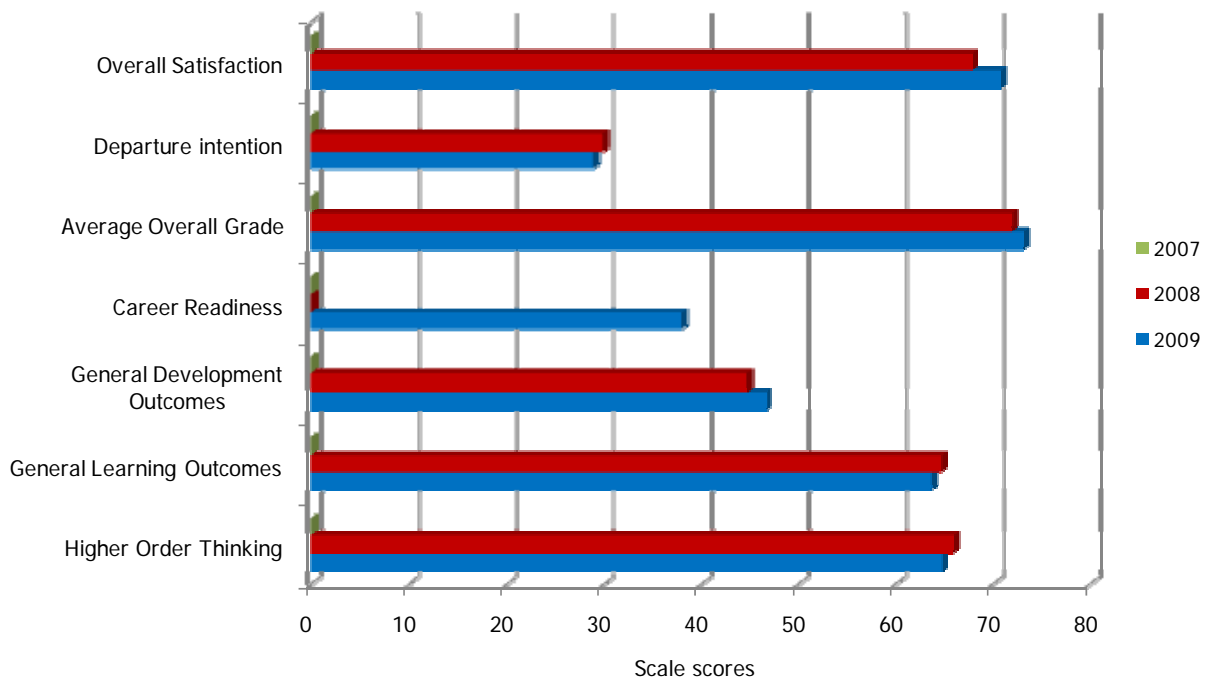
**Figure 5: Later-year student outcome scale scores**

### Cross-year comparisons

Looking at how the AUSSE results change over time helps identify areas for improvement, set targets to improve outcomes and monitor the impact of improvements. Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the scale scores for student engagement and student outcomes respectively at Australasian University for each year of participation in the AUSSE.



**Figure 6: Annual engagement scale scores Australasian University**



**Figure 7: Annual outcome scale scores Australasian University**



## Subgroup summary results

Engagement varies across groups of students. For Australasian University, the distributions of the responses across a number of key demographic and context characteristics are shown in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5.

**Table 3: Demographic subgroup scores for Australasian University**

	Australasian University	Female	Over 20 years of age	Equity group	Part-time or external	International	Non-English speaking background	First in family
Academic Challenge	48	48	49	49	48	49	47	47
Active Learning	38	38	40	38	39	44	40	38
Student and Staff Interactions	23	22	26	24	23	31	27	23
Enriching Educational Experiences	25	25	26	25	25	29	30	24
Supportive Learning Environment	56	55	55	55	56	61	59	55
Work Integrated Learning	44	45	49	49	44	43	41	46
Higher Order Thinking	65	65	66	65	65	64	62	62
General Learning Outcomes	64	63	66	64	64	62	63	65
General Development Outcomes	47	47	47	46	47	49	50	46
Career Readiness	38	39	40	39	38	47	41	38
Average Overall Grade	73	73	73	71	73	71	71	73
Departure Intention	29	27	27	30	29	31	27	31
Overall Satisfaction	71	71	70	71	71	62	65	71

**Table 4: Context subgroup scores for Australasian University**

	<b>Australasian University</b>	<b>Internal mode</b>	<b>Full-time attendance</b>	<b>Living on campus</b>	<b>Government funded</b>
Academic Challenge	48	48	48	48	48
Active Learning	38	39	40	36	38
Student and Staff Interactions	23	24	23	21	23
Enriching Educational Experiences	25	26	26	26	25
Supportive Learning Environment	56	56	56	57	55
Work Integrated Learning	44	43	44	39	44
Higher Order Thinking	65	65	65	63	65
General Learning Outcomes	64	64	64	62	64
General Development Outcomes	47	47	47	47	46
Career Readiness	38	38	38	37	37
Average Overall Grade	73	73	73	71	73
Departure Intention	29	28	29	38	29
Overall Satisfaction	71	72	71	70	71

**Table 5: Field of education subgroup scores for Australasian University**

	Science	IT	Engineering	Architecture	Agriculture	Health	Education	Business	Humanities	Creative Arts
Academic Challenge	46	38	49	50	47	49	49	47	50	47
Active Learning	36	36	44	40	33	41	42	37	35	40
Student and Staff Interactions	25	17	25	24	21	25	25	22	22	25
Enriching Educational Experiences	25	26	26	21	23	28	28	23	25	23
Supportive Learning Environment	55	56	57	56	61	58	55	54	54	58
Work Integrated Learning	36	25	47	41	50	52	58	45	38	41
Higher Order Thinking	60	56	68	63	59	65	64	63	69	65
General Learning Outcomes	63	52	67	61	65	64	63	64	65	61
General Development Outcomes	41	45	42	42	43	51	47	44	50	44
Career Readiness	35	30	38	31	38	38	43	46	34	41
Average Overall Grade	70	70	73	76	71	75	75	73	73	73
Departure Intention	41	45	19	36	20	16	25	36	32	30
Overall Satisfaction	65	61	69	79	76	71	70	70	73	75

## Using AUSSE data to promote change

AUSSE results provide a foundation of evidence for planning and monitoring change. This Executive Summary Report provides a broad outline of this institution’s results for 2009. Using this report in conjunction with other resources and results from previous years will help to build evidence for identifying areas where improvement in engagement can be achieved.

For example, 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; and
- integrate student management activities.

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

- AUSSE 2009 Institution Report, which includes a copy of your institution's unit-record data file;
- 2009 Australasian Student Engagement Report (released in early 2010); and
- AUSSE Enhancement Guides, available at [www.acer.edu.au/ausse](http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse).