

MEDIA RELEASE

Check your inbox and have your say, university students urged

14 August 2012: Students at Australian universities are being urged to check their inbox for a valuable invitation to have their say on the quality of their university experience, in what is set to be the nation's largest ever survey of higher education.

The University Experience Survey (UES) is gathering feedback from around 400 000 first-year and final-year students from 40 universities on how active and engaged they are in learning, the support they experience from teachers and universities, and the degree to which they develop skills and knowledge.

The UES is an Australian Government initiative. The Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education appointed a consortium led by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to administer the 2012 UES.

National Union of Students (NUS) President, Donherra Walmsley, has urged students to complete the survey.

"This is the only opportunity for students to tell the government about the quality of their experience at university directly," said Ms Walmsley.

"Unlike other surveys, the results of the UES will be publicly available on the MyUniversity website, so that potential students can make informed decisions about which university they choose to attend.

"NUS hopes that the publication of the survey results online will drive universities to work harder to ensure they're delivering a quality experience for all students," she said.

ACER's Higher Education Research Director, Associate Professor Hamish Coates, said results from the 2011 pilot of the UES revealed the majority of students rated the overall quality of teaching they had experienced as 'good' (51.4 per cent) or 'excellent' (31.1 per cent), while smaller proportions of students rated it 'fair' (14.3 per cent) or 'poor' (3.2 per cent). Most students (around 90 per cent) said their study improved their knowledge of the field, and also that it improved work-related knowledge and skills such as verbal communication skills.

"But results do vary across courses, institutions, student groups and people, and this is why your response really counts," said Associate Professor Coates.

The confidential survey is being administered online to a sample of first-year and final-year students, including domestic and international onshore students, in all 37 public institutions as well as in participating private institutions.

Council of International Students Australia President, Mr Aleem Nizari, has also urged students to check their inbox and complete the survey.

"International students come to Australia with great expectations of high quality education. The UES survey will help us identify the sectors' weaknesses and improve them such that the students are satisfied with their overall experience at their institution," said Mr Nizari.

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Improving Learning

Students selected to participate in the UES will be contacted between July and September. Their involvement will help universities and governments to improve the student experience by: enhancing lectures, labs and tutorials; recognising and rewarding good quality teaching; and improving libraries, computer labs and student spaces. Students who complete the survey are also eligible to win one of the various prizes offered by their university.

A report on the 2012 survey is due for release in December.

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Media enquiries:

Megan Robinson, ACER Corporate Communications

p: (03) 9277 5582

m: 0419 340 058

e: communications@acer.edu.au