

MEDIA RELEASE

STRICTLY EMBARGOED to 12.01AM AEST WEDNESDAY 5 OCTOBER 2016

Strong student-lecturer relationships reduce university drop out in Australia and Japan

5 October 2016: New research into students' university experience reveals that both Australian and Japanese students are more likely to complete their university degree if they have strong relationships with lecturers.

The research, using a survey to develop benchmarks across universities in different countries, was undertaken jointly by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and the Kawaijuku Group. The survey, based on the University Experience Survey developed by ACER for the Australian Government in 2011, focuses on aspects of students' experience that are measurable, and link to learning and development outcomes.

Dr Daniel Edwards, ACER Principal Research Fellow and a co-author of a *Joining the Dots* research briefing about the study, said, "Both Australian and Japanese university students are less likely to consider dropping out of university if they have strong relationships with teaching staff who are helpful and approachable."

The analysis also reveals substantial differences between Australian and Japanese student responses.

"Survey results show that Australian university students express substantially greater satisfaction with the levels of skills development, learner engagement, teaching quality, student support and learning resources they experience.

"Yet, while previous studies have shown a link between lower levels of engagement and stronger intentions for early departure, Japanese students are much less likely to consider leaving university early than their Australian counterparts," Dr Edwards said.

Japanese students' apparent lower level of engagement may, however, simply be the result of cross-cultural differences in survey response patterns, Dr Edwards said.

"Various research studies of cross-cultural differences have found that Japanese survey respondents typically select neutral or slightly negative responses on a four- or five-point scale."

The joint ACER and Kawaijuku Group research, which attracted participation from 19 universities and 7000 students in Japan, indicates there is significant potential for the use of a common survey instrument across countries to better understand the factors that engage students, improve learning and increase completions.

"ACER and the Kawaijuku Group are undertaking a larger and more representative Japanese study in 2016-17. More detailed analysis and benchmarking will enable us to draw more generalisable conclusions and develop a more comprehensive international perspective on the student experience," Dr Edwards said.

"Understanding Australian and Japanese students' university experience and how this intersects with their achievement gives us another tool for better understanding the factors that most strongly affect student outcomes."

Joining the Dots is a resource developed by ACER for those with an interest in Australian higher education. Details available at www.acer.edu.au/jtd or by emailing highereducation@acer.edu.au

*****ENDS*****

Media enquiries: Steve Holden, 03 9277 5582 or 0419 340 058 communications@acer.edu.au