



**NATIONAL UNION  
OF STUDENTS  
UNDERGRADUATE  
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS  
OF EDUCATION QUALITY  
SURVEY 2010**



## FOREWORD

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DURING the 2007 Federal Election, Australia was promised an education revolution by the Federal Labor Opposition in their bid for government. The National Union of Students was supportive of seeing considerable reform to our universities after over ten years of funding neglect.

The NUS Quality Survey (QS) was born from a policy written in late 2009. Earlier that year, the Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard, announced that the Government would be implementing a recommendation made by the Bradley Review to uncap student places progressively until 2012 when university places would be completely deregulated.

NUS believed that the sudden uncapping of student places would see a positive increase in the number of students enrolling in universities. However, as there was not a complimentary increase in per student funding for teaching infrastructure to match the resource challenges of an enlarged student body, we held concerns that quality standards in universities may drop significantly.

NUS sought to engage in discussions of quality control and the creation of TEQSA (tertiary education quality standards agency) using substantive and representative research, delivered with professionalism. This survey questioned students about a broad range of topics and a variety of contact points within their university experience: academic challenge, student feedback mechanisms, online teaching spaces and campus life.

The QS was designed, administered and answered by 6,855 students from every public university in Australia. Student activists spent two months collecting the data from April 1st – May 31st 2010. All answers were completed online through the NUS website and enabled students to give honest and frank feedback – knowing the survey was anonymous and that it wasn't their university asking the questions.

This was as much a data collection and benchmarking exercise for NUS as it was an attempt to produce a set of recommendations that have come straight from students themselves. In all higher education reform the student voice must be heard loud and clear. This report must be taken seriously by universities, sector groups and the government. Listening to the student voice will ensure that whenever serious changes are made, students are informed and their concerns dealt with. This is vital to the experience of students in higher education, and vital to the calibre of graduate that the sector produces.

Producing this report has been a long journey for NUS and I would like to thank the following:

A special thanks to Graham Hastings, whose work, research and institutional knowledge has made this report possible. Thanks to Curtin University for allowing their Student Guild to link the survey to students' home pages. Thanks to the campus student union presidents, campus activists and the NUS state branch presidents for engaging students all over Australia. And a special thank you to all the students who took part in this survey. We hope that it will influence change and set benchmarking standards for your student and educational experience and for the students who come after you.

Carla Drakeford  
National President of NUS, 2010

# Table of contents

Introduction.....Page 4

Executive summary.....Page 6

Part A: Classroom size.....Page 9

Part B: Facility quality.....Page 13

Part C: Teaching availability.....Page 17

Part D: Online flexibility.....Page 20

Part E: Academic challenge.....Page 23

Part F: Course resources (including library) .....Page 25

Part G: Feedback mechanisms.....Page 29

Part H: Campus life.....Page 30

Part I (Appendix).....Page 33

# NUS UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION QUALITY SURVEY INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY



THIS is the first report of its kind by NUS. This is an important project that aims to deliver robust information on students' thoughts and opinions of their university educational experience.

The online survey conducted in the second half of the first semester of 2010 comes at an interesting time in the development of Australia's universities. 6,851 students responded to the survey. The survey was promoted by campus affiliates, the NUS website and, in the case of Curtin University, by an e-mail message to all students.

Universities are making the transition from the traditional chalk and talk form of teaching to a situation where many internal students are now incorporating the new teaching media first pioneered for external students: downloading lectures via ipods, reading the overheads via wireless networks, and using online discussion board tutorial groups.

However, there is great resource unevenness not only between universities but also between faculties within a university. After more than 15 years of public funding austerity, the growth and modernisation of facilities has been largely driven by the chase for full fee paying domestic and international students or public/private partnerships in technological or cultural hubs.

Elsewhere teaching is often conducted in old facilities constructed in the 1950s (Menzies-era)

or 1970s (Whitlam-era), in over-crowded lecture theatres, tutorials far too large for small group discussion, and too few teaching staff.

Voluntary Student Unionism since 2006 has also had varying degrees of impact on student support services, student representation and student driven campus life depending on the financial capacity or willingness of the university administrations to support these activities.

Australia does have a relatively robust system of quality assurance that has been developed over the last decade by the Australian Universities Quality Agency and its audits of universities. However, quality audits up to now have looked at individual university's internal quality assurance processes and how they stand up against the university's stated education mission and criteria set out in the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes.

Since 2008 quality assurance in Australia has started to shift to include standards (such as discipline based standards) and other external outcome benchmarks. The new Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) due in 2012 will undoubtedly include this expanded concept of quality assurance. NUS wants to be involved in development of student experience and engagement inputs in the TEQSA.

The existing student or graduate inputs include:

- Course-specific student satisfaction surveys although they are rarely made public and are instead used internally within faculties

- The Graduate Council of Australia's *Graduate Destinations Survey* ([www.graduatecareers.com.au](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au)), which measures graduate employment outcomes of recent graduates, is broken down into national aggregated data on fields of education and professions, however, the data is not publicly broken down into institutional or faculty categories.
- Since 1992 the Graduate Council of Australia has also administered the Course Experience Questionnaire, which is a survey sent to final year students to get indicators on a variety of measures such as good teaching, generic skills and overall satisfaction. The data is broken down to a faculty level. However, the reports are highly technical and designed for internal university use only by professional educators. The Graduate Council does not release the institutional or faculty level data publicly. Some universities do make the reports available but are not very visible. There is no obligation for universities to make the faculty reports available publicly.
- The Australian Council of Educational Research has recently developed the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement to provide some qualitative indicators of student engagement with university learning and campus life. They do not release institutional or faculty data although universities may choose to do so themselves.

This will allow student representatives on both a campus and national level to identify areas of policy reform and further research.

Details about the composition of the respondents and recommendations for future surveys are included in the Appendix at the end of the report.

Graham Hastings  
NUS, Education Research Coordinator, September 2010

The NUS Quality of Education Survey is not yet large enough to develop quantitative indicators on a faculty or institutional level.

However, it can still perform a valuable role in drilling down deeper than overall student satisfaction scores and qualitatively identify the main issues raised by students about: classroom size and attendance, facility quality, teaching availability, online flexibility, academic challenge, course resources, student feedback mechanisms and campus life.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Executive Summary

Between April 1<sup>st</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> 2010, 6,855 students completed the NUS Quality of Education Survey. The survey asked them to assess the services, educational and extracurricular experiences of their current institution. This report summarises the headline findings in each of the eight sections of survey.

### A - Classroom size and attendance

- 63% of respondents believed that having tutorial attendance requirements is effective in engaging students in their subjects
- The most common attendance threshold was 80%, followed by 70%
- 16% of students watch their lecture in a pre-recorded format due to large student numbers in lectures
- Students from Health Sciences faculties, Engineering and Medicine said that 100% attendance was required unless a medical certificate was provided

### B - Facility Quality

- 30% of respondents had serious issues with the quality of their facilities (lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, labs etc)
- Many students are aware of a two-tiered system between particular faculties, some that have modern facilities (predominantly law and economics) and some that do not (mostly humanities buildings).
- 16% of students saying air-conditioning in facilities is contingent on the faculty.
- Students undertaking courses with laboratory or studio work complained that a lot of their materials or equipment were obsolete and there were not enough tutors in practical sessions.

### C - Teaching Availability

- The most common response was that lecturers were accessible at fixed consulting times (usually an hour a week) or via email.
- A minority reported that there was an open “knock on my door and see if I’m free” policy, and also noted that lecturers did not engage with students outside of the lecture.
- A common complaint was that the consultation hours were too short compared to the number of students in the class.
- 5% of students are regularly receiving at least some of their lectures remotely by a video link. This creates problems with availability of lecturers to answer questions and raises concerns with depth of knowledge. This mainly concerns regional campus students as well as distance education students.

### Section D - Online Flexibility

- Students responded with a mix of positive and negative experiences.
- Positive responses emphasised the convenience and geographical advantages of distance education.
- There was strong support for use of new technologies such as online discussion boards with staff and other students to create virtual tutorial groups.
- A majority like to download iLectures and emphasised their usefulness in distance education and to catch up if they have missed classes
- Negative comments included: absence or irregularity of iLecture downloads and poor sound quality, lack of staff involvement in class discussion boards, mixed mode students being excluded from distance education support services and teaching staff not making regular enough contact with distance students via email.

- 71% of students felt there was neither an overuse nor underuse of technology in their faculty.

### E - Academic Challenge

- The most common theme in this section of the Quality Survey indicates that there is a general culture that encourages to students to branch out – but it often depends on the teacher.
- 13% of students said they did not feel academically challenged and 16% feel ‘indifferent’.
- 51% of students said that it varies from teacher to teacher whether enough material is taught in their subjects in the semester period.

### F - Course Resources, Including Libraries

- Two thirds of respondents believed that there was an inadequate supply of textbooks in the library, making it almost compulsory for students to purchase textbooks.
- 24% of respondents have to go to other universities for library resources.
- Regional students and students from satellite campuses faced difficulties and costs in accessing books from the main campus.
- Distance and external students also suffer from difficulties and costs with accessing books from the central campus libraries.
- 79% of students said they have not consulted the university careers service.
- 81% of students have not sought advice from university equity services.

### G - Student Feedback Mechanisms

- 77% of respondents have completed a university course experience survey
- 59% of students are unsure of whether they can access the results of the surveys they have completed

### H - Campus Life

- 33% of students said they have voted in student representative elections on their campus and 51% of students are members of a club or campus society
- Nearly half of students do not think that the university has done enough to breach the cultural divide between domestic and international students.

### I - Appendix

- 90% of respondents were full-time students
- 52% of respondents were under 21 years of age
- International students made up 15% of respondents

## NUS Priority Areas For Investigation and Reform

NUS has identified the following six priority areas for reform arising from this study. We wish to work constructively with the Government, non-government parties and independent members, Universities Australia, TEQSA and other stakeholders to develop solutions for these issues.

### Priority Area 1: Faculty funding and facilities

Despite recent funding increases there are still many faculties within universities that lagging a long way behind others in terms of upgrading teaching facilities and equipment to meet the needs and expectations of 21<sup>st</sup> century students. While the overall funding of universities remains a pressing issue the growing funding disparity between the have and have not faculties within universities needs to be addressed to ensure all undergraduates can access a reasonable standard of education and facilities.

### **Priority Area 2: Train staff in new technologies**

That all teaching staff, including casual and guest lecturers, are trained to effectively use the contemporary teaching aids used for that course (recording lectures, setting up tutorial discussion boards, video links to satellite campuses, being aware of the microphone and the external audience when these lectures are being recorded or video-linked). Students receiving video-relayed lectures at satellite campuses should be supported by suitably qualified teaching staff.

### **Priority Area 3: External student access to resources**

External students and students at satellite campuses frequently complained about the difficulty in accessing books from the central campus library. What solutions are there to give these students access to a greater breadth of resources (streamlining borrowing procedures, making more books available so that some can be allocated to external student loans, more on-line resources without infringing copyright laws).

### **Priority Area 4: Government support for students on placement**

Some students are required to live in another city for a period of time to do practicum placements (such as regional health or education students). Not only do they need to meet the cost of accommodation and travel (while still paying the rent or mortgage of their normal home) they also miss out on their normal paid employment. There should be some form of financial assistance for low-income students to deal with these costs.

### **Priority Area 5: Easy online access to internal university quality reports**

That students and potential students should have online access to the results of student feedback surveys that are disaggregated to at least the faculty and degree level such as already occurs in the United Kingdom. Informed student choice is undermined if the results are only released as an optional PR exercise.

### **Priority Area 6: Funding for student activities**

The number of students who have voted in student election or were members of a club (notwithstanding the bias in the sample in that the more engaged students are more likely to have responded to the survey) shows that student engagement with campus life is not dead, just under-resourced. What can be done to enhance the vibrant student voice, the role of civic education in the set of desirable graduate attributes, and active domestic and international student engagement in campus life beyond the current government proposal for a compulsory fee for university student services?

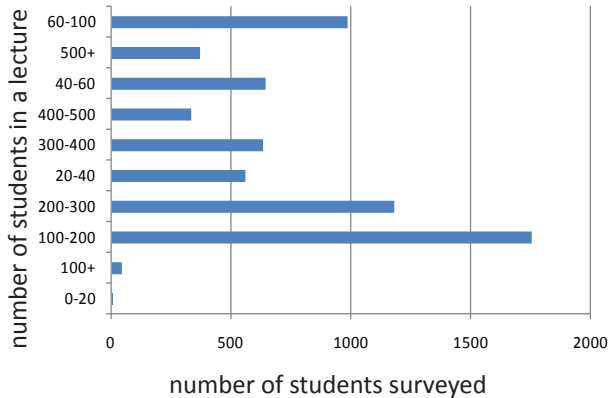
### **Recommendations For Future Surveys**

1. That NUS should conduct the online survey of undergraduate student perceptions of education quality survey on a bi-annual basis. The next survey should be conducted in first semester of 2012.
2. That the survey should be designed such that external students follow a different stream so they don't get questions about on-campus facilities and experiences.
3. That NUS consult with Universities Australia about the next survey to get broader cross-section of university administrations to prepared to e-mail their students about the survey. Ideally these should reflect the diversity of the sector (ie sandstone, gumtree suburban, regional, new and small specialist higher education providers).

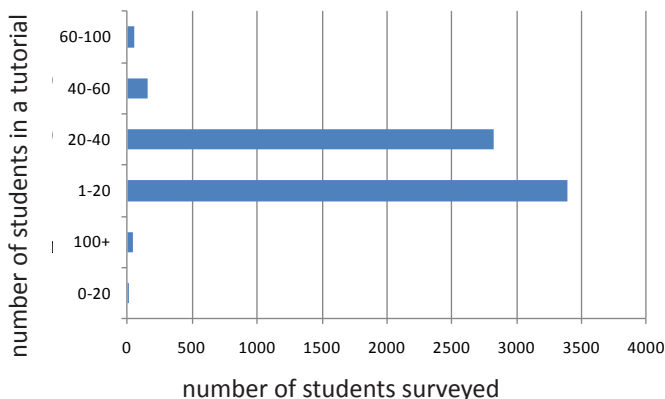


## PART A: CLASSROOM SIZE AND ATTENDANCE

### How many students are in your largest lecture?



### On average, how many students are in each of your tutorials ?



### Are there attendance requirements in your degree?

#### If there are, what is the threshold (ie 80% attendance rate) ?

Attendance requirements are most commonly linked to participation in small group tutorials, laboratory practicals or clinical practicals.

The major category of student who have their attendance monitored apart from the participation component of assessment are international students. This is linked with the full time study requirement of most student visas.

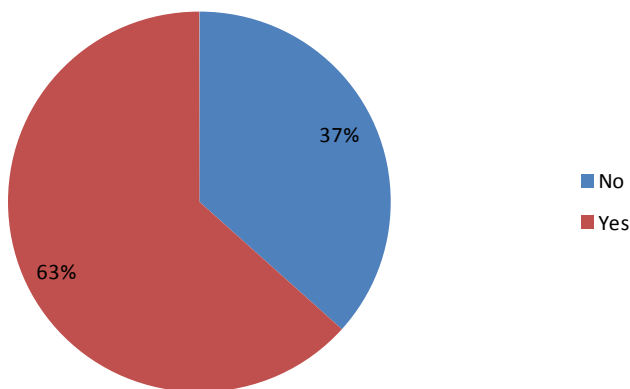
By far the most common attendance threshold for assessment purposes was 80% and the second most common threshold was 70%. In many courses the attendance was not mandatory but a portion of the assessment was based on tutorial participation that could involve active participation beyond attendance.

A significant minority of students were required to meet 100% attendance requirements. A Griffith law student said they needed to attend 100% of tutorials to get participation marks.

Students from faculties such as Science, Engineering, Medicine and Vet Sciences said that 100% participation was required for practical sessions unless a medical certificate was produced (Monash University Science, Curtin University Engineering and Science, University of Melbourne Veterinary Science, La Trobe University Health Sciences, University of Western Australia Medicine, Engineering, Science and Fine Arts/Performance, Murdoch University Education, Monash University Health Science).

Curtin University Health Science students said that 100% tutorial attendance was required unless medical certificate provided. Missing more than two tutorials in a unit leads to an automatic fail.

### If there are do you think attendance requirements work in engaging students more effectively in their subject?



#### Explain why ?

A majority of students responded favourably to the notion that attendance requirements had a positive influence on engagement with their subject. Many commented that the attendance requirements made a major difference in the number of students attending sessions or participating in online discussion boards.

"The only subject which did not have compulsory attendance requirements had very poor tutorial attendance - maximum of 7 students out of approximately 30 enrolled in that class." (Monash University, Health Sciences)

"I saw this very clearly this semester, where one subject set 10% of its grade for attendance and participation both in class and in the online discussion board, and another subject in the same faculty did not. The first subject had 200+ discussion board posts for the semester, of generally high quality, and the second had 4 (Swinburne University, Commerce/IT)"

Many also commented that increased participation led to better and more diverse discussion.

"Its always better when there's more opinions and ideas in tutes" (University of New South Wales, Primary Education)

"Some of the subjects have minimal number of marks (say 5%) for attending and completing tutorial work. This means that you get a higher number of students attending and as some have done the work, better quality of discussion for students like me who do consistently attend and complete the work regardless of any bonus points." (University of South Australia, Commerce)

"Well it is important for students to attend tutorials etc to enhance student learning and engage students in there learning. The more students that come and share ideas helps the entire class to be better engaged in their subject through discussing issues, ideas etc." (Australian Catholic University, Education)

Others stressed the importance of small group discussion and face-to-face teaching in really understanding the complexities behind a topic:

"Tutorial discussions are where most of the learning takes place, and most importantly understanding. Making them compulsory really encourages students to attend and gain the most understanding" (University of Western Australia, Engineering)

"We no longer have face-to-face lectures/tutorials as the entire degree is online for regional students however, when we had the luxury of face-to-face I feel that attendance requirements meant that lecturers/tutors were able to get a feel for the student and their participation/input and students were able to discuss issues/concerns points of interest to clarify and further understand unit content." (Curtin University, Education)

"Face to face teaching eliminates conceptual errors" (University of New South Wales, Engineering)

"The students want to be there when they have an engaging tutor or lecturer; I'm finding being mature age I need to hear what others may say to reinforce my learning so attendance is crucial as it's not always clear via the recordings on-line" (Murdoch University, Education)

"Residential school gives us an intensive "on campus" experience. A chance to discuss issues with fellow students and lecturers/supervisors in person." (Monash University, Medicine, external)

“Nursing is a complex subject and because we do a lot of mixed mode study when you are internal you need to absorb as much as possible” (University of New England, Health Sciences)

Another common theme was that the attendance requirements built up the inter-personal relationships and teamwork amongst a greater number of students:

“They add a sense of cohesion among students, which in turn forms relationships that help with study.” (Macquarie University, Science)

“Prac sessions provide opportunities for students to work together and learn cooperation skills and to make friends in their classes. This then means there are more resources for students because they can use each other and also adds a social aspect to the classes that makes them more interesting” (James Cook University, Science)

Students from some disciplines emphasised that the attendance requirements were necessary as the learning practices could not be gleaned by reading a textbook:

“Spanish - need the conversational practice and constant exposure to the language in order to be successful. Anyone who can't commit to the tutes just shouldn't bother coming” (University of Adelaide, Law)

“Music is a very different subject to teach, it is essential that students attend “aural” classes for example. You can't learn these things at home, or by cramming with a text book.” (Edith Cowan University, Music)

However, about a third of students were critical of attendance requirements. Many mature age or part-time students said that they had more complicated lives and often faced external responsibilities that sometimes clashed with class times (i.e. were not being lazy or indifferent to participating):

“No, it adds more stress to students who have other things to deal with in their lives. For instance I have friends with medical problems who are afraid to take classes off because they are worried about their attendance” (Swinburne University, Arts, part-time)

“I can only speak accurately for myself, but anecdotally this goes for others in my tutes/lectures: I AIM to attend, & if I don't attend, it's due to a reason beyond my control eg illness, family illness or other crisis. Therefore, in my opinion students shouldn't be penalised for circumstances beyond their control - it's especially counter-productive when universities claim to welcome mature students or those with other special needs that might impact on attendance e.g. disabilities, mental illness etc. Unis claim to be flexible - until you need them to demonstrate flexibility to individual circumstances. One of my colleagues with an autistic child dropped out.” (University of South Australia, Law)

Others commented that it was not the role of responsibility of the university to micro-manage how adult students arranged to conduct their studies, particularly in light of external paid work obligations or other pressing assessment deadlines:

“Attendance should not be compulsory. The job of universities is to examine and test the knowledge of people. Not whether they turn up on time. (University of Sydney, Commerce)

“Students who do not want to go to classes, are not going to be influenced by being forced into attending. University is not school. Surely if the students pass or fail should determine their devotion to study. We live busy lives and more people have jobs and sometimes study and work has to overlap and getting to classes can be hard. It's difficult enough for students to support themselves without added pressure like forced attendance.” (University of SA, Communications)

“Any mandatory attendance principle simply serves to force students to feel they might be wasting an hour by focusing on something they already comprehend, contrary to studying on something they prioritise as a necessity by themselves.” (Monash University, Arts)

Another common theme was that attendance requirements would not be needed if the tutorials were taught in a manner that was more engaging or if class sizes were reduced to allow for more meaningful group discussion:

“38 people in a tute, what a joke” (University of Sydney, Law)

“The best way to engage students is to make the subject matter and the way in which it's taught interesting and original. At the moment I don't feel very engaged by most of my classes.” (University of Technology Sydney, Communications)

“The tutorial groups are too large and there is not enough time for discussion. At present they are of no benefit at all and my time would be better spent studying in the library.” (University of Western Australia, Arts)

“Some tutorials are a waste of time, as some tutors have poor abilities in explaining tasks, encouraging debates or imparting knowledge to their students. So students attend only because they have to for attendance purposes. They don’t actually get anything out of that class. It causes a lot of frustration amongst students especially when there is often other work they could be doing (rather than being made to sit in a 3 hour studio without much direction from the tutor regarding their work), and can result in a lack of engagement and even resentment towards the subject.” (University of New South Wales, Architecture)

“I have 2 majors in my degree - psychology & education. The Education topics have been great - well taught, plenty of time for discussion & clarification in the tutorials, tutors able to lead a detailed exploration of the ideas raised in the lectures, knowledgeable lecturers who encourage discussion. This has not been the case in the majority of the psyc topics - lecturers have not be able to explain complicated concepts clearly, lecture theatres in 1st year were overcrowded, tutorials are limited (less than 1/2 of the education topics, eg usually 11-12 tutes for an education topic, 4-6 for a psyc topic) and introduce new information not covered in the lecture. The tutors have been PhD students with no teaching background and unable to explain the concepts clearly.” (Flinders University, Psychology)

“When it was internal work was engaging with hands on activities and skills we could implement into our future classrooms and practical class rooms. Online is merely question and answer therefore low attendance” (Curtin University, Education)

Many students commented that attendance requirements did not improve participation, rather they led to students merely attending the class and not doing any preparation work:

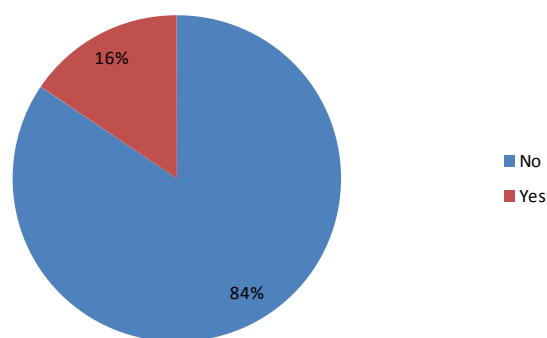
“The people who don’t want to be there will just sit on Facebook, or text messaging, or sleeping through the tutorial. They’re not really engaging with anything useful to the class content” (Monash University, Health Sciences)

“Simply forcing students to attend tutorials that they do not think are useful does not help them learn. There have been issues of students only just missing the 80% attendance rate, still getting great marks in assignments/exams etc, but being in danger of failing the course There should be more emphasis on supporting students.” (Monash University, Medicine)

“Forcing students to attend tutorials does not encourage participation in tutorials. Students who attend tutorials thoroughly prepared and ready to get the most out of discussions will do so irrespective of whether there are attendance requirements. If there are attendance requirements, students who would not otherwise attend will attend, but in my experience, will not engage or contribute to tutorial discussions. Participation in tutorials should make up part of a unit’s assessment; students who come to tutorials ready to share and contribute their ideas should be rewarded. But forcing students to attend does not achieve anything.” (University of Western Australia, Art/Law)

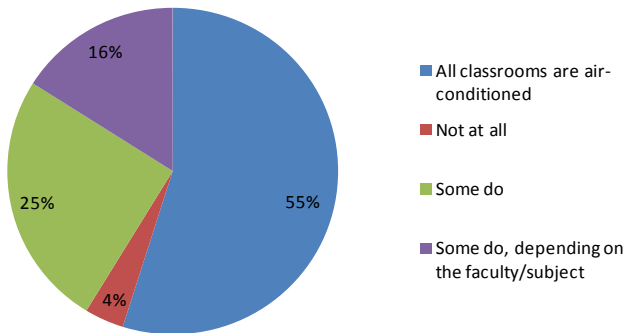
“Enforcement of attendance policies is pretty lax between different teachers of the units. As a sessional tutor myself, forcing students to attend class is very hard to enforce and if Monash properly recorded the student attendance in classes, a very large percentage would fail. Then again that probably is why they don’t formally record it! Students who want to learn will show up to class. Those that procrastinate don’t.” (Monash University, IT)

### Do some students in your course watch the lecture via a video relay to a second lecture theatre because the first theatre is overcrowded?



## PART B: FACILITY QUALITY

### Do your classrooms have airconditioning



### Are there major issues with lecture theatres or tutorial rooms at your university, ie inadequate furniture, poor ventilation, inadequate audio-visual support

#### Main Themes

1. About 30% of respondents had significant issues with their lecture theatres or tutorial room facilities.
2. Many students noted there was a two tier system at their campus with some very modern, high IT for some faculties, with other faculties (often Arts and Humanities) with obsolete, unreliable IT systems in old buildings.

The most common complaints involved:

- Air conditioning (too cold or too hot)
- Poor ventilation leading to stuffiness (worse for double lectures)
- Broken chairs and tables
- Narrow and unstable student writing rests that led to books falling off during lecture, also issues for left-handers in cramped spaces (lecture rooms designed only for right-handers)
- Lecturers unfamiliar with how to use audio-visual support or record an iLecture
- Broken or inaudible microphones
- Overcrowding
- Delays in technical staff turning up leading to loss of substantial lecture time
- Use of lecture theatres for small group tutorials

#### Student Comments

"50% of my lectures and tutorials are in new buildings, and they're fantastic, very inspiring. The other 50% are woeful. No fresh air and in more than one case, tutorials were held in rooms without external windows or fresh air, it was like walking around Ikea in a rabbit warren, down hallways to get to the room. The computer labs at Clayton campus for arts students are in the basement (W building) with the toilets, very smelly and no natural light. It's quite creepy. It really is luck where your subject will be delivered from, either a fantastic, modern, light filled, room or a dark basement." (Monash University, Arts)

"Inadequate audio-visual. The lecturers' laptops can never connect to the internet and they always have trouble connecting the sound." (Edith Cowan University, Health Sciences)

"Inadequate tutorial rooms e.g. substitution of lecture room for tutorial session" (Monash University, Arts)

"The webct system (online lecture recording) fails regularly and therefore lectures go unrecorded" (University of Western Australia, Natural and Agricultural Science)

“Poor ventilation in the small tutorial rooms in the Menzies Building AWFUL AWFUL AWFUL I found myself getting headaches constantly in one room due to the lack of oxygen! Some buildings too cold in winter class left waiting for AV equipment, wasting class time. I am also concerned that the building works in the Menzies Building may be spreading harmful chemical particles ie asbestos...? It is an old building from the 60’s after all.” (Monash University, Commerce)

“Some faculties of my uni have really great resources and are comfortable working spaces. Some other faculties do not have the same qualities. It is the Law fac. that is really nice, and Humanities is the fac. left with the left overs.” (Murdoch University, Arts)

“Inadequate training and support for lecturers unfamiliar with the audio visual equipment (have spent up to 45 minutes of class waiting for the support team to arrive), rooms often too small to accommodate for the whole class, so some sit on windowsills or on the floor, cramming too much furniture into the rooms to accommodate for the larger numbers.” (La Trobe University, Arts)

“Very few lecture theatres at UQ are equipped with power point access for each student. As a law student, where extensive note-taking is required during lectures, this can limit our ability to use laptops, particularly if we have back-to-back classes. This can be contrasted to the University of Melbourne law lecture theatres, or even the Law Library at UQ, where each desk has one or more power points.” (University of Queensland, Arts/Law)

“I guess the main issue is that lecture theatres can’t hold all of the students at one time. I studied psychology briefly last year and the classes were too big in both tutorials and lectures, that some had to sit on the floor.” (Curtin University, Arts)

“I have seen at least 3 plastic chairs snap in class.” (Curtin University, Commerce)

“Many of the tutorial rooms are too small (especially in the History department, and some in the Arts faculty building). There is often not enough seating. Lecture theatres are generally acceptable, except in the School of Music, which lacks the capacity to record lectures, and has virtually no interaction with the university proper.” (Australian National University, Fine Arts)

“Medical building regularly floods during winter... the basement tutorial rooms are particularly affected. The whole thing is ancient.” (University of Melbourne, Medicine)

“As I am a left handed person I have 3 classes in rooms, both lecture halls and tutorial rooms that do not cater for me. The desk are connected to the chairs and only extend half way across the body from the right side meaning I must either lean on my knee or sit uncomfortably to write.” (Curtin University, Science)

“Lack of space. Union Hall is to be demolished and a science hub built, but it has since been heritage listed meaning there is a lack of space on campus. Adelaide Uni has resorted to renting the Masonic Lodge across the road.” (University of Adelaide, International Studies)

“Cannot see the screen due to the poor floor planning of the new \$20 million building” (University of Western Sydney, Commerce)

“The Nathan Campus of Griffith University is undergoing extensive repairs at the moment, but it only serves to ‘paper over the cracks’ of what has clearly become an ageing facility. There are an inadequate number of necessary amenities such as outdoor sitting areas and eateries, while many lecture theatres and tutorial rooms have become run-down and outdated. Often, it is a case of ‘pot luck’ if you get a decent room or not.” (Griffith University, Law)

“In a pre-Honours lecture for Government and International Relations this year, we had over 100 students crammed into the (flat) room, sitting on the floor, standing at the back, for two hours. There room had poor ventilation and no air conditioning, and so the room was stiflingly hot, sweaty and smelly, and thoroughly unenjoyable--quite surprising, especially given that it was a pre-Honours subject.” (University of Sydney, Arts)

## If you are doing a course with laboratory/ studio/work experience practicum components are there any major issues with these facilities (ie obsolete equipment, poor ventilation, safety concerns, inadequate supervision on practicum)?

### Main Themes

Recurring complaints include:

- Poor ventilation in teaching laboratories and computer labs;
- Not enough tutors in practical sessions;
- Obsolete equipment in science and engineering laboratories;
- Inadequate space in architecture and fine arts studios;
- Poor organisation of practicum placements;

### Student Comments

"Equipment is scarce in the laboratories; leading to queuing which wastes time and marks. Equipment is also obsolete. Fume hoods are used for safety, however two students are cramped into working within one fume hood for the duration of the experiment. This leads to dramatically increased chance of accidents. Supervision is limited since no proper introduction to methods are used, leaving the lab supervisor constantly answering questions on how an experiment is done to individuals, thus focusing their attention away from the class as a whole." (Australian Catholic University, Science)

"Poor ventilation in the computer labs forces a mandatory break in the middle of the lecture to 'air out' the room. Due to the discomfort, many students choose to not attend the lecture." (Curtin University, Architecture)

"The conservatorium of music at UTAS is available to book for projects outside of normal working hours however, due to the extreme security measures, virtually no equipment will be available as it is all left in rooms that students have no access too. eg. you have a booked a room to do a full band song recording but there is no bass amp in that room and you can see it through the glass in another room, but there is no one to open that room for you... which means you are screwed. The ventilation in the studios on the weekends is also extremely poor - considered unusable because it gets so hard to breathe

depending on the air conditioner settings (which we have no control over as students)" (University of Tasmania, Music)

"Anatomy and physiology labs are so booked, we can't get any time to review our wet lab work. Our uni contracts out to Notre Dame to do their labs here so our own students can't get access to labs. This means you get one, rushed, shot at your lab work and that's it - no possibility of going over material again or reviewing for exams." (Curtin University, Health Sciences)

"Too many people in laboratories; often very crowded. Not enough assistance - the student:tutor ratio is too high, it's hard to get help when you need it. There's also not enough equipment eg micropipettes and water baths - we waste a lot of time waiting and it's also inconvenient (eg when there aren't enough test tube holders)" (University of Queensland, Medicine/Science)

"Teaching practicums often need more supervision. Teachers are incredibly busy people and schools are busy places. If student teachers were placed into schools supported by the university as in an apprenticeship schools, universities and student teachers would benefit. Say, three days at uni and two days within a classroom environment. Programmes such as these are currently running in Victoria." (Curtin University, Education)


"The electrical labs have equipment from the early 80s and half the multi meters are faulty. Lets not go into the physical electronics equipment. It's older than time itself." (University of Western Australia, Arts/Engineering)

"As a music student, sitting down and practicing for up to 4 hours a day, correct seats are one of the most vital things, but the majority of the seats in the uni are not very good and encourage bad posture, which makes at least half of the people at uni have back problems and seek professional help" (Griffith University, Arts)

"Our practical days have been reduced this semester which we have been informed is directly related to the strain on nursing staff and lack of supervisory roles available in the hospitals." (Curtin University, Health Sciences)

"Whilst some departments, such as the Biology Dept., have very capable facilities, there are astonishingly FEW of them. The Geological Dept. is also severely lacking in up-to-date class/laboratory rooms. Research facilities do exist, but are practically inaccessible to Undergraduate Students." (Macquarie University, Arts/Science)

"Studio space is needed. Better drawing tables needed. Lack of studio space causes model-making and other activities to spill into other areas, causing damage to tables/ furniture, and disrupting pathways" (Curtin University, Architecture)



“Practicuums for education are very disorganised, and often little is gained from participating in them. Furthermore, the structure of placements in the final year makes it almost impossible to keep a job through the year.” (Monash University, Commerce)

“In my microbiology laboratory there are no hockey sticks (used for spread plating) instead students are expected to bend glass pipettes with a bunsen flame and then immerse that in ethanol and flame it (to sterilise)- the problem being that as the flame burns the ethanol, oxygen inside the hollow glass tube is used and ethanol squirts out the end with force, this practice seems inappropriate and dangerous” (University of New South Wales, Science)

“Perpetual lack of music stands and chairs. What we do have is old, broken, and decrepit. Some classes still rely on overhead projectors instead of digital computer-linked projectors. Main lecture theatre and auditorium has substandard seating.” (University of Western Australia, Fine Arts)



## PART C: TEACHING AVAILABILITY

### Are teaching staff regularly available outside of teaching hours for one on one additional tutoring (either on campus or e-mail discussion)?

#### Main Themes

1. The most typical response was that lecturers were accessible at fixed consulting times (usually an hour or two a week) or via email.
2. A minority reported that their lecturers had an open ended 'knock on my door and see if I'm free' policy.
3. A minority reported that their lecturers did not engage with students outside of lectures or respond to e-mails. Typically these were lectures heavily focussed on their research activities or casual teaching staff (sometimes external industry lecturers) who are not regularly on campus.
4. A common complaint were the short consultation hours compared to the number of students, particularly if the times clash with other timetabled lectures in the course.
5. Teaching staff in a faculty spread across multi-campus sites also makes face-to-face consultations more difficult

#### Student Comments

"Low staff wages and poor conditions has created a major staff shortage, in most areas we are propped up by casual staff who are often paid for only one or two tutorials each and aren't paid for marking, let alone student support." (University of South Australia, Arts)

"Most are sessional teachers. Very little interaction between academic staff and students once the lecture is finished." (University of NSW, Law)

"Fantastic contact and support from staff by email. Love it." (Murdoch University, Politics)

"Most are quick to respond to email communication and with a bit of knowledge of staff habits you can find them around campus. As I progress further through my degree staff are harder to track down as they are more engaged in research and conferences which is somewhat frustrating, but they are generally easy to approach and will email you." (Griffith University, Environment and Urban Planning)

"Teaching staff only make themselves available for an hour or two each week, often during times when we have other classes, which means we can't seek help when we need it. Some of the staff also have aversions to help via email correspondence" (University of NSW, Engineering)

"Actual tutoring is not available through the lecturers but assistance in general academic work can be sought from the Student Learning Centre. Most lecturers use the online student portal 'FLO' to interact with students and answer general queries. They often state that they don't answer emails as they have too many and may not get to it in time so it is better to send a message through FLO which they check regularly. All lecturers give students their availability times at the beginning of the topic so they can make appointments if needed." (Flinders University, Psychology)

"The teaching staff here at Muresk are available through email discussions at all times. They will try to fit in any extra tutorial time when and if needed. They will work with the students to obtain maximum potential." (Curtin University, Agribusiness)

"Free to knock policy" (RMIT University, Engineering)

"As an AusAID scholar, private tutoring funds were available for 16 hours in a semester. Thus, a student or teaching staff was consulted and signed agreements with my sponsors and me (students) for a private tutorial." (James Cook University, Heath Sciences)

"Our dance teacher is part-time only. She is not available for outside one on one additional tutoring. We do not have a full time dance teacher in a course that advertises a balanced curriculum of singing, dancing and acting." (Central Queensland University, Fine Arts)

"Multi campus staff are a pain." (Swinburne University, Arts)

"All the Vet Lectures are great, they are happy to answer questions outside of class and are really helpful" (University of Adelaide, Vet Medicine)

"Too many part-timers without their own office on campus" (RMIT, Arts)

"You may see them in the tute time or for 5 min after a lecture any questions are to be directed by email. This is because they are responsible for more than 1 unit a semester so they have up to 500 students to relate to a semester." (Curtin University)

"Only available one hour a week, which is not really enough." (University of Sydney, Arts)

"The tutors at Albany campus are great. There is no complaint there. Unfortunately the lecturers at Crawley aren't so helpful. I have often sent an email querying some problem, only to either receive no reply, or one that does not even remotely apply to my question. And they still haven't told me what the exam format will be!" (University of Western Australia, Science)

"As an off campus student I have most of my contact via email or via blackboard. I have no issues with availability" (Monash, Medicine)

"They are extremely poor at making themselves available for part-time students who work full time" (Curtin University, Commerce)

"3 consultation hours per week" (University of NSW, Science)

"Physics and maths provides extra tutorial classes which are not compulsory. Helps if struggling with work." (University of WA, Engineering/Science)

"Only available one hour per week that clashes with classes" (University of Sydney, Arts)

"UNE is a great uni in this respect - unlike city universities, UNE has generally small class sizes, and frequently our tutorials are actually with our lecturers - I've heard that at city universities this is often not the case. Lecturers generally know the names of everyone in the class and anyone can speak up." (University of New England, Arts)

## Are any of your lecturers or tutorials regularly delivered by video link from another campus? If so, what teaching support is provided on your campus, is it adequate?

### Main Themes

About 5% of students are regularly receiving at least some their lectures remotely by a video link.

Typically these students hold a tutorial with an on campus tutor after viewing the lecture but some report no on campus support. There sometimes are issues with the depth of knowledge the tutor has to stand in for the lecturer.

Some universities use the video-link for high profile international guest lecturers

### Student Comments


"There is always a staff member who coordinates that unit present at those lectures who will answer questions if we approach them. Our workshop facilitators are also happy to help." (La Trobe University, Health Sciences)

"Videoconference facilities are available. My campus (Cairns) is an auxiliary campus, and subsequently has video lectures from Townsville. This has increased in recent years. I think videoconferencing only works if it is either (1) an irregular mode of teaching for a particular subject, or (2) supported with at least a tutor on the other end of the video lecture, if videoconferencing is the mode of the subject." (James Cook University, Arts/Science)

"Yes it is adequate. We have the normal power point presentations and thinking questions set on worksheets for us to answer. A lecture class of a unit groups us to enable group discussion during lectures." (Curtin University, Health Sciences)

"The main lecture is delivered from Lismore campus to Coffs and Tweed, with the internal lecturers ready to take over once video link is finished." (Southern Cross University, Arts)

"As we are studying in Geraldton, we watch ilectures, and there is no one here for labs or to talk to help with questions or subjects that we are finding hard to understand. It isn't adequate in the slightest considering we pay the same as the students in Perth and they get teachers, and people able to help and guide them in their subjects." (Curtin University, Education)



“There is very little if any support. Many tutorial teachers are willing to help. But are not overly knowledgeable about the lecture content.” (La Trobe University, Health Science)

“For this great medieval course, international lecturers from the US and the UK, are giving lectures - every few weeks, its great.” (University of Sydney, Arts)

“They tried once and failed miserably. After that one lecture they gave up and actually gave us a lecturer from our uni.” (University of Western Australia, Commerce)

“I am at the rural campus in Albury Wodonga and we often did not have access to real lecturers and many of our subjects were video linked in from Bundoorra. Often we did not have a lecturer on campus whose specialty was in this area or if they were employed it was only on a part time basis. Our access to support from well qualified experts was severely compromised compared to the main metropolitan campus yet we paid exactly the same fees.”(La Trobe University, Health Sciences)

“Only occasionally, its a joint program with Newcastle. Lecturers are always there” (University of New England, Medicine)

“We have a ‘Learning Centre’ which helps only once you’ve started your assignment, but they don’t help with design subjects, nor with actually finding a starting point. In addition, they have one-on-one appointments but are always booked a month in advance.” (University of New South Wales, Architecture)

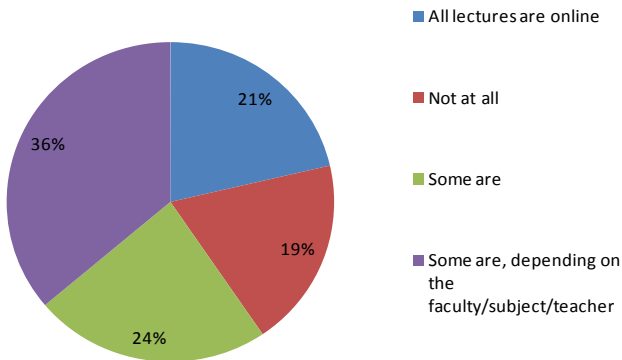
“They pay students to take down lecture notes for those unable to. I guess that’s it, in terms of teaching support.” (University of Newcastle, Fine Arts)

“I use to be a distant education student, and came to Perth Curtin campus due to the lack of support, and services for regional students. Students externally are chucked in any room anywhere there is a space, phone lines and video conferences are always an issue either because they have forgotten, room has been double booked, line down, all the reasons in the world. No support what so ever to external students with IT issues, assignments, Pracs, and lectures. I had numerous issues with enrolling or finding out information that was not delivered to students. Books are not readily available to students and the atmosphere for external students.” (Curtin University, Education)

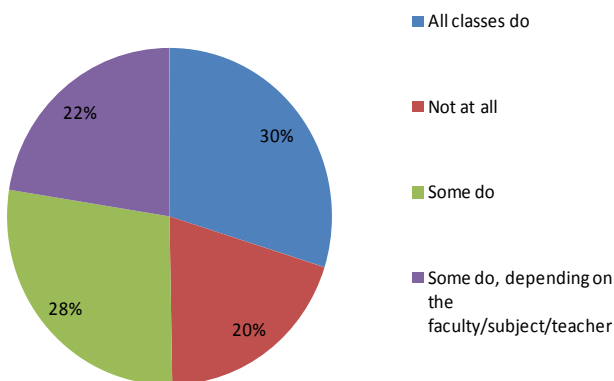
“I’m very happy with the admin support, and the quality of materials offered to externals. I first studied on campus in the early 90s, and had nothing as good as I have now, as an external. More contact with staff, more feedback, and detailed learning materials. It’s great.” (Murdoch University, Politics)

## PART D: ONLINE FLEXIBILITY

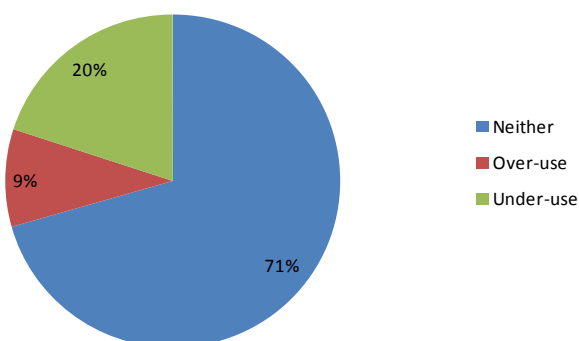
### Are your lectures recorded and available online?



### Does your course have online tutorial groups or discussion lists?



### Do you feel that there is an under-use or over-use of technology in your course?



### For students studying externally or mixed mode are there any comments you want to make on quality of distance education support services?

#### Main themes

#### 1. Positive experiences included:

- Positive respondents emphasised the convenience and geographic advantages of distance education.
- There was strong support for the use of new IT in the teaching pedagogy such as online discussion boards with staff and other students to create virtual tutorial groups, and downloadable “ilectures.”

#### 2. Negative comments included:

- Absence or irregularity of ilecture downloads, poor sound quality;
- Absence of online discussion boards or lack of staff involvement in them;
- Mixed mode students being excluded from distance education support services;
- Teaching staff not making contact with external students or not responding for several weeks to emails from the students, long delays in marking meant students did not get feedback in time to adjust for future assessment

#### Student Comments

“At Murdoch, if studying in mixed mode, you’re not entitled to use distance education support services for your external unit - I am suffering this right now! My money, I thought, would be as good as anyone else’s, however, because I study one unit internally I have been penalised. I raised this issue with 2 unit co-ordinators (for my 2 external units) but they were of no help what-so-ever! They really didn’t care, or even know

about the technology available for external study. The external studies unit were unable to help either, nor were the guild. I do not have equal rights with other students who are fully external." (Murdoch University, Education, mixed mode)

"It would be good if lecturers or tutors actually contacted you to see how you were coping with the material. I enrolled in a subject this semester that has no tutorials. I just received the material via my email at the start of semester and haven't heard from the course coordinator since." (Swinburne University, Arts, external)

"One of my major concerns is the availability of on-line discussion forums for external students. These are not required across the board at Monash and are only made available at the discretion of the program director. I have found that forums provide incomparable access to feedback and assistance from other students and provide an avenue by which external students can feel more involved in their unit. I have found units without these facilities to be severely lacking and far less engaging. Overall, however, I am aware from having attempted to study externally elsewhere that Monash provides excellent services for external students and I have been nothing but happy with my Monash experience as a whole." (Monash University, Arts, external)

"I virtually live at uni in the Guild Office, so, although entirely external, I do not have "distance education" issues; there are other reasons people study externally and other issues they might have because of it. There are either a lot of bothersome issues or virtually none. Again, it boils down to who is actually responsible to deliver the unit/subject. One of the major troubles is simply in having people (student and lecturer/tutor alike) shift their mind-sets to account for externals realities. There is nothing more boring for example, than sitting listening to a lecture recording when the lecturer has done a great job of creating a whole heap of discussion that you can't hear any of. It's also annoying when a lecturer continually apologises to an audience for having to repeat something, sigh, for the externals. It is problematic, pedagogically, to not have an equivalent to tutorials available to external students. I think it would be a good idea to introduce these where they are still absent, whilst making room perhaps for people who simply cannot make a tutorial time. Many external students (not me personally) have difficulty with getting work back on time, despite Assessment Policy clauses which protect this as a right." (Murdoch University, Sustainability)

"The quality of education we receive is disgusting. Everything is online, the lecturers upload documents that we are supposed to read, this is supposed to correspond to the unit outline, but often doesn't. We have all gotten assignments back and almost failed, because there is no actual contact or support in learning, the learning experiences are non-existent and it is virtually a degree by research. As a fourth year student teacher, I have five weeks left of uni and I am fearful that I am greatly unprepared for the real classroom. Curtin University is interested only in making as much money as they

can and not concerned with the quality of the programs they are producing" (Curtin University, Education, external)

"Watching a lecture online requires super fast internet as it can take up to 4 hours to watch 1:30 min lecture." (Flinders University, Education)

"It is useless - stuck in old forms of download material and send back assignments - no real interaction." (RMIT University, Commerce)

"We live over 500km's from our campus so it is delivered completely online. Computer technology is never perfect and should not be relied upon solely to study a university degree. It's very unmotivating and does not allow for appropriate conceptual understanding." (Australian Catholic University, Education)


"Curtin University offers fantastic on-line facilities, especially for their postgraduate courses." (Curtin University, Commerce, mixed mode)

"Poorly resourced, limited training and support available to staff. I completed half my degree via external study - however after a frustrating time trying to pursue equality in my learning experience with internal students I now only study internally. This means that I can only compete one unit per semester as I work full time and have a family. It will take me four years to complete my final year. I feel let down by my university - it would be better to not offer this service unless it was properly run and resourced." (Curtin University, Commerce)

"Quality of services is good through the online services, except when the lecturer forgets to record their lecture on that day" (Macquarie University, Arts/Education)

"I found it difficult to study full time online which is why I chose to transfer to the Bentley campus. I found it difficult because:  
- online resources were difficult to find  
- lack of peer support  
- much more printing where as in a class we get some handouts  
- the online lecturers did not always create the unit making it hard to clarify information for the assignments  
- sending large files and assignments was hard at times due to email size limit" (Australian Catholic University, Education)

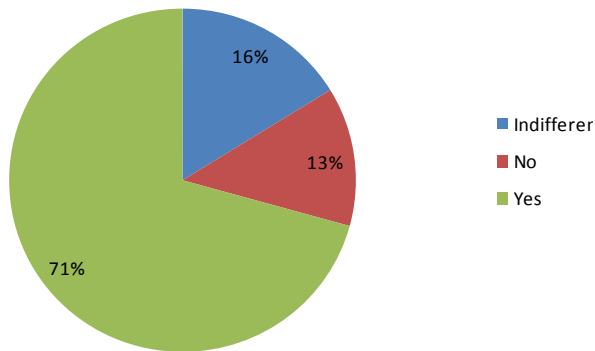
"I strongly believe that teaching and education is a degree that should not be taught online. The University of Tasmania's education faculty has a lot of problems that need to be sorted out and I am very unhappy with the way that the teaching side of my degree is panning out. I know that a lot of other students feel strongly about this and it will not be long before I put in writing my feelings towards the whole situation. I will hopefully be getting a lot of support behind me" (University of Tasmania, Education/Fine Arts)



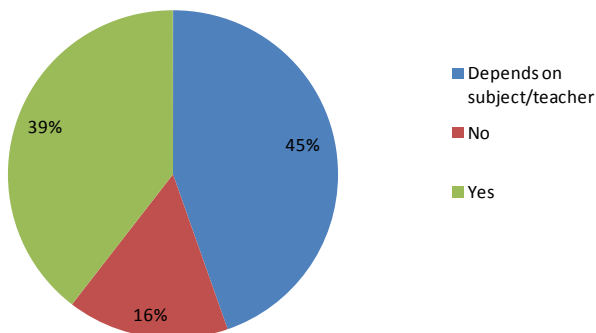
“I have one subject that is completely on-line. There is minimal support from tutors or lecturer’s in this subject and they wouldn’t give us a discussion board to talk to all those in our year level only the 4-5 in our group (we had online group work to submit) so one student brilliantly set up a discussion board on Facebook so we could discuss the assignment. Shouldn’t have to do this.” (La Trobe, Health Science, mixed mode)

## PART E: ACADEMIC CHALLENGE

### Do you feel academically challenged by the material covered in your course?



### Is there sufficeint support for the students to branch out beyond what is taught in the subject?



### Main Themes

- The overwhelming majority of student responses indicated that there was either a general culture that encouraged students to branch out, or alternatively that it varied depending on the lecturer.
- A minority indicated a more systemic hostility to this beyond the vagaries of individual lecturers.
- There were some positive responses about the participation in related extra-curricular campus life activities that allowed the students the opportunity to branch out from curriculum.
- Some responded that the short teaching semesters leave little time to expand beyond the core curriculum.

### Student Comments

“Some lecturers get pissed off if you do that, because it seems like you’re showing off in front of everyone else. But there’s not a huge amount of support for talented students or students that are struggling, so it’s a lose-lose situation all around.” (University of Sydney, Arts)

“(Extra-curricular) Programs like SYN, RMITV and the like give me the opportunity to actually do the work I would be doing in the field of Journalism.” (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Journalism)

“Within the School of Music change is unwelcome and the support to deviate from the course, or add to it, is absent. In Political Science, the support is often good and encouragement is certainly forthcoming” (Australian National University, Arts)

“Reading lists, at least in Philosophy, are expansive to the point of infinity. Dauntingly so”. (University of Western Australia, Arts)

"In my science subjects, there is heavy emphasis placed on rote learning and little opportunity/time available to explore areas of personal interest." (University of Melbourne, Medicine/Arts)

"I'm an economics student - I find there is a failure of lecturers to challenge the *status quo* and engage students to think beyond what they are spoon fed. Now, if ever would be a perfect time to offer alternate courses in other schools of thought" (University of Adelaide, Economics)

"Usually there isn't enough time to cover what is required for the subject in a thirteen week session, let alone cover other topics." (University of Western Sydney, Law)

"We have discussion boards and some lecturers are willing to offer feedback to almost any query you may have on a particular topic, though it does need to be related either to an assessment or the objectives of the unit." (Australian Catholic University, Education)

"Many lecturers in the School of Mech Engineering do not care very much about what they are teaching and do not respond well to further questions. Some however are very encouraging and supportive of new ideas." (University of Western Sydney, Engineering)

"School of geosciences has a well formed society as part of the clubs and societies program offered by the University of Sydney Union, and it is through this that information/lectures and opportunities are advertised." (University of Sydney, Science)

"Library students are often encouraged to join professional bodies that support and even contribute to how the curriculum is taught. Example is ALIA which supports Library students, and the RMAA which supports Records management students. Part time and casual work is often encouraged as evidenced by the HUM DIS list which allows lecturers to advise students on what vacancies are available." (Australian Catholic University, Education)

"We are constantly told about extra courses and help guides. Lecturers and tutors are always available after classes for quick discussions and we can make bookings if we need to speak to them longer. For example we have CBS plus which is specific to Curtin Business School students and it often runs workshops to help us with our course materials." (Curtin University, Commerce)

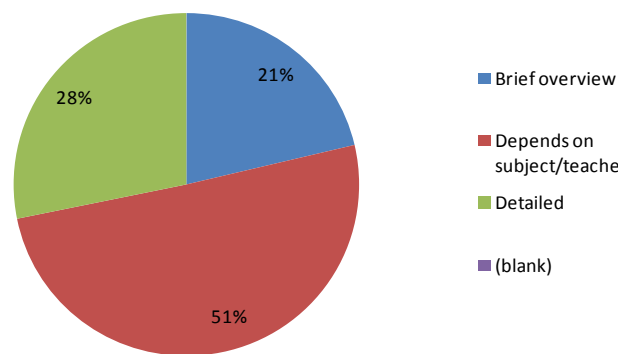
"It is not liked when you attempt to branch out of your subjects lectured scope. It seems to make the lecturers feel challenged." (University of Western Australia, Fine Arts)

"Because we are exposed to so many issues and fields it's hard not to branch out. We are also given the equivalent of 7 electives (though in recent intakes it's been reduced to 6 which is still well above what is allowed by other universities in my program) which are not mandated so you can choose subjects out of your school entirely." (Griffith University, Environment/Urban Planning)

"Some are happy/willing to direct you to further areas of study/interest. Others just say "just read the book - that's all you need to know for now". (Murdoch University, Health Sciences)

"I'm not really interested in broadening my horizons at the moment, just want to pass!" (University of Western Australia, Engineering)

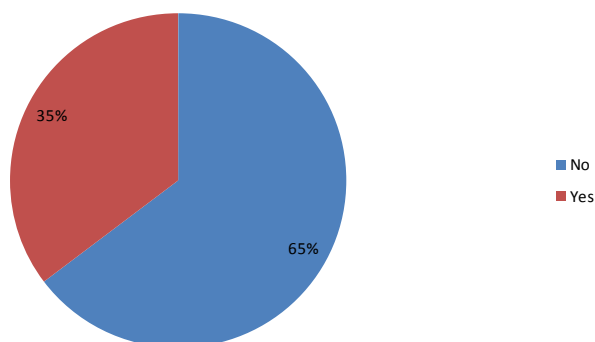
## Do your subjects cover enough detail in the time taught, or do you feel that it is a brief overview?





## PART F: COURSE RESOURCES (INCLUDING LIBRARY)

**Are there enough copies of your textbooks available in the library so that students have a realistic option not to have to purchase them?**



### Main Themes

1. Nearly two thirds of respondents believed that there was an inadequate supply of their textbooks in the library which made it effectively compulsory for students to purchase them.
2. Students from satellite regional campuses cited limited library resources and faced difficulties and costs in accessing books from the main campus library in a reasonably timely fashion.
3. External students faced great difficulty in gaining access to library books.
4. The cap on the number of books an undergraduate can borrow causes complications.
5. Inadequate range of books in libraries at some universities compared to the historic Group of Eight university libraries.
6. Long delays in arrival of textbooks at university bookshops

### Student Comments

"There are 500 students in some commerce subjects and with only 2 of the new textbook available for a weekly loan and two on two hour loan (this is the case for one subject but I think it would be similar throughout) the only option is to buy. Second hand textbooks are not a great option as in some cases the older edition is set out differently and the questions are different." (University of Wollongong, Commerce/Law)

"Each textbook costs around \$140 and the library only has 2 or 3 copies. Students are forced to fork out the money each semester to buy the textbooks as without them you fall behind." (Curtin University, Health Sciences)

"Roseworthy campus is located 60km away from the main campus but most of the medical books we want to borrow are located at the main campus so it's a long hike just to get one book so many students don't bother and just make do with the small library we have on campus. It feels a bit like the university doesn't care about satellite campuses." (University of Adelaide, Vet Science/Medicine)

"As an external student I find that access to library facilities is very limited/difficult to use. I am currently campaigning on this issue at my campus." (Monash University, Arts)

"Unsure as I am based regionally in Geraldton and can not compare to other faculties. I usually save up to purchase all needed textbooks as there are not enough in our TAFE library (usually one to two copies) and library loans from Perth's Bentley campus (Curtin University) entails loan fees, postage and late fees with small loan times." (Curtin University, Education)

"Often students hide the textbooks among the bookshelves and although the library catalogue states that these books are available, they cannot be found." (University of Melbourne, Med/Science)

"Curtin has NO books in its Bentley campus library, I don't know about its other campuses but its ridiculous how little books Curtin Bentley has. How can a university have so little books?? I've had to go to UWA many times to borrow books, (their science library is amazing!). If we have an assignment it only takes one student to borrow all three books Curtin might have on the subject and the rest of us are screwed. Also the average year of publication for Curtin's books is about 1980. I study Molecular Genetics and most lecturers will not accept references more than 10 years old. Curtin seems to spend a lot of money on re-carpeting the library and vamping up its computer areas but there are precious little books in there" (Curtin University, Health Sciences)

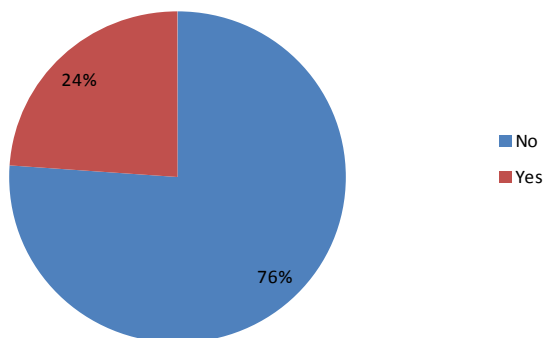
"LTU library system is flawed. You are only limited to 15 loans for 14 days as an undergrad, even if you are studying two degrees at once. Given that final assessments require possibly 8 books for each of the 4 essays, it really becomes more about who can afford photocopy or who is organised or psychic enough to borrow the books a month before you are aware you need it. There will usually be ONE copy of the textbook in the library, on reserve where you can borrow for 3 hours only - so of course, you really have to buy it! In my fourth year, I was studying alongside Dip.Ed students who were considered 'postgrad'...therefore they had larger borrowing privileges and could borrow a book for twice as long, meaning I could easily miss out by the time work was due. This was despite the fact we had the same essays due - well, actually as B.Ed students, we had more on top of that... how was that fair???" (La Trobe University, Arts)

"Sometimes the bookshop does not get books that we need until half way through the semester and then it's too late. We loan them from the library or photocopy what we need." (Curtin University, Education)

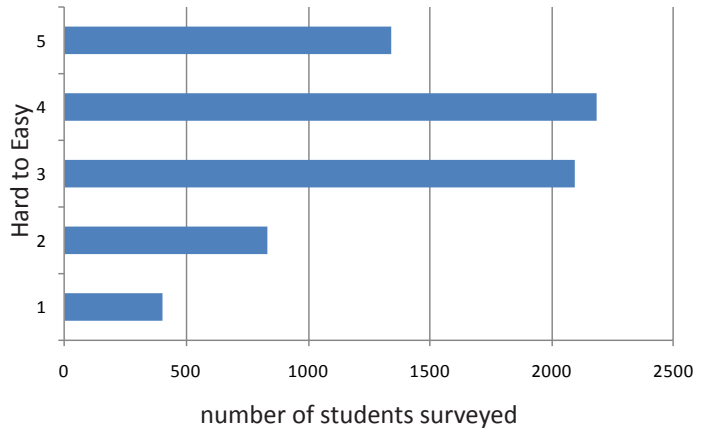
"I've had over \$300 in library fines just to get access to different campuses materials which are only available very short term, had to borrow from the graduate school of business and always had to buy the textbooks, borrowing is not an option." (Curtin University, Commerce)

"The university is quite adamant about PURCHASING TEXTBOOKS in order to receive anything above a passing grade for some of my units. Although it was bought up that they should be photocopying the relevant texts, nothing was done to follow it through. We recently had a shortage of books in the library and for purchase at the bookshop- however, HAHAHAHA. Guess what? All sold out and unavailable. They said the texts would be photocopied for the first few weeks. NOT DONE." (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Health Sciences)

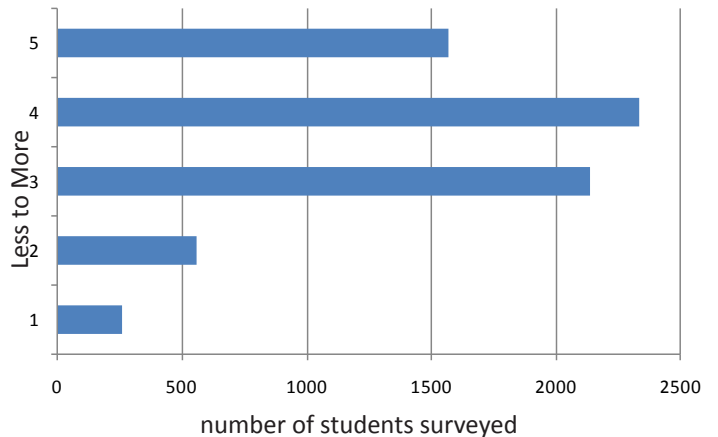
### Do you have to go to other universities for resources (getting resources/books brought in from other campuses)?



### On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to get enrolment advice from your faculty?



### On a scale of 1-5, how accurate is the advice?



### Are students charged course material fees on top of HECS or tutorial fees that is effectively a compulsory fee?

**Technical Note:** The *Higher Education Support Act* prohibits universities from charging compulsory fees on top of HECS or tuition fees. However, many university faculties do charge for things like reading packs or expect student to cover the costs of field trips, practicum placements in different cities and professional equipment or material owned or used by the student.

NUS has periodically run campaigns to highlight these additional costs to students. Over the years various federal ministerial guidelines have been developed to regulate this. In 2008 NUS forced some universities to repay students or change their arrangements to comply with the guidelines.

The current guidelines are:

### 8.5 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A FEE IS OF A KIND THAT IS INCIDENTAL TO STUDIES THAT MAY BE UNDERTAKEN WITH A HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER

8.5.1 Provided that its payment is in accordance with the *Act*, a fee is of a kind that is incidental to studies that may be undertaken with a higher education provider if it falls into any one or more of the following categories:

- (a) It is a charge for a good or service that is not essential to the course of study.
- (b) It is a charge for an alternative form, or alternative forms, of access to a good or service that is an essential component of the course of study but is otherwise made readily available at no additional fee by the higher education provider.
- (c) It is a charge for an essential good or service that the student has the choice of acquiring from a supplier other than the higher education provider and is for:
  - (i) equipment or items which become the physical property of the student and are not consumed during the course of study; or

- (ii) food, transport and accommodation costs associated with the provision of field trips that form part of the course of study.

- (d) It is a fine or a penalty provided it is imposed principally as a disincentive and not in order to raise revenue or cover administrative costs.

### Main Themes

Common learning costs faced by students in 2010 on top of textbooks and tuition fees/HECS include:

- Course manuals and reading packs;
- Art material (Fine Arts)
- Model material (Architecture)
- Field trips (Science, Social Sciences, Commerce)
- Articulators, stethoscope, cadaver dissection license fee, radiation badges (Medicine, Dentistry)
- Diagnostic tools (Chiropractors)
- External exam fees (Aviation)
- Medical tests and vaccinations (Health Sciences, Medicine)
- Practicum placements in other towns (Health Sciences, Education)
- Uniforms (Health Sciences, Medicine)
- Outdoor equipment (Physical Education)
- Fees to access to books from central campus (students at regional satellite campuses)
- Stamped self-addressed envelopes to return essays (Arts)

Most of these would technically comply with the letter of the guidelines apart from those that are tied to compulsory assessment.

The new Commonwealth Start Up Scholarships (\$1300 in 2010, \$2128 in 2011) are meant to defray these costs for income support recipients although in practice NUS believes that the inadequate level of income support means that much of the scholarship money is likely to be used on living costs such as rapidly rising rents.

## Student Comments

"We were in Fine Arts. All art materials were a huge financial burden on us." (University of Tasmania, Arts)

"I've paid over \$2500 in compulsory camp fees." University of Melbourne, Science)

"We are required to be tested and/or vaccinated against almost everything: Tetanus, HIV, MMR, TB, flu, chicken pox, etc. All are out of pocket expenses that are not subsidised for students, Medicare, etc. Becomes very expensive" (Curtin University, Occupational Therapy)

"Textbooks obviously have to be bought as well as items we need such as stethoscopes and thermometers" (Murdoch University, Health Sciences)

"Students are expected to buy the necessary resources for tutorials and labs. This includes reference and study material, homework problems, and the lab report sheets. I would like to see students have the option of having electronic access to this material as well, but personally I prefer to study out of a book so materials should continue to be physically available." (University of NSW, Engineering)

"Have to do many practical sessions often for a month in rural areas where we must organise and pay for our own accommodation and transport" (University of Sydney, Vet Science)

"In physiotherapy there are a lot of extra costs involved with the course, things such as senior first aid courses, immunisations, uniform, unit guides, badges, criminal record screenings etc..".(Curtin University, Health Sciences)

"You have to buy a reader for almost every topic which is anywhere from 15 - 50 dollars." (Flinders University, Arts)

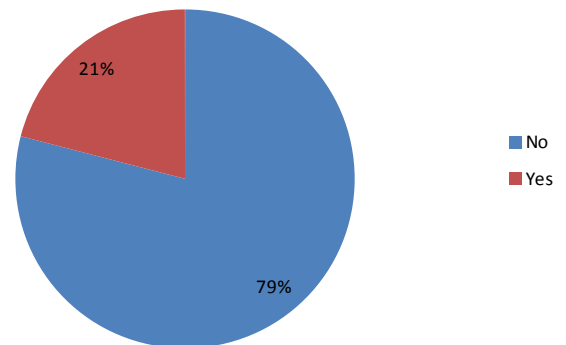
"We must buy all materials for our folio. This ranges from approx \$80-\$500+ per submission. "(University of Western Australia, Architecture)

"The biggest gripe with our long prac is money. We have to work full time, teaching for 8-10 weeks and are told not to work any other jobs at the same time and take time off from other jobs. We still have families to support, rent, bills etc, so where are we expected to get money from if we don't work?" (Curtin University, Education)

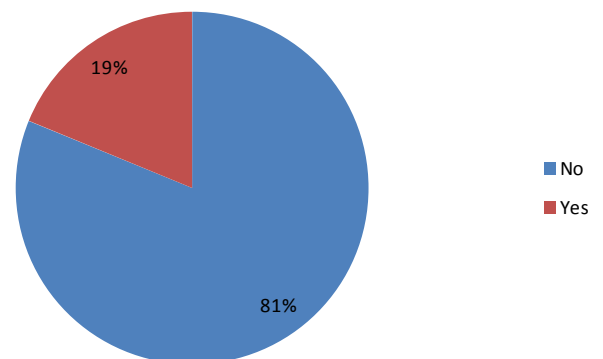
"In one class I had to pay for a unit field trip for 4 nights during a study week. We were not made aware that this would be the case when we enrolled in the unit and were basically told that it would be very inconvenient and we would lose participation marks if we did not attend. It was in order of \$500 all up front which is a lot of money when you are a student and can't work during that time that you are away.

Also affected our studies in other units given that it was in a study week." (Curtin University, Commerce)

## Have you ever consulted the university careers service for advice?

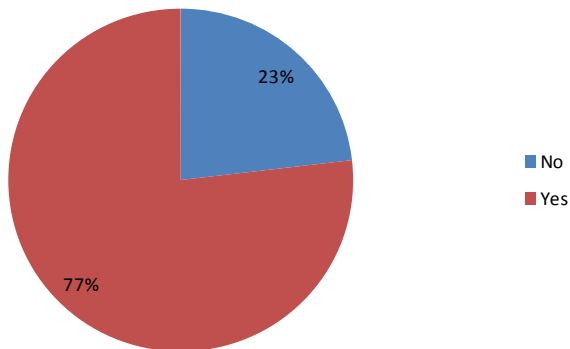


## Have you received advice or support from the university equity services?

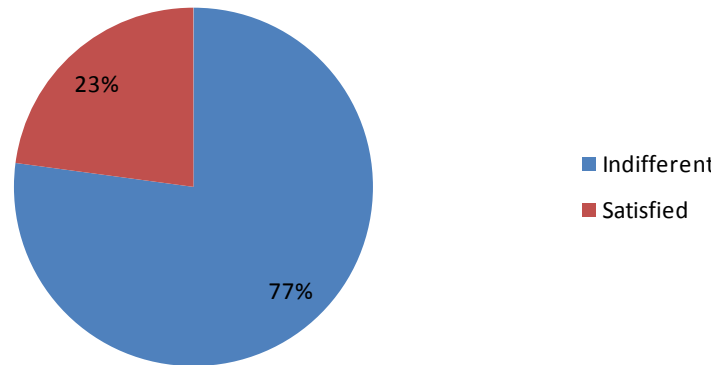


## PART G: STUDENT FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

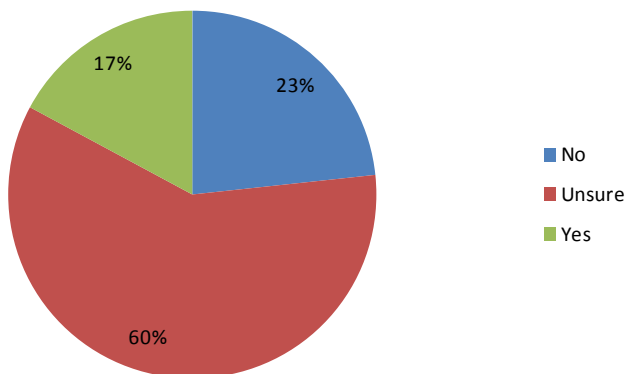
Have you completed any university surveys to provide feedback on course experience and teaching?



If these surveys are not available to you, how do you feel about the feedback process?

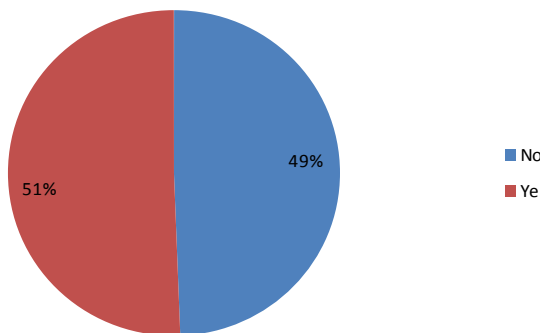


Can students find out the results of these surveys?

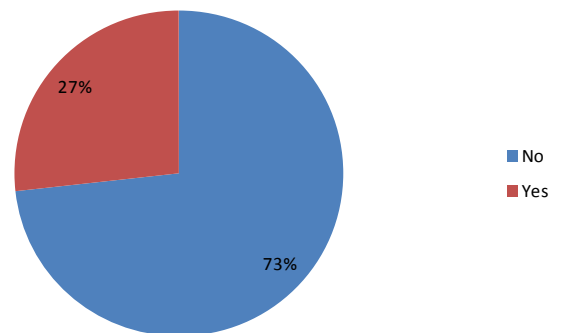


## PART H: CAMPUS LIFE

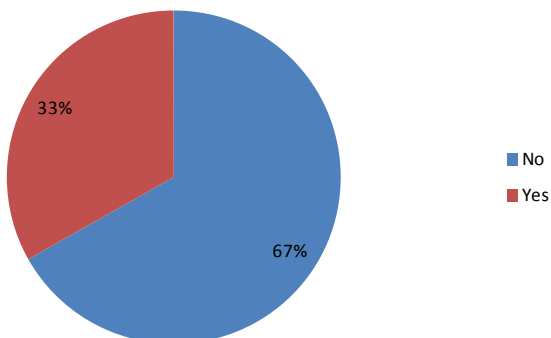
Are you a member of a campus club or society?



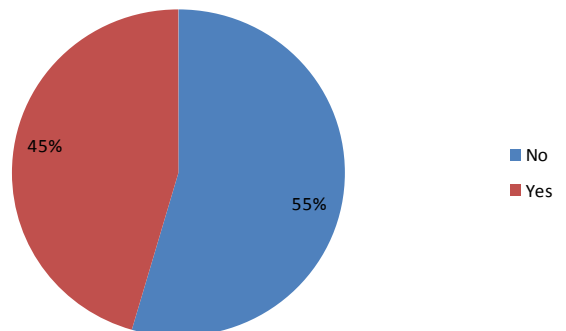
Have you ever taken part in a student representative organisation campaign or event?



Have you voted or taken part in student representative elections?



Does the university do enough to bridge the cultural divide between domestic and international students?



## What programs are in place?

### Main Themes

1. One student neatly encapsulated the cultural gulf that can exist on campus between domestic and international students:

“There is a stark gap between international students and locals. The locals gather to one side of the lecture hall/ classroom. Groups are always obviously divided. There is almost no interaction between the locals and international students unless they are forced into the same group for class work.” (Curtin University, Architecture)

The majority of domestic student respondents were unaware of campus programs to bridge this divide.

2. The most common programs cited by students included:

- Multi-cultural weeks,
- Campus International Student Clubs,
- Residential village student clubs,
- International Student Associations (or Departments within a broader student association),
- Mentoring and buddying programs with local volunteer students,
- English language courses to improve conversational English,
- Student exchange programs,
- Orientation Week activities,
- “Aussie experience” tours such as visits to snowfields, beaches or wineries

3. Several students commented that they were concerned that many of the programs did not actively involve significant numbers of domestic students and only reinforced the perception of a divided student body.

### Student Comments

“It organises mentor programs and English conversation partner programs.”(University of Melbourne, Science)

“Multicultural week and international student groups” (Curtin University, Engineering)

“It attempts to benefit international students into fitting in with a specific facility set up for international students. However, I feel this really does nothing for domestic student interactions with international students and in fact other than necessary help of the university to international students, any other advantageous benefits will only divide the two groups furthermore.” (Flinders University, Science)

“UniSkills - a program that organises events so that international students or students coming from under-privileged backgrounds can mingle and make friends as well as create a support system for themselves. UniMentor - A mentoring program where older students volunteer to take new students (including mature-age students) under their wing and teach them about uni life.” (University of Western Australia, Science)

“Speak-up: a program to help international students practise their English and expand their knowledge of Australian culture; Buddy Exchange Program: assigns exchange students Australian buddies to help them with local knowledge and take them around. Several more programs available on the Curtin Volunteers! website.” (Curtin University, Engineering)

“Not much. Harmony Day. (Australian Catholic University, Arts)

“The Kalgoorlie campus is pretty small so everyone gets along fine.” (Curtin University, Mining)

“Culture specific clubs, Faculty specific clubs to integrate all students” (Curtin University, Health Sciences)

“Lots in O-Week, but not much during the year - if anything.” (Monash University, Arts)

“Many programs are run by the colleges which give International students an ‘aussie experience’ on tours to wineries and farms etc. Student societies cater for international students once a week off campus” (La Trobe University, Science)

“The student guild provides funds for many clubs which accept people from all walks of life.” (University of Western Sydney, Engineering)

“Asian nights, some social clubs, sports etc. But majority students aren’t involved or don’t know how to get involve.” (Curtin University, Accounting)

“Multicultural week and mentoring programs” (University of Adelaide, Law/Arts)

“There are things like international events and a ‘learn English’ table in my campus accommodation, at the Conservatorium there is less conscious effort although there are opportunities to learn gamelan and travel to Bali to study and there was recently an Asian music symposium.” (University of Sydney, Fine Arts)

“Not a lot. Monash has an International Students Association, but besides their work, I do not see the university doing a lot to help bridge the gap - especially considering Monash has a lot of international students.” (Monash University, Arts/Law)

“The university hosts some services such as language discussion groups, tours and there are a few programs, but I believe more robust events need to be done such that the domestic student body have it in view of their every day life rather than just on the side lines where no one sees it. Majority of the services offered are taken up by non-English speaking students, which further pushes them out of view of the main campus, which should not be done.” (University of Wollongong, IT)

“VRC - Village Residents Club. A social club which gets all the residents in the Housing Village together, allowing people to be introduced to their neighbours.” (Flinders University, Arts)

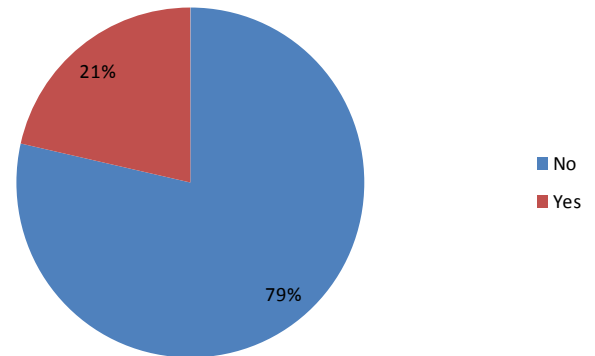
“Student organisations underfunded, but will improve hopefully.” (La Trobe University, Arts/Law)

“The guild does most of these. University events are weak.” (Curtin University, Commerce)

“Not much that I’m aware of. There is a welcome to International Students day during O-week and there is International Student officer on the Student Council.” (Flinders University, Law)

“The nursing school has a host a Thai student program going on which allows the host and the Thai student to exchange knowledge about their different cultures.” (Curtin University, Health Sciences)

## Have you worked with teaching staff on activities other than coursework (eg faculty clubs, volunteer programs, research projects, campaigns)?



■ No  
■ Yes



## APPENDIX: COMPOSITION OF RESPONDENTS AND RECCOMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SURVEYS

Count of What campus are you enrolled in?	
What campus are you enrolled in?	Total
Australian Catholic University	197
Australian National University	93
Central Queensland University	1
Charles Darwin University	1
Charles Sturt University	4
Curtin University of Technology	2801
Deakin University	23
Edith Cowan University	13
Flinders University	41
Griffith University	22
James Cook University	59
La Trobe University	251
Macquarie University	32
Monash University	608
Murdoch University	168
Queensland University of Technology	23
RMIT University	280
Southern Cross University	2
Swinburne University of Technology	24
University of Adelaide	65
University of Ballarat	2
University of Canberra	7
University of Melbourne	174
University of New England	61
University of New South Wales	132
University of Newcastle	5
University of Notre Dame	5
University of Queensland	80
University of South Australia	84
University of Southern Queensland	27
University of Sydney	423
University of Tasmania	39
University of Technology, Sydney	412
University of the Sunshine Coast	2
University of Western Australia	576
University of Western Sydney	19
University of Wollongong	80
Victoria University	16
Grand Total	6852

The two most pertinent things to comment on here is the massive number of Curtin University responses compared to all other universities. This is because the university administration agreed to email all students informing them about the survey.

**We did disaggregate the Curtin data** and found that it was not very different from the aggregated national data from other campuses. This may not have been the case if our data had been skewed towards an elite sandstone or struggling regional campus.

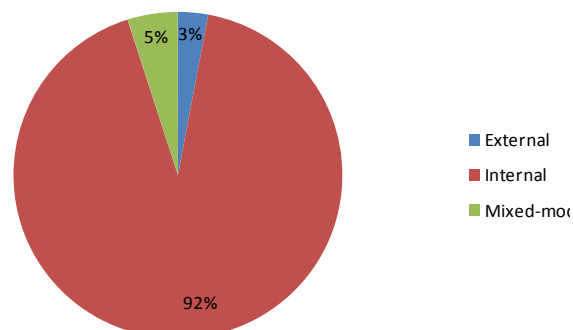
Also of note is the small number of responses from some regional specific universities such as Southern Cross, Ballarat, Charles Darwin, Charles Sturt, Newcastle and Sunshine Coast. We believe this primarily reflects the post-VSU weakness or absence of independent student representative structures on these campuses to promote the survey.

This was offset by some significant and insightful regional input from external/ mixed mode students and also students at satellite regional campuses of large Victorian and Western Australian universities.

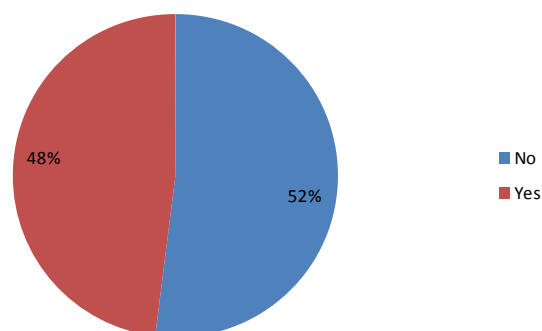
## Count of which faculties students were enrolled in

Architecture	115
Arts	871
Arts, Commerce	70
Arts, Communications	59
Arts, Law	148
Arts, Science	94
BUSINESS	58
Commerce	850
Commerce, Engineering	79
Commerce, Law	60
Communications	273
Education	260
Engineering	681
Engineering, Science	104
Fine Arts/Performing Arts	61
Health Science *Nursing, Physio, Podiatry etc)	1058
Humanities	55
IT	88
Law	102
Medicine	137
Science	652
Grand Total	6853

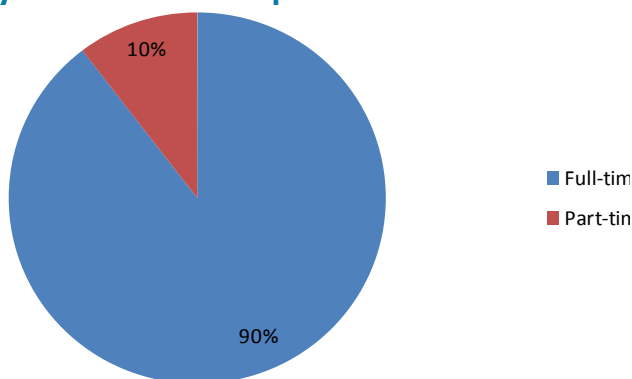
## Are you studying Internal/External/ Mixed mode ?



## Are you 21 or older?



## Are you a full-time or part-time student?



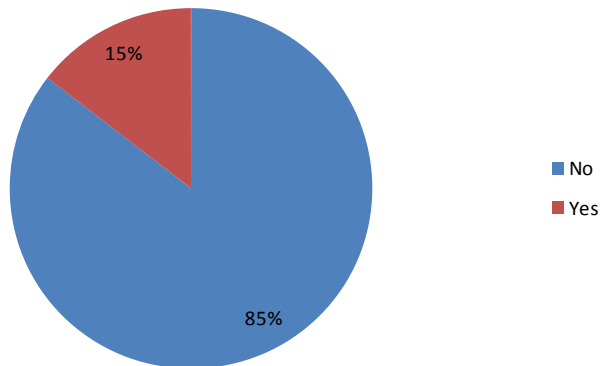
The reference values for total higher education students are 73 % full time students and 27 % part-time students (2008, DEEWR Statistics). Thus the sample group over-represents full time students.

The reference values for total higher education students are 81% internal students, 12% external students and 7% mixed mode students (2008, DEEWR Statistics).

The reference value is that 66.2% of all higher education students are aged 21 or over (Review of Australian Higher Education, Final Report, 2007 figures). The reference figure includes postgraduate students which inflates the mature age proportion compared to our sample which was targeted at undergraduates (although we did not remove the small number of postgraduates who did respond to our survey).

The reference values for total higher education students are 73% domestic students and 27% international students (2008, DEEWR Statistics). Thus the sample group under-represents international students.

## Are you an international student?



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**Written by:**  
Graham Hastings

**Graphs compiled by:**  
Carla Drakeford and Alex Benevento

# QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

## Let's Fight for It

The Government is introducing the most significant reforms to university funding since the introduction of HECS. The changes will cede more power to university administrations to decide which subjects are offered and which are not.

This new system will mean that the most popular (and profitable) subject areas such as law and business will be allowed to take on more students, risking further class crowding, impacting graduate employment opportunities and devaluing the quality of education. Other critical areas such as Nursing, Teaching and Humanities may risk massive funding windfalls and subject cuts.

Students' interests must not be swept aside as universities look to cash in on these funding changes. We need to ensure that the reforms do not limit the quality and diversity of higher education no matter students' background or choice of university.

NUS is campaigning to ensure that quality is maintained through the new regulatory body, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Authority (TEQSA).

**WE CAN'T ALLOW  
OUR INTERESTS AS  
STUDENTS TO BE  
STEAMROLLED.  
WE NEED A VOICE  
IN OUR ACADEMIC  
AFFAIRS.**

**NATIONAL DAY  
OF ACTION  
31ST MARCH,  
2010**

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