

We Listen

Responding to student feedback

The Faculty greatly values student feedback. Where possible and appropriate we respond to students' suggestions in order to enhance students' experiences in the Faculty.

The University collects feedback from enrolled students via the Student Course Experience Questionnaire every two years¹. Results from the 2005 survey, received in 2006, included feedback from 317 undergraduate students and 258 postgraduate students about their entire course experience. Experiences within individual units of study are sought annually with the Unit of Study Evaluation survey. More information on the instruments and more detailed feedback is available online from the central Institute for Teaching and Learning <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/quality/>.

Student feedback from the Student Course Experience Questionnaire (2005, received 2006)

It is pleasing to see that feedback on most indicators of quality teaching improved from the last survey in 2003.

Perceptions of UG students include:

- 3% improvement on agreement with items relating to Overall Satisfaction
- 2% improvement on agreement with items relating to Good Teaching
- 5% improvement on agreement with items relating to Appropriate Assessment
- 3% improvement on agreement with items relating to Learning Community
- 2% improvement on agreement with items relating to Appropriate Workload
- 1% improvement on agreement with items relating to Generic Skills
- 1% reduction in agreement with items relating to Clear Goals and Standards

Perceptions of PG students include:

- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Overall Satisfaction from 2003
- 3% improvement on agreement with items relating to Good Teaching from 2003
- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Learning Community from 2003
- 3% improvement on agreement with items relating to Clear Goals and Standards
- 1% reduction in agreement with items relating to Appropriate Workload
- 7% reduction in agreement with items relating to Appropriate Assessment
- No change in agreement with items relating to Generic Skills

Student feedback from the Unit of Study Evaluation (2006)

It is pleasing to see that feedback on most indicators of quality teaching improved from the surveys in 2005.

Perceptions of students include:

- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Overall Satisfaction
- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Good Teaching
- 5% improvement on agreement with items relating to Appropriate Assessment
- 5% improvement on agreement with items relating to Online Learning
- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Clear Goals
- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Active Engagement
- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Staff Responsiveness to Feedback
- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Feedback on Assessment Assisted Learning
- 4% improvement on agreement with items relating to Research-Led Teaching
- 3% improvement on agreement with items relating to Graduate Attributes
- 3% improvement on agreement with items relating to Relevance to Degree
- 1% reduction on agreement with items relating to Appropriate Workload

Aggregate quantitative results are provided here (LINK to appendix)

In addition to the quantitative feedback, qualitative comments revealed that the content, structure, flexibility and diversity of the curriculum and its relevance to work/ career, along with good teaching and skills development were valued by students as the best aspects of their studies.

Student comments identified the following areas in need of improvement:

- Standard of teaching including useful and timely feedback
- Curriculum content and structure
- Appropriate assessment
- Groupwork (for postgraduate students)

How have we responded?

Standard of teaching including useful and timely feedback

- The tutor development program runs every semester and all tutors are encouraged to attend. Tutors receive up to 10 hours of professional development per semester, including the opportunity to receive peer feedback on their teaching.
- Each discipline has a Learning & Teaching Associate to assist academics in their discipline with learning and teaching issues.
- The unit of study outline template for staff contains examples of assessment criteria and best practices in providing students with feedback (e.g. immediate feedback via online quizzes, summary of class-wide errors and appropriate improvement action).
- In addition to the feedback on assessments, staff have been advised to 'flag' feedback with students as there are many sources of feedback on learning (e.g. your peers during class or via online discussion boards, PASS, your tutor or lecturer during consultation hours, your tutor or lecturer's comments on your in-class contributions, your own self-reflection).
- Conducting a pilot trial of Re-View, an online tool to assist students and staff with seeing how each assessment task in its various components contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes and the development of graduate attributes. Feedback is provided by criterion and by standard.

Curriculum content and structure

Students reported a lack of clear understanding about the prerequisites needed for introductory units and understanding how to structure their degree. In response, the Faculty appointed two program advisers whom students can see to get help with planning courses and degrees and explaining Faculty guidelines

Postgraduate students particularly wanted more practical, industry-related experiences incorporated into their coursework. The Faculty recently funded projects that will enhance the development of graduate attributes and practical experiences in seven postgraduate units.

A review of all postgraduate and undergraduate courses in on the agenda for 2007.

In addition the Faculty has employed a Careers and Employer Relations manager who will develop a range of careers services for students: <http://www.econ.usyd.edu.au/careers/>

Appropriate assessment

Students requested more variety in assessment tasks and more assessments throughout the semester with less emphasis on exams. Academics are encouraged, via the unit of study outline template, to go beyond the standard essay and exam assessment regime to allow students to develop and demonstrate their learning in ways that will be significant as professionals (e.g. report writing; presentation; case analysis).

In 2007 the Faculty will systematically monitor the emphases in different assessment types. Case studies of good practice will be developed.

Groupwork (for postgraduate students)

Postgraduate students expressed concerns about students 'free-riding' and that it is difficult to find time to meet especially when working as well as studying. In response the Faculty developed a website to support students with groupwork <http://learning.econ.usyd.edu.au/groupwork/> and a companion site for academics <http://teaching.econ.usyd.edu.au/groupwork/>

The sites received 6,297 unique hits and 158,606 total hits from April to December 2006. Further efforts are being made to make staff and students aware of the sites.

In addition an online tool to assist in confidential self and peer assessment is being built for piloting in semester 2 2007.

APPENDIX

	2005 UG %agreement (change since 2003)	2005 PG %agreement (change since 2003)
Good Teaching Scale 3. The teaching staff normally give me helpful feedback on how I am going 8. The teaching staff of this degree course motivate me to do my best work 16. The staff make a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having with my work 19. My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things 21. The teaching staff work hard to make their subjects interesting 27. The staff put a lot of time into commenting on my work	32% (+2)	45% (+3)
Clear Goals and Standards Scale 6. I have usually had a clear idea of where I am going and what is expected of me in this degree course 12. It is always easy to know the standard of work expected 25. The staff made it clear right from the start what they expected from students 29. It has often been hard to discover what is expected of me in this degree course	38% (-1)	52% (+3)
Appropriate Assessment Scale 13. The staff seem more interested in testing what I have memorised than what I have understood 20. Too many staff ask me questions just about facts 26. To do well in this degree all you really need is a good memory	49% (+5)	47% (-7)
Appropriate Workload Scale 2. There is a lot of pressure on me as a student in this degree course 4. The workload is too heavy 15. I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn 24. The sheer volume of work to be got through in this degree means it can't all be thoroughly comprehended	24% (+2)	27% (-1)
Generic Skills Scale 5. The degree course has helped me develop my ability to work as a team member 9. The degree course has sharpened my analytic skills 10. As a result of my degree course, I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems 18. The degree course has developed my problem-solving skills 22. The degree course has improved my skills in written communication 23. My degree course has helped me to develop the ability to plan my own work	63% (+1)	64% (0)
Learning Community Scale 28. I feel part of a group of students and staff committed to learning 31. I have learned to explore ideas confidently with other people 33. Students' ideas and suggestions are listened to during the course 34. I feel I belong to the university community 35. I am able to explore academic interests with staff and students	48% (+3)	52% (+4)
Overall Satisfaction Item 50. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this degree course	65% (+3)	(67% (+4))

	2003 (<i>n</i> = 321 units; 24,579 student responses)	2005 (<i>n</i> = 402 units; 25,973 student responses)	2006 (<i>n</i> = 437 units; 24,393 student responses)	Inferential statistics all students
Item				
1. Clear Goals	71 (26)	72 (27)	76 (22)	$t(749) = 4.08$ $p < .001$, $d = 0.30$
2. Good Teaching **	67 (36)	68 (34)	72 (27)	$t(749) = 3.39$ $p < .001$, $d = 0.25$
3. Graduate Attributes **	60 (31)	64 (28)	67 (25)	$t(749) = 4.76$ $p < .001$, $d = 0.35$

4. Appropriate Workload*	35 (22)	32 (23)	31 (23)	$t(749) = 1.84$	$p = .066, d = 0.14$
5. Appropriate Assessment	65 (24)	66 (22)	71 (21)	$t(749) = 4.98$	$p < .001, d = 0.37$
6. Relevance to degree	79 (19)	81 (17)	83 (15)	$t(749) = 4.08$	$p < .001, d = 0.30$
7. Staff responsiveness to feedback	70 (31)	71 (29)	75 (21)	$t(749) = 2.96$	$p < .001, d = 0.22$
8. Feedback on assessment assisted	49 (35)	54 (33)	58 (30)	$t(748) = 5.02$	$p < .001, d = 0.37$
9. Active engagement	63 (30)	66 (24)	70 (23)	$t(748) = 4.46$	$p < .001, d = 0.33$
10. Online resources (2003); online learning (2005+)	60 (41)	53 (27)	58 (22)	$t(827) = 3.39$	$p = .001, d = 0.24$
11. Lab availability (2003); Research-led teaching (2005)	28 (20)	56 (33)	60 (28)	$t(828) = 2.62$	$p = .009, d = 0.18$
12. Overall sat'n with quality **	73 (29)	73 (28)	77 (24)	$t(749) = 2.60$	$p = .010, d = 0.19$

* uses "percentage disagreement" (percentage of students who strongly disagreed or disagreed) as this item is negatively worded

** Items mirroring Course Experience Questionnaire items that are used to gauge national Learning and Teaching Performance Fund outcomes.