

2004 Student and Graduate Opinion Surveys

Summary of University-wide Results

Summary of Key Issues and Conclusions

- University Support Service ratings are generally good, however there may be a need to focus on some issues pertaining to International and Pacific Island students. Māori students' ratings are commensurate with ratings for the general student population.
- Course experience ratings are also good; they are both above Australian university averages and generally improving. Primary areas of concern are feedback on student work and clear stating of standards and expectations.
- Postgraduate ratings are very high, particularly on supervision items. The items most obviously receiving low ratings are those on induction into postgraduate research, including the provision of information on postgraduate work to students.
- Course outcome analysis suggests that while graduates are developing skills at university, they need to apply these skills to an even greater degree in their post-University experiences. Attributes that are least developed, compared to the amount graduates feel they are needed, are teamwork skills, oral communication skills and self-confidence.

Demographics

- Academic reputation remained the most identified reason for choosing to study at the University of Otago, identified by 40% of student respondents and 42% of graduate respondents as one of the reasons they came to Otago.
- 97% of graduate respondents would recommend the University of Otago to others.
- 20% of graduate respondents were engaged in further study at the time of the survey; this was down somewhat on recent years, however this may have been to a higher proportion of PhD graduates being surveyed.
- 86% of graduate respondents were employed, 76% in full-time work.

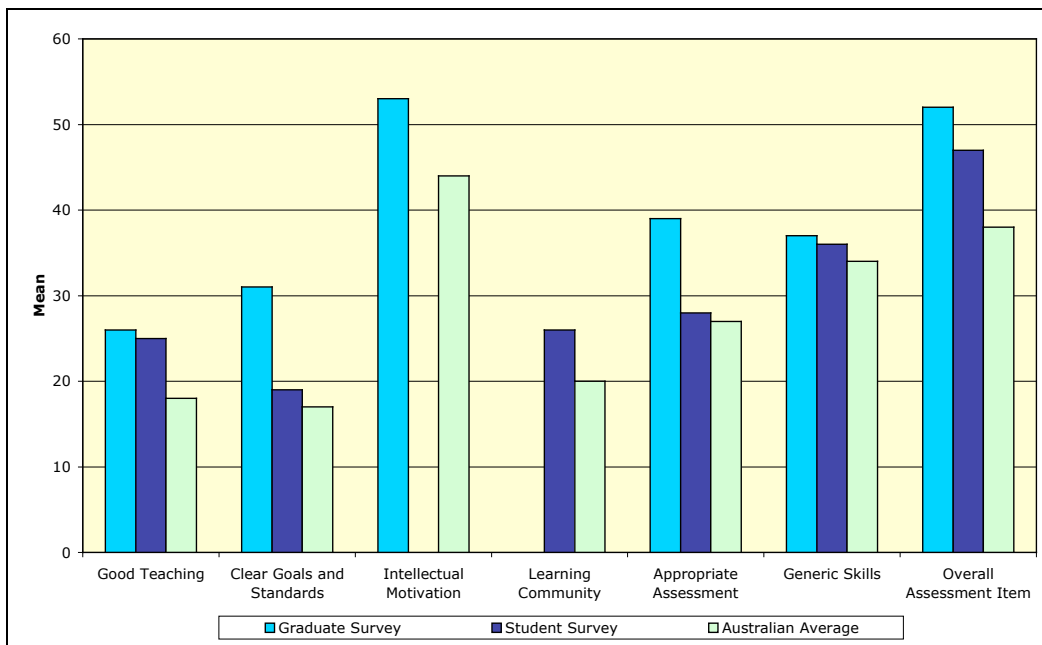
University Support Services

- Library ratings were generally good. Students were particularly happy with opening hours during semester weekdays, access to the library catalogue and helpfulness of library staff.
- Of most concern to library users was availability of study places, including group study rooms. Ratings also suggest this problem is getting worse, with much lower ratings this year than previously.
- Respondents were very happy with access to email and internet facilities around the University.
- Lecture rooms, tutorial rooms and laboratory spaces, as well as the provision of equipment in these, also rated very well.
- In the ITS area, respondents were most concerned about the availability of training in the use of computers and the availability of computer resource room supervisors, although the latter had improved compared to recent years.

- The campus environment was very well rated.
- Personal safety on campus also rated highly.
- Many administrative and support services rated very well, in particular residential halls and colleges; the helpfulness of administrative staff in departments and in the Student Information Centre; the Guide to Enrolment and Undergraduate Prospectus booklets; examination procedures; and the Student Health and Counselling service.
- Less well rated administrative and support services included childcare services; service from the Student Financial Advice Service; and, to a lesser extent career and course advice.
- It may be of some concern that access in matters of grievance (such as harassment and discrimination) rated relatively poorly.
- Postgraduate/Higher Degree administration in the research office showed the largest improvement of the administrative and support services compared to recent years.
- In terms of disabilities support, students with disabilities were least impressed with access to buildings, but very happy with support from the Disabilities Office.

Course Experiences

The chart below shows results for the Student and Graduate Opinion Surveys, compared to data from all Australian universities. Note that Australian graduates are surveyed relatively soon after graduation (approximately six months), while Otago graduates are surveyed 18 months to two years after graduation.



As the chart illustrates, ratings were very positive. In particular, Overall Assessment in both surveys, and Intellectual Motivation and Appropriate Assessment in the graduate survey, rated very highly. Generic skills also rated well, albeit closer to the Australian average.

The two main areas of concern identified by the surveys were feedback on student work, and (primarily in the student survey) clarity of expectations. Generally, trends compared to recent surveys were positive.

Postgraduate Supervision and Support

In terms of mean scores, Postgraduate Supervision and Support Results are generally very positive.

For supervision:

- Supervisor friendliness rated highest, followed by items relating to supervisor knowledge of, and interest in, the student's research area.
- The only supervision item that rated truly lowly was 'My supervisor discussed the University's guidelines on supervision with me'.
- Other items that were less well rated (at least comparatively) included items on the supervisor and student meeting regularly, the supervisor encouraging the planning of work and meeting of deadlines, and, in the graduate survey only, the supervisor encouraging seminar/conference presentations and publishing where appropriate.

For support:

- Ratings overall were lower than for supervision, particularly in the graduate survey.
- Highest rated were the University's provision of library services in the graduate survey, and the University's provision of library and technical services in the student survey.
- The lowest rated items related to the University's provision of financial support, plus induction into postgraduate study, including statement of the responsibilities of, and support available to, postgraduate students.

Course Outcomes

All measured attributes were applied more post-graduation than they were developed during study, with the exception of academic rigour.

The most developed attributes were:

- Written communication skills
- The skills to plan my own work
- Analytical skills
- Independent judgement

The most applied attributes were:

- The skills to plan my own work
- A willingness to learn
- Flexibility and adaptability
- The ability to solve problems

Overall, the areas that showed the largest difference between development and application were teamwork skills and oral communication skills, although both of these seem to be improving compared to previous years.