

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

### Course Experience Questionnaire 2004

#### **Purpose**

This document, presented for the information of Council, provides a brief summary of University outcomes from the 2004 Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ). CEQ outcomes are used extensively as a measure of performance in teaching and learning.

#### **Background**

The CEQ is a 31-item questionnaire which is given to all students who complete an award course in a given year, to elicit their views about various aspects of the course they have just completed. For reporting purposes, responses are normally reduced to the following dimensions or scales, three of which are compulsory:

- GTS, Good teaching scale (compulsory)
- CGS, Clear goals and standards scale
- GSS, Generic skills scale (compulsory)
- IMS, Intellectual motivation scale
- LCS, Learning community scale
- LRS, Learning resources scale
- OSI, Overall satisfaction (compulsory)

CEQ results are used extensively by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Technology (DEST) to report on national outcomes. DEST also uses CEQ outcomes as part of the recently introduced Institutional Assessment Framework (and prior to this, the annual Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan), to assess how well individual institutions are performing. Results are also used by individual institutions in benchmarking with other institutions. Commercial publications such as *The Good Universities Guide* also use CEQ outcomes to inform prospective students of graduates' views of their previous study.

CEQ results are used in a number of ways internally. Individual departments and faculties request results for specific or general fields of study to assess teaching and learning in their discipline area, and to identify potential areas of concern among students. Results are also used in faculties' annual operational performance reviews as part of a range of indicators to assess teaching and learning. As described in the University's Teaching and Learning Management Plan, CEQ outcomes are also used internally as a performance incentive to reward teaching excellence, whereby faculties can be awarded a bonus of up to 1% of their budget allocation for coursework programs on the basis of a ranking in the top 25% nationally of the CEQ *Overall satisfaction index*.

The 2004 report has been discussed by TALQAC and Academic Board, and has been distributed to all departments and faculties. Verbatim comments are being compiled and sorted for circulation to all relevant areas.

#### **Summary of 2004 outcomes**

1. Although the overall trend over the last five years shows an increase in core scale means, there is no significant increase in 2004 results over 2003 results. The main change over time has been over the period 2001-2003, when there were significant improvements in the *Good teaching* and *Generic skills* scale means. The 2004 *Good teaching* scale mean for Bachelor graduates stands at 3.39, and shows no change from 2003 (3.38), but is substantially higher than the 3.20 mean achieved in 2000.

2. The *Good teaching*, *Learning community*, and *Clear goals and standards* scales are the weakest of the University's ratings. Particular items from these three scales which show higher levels of disagreement are those relating to feedback and comments from, and

understanding of, staff (GTS), standards of work and expectations made of students (CGS), and their engagement with the university community (LCS).

3. Undergraduate ratings are considerably stronger on *Generic skills* (3.75), *Intellectual motivation* (3.98), *Learning resources* (3.73) and *Overall satisfaction* (3.86). A high percentage of Bachelor graduates agreed that their course sharpened their analytic skills (80%), and that their studies were intellectually stimulating (79%). Three quarters of Bachelor graduates reported they were satisfied overall with the quality of their course, with less than 10% disagreeing.

4. Scale mean scores for postgraduate coursework graduates are also unchanged from the previous year, although there have been gradual improvements in the *Learning community* scale mean (from 3.38 in 2002 to 3.48 in 2004). Postgraduate ratings are generally more positive than those of undergraduates, although they tend to rate *Generic skills* lower.

5. Overall trend from 1999/2000 to 2004 for both undergraduates and postgraduate coursework graduates shows increased scale means, particularly for *Good teaching*, *Generic skills* and *Learning community* – this last especially from postgraduates (Table 1).

**Table 1 CEQ scale means, 1999-2004**

		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Bachelor graduates</b>							
Good teaching	Mean	3.19	3.20	3.22	3.31	3.38	3.39
	Std. Deviation	0.84	0.84	0.82	0.78	0.79	0.76
	N	3383	2458	2368	2755	3466	3192
Generic skills	Mean	3.55	3.59	3.61	3.72	3.76	3.75
	Std. Deviation	0.70	0.68	0.67	0.69	0.69	0.67
	N	3385	2457	2368	2756	3464	3191
Clear goals and standards	Mean	3.35	3.37	3.38			3.37
	Std. Deviation	0.79	0.78	0.78			0.76
	N	3382	2460	2368			2987
Intellectual motivation	Mean				3.97	4.00	3.98
	Std. Deviation				0.81	0.79	0.78
	N				2756	3463	3189
Learning community	Mean				3.33	3.40	3.40
	Std. Deviation				0.78	0.77	0.75
	N				2749	3458	3179
Learning resources	Mean				3.67	3.72	3.73
	Std. Deviation				0.69	0.67	0.65
	N				2749	3458	3188
Overall satisfaction	Mean	3.76	3.83	3.81	3.83	3.86	3.86
	Std. Deviation	1.03	0.94	0.95	0.94	0.95	0.92
	N	3362	2450	2365	2743	3456	3170
<b>Postgraduate coursework graduates</b>							
Good teaching	Mean	3.34	3.40	3.38	3.47	3.52	3.52
	Std. Deviation	0.82	0.82	0.83	0.84	0.84	0.85
	N	1205	973	784	1046	1550	1359
Generic skills	Mean	3.42	3.50	3.51	3.64	3.60	3.62
	Std. Deviation	0.76	0.72	0.72	0.78	0.80	0.77
	N	1205	973	784	1046	1550	1359
Clear goals and standards	Mean	3.42	3.46	3.47			3.42
	Std. Deviation	0.82	0.82	0.83			0.88
	N	1206	973	784			1212
Intellectual motivation	Mean				4.00	3.98	4.03
	Std. Deviation				0.86	0.88	0.85
	N				1046	1550	1359

Table 1 cont'd

		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Learning community	Mean				3.38	3.43	3.48
	Std. Deviation				0.82	0.82	0.80
	N				1042	1548	1355
Learning resources	Mean				3.66	3.68	3.72
	Std. Deviation				0.74	0.74	0.72
	N				1042	1548	1359
Overall satisfaction	Mean	3.75	3.84	3.72	3.85	3.83	3.85
	Std. Deviation	1.00	0.96	1.06	1.00	1.03	1.03
	N	1201	970	784	1039	1540	1355

6. The breakdown of results by various demographic indicators suggests that, consistent with previous years' outcomes, females tend to rate *Good teaching* and *Intellectual motivation* more highly than males, that older graduates rate almost all scales higher than younger graduates, and that those continuing with further study (for example to honours or higher degree level) tend to rate their course experience more highly than those who do not (for example those who complete a pass degree). As we have found in previous years, there are large field of study differences, most noticeably for *Good teaching*, which can be demonstrated by faculty outcomes which show that scale means in some fields (for example, in the humanities) are consistently higher than in others (for example in engineering and technology).

7. Comments received with the 2004 CEQ have been analysed using a specially designed software, *CEQuery*, made available to all participating universities through the Graduate Careers Council of Australia. Analysis of the comments showed that the broad issue most often mentioned by students related to various aspects of the design of their course such as course methods, flexibility and structure, its relevance to work, life or the discipline, and links between practice and theory. These comments accounted for about one-third of all coded issues and were generally more negative than positive.

The second most cited broad issue related to the teaching staff, and included issues such as the quality of staff teaching skills, their accessibility and practical experience. This group of comments made up about 27% of all comments and were, on the whole, more favourable than comments relating to their course.

Students also commented frequently and negatively on the support they received and the community of staff and students (20%); less frequently but positively on their skill development (13%); and very negatively on assessment (5%). Coded comments on students' overall satisfaction with the course and the prestige of the University made up 3% of total hits and were highly positive.

Changes in CEQ ratings over time have been gradual, and were most noticeable in the period 2001-2002. This year's results show no improvement in scale means, but also show no substantive decrease in scale means. While the CEQ questions capture important and useful information about students' experience, the analysis of comments shows other dimensions of students' experience, particularly course design, not always explained by the quantitative data. A reading of both analyses together provides an opportunity for departments and faculties to better understand students' experiences of their course, and take steps to improve the quality of their learning experience.

#### Proponent/author

Ian Marshman

Senior Vice-Principal