Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)

Engaging international students for success

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Australian Council for Educational Research
Institutional emphasis on helping students cope with non-academic responsibilities...

- **Very little**: 33% International student, 42% Domestic student
- **Some**: 46% International student, 37% Domestic student
- **Quite a bit**: 19% International student, 14% Domestic student
- **Very much**: 6% International student, 3% Domestic student

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**Highlights**

1. 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.

2. Students living in residence are equally and in many instances, more engaged than others, particularly in terms of participation in active...
Time spent on campus...

Distributed learning...
Travelling, preparing...

- Graph showing the percentage of students per hour worked:
  - Preparing for class:
    - None: 0%
    - 1 to 5: 2%
    - 6 to 10: 9%
    - 11 to 15: 16%
    - 16 to 20: 28%
    - >26: 34%
  - Travelling to campus:
    - None: 0%
    - 1 to 5: 2%
    - 6 to 10: 10%
    - 11 to 15: 16%
    - 16 to 20: 26%
    - >26: 53%

Working for money...

- Graph showing the percentage of full-time students per hour worked:
  - 2007 off campus paid work:
    - None: 0%
    - 1 to 5: 30%
    - 6 to 10: 10%
    - 11 to 15: 10%
    - 16 to 20: 10%
    - >26: 10%
  - 2008 off campus paid work:
    - None: 0%
    - 1 to 5: 20%
    - 6 to 10: 10%
    - 11 to 15: 10%
    - 16 to 20: 10%
    - >26: 10%
  - 2008 on campus paid work:
    - None: 0%
    - 1 to 5: 20%
    - 6 to 10: 10%
    - 11 to 15: 10%
    - 16 to 20: 10%
    - >26: 10%
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.

A focus on engagement
**Highlights**

- Overall satisfaction varies across student groups, and is comparatively low for international students, students in their mid 20s, and people studying management and commerce and information technology.

- All aspects of student engagement are positively related to students’ overall satisfaction.

**Beyond Happiness: Managing Engagement to Enhance Satisfaction and Grades**

Universities collect a considerable amount of data on students’ satisfaction.

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**World class academic outcomes**

- New quality and regulatory standards
- Performance funding

Australia currently lags behind our competitors on a number of student satisfaction indicators and education outcomes. To improve standards and outcomes, the Government will invest $20 million over two years to introduce performance funding from 2012.

- The Government will set target performance outcomes across teaching and learning engagement and research engagement, with research performance linked to the targets. TESSA will provide an independent assessment of whether agreed performance targets have been met.

**Australian Survey of Student Engagement 2007**
Refocusing on students and their learning...

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<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Institution</td>
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<td>Context</td>
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<td>(3.IV) The national educational, social, economic, and demographic contexts</td>
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'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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USA 2008 later year</th>
<th>USA 2008 first year</th>
<th>AUSSE 2008</th>
<th>AUSSE 2007</th>
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<td>Work Integrated Learning</td>
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<td>Academic Challenge</td>
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Mean scale score

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70
Engagement change across years

Outcome measures – sample Australasian institutions...
Challenge: Spending significant time on academic work

Participation in active forms of learning
Working with teaching staff

- Worked with teaching staff on activities other than coursework
- Received prompt written or oral feedback from teachers/tutors on your academic performance
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with teaching staff outside class
- Talked about your career plans with teaching staff or advisors
- Discussed your grades or assignments with teaching staff

Participation in enriching experiences

- Independent study
- Culminating final-year experience
- Study abroad or student exchange
- Foreign language
- Learning community/study group
- Community service
- Practicum/internship

Per cent

USA later year
USA first year
Australasia later year
Australasia first year
Feeling supported...

Importance of campus climate (Little, 1975)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
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</table>
| H        | Cultivating/Enriching | L
| L        | Neglecting | L
| H        | Indulging  | H

Australian International Education Conference 2009
www.aiec.idp.com
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

(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

(by definition)
International engagements: The characteristics of international students’ engagement with university

Highlights

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

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

3. Those international students who are
A perspective on international students

- Looking beyond ‘happiness’ at the foundations of high-quality education
- Insights from 2008 AUSSE:
  - 1,750 (578 first-year and 992 later-year) international students at Australian universities
  - 426 international students at New Zealand universities
  - 16,226 international students at USA universities
- Insights from 2009 AUSSE
  - 3,189 international students
  - Links with China, Japan, Canada, USA, New Zealand, Mexico, South Africa
  - Off-shore administrations

Engagement scale scores for international students by family education background

![Graph showing engagement scale scores for international students by family education background.](image-url)
Engagement scale scores for international students by field of education

Engagement scale scores for first-year international students by country
Engagement scale scores for later-year international students by country

International students worked with others during class ‘very often’
Engagement scale scores for all international students by country and year level

Engagement scale scores – first-year international/domestic students
Engagement scale scores – first-year international/domestic students

**Scale scores**
- Academic Challenge
- Active Learning
- Student and Staff Interactions
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Learning Environment

**Later year International student**
- 55.0
- 46.2
- 38.1
- 25.0
- 20.0

**Later year Domestic student**
- 51.0
- 44.0
- 35.0
- 23.0
- 19.0

USA – Australian international/domestic scale score differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>SSI</th>
<th>EEE</th>
<th>SLE</th>
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<td><strong>International students</strong></td>
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<td>First year</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Later year</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>14.4</td>
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<td><strong>Domestic students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Later year</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>International – domestic students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Later year</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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AC for first-year USA international students 8.8 points higher than AC for first-year Australian international students

Difference between USA/Australian international students 1.9 points higher than difference between USA/Australian domestic students
Key insights...

International students in USA universities have higher levels of engagement with their institution when compared to international students enrolled in Australasian universities.

The largest difference between USA and Australian international students was related to student and staff interactions.

The growth in engagement with their institution between first and later year students among the international cohort is more prominent among those enrolled in USA than those in Australia (or New Zealand).

Among Australasian higher education students the international student group on average have higher levels of engagement than domestic students.

When compared cross-nationally, the engagement score difference between international students in Australasia and international in the USA is larger than the gap between domestic students from these countries.

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.

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.

8:45  Arrival tea and coffee
9:15  Forum opening
9:30  Keynote: Using an evidence-based and institution-wide approach to enhancing university student engagement
     Professor Marja Davis, Deakin University
10:45  Morning tea
11:00  Interactive presentation: Leading students' engagement – new messages from the AUSSE
     Dr Harsh Chadha, AUSSE Director
     Australian Council for Educational Research
12:30  Lunch
13:30  Concurrent workshops: Usage and communication data on...
Overview
Patterns and trends
Educational theme
Suggestions for change

Engaging Students for Success
Australasian Student Engagement Report
Australasian Survey of Student Engagement

Developing institution-wide approaches to student engagement
The 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 organizes 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/departmental 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 on 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

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 had not 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 10 hours a week on campus outside class time.

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’ 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 some 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 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 relieving anxiety. A description provided in a lecture or tutorial perhaps or a thematic 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 or 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 interaction mean on social occasions for conversations across a wide.

Broadening staff involvement in student learning

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 teachery 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 ‘Was invited to 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 could contribute to the development of a range of employability skills — communication, problem solving, teamwork, use of technology, self-management using initiatives 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 these 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 can create opportunities to explain what you can and are planning to do. You can also explain why there are some things you can't do on a regular or timely basis. 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 for each item 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 assessment tasks. Where

**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 approaches can be face-to-face discussions with benchmarking partners. You could conduct online or phone conferences. 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 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 'believe 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 focusing on the preferred outcome – in this case, 50% – you establish a criterion a benchmark you aspire to. Against
Learning about student engagement

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

Analyzing 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 the level 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 Australian 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 we 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 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.

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 cyclical 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 cyclical 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 campaign 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 broading 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 campaign outcomes as part of your student services role or involvement.

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.

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 do not directly impact the particular group you are targeting, perhaps consider using a more general message.
Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)

Engaging international students for success

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