Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)

Students’ engagement with information and learning systems

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Australian Council for Educational Research
Distributed learning...

![Graph showing percentage of students studying part time or externally versus full time and on campus.]

- **Part time or external**: 87% study online, 13% no study online.
- **Full time and on campus**: 81% study online, 19% no study online.
Travelling, preparing...

- Preparing for class
- Travelling to campus

[Graph showing the distribution of hours spent traveling and preparing for class among students, with data points for 'None', '1 to 5', '6 to 10', '11 to 15', '16 to 20', '21 to 25', '26 to 30', 'Over 30' hours per week.]
Working for money…

![Bar chart showing full time students (per cent) working for money by hours per week for 2007 and 2008 off campus paid work, and 2008 on campus paid work.]

- 2007 off campus paid work
- 2008 off campus paid work
- 2008 on campus paid work

Hours per week:
- None
- 1 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 15
- 16 to 20
- 21 to 25
- 26 to 30
- Over 30

Full time students (per cent): 0 to 100
A focus on engagement
## Refocusing on students and their learning...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Capability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning processes</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Institution supports</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reputation</strong></td>
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### Learner Outcomes
- (1.II) The quality of instructional delivery
- (1.III) The output of educational institutions and institutional performance
- (1.IV) The overall performance of the education system

### Processes
- (2.IV) System-wide institutional settings, resource allocations, and policies

### Inputs
- (3.II) Student learning conditions and teacher working conditions
- (3.IV) The national educational, social, economic, and demographic contexts
‘Student engagement’ - the idea

- A student-centred perspective that reflects the wide range of academic and non-academic interactions that students have with university

- Two premises:
  1. Individuals learn and develop through behavioural, cognitive and affective involvement with key educational practices
  2. People learn and develop when staff and institutions provide support likely to encourage involvement

- Engagement measures provide ‘an index of whether students are engaging with university in ways likely to generate high-quality learning and development’
Research foundations

- Grounded by normative perspectives on learning and ‘student affairs’ and established via (mostly longitudinal) empirical research
- Interpretations of learning as constructive participation in university communities – Kuh, Astin, Pace, Tinto, etc…
- Based on the identification of activities and conditions linked with effective learning – Chickering and Gamson, Pace, Pascarella and Terenzini, Astin, Ewell, Kuh, Ramsden, etc…
- Reaction to alternative means of evaluating the quality of university education…
  - Institutional resources and reputations
  - Measures of research productivity
  - Measures of teaching quality and teacher qualifications
  - Student input, progression and output
The AUSSE - an overview

- AUSSE, SSES, POSSE, CLASSE, SSSSE…
- Collaboration about ‘engagement’ based on independent ‘living data’ collected by, for and with universities
- Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) measures research-based indicators
- Covert methodological agenda: carefully defined population frames; complex sampling; interpretive guidelines; experimental items; QA processes…
- Reports that facilitate data-driven monitoring and improvement
- Cross-institutional and cross-national comparisons: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, South Africa, Japan, China… AHELO…?
Six engagement-focused scales
- Academic Challenge
- Active Learning
- Student and Staff Interactions
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Work Integrated Learning

Six outcomes-focused measures
- Higher-order Thinking
- General Learning Outcomes
- General Development Outcomes
- Average Overall Grade
- Departure Intention
- Overall Satisfaction
AUSSE 2008 - general results

- Work Integrated Learning
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Student and Staff Interactions
- Active Learning
- Academic Challenge

Mean scale score

- USA 2008 later year
- USA 2008 first year
- AUSSE 2008
- AUSSE 2007
Engagement change across years

- Work Integrated Learning
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Student and Staff Interactions
- Active Learning
- Academic Challenge

Mean scale score

- Later year
- First year
Outcome measures - sample Australasian institutions...

- Overall Satisfaction
- Departure Intention
- Average Overall Grade
- General Development Outcomes
- General Learning Outcomes
- Higher Order Thinking

Graph showing mean scale scores for different outcomes across multiple institutions.
Challenge: Spending significant time on academic work

- **Very much**
  - USA students: 25.9%
  - All Australasian students: 25.9%
  - Australian or New Zealand domestic students: 24.9%
  - Australasian international students: 35.5%

- **Quite a bit**
  - USA students: 45.5%
  - All Australasian students: 50.7%
  - Australian or New Zealand domestic students: 43.8%
  - Australasian international students: 51.6%

- **Some**
  - USA students: 17%
  - All Australasian students: 21.2%
  - Australian or New Zealand domestic students: 20.4%
  - Australasian international students: 28.7%

- **Very little**
  - USA students: 2%
  - All Australasian students: 2.3%
  - Australian or New Zealand domestic students: 2.2%
  - Australasian international students: 2.7%
Never asked questions or contributed to discussions in class or online
Never made presentation in class
Never worked with students during class
Never worked with students outside class
Never tutored other students
Never participated in community-based project
Never discussed ideas from your classes with others

Participation in active forms of learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Later year (NSSE)</th>
<th>First year (NSSE)</th>
<th>Later year (AUSSE)</th>
<th>First year (AUSSE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never asked questions or contributed to discussions in class or online</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never made presentation in class</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never worked with students during class</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never worked with students outside class</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never tutored other students</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never participated in community-based project</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working with teaching staff

- Worked with teaching staff on activities other than coursework
  - USA later year: 22.0%
  - USA first year: 16.0%
  - Australasia later year: 8.1%
  - Australasia first year: 5.3%

- Received prompt written or oral feedback from teachers/tutors on your academic performance
  - USA later year: 64.0%
  - USA first year: 56.0%
  - Australasia later year: 40.3%
  - Australasia first year: 38.6%

- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with teaching staff outside class
  - USA later year: 29.0%
  - USA first year: 22.0%
  - Australasia later year: 13.2%
  - Australasia first year: 9.5%

- Talked about your career plans with teaching staff or advisors
  - USA later year: 42.0%
  - USA first year: 31.0%
  - Australasia later year: 9.8%
  - Australasia first year: 16.1%

- Discussed your grades or assignments with teaching staff
  - USA later year: 59.0%
  - USA first year: 50.0%
  - Australasia later year: 24.0%
  - Australasia first year: 18.1%
Participation in enriching experiences

- Independent study
  - USA later year: 4.0
  - USA first year: 18.0
  - Australasia later year: 2.6
  - Australasia first year: 7.6

- Culminating final-year experience
  - USA later year: 2.0
  - USA first year: 32.0
  - Australasia later year: 2.5
  - Australasia first year: 0.6

- Study abroad or student exchange
  - USA later year: 3.0
  - USA first year: 15.0
  - Australasia later year: 6.7
  - Australasia first year: 3.5

- Foreign language
  - USA later year: 16.5
  - USA first year: 41.0
  - Australasia later year: 14.3
  - Australasia first year: 16.5

- Learning community/study group
  - USA later year: 16.0
  - USA first year: 26.0
  - Australasia later year: 22.2
  - Australasia first year: 28.5

- Community service
  - USA later year: 14.0
  - USA first year: 38.0
  - Australasia later year: 27.0
  - Australasia first year: 38.0

- Practicum/internship
  - USA later year: 8.0
  - USA first year: 53.0
  - Australasia later year: 9.0
  - Australasia first year: 28.4
Feeling supported...

- **Relationships with other students**
- **Relationships with teaching staff**
- **Relationships with administrative personnel and services**

Bar chart showing the percentage of students feeling supported in different aspects across different levels of support.
Importance of campus climate (Little, 1975)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Cultivating/Enriching</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglecting</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Indulging</td>
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(Little, 1975)
The importance of a cultivating climate for engagement

- Work Integrated Learning
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Student and Staff Interactions
- Active Learning
- Academic Challenge

Scale mean score

(by definition)
The importance of a cultivating climate for outcomes

- Overall Satisfaction
- Departure Intention
- Average Overall Grade
- General Development Outcomes
- General Learning Outcomes
- Higher Order Thinking

Scale mean score

- Cultivating
- Training
- Indulging
- Neglecting
Use of library resources
Used library resources on campus or online by field of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Education</th>
<th>Frequency of participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Used library resources on campus or online by institution
Used library resources on campus or online - various student characteristics

- Domestic student
- International student
- Disability
- No disability
- 20 or over
- Under 20
- Female
- Male
- Later year
- First year

Frequency of participation
Used library resources on campus or online - various student characteristics

- Full time
- Part time
- ATSI
- Not equity student
- Low SES
- Not equity student
- Remote
- Provincial
- Metropolitan
- Language other than English
- English

Frequency of participation
Used library resources on campus or online - various student characteristics

- Lives on campus
- Lives off campus
- Some or all of study online
- No study online
- Full time and on campus
- Part time or external
- External-distance
- Campus-based

Frequency of participation
Used library resources on campus or online - link with engagement and outcomes

- Overall Satisfaction
- Average Overall Grade
- Departure Intention
- General Development Outcomes
- General Learning Outcomes
- Higher Order Thinking
- Work Integrated Learning
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Student and Staff Interactions
- Active Learning
- Academic Challenge

Correlation

Later year
First year
Converting insight into change
Promoting Student Engagement for Learning: Improving Practice with AUSSE Data

Developing student engagement

Jointly hosted by the University of Auckland and the Australian Council for Educational Research, and supported by Ako Aotearoa, the 2009 Student Engagement Forum focuses on the role student engagement plays in developing education in New Zealand universities.

It looks broadly at how evidence from surveys can be used to enhance practice and for quality improvement.

The forum will provide:
- background on student engagement
- advice on policies and practices for engaging students at your university
- guidance on using the data for leading change and development
- insights from national and international surveys.

Program

The day-long format allows for in-depth discussion of a wide range of topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>Arrival tea and coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:15</td>
<td>Forum opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Keynote: Using an evidence-based and institution-wide approach to enhancing university student engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professor Marcia Devlin, Deakin University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>Morning tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Interactive presentation: Leading students’ engagement – new messages from the AUSSE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Hamish Coates, AUSSE Director; Australian Council for Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Concurrent workshops: Using and communicating data on</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
Institution Report

Packaged presentation
Consistent approach
Validated reports
New methodologies
Suggestions for change
Beyond Happiness: Managing Engagement to Enhance Satisfaction and Grades

Universities collect a considerable amount of data on students’
Enhancing the Engagement of Distributed Learners

For much of the twentieth century it was conventional practice to distinguish between ‘on-campus’ and ‘external’ or ‘distance’ forms of higher education. This distinction has blurred both in theory and practice over the last few decades, with an increase in what may be referred to as ‘distributed’ forms of learning and higher education.
International engagements: The characteristics of international students’ engagement with university

Highlights

- Basic statistical analysis of the AUSSE scales show that there are relatively few differences between international and domestic students on measures of engagement.

- Within the international student cohort, later year students are more likely to feel engaged in their course than students in first year.

- Those international students who are
Engaging College Communities: The impact of residential colleges in Australian higher education

Highlights

- Students living in residential colleges are more likely than those in the general population to be younger, in their first year of study, from a provincial area, studying full time or an international student.

- Students living in residence are equally, and in many instances, more engaged than others, particularly in terms of participation in active living communities.
Developing institution-wide approaches to student engagement

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide considers how institutions might approach the development of institution-wide approaches to student engagement.

Responding to student needs

Building successful student engagement means building student perspectives into the way your institution organises to meet student needs. The starting point is students rather than institutional structures and procedures.

Student engagement rests, first, on the idea that students are independent learners with responsibility for managing their own learning. Second, it rests on the idea that a university has a responsibility to create an environment that supports and encourages students to manage their learning effectively. The selection of student engagement strategies is informed by considering how to allocate institutional resources so that creative and productive relationships are established between students, their learning journeys and the institution.

A key characteristic of effective student engagement is an integrated web of supportive institutional practices and functions. Establishing and maintaining that web involves identifying the potential for creative and productive links between practices and functions as diverse as career and employment services, student unions, course advice, learning support, study abroad, peer tutoring, faculty/department academic strategies for student engagement, the use of diagnostic assessment designs in the early part of semester; cafeteria hours – and so on.

Developing responsive strategies

The selection and development of strategies that promote such links will depend to a considerable extent on:

- academic and professional staff understanding the student approaches to supporting peer-to-peer interactions in both academic and social contexts.

The best means of securing a deeper understanding of student engagement will differ between and within universities. Specific professional development activity about student engagement may be necessary. It may assist if other professional development activities incorporate student engagement perspectives. Task-specific support may help – targeted and knowledgeable input on student engagement could be offered to a teaching team renewing first-year engineering subjects, or a group charged with developing a capstone subject in international development, or faculty course advisors evaluating the effectiveness of their service delivery over the past year.

Understanding student engagement data

Analysis and interpretation of AUSSE data will be instructive and influential if the principles of student engagement are widely shared. AUSSE data can be a key input to selecting strategies, and to their planning, monitoring and review.

Student engagement is a complex phenomenon. You will have access to other data that will support your inquiry and strategy selection – the AUSSE data of your benchmarking partners, retention data, student evaluations of teaching, perhaps you have data from a survey you conducted or focus groups on orientation activities or a work-integrated learning program. Your AUSSE data is a valuable resource that offers a particular and important perspective, but it will be one resource among many.
Enhancing interactions between students and staff

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide considers opportunities for extending interactions between staff and students outside class time.

Engaging students outside classes

Many academic and professional staff are generous with the time they commit to interacting with students.

The 2007 AUSSE results show that 21 per cent of students had worked with teaching staff on activities other than coursework. Some 44 per cent of students report talking about career plans with teaching staff or advisors.

The reverse of these figures, of course, is that 79 per cent of students hadn’t worked with staff on activities other than coursework, and 56 per cent of students had not discussed career plans with teaching staff or advisors. Yet the evidence suggests that high levels of student-staff interactions have positive effects on learning, motivation, persistence – on engagement.

Use AUSSE data to target wider engagement

When considering how to promote greater staff-student interaction it’s important to go beyond preconceptions that limit thinking and action. A common preconception is that many, or even most, students are rarely on campus. The presumed corollary is that because students are absent they have no time to interact with staff outside of class time. AUSSE data can provide a check on the veracity of opinions like these.

The 2007 AUSSE data indicate that around 22 per cent of domestic students, and 36 per cent of international students, spend more than 10 hours a week on campus outside class time. Students are on campus – indeed, 12 per cent of domestic students, and 22 per cent of international students, spend more than 20 hours a week on campus in face-to-face interactions with academic staff.

Use AUSSE data to review existing strategies

Often the challenge is to make existing engagement strategies work more effectively.

It may be that 30 per cent of your first year students in management and commerce answered either ‘often’ or ‘very often’ to the item ‘Discussed your grades or assignments with teaching staff’. You need to decide if that percentage is a good outcome, or too low. You might investigate further and find that though all lecturers and tutors have scheduled hours for student consultations, very few students make use of the opportunity. You may find that first year students feel uncomfortable about taking up the opportunity – they may not know anyone else who has done so, they may be uncertain what happens during a consultation, they may be unsure about the benefits of a consultation. You can then begin to think about specific actions that might encourage students to take advantage of the opportunity by lessening anxiety. A description provided in a lecture or tutorial perhaps, or a testimonial report from students who have scheduled a consultation, or email to all students a video clip of a consultation accessible on the university’s learning management system.

Developing informal engagement strategies

Student-staff interactions are often thought of in formal terms like scheduled consultations about assessment tasks mentioned above. Such opportunities are fundamental to good learning.

It’s also useful to consider how informal interactions can become a larger part of the student experience. Opportunities for informal interactions open up social possibilities for conversation across a wide...
Broadening staff involvement in student learning

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide suggests how teachers could broaden their involvement in student learning activities beyond lectures and tutorials.

Teaching within the boundaries of coursework

AUSSE data can be a key input to reviewing entire courses, revising assessment designs for first year students, or revising feedback practice in a single subject. The data show a clear link between student satisfaction and learning experiences that are challenging, enriching and supportive. Exploring your AUSSE data with these things in mind – support, challenge and enrichment – can suggest areas for extension or improvement.

There is, for example, a strong correlation in the AUSSE data between satisfaction and positive responses to the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) item ‘Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations’. Improving the proportion of positive responses to this item could involve a minor, or a major review of case studies and set tutorial problems. You can explore options that go beyond the classroom in pursuit of enhancing student engagement. For example, you could design assessment tasks that can be completed through voluntary activities with community organisations, or in work placements.

This kind of change is valuable in its own right.

Teaching beyond the boundaries of coursework

The challenge this Enhancement Guide proposes is to broaden your teacherly involvement with students beyond the familiar boundaries of coursework and classroom. The challenge is to see learning and your role in supporting learning in a wider context.

The SEQ includes the item ‘Received prompt written or oral feedback from teachers on your academic performance’. Feedback practice need not be limited to conventional activities like oral feedback on a group tutorial presentation, or written feedback on an assessment task. You can help students by:

- assist in editorial activities related to academic journals such as layout, close checking of reference lists to ensure they conform with the relevant style, cross-checking in-text references with reference lists
- assist with translation of documents related to academic research
- introduce the speakers at every public lecture, and offer the vote of thanks
- play a substantial role in promoting the study of science and mathematics in primary and secondary schools as part of the university's community engagement activities.

Such roles do require preparation and guidance from academic and professional staff. Developing these roles as ongoing activities in your subject, department or faculty will lead to a growing fund of knowledge about how to structure preparation and guidance efficiently. Inevitably, those students who take on such roles can become part of the training effort for students who follow them. And inevitably there will be successes and some stumbles – that’s the learning life.

Benefits of broadening staff involvement in student learning

The activities and roles are examples of structured learning experiences that deliver challenge and enrichment along with support. They can contribute to the development of a range of employability skills – communication, problem solving, teamwork, use of technology, self-management, using initiative. The activities they undertake, and the skills they develop, can be recorded in e-portfolios and appear on resumes.

AUSSE data records a link between student satisfaction and the development of knowledge and skills that improve employability. Just as importantly, such roles are likely to enhance the quality of
Establishing student expectations

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide suggests how institutions might approach negotiating and meeting students’ expectations in ways that help them manage their learning.

Expectations make a difference

Students who complete the AUSSE Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) will respond to the questionnaire items with expectations in mind. They will use those expectations as a standard against which to assess aspects of student engagement in your university or your faculty.

Your AUSSE results will be positive if you meet or exceed the expectations they have in mind. If their expectations are not met, your AUSSE results may be disappointing.

Managing expectations

The most productive way to deal with student expectations is to address them on an ongoing basis through your quality improvement cycle. To be confident you are meeting student expectations you need to constantly review your understanding of them.

Students need to understand your perspective. If you build regular dialogue and feedback opportunities into your quality improvement plans, you also create opportunities to explain what you can do and are planning to do. You can also explain why there are some things you can’t do reasonably or quickly. If your explanation is sound, your students will adjust their expectations. If there are no opportunities for dialogue and feedback, then the process of adjusting expectations is less likely to be productive.

Incorporating SEQ items into your quality improvement cycle

- Do you check that communication about these expectations is understood? How do you know that students clearly understand what is being communicated?
- Do teachers, learning support staff and other professional staff reinforce the same expectations?
- Do all staff ask students for ideas about how this kind of expectation might be met?
- Do you let students know how you are responding to their feedback on the ideas they offer?

Because you know what items are on the SEQ, you can structure your quality improvement plans and activities so that each item is covered appropriately. If items are not covered:
- you can adjust your processes, practices and plans
- you can build extra checks into your quality improvement cycle to ensure your processes, practices and plans are effective.

Keeping it manageable

Your processes, practices and plans will usually deal with all the items on the SEQ. But you won’t need a separate process, practice or plan for every SEQ item.

Perhaps you provide a student guide to all students before semester commences. A student guide would usually make clear statements about expectations in a particular subject or course. These expectations might include statements about the need for each student to support other students in completing assessment tasks, or to seek support from other students when tackling an assessment task.
Benchmarking for continuous improvement

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide provides information on steps institutions can take to pursue evidence-based continuous improvement.

Benchmarking approaches

Benchmarking can deepen your analysis and interpretation of AUSSE data. You can benchmark your AUSSE data in two main ways:
- criterion-referenced benchmarking
- norm-referenced benchmarking

Benchmarking can occur via face-to-face discussions with benchmarking partners. You could benchmark using email or by teleconference. Benchmarking discussions might take two hours a year, or ten. You decide what is appropriate.

Benchmarking activities offer opportunities to involve your students in the collection and analysis of data.

Criterion-referenced benchmarking

Criterion-referenced benchmarking involves establishing a target. Usually the target is either:
- a specified minimum outcome
- an outcome you aspire to.

For example, the AUSSE’s Student and Staff Interactions scale asks students to assess the level and nature of their contact with teaching staff. AUSSE data for your institution or faculty may show that 25% of first year students report they ‘often’ or ‘very often’ have good contact with teaching staff. You might decide – perhaps as part of a first year strategy – that 50% is a preferred result on the Student and Staff Interactions Scale. By nominating the preferred outcome – in this case, 50% – you establish a criterion, a benchmark you aspire to. Against

Benchmarking partnerships

Your university or faculty may already have benchmarking arrangements with one or more partners. It may be a matter of participating in existing arrangements more actively, or of extending the benchmarking arrangements to include AUSSE data.

Benchmarking relies on the willingness of benchmarking partners to share AUSSE data. As the data belong to your institution, you decide which results to share. Initially, you might agree to share only scale results rather than results for each survey item. You might decide to share only results for the Academic Challenge Scale and the Staff Interactions Scale. As confidence grows, you can agree to share more.

It’s especially helpful to compare results over time. To this end, benchmarking partnerships are usually long-term arrangements.

Benchmarking agreements

Benchmarking partners usually establish a benchmarking agreement that governs important benchmarking arrangements.

A benchmarking agreement can cover matters such as:
- confidentiality of your shared AUSSE data
- confidentiality of the discussions you have about the data
- how you will conduct benchmarking with your partners
- when you will schedule benchmarking activities.

Selecting benchmarking partners
Learning about student engagement

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide covers a few different ways in which you can learn about student engagement.

Analysing AUSSE quantitative data

A first step you might consider to learn more about student engagement is to consider the AUSSE quantitative data for your institution. These data tell a story about student engagement within your institution.

Look at both the mean scores achieved in individual items and on each of the six scales. This information will provide a quick snapshot of student engagement at your institution. It may be valuable to compare the student engagement of different groups of students - for example, compare the results achieved by international versus domestic students, first- versus final-year students or on-campus and off-campus students to get a better understanding of student engagement.

For an even clearer picture of student engagement within your institution, it is important to consider the contexts or situations which impact upon student engagement. Also tracking the results achieved in the AUSSE survey over several years will further deepen understanding of student engagement at your institution.

You may also wish to compare the AUSSE data with other indicators of student engagement and satisfaction, including retention data, student quality of teaching surveys, graduate surveys or other relevant data. Comparisons can also be made against relevant criteria or internal expectations of results and also against Australasian results.

The standard AUSSE data file is provided in SPSS 15.0 format and includes codes and labels which institutions can use to further manage and analyse their own data. A file containing basic syntax is also provided to assist in the preparation and analysis of the data. The data partnership of 10 Australian universities in 2003 and distributed free of charge, with a user manual and training, to all Australian universities in 2004 and 2005. The tool can identify those components of university experience that students themselves see as most (or least) engaging them in productive learning, both at an overall institution level and for different fields of tertiary education. It can help produce a framework to enable the use of these findings to improve the quality of learning design, course delivery, student support and assessment in university learning programs along with their associated support services, administrative systems and infrastructure.

The software can be used to automatically classify respondent written comments provided on the SEQ into 5 main domains (Outcomes, Staff, Course Design, Assessment, and Support) and 26 sub-domains using a custom-tailored dictionary. Further, users can undertake a wide range of customised analyses against any of the variables gathered in the SEQ (university, field of education, qualification, fees, sex, age, mode and type of attendance, etc.), as well as SEQ quantitative results. There is also a custom search facility to be employed when a more detailed analysis of themes within a sub-domain is needed. Finally, the dictionary itself can be modified.

CEQuery is distributed by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA). For further information, please contact GCA on +61 3 9605 3700 or info@graduatecareers.com.au.

Discussions about AUSSE results and student engagement
Engaging students in the AUSSE

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide outlines a cyclic approach to managing the AUSSE and suggests ideas for engaging students in key aspects of the feedback process.

AUSSE – year round, rather than once a year

Achieving your target response rate is crucial. Achieving the target delivers sufficient data to support reliable analysis and interpretation. This means you have a valid input to performance monitoring, to planning change, and to monitoring the impact of changes you introduce.

Securing your target AUSSE response rate relies on a cyclic approach to survey management. Success in reaching or exceeding your target relies on the steps you take between each administration of the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ). It’s important to run a campaign in the weeks before the SEQ is distributed through to the deadline for completing it. This campaign is best regarded as the last stage in the cyclic process.

Designing, managing, monitoring and evaluating an annual AUSSE cycle is done most efficiently by an identified task group involving stakeholders and including representatives of those who use the data. It’s important to evaluate the effectiveness of your campaigns so you can focus your efforts in future promotional campaigns on the strategies that are most effective.

Involving students and staff year round

The AUSSE itself can provide a valuable means of broadening student engagement. Most elements of your AUSSE cycle offer opportunities to involve students directly. For example, students could be involved in designing and conducting an evaluation of your AUSSE promotion materials, or helping design a project to collect feedback.

Communicating about AUSSE year round

Research tells us that people are more likely to respond to surveys if they believe that:
- the outcomes will benefit them, or will benefit an organisation they care about
- their voice matters and will be heard
- the survey process is conducted in a consistent, valid and transparent way.

This knowledge suggests students will be encouraged to respond to the AUSSE if you let them know how your university, faculty or department is using the data. Tell them about how AUSSE data has informed changes to things like teaching practice, orientation programs, curriculum design, learning support services or online delivery.

Communicate both small and big changes.

What to communicate to students can be revealed by answers to questions like:
- What has changed about the way we do things around here, based on our analysis of AUSSE data?
- What has improved?
- What opportunities have we created?
- What problems have we resolved, in whole or in part?
- What are the benefits of these changes to students?

It can be helpful to frame your communication in ways that are of direct interest to particular groups of students. If changes you have made are perceived to only affect a minority group, for
Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)

Students’ engagement with information and learning systems

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