

# 2019 National student wellbeing survey



Study Life and Wellbeing  
insight from Australian  
university students



Study supported by:

**Studiosity**

Thanks to all the students who participated in this study, the Studiosity Academic Advisory Board, Studiosity's Chief Academic Officer Professor Judyth Sachs, and all university staff who help students every day to feel better about - and more capable of - succeeding with their studies.

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# Foreword

Dear Educator

In the space of just a few weeks, from mid-June to early July, the higher education sector in Australia received two wake-up calls from the federal government. First was the Productivity Commission's long-anticipated investigation "The Demand Driven System: A Mixed Report Card." Then, shortly thereafter, the Minister for Education released draft legislation criminalising the activities of commercial essay mills.

The PC's report contained a number of findings about the impact of the Demand Driven System and the Widening Participation agenda that underpinned it. Among them:

- Additional students arrive at university with lower ATARs and weaker literacy and numeracy skills. Moreover, and not surprisingly, these additional students struggle more at uni, are more likely to drop out, and also have a more difficult transition to full-time, paid employment.
- "The incentives for universities to manage drop-out risks are weak. By and large, universities' incentives are to enrol more students. In many courses (particularly those without a laboratory component), the incremental costs of enrolling an additional student are low compared with the per-student revenue. *This imperative for growth has not necessarily aligned with the needs of the student, nor the needs of Australian society and the economy*". (emphasis added) (p.16)
- Based on the evidence, there is a "role for greater support for students to either build the skills required to succeed or exit early." (p.31) A well-designed policy would push universities to find ways to improve student skills to give them the best chance of success, or to "fail fast" so as to avoid incurring too much debt ("debt and regret" - the worst of all outcomes).
- *"The high dropout rate for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds suggests more should be done to support these students academically. There is private and social benefit in doing so, as they will likely be set on a path to better economic prospects. Though improving access is valuable in its own right, policy should aim to ensure access also leads to success."* (p.48-9)

Nearly concurrently the Coalition announced its intention to legislate against essay mill websites that offer bespoke essays for a fee. As I write Parliament is considering legislation that will impose fines of up to \$210,000 or two years in prison for anyone found guilty of operating such a business.

No doubt it is politically expedient to be seen to be taking a hard line against cheating, and no doubt academic integrity issues can undermine the value of university degrees, and

universities themselves. The legislation is, whether intentionally or not, shining a spotlight on international students, who are over-represented in statistics around plagiarism in particular.

Why might this be so? One reason is that many Asian countries have very different understandings of plagiarism and simply do not teach Anglo-Australian approaches to academic integrity. Another is that for students who are not native English speakers, the challenge of studying a university degree in Australia is both difficult and stressful, particularly with an arriving IELTS score of 6.5. Add onto this the financial pressure many international students feel to succeed and there's a recipe for some students to cross the line.

The conclusion we draw is clear. For both domestic and international students, universities need to invest more in academic support, particularly early-intervention initiatives, academic literacy instruction, and 24/7 online and anonymous assistance. Large and growing enrolments of traditionally disadvantaged domestic students and anxious international students (often from non-English speaking backgrounds) deserve nothing less. Indeed, it's highly likely the federal government's next step will be to direct TEQSA to mandate improvements in the student experience, as measured by QILT data, graduation rates, and employment outcomes. Universities would be wise to get on the front foot and move quickly to address these obvious areas of risk.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack Goodman', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jack Goodman  
Founder, Studiosity

# Executive summary

The findings collated in this third annual report provide insights into wellbeing, study life, and emotions about university study by Australian university students. A total of 1,000 students completed the survey.

The responses represented every public Australian university. The questions posed to the students were themed around 1) stress relating to study, 2) feeling supported and part of a learning community, 3) Reasons for study and value of their degree, 4) plagiarism and cheating, and 5) employability.

## Section 1: Stress

46% of students found the 'amount of study' the most stressful part of studying (Question 1).  
77% of students feel stressed weekly (Question 2).  
50% of students want longer periods to complete exams and assessments in order to feel less stressed (Question 3).

## Section 2: Feeling supported and part of a learning community

56.5% of Australian university students have thought about quitting their degree due to the struggles associated with studying alone. This is a 5.5 percentage point increase over 2018 (51%) (Question 4).  
72% of students feel supported by their university (Question 5).  
40.5% of students said they feel supported because their university offers easy access to study support services 40.5% (Question 6).  
29% of students answered that they don't feel supported because their university does not offer easy to access study support services (Question 7).  
48.5% of students wished their university offered more feedback on their work and more academic support (Question 8).  
66% of students feel as though they're part of a 'learning community' (Question 9).  
65% of students who did not feel part of a learning community, wish they did, because it would help them (Question 10).

## Section 3: Reasons for study and value

50% of students said their main reason for deciding to go to university was to get a job in their area of interest (Question 11).  
58% of students said they would choose the same degree again (Question 12).  
62% of students said that completing a degree significantly improves their chance of getting a job that is related to their field of study (Question 13).  
51% of students think their degree is worth the money it costs (Question 14).  
54% of students say their degree is worth it because it will improve their ability to get a job after graduation (Question 15).

55% of students who do not think their degree is worth the money it costs say it will take years to pay off their student loan (Question 16).  
61.5% of students say that university is what they expected (Question 17).  
33% of students who said university is not what they expected said they expected to learn more skills to make them 'job ready' (Question 18).

#### Section 4: Plagiarism and cheating

92.5% of students said they have never cheated (Question 19).  
75% of students who said they cheated said they did it less than 5 times (Question 20).  
35% of students who said they cheated said there is pressure to perform well (Question 21).  
91% of students have never plagiarised (Question 22).  
86% of students who said they have plagiarised have done it less than 5 times (Question 23).  
23% of students who said they have plagiarised said they wouldn't be able to get good enough marks without it (Question 24).  
71% of students said that having access to additional study support would help lessen their chances of cheating (Question 25).  
57% of students said their university could provide more academic support to better prevent cheating or plagiarism (Question 26).  
32% of students felt that students who cheated shouldn't be eligible for the same opportunities as other students (Question 27).  
55.4% of students don't know anyone who has been academically dishonest (Question 28).

#### Section 5: Employability

76% of students think it's part of a university's responsibility to help students get a job (Question 29).  
64% of students who think it's part of a university's responsibility to help students get a job clarified that it's the university's duty to help transition students from the classroom to the workplace (Question 30).  
48% of students who think it's part of a university's responsibility to help students get a job think this should be done by partnering students with jobs after they graduate (Question 31).  
65% of students who think it's part of a university's responsibility to help students get a job think that students should take this responsibility on themselves (Question 32).  
61.5% of students think they will be 'somewhat prepared' for a job in their chosen field after graduating (Question 33).  
47% of students who do not think they will be prepared for a job in their chosen field after graduating, feel like they don't have enough relevant skills (Question 34).

# Recommendations

## Section 1: Stress

Most students reported being frequently stressed (“weekly”), and while causes were varied (work, family, commutes, amount of study), all causes had an underlying stress around lack of “time” associated with those factors. The quantitative and qualitative responses both reveal that students need support that is convenient for their study-life-work balance. **We recommend** universities consider how and when students are being supported, to reduce anxiety around limits to access, and following the lead of other sectors offering customers out of hours options and 24/7 assistance.

Females struggled more than their male counterparts when it came to the amount of study (49% vs 38%), and students over 42 years old struggled the most, compared to 26-33-year olds who stressed about study the least. Enrolment trends show an increase in mature-age women enrolling in study, bringing with them potentially complex personal circumstances and schedules. More research is also needed into the experience of students who are deaf, blind, or otherwise differently-abled, or students who are managing mental health issues, all of whom may be prohibited from accessing student support fairly. **We recommend** further study into the student experience and wellbeing of groups who may find it difficult to access and benefit from traditional study support.

## Section 2: Feeling supported and part of a learning community

Where students reported that they don’t feel a sense of belonging with their university, most wished they did, because they imagined it would improve their grades and opportunities to meet friends. However, many online students see the physical distance from campus as an unfair barrier. With more students studying online or alone due to work-life-study pressures, creating a sense of ‘belonging’ at scale, and inclusive of all study modes, is an important strategy for all universities.

Students are recognising the growing number of enrolments on campus, and some are reporting poor satisfaction and the feeling that their personal needs can’t be met fairly. As enrolments grow, **we recommend** universities also improve accessibility and personalisation of all support services at the same time.

**We recommend** universities consider ways to extend the reach of peer-to-peer services, where positive experiences on campus can be made available to increasing numbers of students studying externally and those who are employed in addition to their study workload.

While students were mostly appreciative of their lecturers and university tutors, the majority of students wanted more personal feedback on assignments. **We recommend** universities allow all students to benefit from formative feedback and early intervention with at-scale student support, as part of a holistic student support system.



### Section 3: Reasons for study and value

Overall, job prospects, enjoyment, quality of course delivery are top of mind for students when reflecting on their degree choice and thinking about future choices. **We recommend** universities focus on these areas to further improve student satisfaction, as a strategy to help avoid attrition, and to encourage students to re-enrol for further studies.

Universities are doing more to put the student experience at the core of their model. Students expectations are also strongly tied to an awareness of their financial input, and **we recommend** universities continue to adjust their model to better recognise students as customers, for instance, by ensuring personal, 24/7 support that mirrors the service of other sectors outside education.

### Section 4: Plagiarism and cheating

Students were overwhelmingly critical of both cheating and plagiarism and results suggest the majority are well-intentioned and take academic integrity guidelines seriously.

Even though universities need to demonstrate a strict stance on any kind of cheating, this particular data set suggests that university leaders may be able to do more to reduce intent to cheat and actual cheating, by treating causes, including student anxiety, early. Most universities are excelling in this area, by providing Studiosity to cast a fair, early-intervention net for wellbeing across cohorts. Like all resources provided to students, **we recommend** that the availability of such tools is communicated frequently and simply in order to change students' mindsets and behaviour around cheating, intentional or unintentional.

The survey results also point to a disconnect between plagiarism intent, behaviour, and formal definitions, and at best, students' lack of knowledge about what constitutes plagiarism. **We recommend** universities invest in referencing support as an early intervention initiative, to eliminate confusion and offer well-meaning students the opportunity for skills development. **We recommend** that future studies prioritise the area of 'unintentional plagiarism' to further investigate the potential return on investment that support in this area offers to universities, in the form of improved student engagement and belonging, and improved satisfaction, self-efficacy, and academic performance.

### Section 5: Employability

Universities are already doing more to aid employability. However, employers also need to see evidence of core skills - literacy, comprehension, writing - in graduates. Any university qualification carries with it the expectation of developed core communication skills that go beyond just proof of passing grades and graduation, and this is a growing challenge as enrolment intakes become increasingly diverse. **We recommend** that universities continue to personally help every enrolled student build the skills - literacy, writing, comprehension - that are critical benchmarks for employers in addition to a core degree skillset.

Many respondents in this survey wanted the university to be more responsible for students 'getting a job' after graduation. However, the student population surveyed were motivated by the paid opportunity to complete the survey and this could have weighted the student responses. Universities aren't responsible for delivering jobs upon graduation. More appropriately, **we recommend** universities help students understand the value of communication skills gained during their degree to employers - regardless of degree - and improve student awareness and use of academic support for these outcomes to be realised.

# Introduction

Today, every Australian has a better chance of enrolling in university than ever before. (Productivity Commission, 2019; Norton, 2019) This means lectures, online forums, and quads are home to more diverse socio-economic backgrounds, nationalities, cultures, life-stages, academic capabilities, and physical abilities. As many different students as there are, there are also just as many reasons why a student may struggle during their degree. For this reason, universities are doing more to deliver the best possible experience to all students.

As part of filling critical gaps in the holistic student experience, Studiosity delivers one-to-one, 24/7 universally-accessible study support. Globally, 1.5 million students have access to Studiosity, and the comments and other data students leave inside the service provide deeper insight into satisfaction and improved confidence with the service. Further, at-risk students also benefit from early intervention and escalation to university services. These in-service insights are effective in showing educators the correlation between timely study help and student outcomes.

This annual survey seeks to expand this insight to a national level, to better understand, and then support, the motivations, emotions, and demands of university students, and how to better tailor initiatives and solutions. The survey investigates key areas of student wellbeing, for example: How do students react to study *stress*? What academic support are they looking for in their *learning community*? What *service expectations* do students have during their degree? What is the behaviour around *cheating*? Do students expect a *job* as part of their degree?

With this survey, Studiosity seeks to take responsibility for, and contribute to, the growing national and global discussions around online student support and the online student experience.

This report includes an executive summary, an overview of data including both quantitative and qualitative insights, recommendations for universities, and the complete data sets.

# Method

Survey conducted by: The Digital Edge (based in Sydney, NSW).

This survey was commissioned by Studiosity to obtain insights into student attitudes and feelings toward study, their study patterns, and their expectations and experiences in their university courses.

Studiosity produced the questions for this survey, and The Digital Edge gathered the responses from Australian students via an online survey. 30,000 tertiary students that opted into Digital Edge's database received the survey invitation via eDM and website notifications on StudentEdge.org (a student-facing website that includes audience and study-specific content) at the end of December 2018.

After seven days of data collection, the survey was closed in January 2019, with 1,000 survey responses submitted.

## **Demographic of survey respondents**

All public Australian universities were represented in the 1,000 sets of student responses. The students were 18 – 42+ years old and consisted of a mix of both domestic and international students.

## **Survey design**

The survey was intended to provide new, aggregate information about Australian students' study habits and wellbeing around study, with a focus on obtaining insight into their often unseen behaviour and feelings outside of typical campus hours.

To gather numerical results to specific behaviours and emotions, the survey was based on a quantitative design. However, to foster qualitative insights and enable respondents to further clarify and complement their quantitative responses, students were given the opportunity to provide additional comments. The survey was comprised of 24 questions.

## **Ethical implications and demographical data**

The database of survey participants was managed by The Digital Edge. All respondents opted in to complete surveys around their student and study lives. The survey did not ask for names or other identifying information of the students.

## **Demographical data was collected on:**

- Student age range and gender
- Study type (part-time or full-time students)
- Current year in degree

- Student location (metro, regional, and state) and distance to campus
- Employment (part time, full time, casual, unemployed) and annual income range
- Degree cost range
- Name of their institution (which has been excluded from this report, due to requests from Studiosity partner institutions)
- International or domestic student status

### **Analysis**

Most survey questions were quantitative, followed by optional, free-text commentary. The overall analysis of the survey results was focused on the quantitative responses. Even without an in-depth content analysis of the qualitative content, the students' free-text responses were used to provide additional narrative, more comprehensive insight, and offer directions for further investigation.



# 1. Stress

It is a stressful time to be a student. While academic pursuits have always been associated with some pressure - workload, deadlines, funding - stress is also rising across society, in workplaces, amongst teenagers, and in online and media discourse. (Urban, 2018; Youth Mental Health Report, 2017) The cost of living is still prohibitive, those in urban centres also have longer commutes, and regional and remote Australians still have fewer services and lower living standards. (Ma & Ye, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Lysaght, 2019; Gair, 2018)

Students are not only under pressure due to study, but are arriving at university already more likely to be under pressure in other areas of their life. Survey results here point to a number of ways that universities can give students the best chance for success to overcome study stress.

## Q1. What is the most stressful part of studying?

<b>The amount of study</b>	<b>46%</b>
The topics are difficult	14%
Dealing with more responsibility on my own	14%
Meeting new friends	5%
Paying for uni	18%
Feeling alone when I have to study	3%



Females struggled more than their male counterparts when it came to the amount of study (49% vs 38%)



42-year olds and above struggled the most, compared to 26-33-year olds who stressed about study the least.

## Q2a. On average, how often do you feel stressed by studying?

Constantly (more than twice a day)	12%
Daily	27%
<b>Weekly</b>	<b>77%</b>

Monthly	13%
A few times a year	9%
Never	1%

### Q2b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students answered that the amount of study was the most stressful part of studying (46%), and their free responses were consistent. Students' responses also included emotional descriptors: "anxiety", "pressure", "struggle". The most frequent themes were time, work, and exams, followed by pressure, friends, and family. Other responses, making up 20% of the qualitative, included travel or commuting, health reasons, financial (money, rent), procrastination, being unorganised, and lacking motivation. Overall, student circumstances vary considerably, but emotion combined with a lack of time is common. Together with the daily and weekly frequency of when stress occurs, results point to the need for support that is scalable to reach all students fairly, and personal, to serve diverse circumstances and account for individual wellbeing.

#### Themes:

##### TIME

*Coming from a student who travels an hour to campus, sometimes on-line help is excellent for when you are stuck on certain topics*

*Most units start giving assignments around the same time, forcing students to feel stressed as they have too much work that needs to be done in a short amount of time.*

*University does not take into consideration each subjects and the timeline of assignments. Summer semester is also extremely intense with subjects having high number of assignments*

*due to cramming for exams because I don't have the time to study regularly during weeks 1-12.*

##### EMPLOYMENT

*There is a lot to get done, and I have a lot of competing responsibilities (family, friends, work and uni).*

*Trying to fit study in with work*

*Balancing work and study can be challenging*



*i think working at the same time adds to the stress*

*I find it can be overwhelming when I start to really think about how much I have to study, the fact that I have to go to work and fit in extracurricular activities, such as volunteering, for my degree.*

## **EXAMS**

*When exams come I feel overwhelmed.*

*Difficulty with time management when lecturers schedule assignments/exams at the same time and continuously move due dates. Stress also due to a lack of understanding during lectures. Sometimes find it difficult to ask questions.*

*I dont understand how to achieve top marks and it is not clear how to do well in exams.*

*Mainly around exam time. I don't mind doing the exams, its just some subject provide little insight onto what may be on the exam so there is a lot to study.*

*It would be useful to have someone or a support network to help people study who never really learned how to do it on their own.*

### **Q3a. What would help you feel less stressed?**

Most students (50%) wanted longer periods to complete exams and assessments (50%), and the next most common desire (44%) was for support (study, emotional, and online).

Access to additional study support services, outside of campus hours	17%
Access to more emotional support services through the university	9%
More group-based projects	7%
<b>Longer periods to complete exams and assessments</b>	<b>50%</b>
Online study support services where I can get help from experts	18%

### **Q3b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?**

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

The quantitative and qualitative responses both reveal that students are demanding support that is convenient for their study-life-work balance. In answering what would help them feel less stressed, students re-stated that time - lack of time, too much study, balancing study with work - was a cause of stress, which correlates with the most popular quantitative response of “longer periods to complete exams and assessments” (50% of responses). Students requested flexibility and spacing of course content and exams. Students also

reasoned that support services would reduce stress, with reference to online services being able to overcome challenges of both time and geography.

There were also comments around wellbeing for specific groups of students, which require further study to better ensure an inclusive student experience: "It would be good to be able to make friends as a mature age student, it is tough to be older but to also be Deaf - feeling completely different to the whole campus students."

Interaction with peers in the form of group work was more often perceived as negative and a cause of stress rather than solution, but specific complaints around groups were consistent with other responses: workload, fairness, and time management.

### Themes:

#### TIME

*It takes me 2 hours to get to university by bus, I'd find it much more convenient to be able to ask for advice from experts online rather than travel*

*Would give more time to those who have to travel far*

*less stress for students as there are people like me who balance uni life with work and need more time as we can work long hours.*

#### SERVICES

*It would be useful to have someone or a support network to help people study who never really learned how to do it on their own*

*I like "Live chat" functionality, so please include more services like this which I might be able to access.*

*Online support would be great because sometimes you stumble upon difficult content after campus hours and need quick help*

*I live in NSW and study online through an NT university so online support is very important to me*

#### GROUP WORK

*It's good to work in a group as it keeps you accountable and also provides support*

*NOT group based projects--they're probably the worst because I end up taking the workload of the entire group for myself. At least with individual projects I'm accountable/responsible for*

*the workload, in group projects there's always freeloaders which makes me feel a LOT more stressed.*

*Definitely not more group-based projects*

*I am signing up to support groups through the university already as I feel that will be beneficial for me*



*“Most students need to balance their studies, a part- or full-time job and their personal life, so universities need to consider the practicalities around deadlines and how their students are supported on and off campus to ensure students do not experience excessive stress. Luckily, these improvements are relatively easy to implement, and can add to a significant amount of students getting more out of their university experience than ever before, which is the main goal of many organisations in the sector.”*

Michael Larsen, CEO, Studiosity



## 2. Feeling supported and part of a learning community

The Productivity Commission report (2019) revealed that although there are more students entering university, access isn't necessarily leading to success. (Productivity Commission, 2019, p.48-9) Students quit for many reasons, however, higher engagement and greater sense of belonging are correlated with reduced attrition. (Moodie, 2016) With more students studying online or alone due to work-life-study pressures, creating a sense of 'belonging' at scale is an important strategy for all universities.

### Q4. Do you think struggling with study when you're alone (after class or when you leave campus) makes you think about quitting your course?

More students in 2019 are thinking about quitting their degree due to the struggles associated with studying alone, up 5.5 percentage points from 2018. Year on year, students are also thinking about quitting more frequently.

Specifically, this survey found 56.5% of Australian university students have thought about quitting their degree due to the struggles associated with studying alone. This is a 5.5 percentage point increase over 2018 (51%). Compared to 12 months ago, more students think about quitting once a semester (up 10 percentage points) and weekly (up 3 percentage points).

	2019		2018
<b>Yes, once in a while</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>Yes, once in a while</b>	<b>34%</b>
Yes, at least once a semester	21%	Yes, at least once a semester	11%
Yes, weekly	7.5%	Yes, weekly	5%
Yes, daily	2%	Yes, daily	1%
<b>No, it's part of the study journey</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>No, it's part of the study journey</b>	<b>49%</b>

### Q5a. Do you feel supported by your university?

The data highlighted that 72% of students feel supported by their university.

<b>Yes</b>	<b>72%</b>
No	28%



International students were significantly more likely to feel supported (86%) versus their local counterparts (72%)



*“In good news for the sector, 72% of students feel supported by their university, which indicates that a large number of universities are already doing a great job of nurturing students through stressful periods.”*

Michael Larsen, CEO of Studiosity

#### Q5b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students’ responses in this section were focused on three main themes, **accessibility**, **personal attention**, and **practical examples of course delivery**. Some students felt prevented from using support services due to a disability, others said that disability services in fact gave them better support. While some universities have been successful, others may be looking to do more for inclusivity. Also describing accessibility, students said that being online or separated from the campus by geography (“They are in NSW and I am in WA...”) made it harder to access support.

Students were either wistful (“hard to cater to each individual in a large uni...”) or demanding (“The support services are understaffed and overused, and not tailored for my experience...”) of personalised support. Either tone may point to the need for more personal study support.

Another group of students tied their feeling of being supported to the logistics of course delivery. There was also some distinction between course modes: “Lecturers are quite supportive” and “As an external student, I don't feel as though the same effort is put in to supporting us as if we were internal students”. A possible conclusion is that although universities are doing more to improve the student experience, yet more could be done to deliver support fairly, regardless of mode.

#### Themes:

#### ACCESSIBILITY

I know the support is there if I need it. It's not something I have felt like I do need but it's also not obvious exactly how to receive support if I did need it.

I mean they have the support there, I just haven't accessed the services because I don't want to look stupid.

It's more to do with the large number of students at my university and the amount of people accessing services at the same time at particular times in the semester, rather than lack of support per se.

The university is not equipped to support Deaf people nor people with disability. We get pushed back and met with resistance when we ask to have things/support done the way we need it to be.

It is harder to feel supported online as I have to rely on myself.

It's summer there is no one there

## **PERSONAL ATTENTION**

[University] does have lots of support services. I don't think it's particularly personal but universities are huge institutions so it's unrealistic to expect them to be personal for thousands of students.

I feel like I am just a student ID number in their system, being Aboriginal the only support I feel is from the Indigenous Centre they have on campus. The uni itself, I have nothing to do with except being enrolled and doing the degree.

The emails do help and I understand that it is hard to cater to each individual in a large uni.

But I don't really seek out their support - and feel that some of the initiatives to 'help students' are actually taking us in the wrong direction. e.g. limit on the number of assessments per semester - the fewer you have the bigger deal they become (as they are then also weighted higher) - whereas in my course we get assessed 4 times daily based on practical work - and like exams usually it was very stressful at the start - but now it's part of life and it's fine.

I feel supported by individuals within my university, particularly some of my subject coordinators and lecturers, but no, I don't feel supported by the University as a whole.... The support services are understaffed and overused, and not tailored for my experience...

## **COURSE DELIVERY**

Sometimes it feels as though they're a minimal course and rely too much on videos, etc.

They give very little information and expect us to search for everything so when we miss something they say it is our fault not theirs.

Lecturers are quite supportive.

As an external student, I don't feel as though the same effort is put in to supporting us as if we were internal students. We don't have access to the same services (or if we are they aren't communicated to us) and the opportunities given to us aren't the same (or the effort isn't put in to provide us with other opportunities to even the playing field).

### Q6a. If answered yes, why?

The two main reasons for this positive sentiment were their respective institution's ready provision of study support services (40.5%), and the availability and willingness of staff to be helpful (28%).

They are always available to assist me, with whatever I need	28%
<b>They offer easy access to study support services</b>	<b>40.5%</b>
They offer flexible timetables, so I can go to class after work or study online	20%
They have a great peer-to-peer support network	11%

### Q6b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students in this section had previously answered positively (representing 72% of respondents) about feeling supported and their answers here sought to expand on that. Students mentioned flexibility of delivery (timetables that suit lifestyle, assignment extensions) and educator support (great, helpful, approachable) as drivers of their satisfaction. Of this selected survey group, 40% of responses were positive but conditional, for example, "teachers are spread quite thin," or "only the teachers who are fully willing", or indicated "more" would be appreciated. Overall, universities are supporting students and it is being noticed, with students suggesting there is also room to do more, more consistently.

#### Themes:

##### Flexibility

It would be nice if [University] had more timetable spots for 2nd year students and above. It is really annoying when they only have one tutorial available and it is at 9pm. When you live an hour away by train getting home at 10:30-11 isn't ideal.

I can pick which of the classes offered I want to attend and when which makes it easier to create my semester timetables cause I can pick what suits me best

An access plan for easy assessment extension without explanation for ongoing conditions is a lifesaver



## Support from educators

Lecturers and tutors are also great support

[University] has great support services and the university staff are very approachable

So far my tutors have been extremely helpful which has made my journey easier

The teachers make a point of being able to contact them for help as well as offering tutoring classes

I do not agree with any of these, as I feel like teachers are spread quite thin. However, I do appreciate the ability to seek access to health and disability services

only the teachers who are fully willing to help give access to study support

University does have an online forum where students can ask questions and professors will answer. However, professors will only provide very limited information and will leave the student to work it out. This can be not helpful during times closer to exams because it can lead to further confusion.

### Q7a. If answered no, why not? (Choosing most relevant)

Students who stated that they did not feel supported by their university (28%) attributed their response to the following reasons:

They aren't flexible, and make it difficult to change units or courses	25%
<b>They don't offer easy to access study support services</b>	<b>29%</b>
The classes are too big, and I don't get the attention I need	22%
They don't have a sense of community	24%

### Q7b. Do you have additional comments? / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students expanded here that support was impersonal (class size, personal attention, content too rushed, lack of time for personal questions). Students cited distance from campus or online mode (joining clubs or societies offers support but these are less accessible when studying online). Students referred to their perception of customer experience (rude, refusing service, hard to talk to, distracted) and a perception of the university's financial incentive ("they are money makers") as drivers of their poor satisfaction. This group suggests a proportion of students see the need for improvement in services that are offered fairly to all study modes, and that are tailored to the individual.

### Themes:

## PERSONALISATION

Additionally the classes are too large for effective assistance to be provided.

smaller classes with more student teacher support and working times

Not enough individual attention on students, classes are too rushed, and it's too hard to get in contact with lecturers.

There is no support or question time given to students during class time

## ONLINE STUDY EXPERIENCE

Sense of community only comes with joining clubs and societies, it doesn't tend to exist in other areas of the university.

It's not that the University doesn't have these things, it's that these things are almost tokenistic in nature and aimed at a very different kind of student. They don't offer the kind of support that students like me need, and if they do, it's pretty unhelpful. The community exists, but I don't feel as much a part of it as I would like. I've found my own little community within the whole, but I'm not necessarily proud to be a part of my university.

## FINANCIAL

It feels as if the university is only trying to get money out of us students rather than provide support

Only care about the money and their reputation

No student friendly payment plans or course structures. No flexibility at all and we have to follow their strict rules

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The people who are meant to be student services aren't helpful as they try to refuse people more than help them.

Some teachers are hard to talk too

## Q8a. What else do you wish your university offered more of, in terms of study support?

Most students (48.5%) want more feedback on their work and more academic support.

More one-to-one study support options

19%

Free access to 24/7 support services online	23%
<b>More feedback on my work and more academic support</b>	<b>48.5%</b>
More peer-to-peer/group study options	10%



*“Although universities are doing an excellent job making the majority of students feel supported, there are still a lot of elements that can be improved to enhance the student experience. Nearly a third of all students believe their university could provide a more supportive environment, and almost half feel the feedback they receive on written work is sub-optimal.”*

Jack Goodman, Founder and Executive Chair of Studiosity

### Q8b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Many respondents noted that when receiving results, the feedback from tutors and lecturers was too brief or generic, and that it needed to be more detailed and comprehensive in order to help them improve their work for future assessments. The results indicate a strong need for universities to ensure students have earlier and more in-depth feedback. Notably, student comments point to a need to consider ways that study support can be delivered online, 24/7, and offer more opportunity to connect with peers.

#### Themes:

#### FEEDBACK

*Unless you have requested an appointment with your unit co ordinator, you rarely get to review your paper and determine where you went wrong*

*Often we don't get feedback on the last few assignments before the end of semester, and often these are the important ones with applications for future study and work, which would benefit us most.*

*Sometimes you don't understand where you went wrong, and it isa long process to obtain more in depth feedback*

*Although assessment tasks provide feedback, there is little opportunity to receive personalised feedback on my academic progress.*

*I often just get really simple feedback such as "don't include" and "this is good".*

## **STUDY GROUPS AND PEER-TO-PEER**

*PASS sessions are awesome but are often only available for 1st year courses, and sometimes not even all of those. Peer assisted study sessions are a great way to feel more confident with coursework and to get to know other students in the course.*

*I'd love peer study sessions so I can meet people and get help from my peers. It's really hard to make friends at uni so it can be quite boring sometimes.*

*Study groups can be tricky in terms of timing. Getting people to catch up on the same topic so everyone can have the advantage in learning. However many people also have things on the side to focus on.*

*E.g. having people who have done the unit before, tutors of the unit or teachers of the unit to help in a 'study centre' environment.*

*I think a few more opportunities to work with peer at the beginning of uni is important cos it helps you make friends.*

*i think it would be nice to have more group study options as it would ease us students a little bit more*

*Especially in the first year of university i would have preferred more group work in order to meet new people*

*expected to study yourself or make your own study groups*

## **24/7 AND ONLINE**

*So you could have the time to ask the questions and understand what you need to do*

*24/7 online support will be perfect during the days leading up to the exams especially since campus is closed and our access to professors and tutors are limited.*

*I need more study options. Study groups based on library locations that I can opt-in through online, as well as clear advice on how to do well in assignments from the tutors and lecturers.*

*Sometimes I struggle with requirements and planning my degree. 24/7 support would be beneficial.*

*This service would provide the best deal of support*

*24/7 support services would be very helpful too.*

*24/7 services for free would also be very beneficial!*

*Late at night is where I really get all my assessments done*

### Q9a. Do you feel as though you're part of a 'learning community'?

The survey revealed 34% of students don't feel as though they are part of a learning community, but 65% of those wish they did.

**Yes 66%**  
**No 34%**



International students were more (+18%) likely to feel they are part of a learning community.

### Q9b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Many students noted here that although there was a sense of community during classes, when they left campus they felt isolated and alone. Further, there was feedback that student groups on social media may be having an adverse effect on belonging: "Too much negativity amongst the facebook groups." Mature-age students (age 25 - 33) responded more positively (68%), yet this was in contrast to the comment, "Sometimes the mature aged students are neglected or ignored by the younger students." Given the increasing number of mature aged students enrolling in higher education, the wellbeing and belonging of older students requires further study.

#### Themes:

##### **DISTANCE**

In class, yes. But as soon as you go to study in the library / at home, etc. you do feel isolated, etc.

I usually do uni online at home since I'm always short on time. I can never usually be apart of the learning community if I can't get there.

I don't attend university often and I have made any proper friends at university due to this. I don't consider myself to be an active member of my university due to travel.

Hard to join a group when enrolled as an off-campus student

I go to uni and I go home, there's no real community for me

I am doing individual learning majority of the time, group work is too difficult to do as an external student.

## DETERMINED BY THE COURSE OR DEGREE

In the courses that I did there was no learning community unlike other courses at the university.

I feel this way due to the nature of my degree (nursing) though the other half of my degree (health science) being significantly broader, i feel like i am part of less of a community

As a law student, the university environment is highly competitive. There is less emphasis on group work and more on individual achievement. Not that I'm complaining. This actually suits me quite well.

Often other students typically in arts and humanities don't take it seriously and apply pressure on those to go out rather than focus on uni

## COMPETITION

the learning sparks competition among peers, so no one really helps each other out, in the fear that they may achieve more

Everyone is only focussed on their own study.

Not really a community. It's mostly individual work.

### Q10a. If answered “no” to ‘do you feel part of a ‘learning community’, then ‘Would you like to be part of a learning community?’

<b>Yes, I feel like it would help me</b>	<b>65%</b>
No, I don't think it would make a difference	36%

### Q10b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Of the students who answered that they *did not* feel part of a learning community, 48% gave a qualitative response that they *wish they did*: “it will make me more engaged,” “connection is good” and another student said that the workload would feel more manageable with a learning community. A student shared that “i think its better for students' mental health and wellbeing.” Other variations in responses were from students who defined the question as wanting to ‘study alone,’ and others who described a poor student experience.

#### Themes:

## COMMUNITY AS AN ENABLER OF LEARNING

*would create a more supportive and comfortable environment*

*It would be nice to be a part of a community*

*Yes of course! If the university had the aim of teaching at the highest standard then the learning would be much better too and encourage students more.*

*It will make me more engaged.*

*Having someone to talk to face-to-face may help deepen my understanding of subjects, see things from a different perspective and exchange ideas.*

*connection is good*

*i think its better for students' mental health and wellbeing*

*you'd get more of a sense of inclusion and acceptance to wanna reach out to people*

*I think being part of a community would make the workload feel more manageable because you have people to work with and bounce ideas off of.*

*Definitely. I think working as a group brings out my confidence which hides away most days. And I think I learn better when working with a good group of people.*

## PREFERENCE OR ACCEPTANCE OF SOLO LEARNING

*Universities are just too different, each person cares more about themselves than those around them, you can't really be 'friends' with them*

*I learn better on my own as I have time to think about it and understand it. If I can't understand it or why it is a certain way then I can't learn it.*

*I'd like a private study group - community learning is not helpful in law as I have competition across the cohort.*

*It doesn't sound like something I'd want to go to, I don't study well with other people*

*I'm there to get in and out and get a degree, not be part of a community.*

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE

*Because, im sad with the current education and the experiences i have been through*

*I think a sense of belonging is very important in educational institutions and this is missing at university.*



*“Whether or not a student feels part of a learning community can have a significant impact on their educational experience. While this research shows that many students are benefiting from this sense of community, in order to get the best results across the board, it’s important that universities implement processes that enable everyone to feel supported and included.”*

Professor Judyth Sachs, Chief Academic Officer at Studiosity



“Thank you so much for the feedback. You have given me the confidence that university is achievable”

Student, Edith Cowan University  
Writing Feedback on an Essay, 3 April 2019,  
5:40pm

“Wow - what a fantastic service. It is great as a new online student to feel so supported with my academic writing.”

Student, Western Sydney University  
Studiosity *Writing Feedback* service, 16 March  
2019, 9:25pm

“How awesome is this service!!! This is my first year studying since I dropped out of uni 22years ago. Kids these days have it so easy in comparision.”

Student, University of the Sunshine Coast  
Studiosity *Writing Feedback*, 19 March 2019,  
9:44pm

### 3. Reasons for study and value

Only 58% of students say they would make the same degree choice again, 19% of students say they enjoy their degree but would choose to do it at another university if they had the chance, and 14% say they would choose something that promises better job opportunities upon graduation.



By region, South Australians were the happiest with their decision, with 76% saying they would make the same decision again, while students from the Northern Territory and Tasmania had the lowest levels of satisfaction at 50%.

#### Q11. What is the main reason that made you decide to go to university?

Obtaining a job in the student's area of interest was the main reason students said they chose to go to university (50%), followed by learning the skills needed for jobs in the future (21%) and to be awarded with a certain degree/qualification (20%). However, this leading reason varied greatly between age groups.

<b>To get a job in my area of interest</b>	<b>50%</b>
To be awarded with a certain degree/qualification	20%
Learn the skills I need for jobs in the future	21%
To get a job that pays more	9%



Whilst getting a job was the core reason for students between the ages of 18 – 33, students between the ages of 34 – 41 and 50+ were primarily looking to be awarded with a certain degree/qualification, compared to 42 – 49 year olds who prioritised learning skills.

#### Q12a. If you could choose your degree again, would you choose the same one?

Most students (58%) responded very positively about their current degree, suggesting that many universities are doing more for students and seeing higher rates of student satisfaction.

<b>Yes, I love it</b>	<b>58%</b>
Yes, but I would go to a different university	19%
No, I'd choose something that promises job opportunities upon graduation	14%
No, I don't feel like I'm getting value for money	4%
No, I wouldn't go to university if I could choose again	3.5%
No, I am contemplating dropping out of uni all together	2%



Female students are more likely to enjoy their degree (61%) compared to their male counterparts (50%).

### Q12b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Responses followed two core themes of: employment and experience. Students clarified here that while they have to do their degree for employment reasons, they don't necessarily enjoy it. Some students specifically said that they expected to find a better experience at other universities: "Because, other universities have a better learning community." Overall, job prospects, enjoyment, quality of course delivery are top of mind for students when reflecting on their degree choice and thinking about future choices.

#### Themes:

#### EMPLOYMENT

I would pick something in the medical field that is in demand

Too stressful not enough jobs

Commerce is a very broad business degree and allowed me to explore which path I wished to take

I don't really love my degree, but they are important for me to find a job.

I dont love it, but it suits my current needs (as well as gaining a scholarship)

I picked the degree because it promises better job opportunities upon graduation.

This is my third degree I have attempted and it's the one I'm sticking with

## EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNITY

Because, other universities have a better learning community

I would choose something I enjoy more

Different universities have different environments, the university I am currently studying in is known for highly academic students which can sometimes foster an air of competition and hostility, I would go to a different university that is more welcoming and supportive.

my course has a practical side to it. But the teacher is usually 15-20mins late; sometimes our equipment isn't ready/ there isn't enough for all of us and the teacher isn't great at teaching (she shows us what to do without properly explaining it to us- so i have to ask a lot of questions)



*“These results emphasise that a significant number of students aren’t enjoying what they are currently studying, or where they are studying it, which is worrying both for students and the entire education sector. In addition to the statistics, the majority of comments as to why students do or don’t regret their decision are based on their future job prospects and the level of student support offered, highlighting two key aspects that universities need to focus on to improve the current sentiment. This data proves that many students are seeing university degrees as a crucial step in gaining their dream job. However, with such broad differences between what different age brackets are looking for, it’s important that institutions prioritise catering to each of these areas.*

*“There are many reasons that could contribute to disliking a degree, such as managing life whilst studying and keeping up with deadlines. What’s important to remember is that we need to keep listening to students and their worries, stresses, and needs. Ultimately, insights like these allow institutions to improve on the already high standards we have of providing a seamless student experience, which is an important step in making the Australian university sector a leader on the global stage.”*

Michael Larsen, CEO, Studiosity

### Q13a. Do you feel like completing a degree improves your chance of getting a job that is related to your field of study?

Overall results show that students completing their degree are confident that their degree will improve employability.

<b>Yes, significantly</b>	<b>62%</b>
Yes, slightly	31%
No, not really	6%
No, definitely not	1%

### Q13b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Most student responses here referenced professional standards, where a particular job required the qualification, and described that their degree is a means to their goal. Other students' comments described their concern that work experience would be more valuable: "Often, companies focus more on the level of work experience." Students also said skills that come out of the degree were more valuable: "Though not necessarily for the accreditation itself, the skills learned are definitely helpful." And others were concerned about their own experience or that of others where a degree did not help find a job: "A lot of people I know have a degree and experience but still cannot get a job."

#### Themes:

##### MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

*I want to be a lawyer. It is impossible to be admitted as a solicitor without an accredited law degree.*

*Jobs in health sciences (e.g. Medicine, Psychology, Dentistry) usually are only obtained after completing a university degree*

*My degree is teaching - you kind of have to complete the degree to get a job in that field (as opposed to other jobs where you could gain entry through experience)*

##### WORK EXPERIENCE IS MORE IMPORTANT

*not significantly, because employers tend to look at your experience and degree together. so if you have relevant experience in the field, that enhances your chances of being offered a job*

*It depends on prior experience and learning not just the degree*

*Everyone seems to be getting degrees and the only thing setting you apart is your own personal experiences*

### **SKILLS ARE MORE IMPORTANT**

*Though not necessarily for the accreditation itself, the skills learned are definitely helpful*

*That is part of the equation, but a fundamental thing would be to be willing to put in the work consistently and developing the abilities to communicate and adapt.*

*University is an excellent place to learn the skills needed for a job, however, the amount you get out of university is really dependent on your own willingness to learn and explore.*

*Having a degree in my area of study is required to get a job in the field I am studying for however it's more a who you know field now and having "extra skills" including being able to do work in more areas than one also impact employability*

### **EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY OF POSTGRAD EMPLOYMENT**

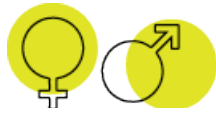
*I say "slightly" because there is a lot of competition for jobs within metropolitan areas, where I want to stay. New graduate nurses are a dime a dozen and there simply isn't enough work to go around for them. Most struggle to find employment without prior relevant work experience or a post graduate position (which is even harder to secure). I worry that I will graduate jobless.*

*A lot of people I know have a degree and experience but still cannot get a job.*

### **Q14a. Do you think your degree is worth the money it costs?**

Even though 93% of students believe that completing a degree improves their chance of getting a job that is related to their field of study, 49% answered here that they don't believe their own degree is worth the money it costs.

<b>Yes</b>	<b>51%</b>
No	49%



Males and females were on par in this sentiment, and internationally enrolled students were more likely (by 7%) to feel appeased by their decision compared to their local counterparts.



South Australia had the highest percentage (65%) of students saying it is worth it, compared to Victoria who had the least satisfied students (42%).

#### Q14b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Most students described their sentiment in terms of content and experience (“Not given enough resources included with the course”) or employment (“My degree will increase my long-term earning potential”) or family and financial circumstances (“Degrees are way too expensive, especially for international students”). Universities can continue to help by supporting students throughout their degree, with study support for content as well as conveying the value of employment skills earlier in their degree. Students are also price-conscious, and personalised support would aim to increase overall satisfaction.

#### Themes:

##### CONTENT AND EXPERIENCE

Not given enough resources included with the course

Although I think the cost is very high, the quality is very high and deserves with this cost.

For the amount of useful contact hours you get, prices are exorbitant

looking at powerpoints every week and an unsupportive environment is not worth \$1200 per unit

honestly not sure at this stage, very early in the course. But so far i'm not impressed

There are core units I had to take in the degree that I would rather have not taken as I didn't learn anything useful from them, a waste of time and money

sometimes classes are cancelled etc.

It's a ridiculous amount, and I am 100% sure that it doesn't cost that much to run a subject.

It is not taught efficiently or brilliantly to be this expensive.

Whilst the support classes/workshops/tutorials are helpful, I feel as though I'm paying to obtain my certificate of completion of my degree rather than the education itself. I feel as though for what I'm paying, I'm learning too much of the material on my own.

Over the next three years I will be over \$30,000 in debt. I will only be 21 years old. That cost doesn't even include textbooks or study supplies. I definitely think my degree is not worth the money it costs. I learnt my first two semesters all in high school and was basically repeating year 12.

### **EMPLOYMENT - EARNING MULTIPLIERS VS POOR EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS**

My degree will increase my long-term earning potential by more than the short-term cost of studying.

No it has not provided me with a job near the end so it is not worth it, even after the ridiculous number of years I have studied.

It is so overpriced and expensive and it doesn't even guarantee you a job afterwards. I don't believe it is worth the stress at all.

hard to find a job for my degree. not guarantee a job

Yes, though sometimes its hard having to pay a years worth of salary for the degree before being able to earn anything...

It cost thousands yet I won't get that amount within the first year of full time work

In the grand scheme of things, having a degree will generally lead to a higher paying job, hence it makes sense we have to pay for a degree when in the long run we will probably be more well off than those who didn't attend university

I believe it is an investment in my future. That does not mean I don't struggle and believe it could be significantly less.

Absolutely worth it in the long run.

### **FAMILY AND FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

i dont totally believe its not worth the money its more that i think its way too expensive especially for students and families with more than one child.

Degrees are way too expensive, espically for international students



Too much my HEC Dept is over 80000 and I had to move away from my home in a rural area costing additional 40000 at the end of study. Centrelink only offers enough for day to day cost

### Q15a. If answered yes, why?

Students who stated that their degree was worth the cost (51%) attributed their response to the following reasons:

<b>It will improve my ability to get a job after I graduate</b>	<b>54%</b>
I have learned skills that I will be able to use forever	29%
I have learned skills I wouldn't have obtained anywhere else	18%

### Q15b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

#### MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

I need a degree to become a teacher, which is what I want to be

I can't get a job in teaching without a degree, I mean, I do wish it was cheaper but it is what it is.

Laboratory skills can only be gained in a lab. I guess that where a science degree becomes useful

#### LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS

I guess it trains you on how to get used to stress

Even if I do not gain employment, the skills acquired through this course are invaluable and unobtainable outside of university.

It also improves my knowledge

Through my science degree i have learned not to take everything at face value

### Q16a. If answered no, why?

Students who stated that their degree was *not* worth the cost (49%) attributed their response to the following reasons:

I could have learned everything in the workplace	16%
<b>It will take me years to pay off my student loan</b>	<b>55%</b>
I don't feel like the education standard was high enough	10%
I don't feel like I learned enough to be job ready	19%



*“With the cost of higher education continuously on the rise, proving consistent value adding opportunities will be a challenge for universities, not only in Australia but globally. By constantly keeping the student top of mind and understanding their varying needs, universities will be able to go from strength to strength in providing a seamless and invaluable student experience. Further, although a high percentage of students have questioned whether their degree is worth the money, the fact that institutions are escalating their investments in student satisfaction is a promising sign for the sector. When universities respond to this feedback and implement appropriate initiatives, the levels of student experience will increase, which is impressive considering the data also stated that 77% of students said university was what they expected or even better than expected.”*

Michael Larsen, CEO, Studiosity

### Q16b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students who stated that their degree was *not* worth the cost (49%) gave free responses that were largely themed around the comparison to: workplace experience (“Much of what I am learning seems more theory based and not very practical”), references to cost generally (“I just don't understand why the costs for my classes are as high as they are”), student resources and experience (“They give us powerpoints and assignments. That's it”) and government support (“I believe it should be a service provided through our government”).

#### Themes:

## RESOURCING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

When a PhD course says you will be provided with guidance to help develop your skills to be an independent researcher and your supervisor does nothing then that's pretty disappointing.

Needing more effort from tutors / lecturers.

My degree whilst hard can be self taught, most lecturers don't add value, and the labs or tutorials don't aid understanding.

They give us powerpoints and assignments. That's it

## COMPARED TO WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE

As great as the system is, i feel many people still go out unprepared because they havent actually experienced the world.

it's very theoretical, not very practical based learning you deal with in the workplace

I am concerned about being job ready and the possibility of receiving better education elsewhere.

Costs too much and you learn more on the job

i couldve went to tafe for a less amount of time and money and still learn the exact same thing

## EXPENSIVE

Costs will take a long time to pay off

The course had been made longer, and thus costs more

It's a \$60,000 degree.... I don't think any degree is worth that much

neither, I just don't understand why the costs for my classes are as high as they are.

I think the amount of money spent on electives that aren't focused on your major is ridiculous

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Education should be prioritised for all and therefore I don't see it having monetary value as a student as I believe it should be a service provided through our government

The government can pay for tuition

### Q17a. Is university what you expected it to be?

For most students, university was what they expected (61.5%) or better than they expected (16%).

Yes, it's even better than I expected	16%
<b>Yes, it's what I expected</b>	<b>61.5%</b>
No, it's not as good as I expected	22%

### Q17b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Some students described how university was better than expected: "...easy and stress free as possible but still with challenging aspects," "The social life and independence is good," "It a great place with a diverse group of people." Other students said they found it more stressful than expected ("I find myself stressing"). Students also expected more sense of community ("i was rarely there"), and expected more skills and resourcing ("it is easy to feel forgotten"). While university should be challenging, comments suggest that more personalised support for students would help with both students' wellbeing and sense of belonging.

#### Themes:

#### WELLBEING

alot more stressful than i thought

After high school I thought I wouldn't stress as much. But the university workload and the lack of academic support has been really hard to adjust to and I find myself stressing even more than I did back in high school.

i did expect uni to be very stressful as i have a sister who is 3 years older than me

i thought it would grant more freedom than high school, and would be a time of self-discovery and making friends and having new, enjoyable experiences, but instead i got diagnosed with depression and only have like 3 friends

I thought it would be constantly stressful and hard but the curriculum is set out to be as easy and stress free as possible but still with challenging aspects

#### SKILLS AND RESOURCING

I like the freedom and time to study and work.

There is a consistent lack of one on one learning it is easy to feel forgotten in a class  
 It makes me feel independent and important. Even though I'm one in thousands I still feel like my journey is important to UOW and they recognise good students as well which is always a nice thing.  
 I have not developed the skills I imagined I would at all. The nature of academia is toxic.  
 Academically yes except I thought I'd know more things by the end of the semester

## COMMUNITY

I thought it would feel more like a community.

its lonely

I love being at university, and I love studying and learning about things that interest me and what I'm passionate about, but the university culture is something I didn't expect and I don't like.

It a great place with a diverse group of people

no i was rarely there

Mainly it's difficult to make friends as my course is majority of mature age students or student on their second course.

### Q18a. If answered no, why isn't it what you expected?

Students who stated that their degree was *not* what they expected (22%) attributed their response to the following reasons:

I expected better study support and additional access to expert help	12%
<b>I expected to learn more skills to make me 'job ready'</b>	<b>33%</b>
I expected it to be more of a community	25%
I expected the learning content to be of higher quality	22%
I expected more help with time management / balancing uni and work	8%

### Q18b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students' free responses here matched their quantitative, following the themes of job-readiness, community, and content. Specific requests were for "practical experience earlier", more opportunities for immersion into a community, and "more support".

## JOB-READINESS

I would have liked more practical experience earlier in my degree

I do not feel job ready and I know my supervisor has not done his job. Many others are in the same position unfortunately.

## COMMUNITY

I expected people to be more welcoming and friendly

need to focus on other aspects of students life, to ensure balance. this will enhance students overall wellbeing, feeling less stressed

## CONTENT AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Classroom and class lectures are not enough

Need more support.

I expected the standard to be higher

a lot of the time teachers didnt teach they just through slumps of information at you and expected you to do all the work yourself



*“University is a significant investment and students in Australia are divided when considering the value they receive. However, the data interestingly revealed that a significant number of students are not only attending university simply to receive their qualification, but to develop and improve their life, soft skills related to teamwork, organisation, and communication.”*

Professor Judyth Sachs, Chief Academic Officer at Studiosity



# 4. Behaviour and awareness around plagiarism and cheating

In April 2019, the Australian Federal government announced plans for stricter punishments on contract cheating services. (Tehan, 2019) Regarded as a positive initiative, it sends a strong message about expectations for academic integrity in the Australian higher education sector. (Universities Australia, 2019) However, based on the results of this report, students are overwhelmingly well-intentioned and behaviourally compliant, with only 7.5% of Australian university students admitting that they have cheated.

This survey also suggests that while students are well-intentioned, they are ill-prepared. Students describe being confused about what constitutes plagiarism and how to reference correctly. The outcomes suggest that students' behaviour around unintentional plagiarism can be changed with support that overcomes this confusion and skills gap. More research into unintentional plagiarism, and how support and prevention are intertwined would be of benefit to both students and the sector.



Overall, the 42 – 49 year age group admitted to cheating the most (20%) compared to the 18 – 25 age group (8%).



The data also reflected that international students were more likely to have cheated compared to local students (12% vs 7.5%).

## Q19a. Have you ever cheated?

Yes 7.50%  
No 92.50%

## Q19b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*



Consistent with the quantitative responses, most students who left additional comments said they did not cheat. Themes in this section were 'personal ownership' (frequent use of the pronoun I) and 'systemic blame' (use of "we" "us" "students" and indefinite "you" and "they"). Of all the free responses, 23% provided a reason for cheating, including poor judgement due to age, lack of knowledge, being unprepared, frustration, intending to cheat but not following through, or blaming the institution for content delivery and assessment.

The contrast between "No" quantitative responses (93.5%) and the "No" qualitative responses (68%) suggests there is some confusion about what constitutes cheating, for example, one student explained: "Yes, but only to a mild extent". Further, responses that described emotion (panic, frustrated) also suggests that cheating and student mental wellbeing are connected. The results point to a need for earlier intervention and setting expectations by helping students learn about academic integrity expectations.

### Themes:

#### PERSONAL REASONS FOR CHEATING

I have also had a panic attack during an exam once where I was underprepared and went to the bathroom and googled an answer to a question - it barely helped me and I regret doing it, I felt very guilty afterwards but I guess I was also dealing with a lot of personal issues at the time so I know I wasn't exactly thinking clearly.

I wasn't ready for the test

Have written answers on my leg but never actually used them

Yes, but only to a very mild extent

I have copied answers from a friend for a quiz.

In one of my Spanish exams, I peeked at the person's test next to me to see what they had answered because I was stuck and getting frustrated.

I have had someone complete assignments for me

#### SYSTEMIC REASONS FOR CHEATING

But some courses have been so hard particularly with 50%+ exams that I have wanted to.

I don't think it counts but when I have no clue about a certain subject and we have to do a research assignment; I have reworded things I've found online where it's basically saying the same thing, just different wording

The subject contained a lot of information that was confusing and hard to learn in the little time we had to cover it

I have done it once in an exam where it was really badly organised and they allowed us to sit an official exam online while in class, but on our own computers and claimed that the university website could tell what other internet pages we had open. Of course the university website can't do that so pretty much everyone cheated in that exam.

It is rampant at university, and these days the staff have so little control. As an exam invigilator, I was told if I caught someone cheating I couldn't take a photo of the cheating as evidence, couldn't ask them to stay so senior staff could come, I just had to record their name - and then it becomes a matter of what they say vs what I say and they barely get anything more than a warning.

Definitely not, although I have marked assignments where student have.

### Q20a. If answered yes, roughly how many times throughout your degree?

Most students who reported cheating said they had done it less than 5 times (75% of respondents).

All the time 12%

**Less than 5 times 75%**

Between 5 – 10 times 11%

More than 10 times 3%

### Q20b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students were given the opportunity to reflect on the frequency of cheating. Responses indicate that a particular course or unit could be predisposed to higher rates of cheating, and this hypothesis needs more in-depth research.

#### **Unit or course-specific cheating**

Mostly it was during my Spanish exams.

Just that one subject contained too much information to be crammed into one term

#### **Self-awareness**

I tried to avoid cheating, even if it was a small matter. I knew that it was wrong.

### Q21a. If answered yes, why?

The leading reasons for cheating included very high pressure to perform well (35%), students feeling that it's not that big of a deal (25%) and struggling to remember information without it (15%).

It isn't that big of a deal	25%
I wouldn't be able to get good enough marks without it	11%
I struggle to remember information without it	15%
<b>There is so much pressure to perform well</b>	<b>35%</b>
I don't have enough time to study	7%
I don't know how to pass otherwise	8%

### Q21b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students' open-ended explanations for cheating were diverse, describing fairness, time, a lack of skills, and unintentional cheating. The diversity posits that student pressures are highly personalised. Additional investigation and research into student psychology would also provide more in-depth insight.

#### **FAIRNESS**

An entire portion of our cohort for one course had the answers to a quiz which they weren't going to not use so I decided to level the playing field by gaining access to those answers to ensure I maintained my GPA

#### **TIME**

I was rushed for time, so I just copied answers to pass.

There was too much information crammed into too little time

#### **LACK OF SKILLS**

I am hopeless at coding, and my stupid degree is basically 80% coding courses

#### **NO INTENTION TO CHEAT**

It's usually an accident in an exam/test and I glance over - don't go into the exam with the intention to cheat

### Q22a. Have you ever plagiarised?

While 9% of students responded 'no' to having plagiarised, when asked to expand in comments, 34% of students justified plagiarism as sometimes being an "accident" or students weren't sure either way. One student agreed with their "yes" answer by saying that they "have never plagiarised" but continued by saying "Although I did give someone my assignment to plagiarise...". Another student said "I have not directly plagiarised, but I have taken ideas that I have read or seen and utilised them in my own work." Another student stated that "I didn't know what I was doing and felt like I had no other choice but to look at examples." Some students commented that resources could detect plagiarism so this would be enough of a deterrent. Overall, the responses suggest that confusion and behaviour related to unintentional plagiarism can be reduced with better student support.

Yes 9%  
No 91%

### Q22b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*



*international students were more likely to have plagiarised compared to local students (14.04% vs 9.01%).*



"The act of attribution, citation in academic work, is not standard in some countries. Additionally, international students are much less likely to put up their hand in the lecture and seek help. So universities need to be on their front foot and must offer accredited in-house free support services to struggling students to nip the problem in the bud."

Jack Goodman, Founder, Studiosity, interviewed by SBS Punjabi and SBS Mandarin (Arora, 2019; Chen, 2019)

## Themes:

### UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM

By accident, in an assignment, as I hadn't learned how to cite properly. I got called out on it by the marker, with a warning (since they are more lenient with first years)

I have plagiarised when I write academic writing or reports but it is unintentional. After I know it was a plagiarism, I fixed and change my work.

I'm not sure - I've never taken someone's words directly and copied them but I've used similar phrasing and held it as inspiration, and maybe that isn't plagiarism but it feels wrong sometimes.

I borrowed a piece of work from a friend, and as much as I tried to create my own work, I ended up following it pretty closely as a template.

No, I have never plagiarised. Although I did give someone my assignment to plagiarise back when I was studying a certificate at TAFE. We were found out (the person changed nothing except for the name written on the cover sheet) and I had to redo the assignment. I will never do that again.

By accident. My own group did as we misunderstood the instructions. However, our coordinator recognised this mistake and was willing to give us another chance.

I have not directly plagiarised, but I have taken ideas that I have read or seen and utilised them in my own work. In these works I have referenced them but sometimes it may have been a little more closely than I was meant to.

I self plagiarised

And if I did, it was only minor and not on purpose.

Not intentionally, but it is possible that I have missed appropriately referencing a sentence at least once throughout the essays, etc that I have completed thus far.

Maybe accidentally but I love referencing

### RELIANCE ON RESOURCES

programs will easily detect this

Even if you wanted to there's no use, they run everything through plagiarism detection programs.

I don't understand why anyone would plagiarise when universities use programs that give you a percentage of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is too easy to detect

### Q23a. If answered yes, roughly how many times throughout your degree?

Most students responded that they had plagiarised less than 5 times (86% of respondents).

All the time	5%
<b>Less than 5 times</b>	<b>86%</b>
Between 5 – 10 times	7.5%
More than 10 times	1%

### Q23b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

#### COMMENTS

By accident  
no further comments  
Too scared to try it with other subjects  
Had to reword and resubmit a small assessment once

### Q24a. If answered yes, why?

Most students said that there is pressure to perform well (34%), that they wouldn't get good enough marks (23%), or they struggle to remember information (17%).

It isn't that big of a deal	15%
<b>I wouldn't be able to get good enough marks without it</b>	<b>23%</b>
I struggle to remember information without it	17%
There is so much pressure to perform well	34%
I don't have enough time to study	8%
I don't know how to pass otherwise	3%

### Q24b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

As with students' responses to cheating, when asked about plagiarism, comments appeared to be either personal or indirect. The type of student, their circumstances, and their ability to self-reflect may offer new areas for research into how to better prevent plagiarism across cohorts.

## PERSONAL

Didn't have enough time to write my own, quality essay as I did not know what the topic was  
It was a misunderstanding of the instructions.

## COLLECTIVE

Everyone in the year level did it together at the same time so didn't want to seem silly  
We just ask around to see if we've all written a similar thing and whether or not we're on the right track

### Q25. Would having access to additional study support help lessen your chances of cheating?

Interestingly, the majority of students (71%) said that having study support would lessen the chance of cheating. The findings here echo a 2018 international study, which found that after using a study support service - Studiosity - 73.15% of students felt they understood the need to take responsibility for avoiding plagiarism. (Devlin & McKay 2018)<sup>1</sup> The 2018 findings also indicated a perceived change in behaviour relating to: approaching their written work differently (67.71%), checking their university's plagiarism policy (76.53%), and ensuring they accurately reference and cite the work of others (74.58%).

**Yes** 71%  
**No** 29%

### Q26a. What could the uni do better to support you to not cheat or plagiarise?

The majority of students (57%) requested more academic support to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

<b>Provide more academic support</b>	<b>57%</b>
There's nothing the uni can do	29%
Offer more English language and writing support	14%

### Q26b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

## COMMENTS

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Its always going to be a problem

It's more time to study and organisation skills then anything else really.

Because they have no related support online chat services related to the Subject I'm doing, only just standard understanding towards basic subjects.

People will always take an easy way put if they know they won't get caught



*"It's encouraging that the research found that an overwhelming majority (71%) of students said that additional study support would reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. Prevention can be a more potent and supportive solution to combat this issue before the need for actual policing, such as with services like Studiosity that help students and universities better prevent unintentional plagiarism."*

Michael Larsen, CEO, Studiosity

### Q27a. If answered no, how do you feel towards students who have?

In terms of how students felt towards their peers who cheated, the research found that 32% of students think that those who cheat or plagiarise shouldn't be eligible for the same opportunities as they are afforded, with females at 33% and males at 26% holding this view. Furthermore, 26% of students are disappointed with others who cheat or plagiarise, especially 18-25-year olds with 27%, against 26-33-year olds with 17%. This sentiment was echoed in a respondent's (Male, 19 years old, VIC) comment who said, "I don't think I could ever be proud of my degree or achievements if I cheated. I want to know I did it on my own back."

Disappointed	26%
Angry	8%
<b>Like they shouldn't be eligible for the same opportunities at me</b>	<b>32%</b>
Empathetic	8%
Neutral	26%



## Q27b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

The majority of students commented that plagiarism was not fair to other students who had put in their own work. A significant number of responses stated that external “pressure” may lead students to plagiarise: “family member in hospital.” Other respondents stated that students who plagiarise inherently lack the skills to do university-level work properly or don’t have or know how to use resources: “They do not know how to seek help obviously” and “It is a hard concept to grasp especially when you are not used to referencing...” Intentional plagiarism undermines the integrity of the whole sector; however, overall, the responses indicate that students believe universities could be doing more to fairly and consistently support well-meaning students who are facing external pressures, anxieties, or who lack the academic skills necessary to succeed.

### Themes:

#### SKILLS GAP

It can be hard to write an essay and sometimes you just don't realise that you have plagiarised. Other times, they are stressed or stuck, so I definitely empathise with the people who plagiarise but at the same time we are aware of what it is and it,

It is a hard concept to grasp especially when you are not used to referencing...

I feel disappointed towards students who do plagiarise as i believe they should know better considering they are at university level. These students should have learnt by now how to cite other peoples ideas.

Plagiarism is very easy to do if you're not educated properly on what it is, some people even do it subconsciously and don't even realise.

#### STUDENT PRESSURE AND WELLBEING

if they did it due to a particular reason (eg family member in hospital, so they were unable to complete assignment within allocated time, however they were not granted extra time to complete assignment), it is understandable. However, if the student was just not "bothered", that is not acceptable.

Other students make poor decisions because they are stressed, or had a circumstance or mental health issue that prevented them from working, in which case I feel like students should feel like there are university support services available that would help them and understand their circumstance."

I understand how some people may feel so under pressure or struggling with assignments that they try to get it done by any means possible, or maybe they don't understand what plagiarism actually is. However, my university has a ton of resources about plagiarism, it is addressed in support resources and extensively in first year units.

Sometimes people are lazy because they know they only have to get the minimum and don't try when they could've. But most of the time people are busy at their full time jobs and looking after their loved ones and trying to get any sleep and uni is tough so I get it.

Some people have issues in their life which has led them to choose bad decisions. Uni needs to provide more support and get the info out there about support (such as finance, welfare, mental health etc etc)

### Q28a. Do you know of anyone who has ever been academically dishonest?

Most students didn't know anyone who had been academically dishonest (55%). The open-ended responses followed themes of empathy with student stress, or condemnation and some active policing by peers.

Yes, I have and I know others who have	5.5%
Yes, I know of others who have	39%
<b>No, I don't know anyone who has ever done this</b>	<b>55%</b>

### Q28b. Do you have additional comments?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

#### Themes:

#### STRESS

In the end they were confronted for their dishonesty and suffered harsh consequences that ultimately stressed them out more than simply completing their own work

I know people do this and I have honestly thought about doing it too because it is so stressful and time consuming to complete certain assessments and tutors and convenors can be really rude and unhelpful.

#### CONDEMNATION

I have outed someone to the university based on their actions of being academically dishonest.

I have had a friend submit my assignment after I attempted to help her and it became a very serious matter where she received a 0.

I think that's a blatantly obvious thing to do so people don't really do it

Those people just finished their degrees and are "qualified" when they shouldn't.



*"There is a lot of appropriate emphasis on preventing cheating in the higher education sector; however, one area which deserves more attention is unintentional plagiarism, where students do not understand or do not have the skills to demonstrate academic integrity conventions such as referencing."*

*"Inadvertent plagiarism constitutes the vast majority of academic integrity breaches, and it's encouraging to see that universities and support services, such as Studiosity, are being proactive about addressing this issue by providing ethical, 'just in time' support that helps students to learn how to use and cite sources."*

Dr Tracey Bretag, Associate Professor at UniSA and Founding Editor of the International Journal for Educational Integrity



# 5. Employability

A university degree can be essential or a valuable addition to a career path. Today for some students, it is easier to start a degree and harder to find a job. (Robinson, 2019) Fees are also higher, and some degrees are being evaluated for their return on investment for the student's career prospects. (Doyle, 2017) Fortunately, improvements have been underway for several years, with universities working to upskill and prepare students. The Australian Federal Government has also launched initiatives to improve transparency into employment prospects ("Improving the transparency of higher education admissions" 2016) including the launch of [courseseeker.edu.au](http://courseseeker.edu.au). Globally, leaders in the United Kingdom are also pushing for a 'revolution in transparency' to help students make better decisions and maximise the return on their time in study. (Gyimah, 2019) As much as work is underway, results here show that 83% of students think they could be more prepared for a job after graduating, suggesting that there is room to continue to improve.



*"It's a positive sign to see that the recommendations put forward by students - for example assistance with resume writing or introducing placements - are areas that universities are already exploring and introducing into their courses to link learning with career prospects."*

*"However, a student's competency in foundation-level literary, numeracy, and writing skills throughout their degree will dictate their employability and job-search confidence, as much as their degree content. Although we live in an age of exponential technological advancement, the ability to communicate both verbally and in writing will continue to be amongst every potential employee's most valuable skills."*

Michael Larsen, CEO, Studiosity

## Q29a. Do you think that it's part of a university's responsibility to help students get a job?

In terms of how students feel towards universities when it comes to this topic, 76% think it is part of the university's responsibility to help them secure a job.

“Yes” by age:

Yes	76%	18 - 25	76%
No	24%	26 - 33	75%
		34 - 41	45%
		42 - 49	60%
		50 +	100%

### Q29b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

The comments reveal two core insights into students' expectations. Students feel burdened by their fees and attach their satisfaction and employment prospects to their experience as customers. Additionally, students don't necessarily expect a job after their degree but want the skills to be competitive. Other students connected course quality with employment: "It makes the university more accountable for what they are teaching us if they are also tasked with helping us get a job and we need to be job ready."

Universities are doing more to put the student experience at the core of their paid service, and more could be done that recognises students as customers, including personal, 24/7 support that mirrors the service of other sectors outside education. As enrolment intakes become increasingly diverse<sup>2</sup>, it is also necessary that students are helped to build core skills - literacy, writing, comprehension - that are critical benchmarks for employers.

#### Themes:

##### FINANCIAL

We paid for their services.

Because we pay alot of money

We're literally getting these huge loans to do attend these places because everyone says 'you need to go to uni to get a good job!!!' so if the university does not help us get jobs, why on earth should we go??

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definitely. We are spending a lot of money for education and there's no guarantee for a job once finished which is ridiculous, they should do more to help us to find a job

"Definitely, we pay so much money to get into their campus.. Then it's all up to us in the end to find work, and they should start doing partnership programs with official businesses in the surrounding locations to help students have more a chance into getting work.

We pay almost 10k per year. I'd hope my uni would help us into a career in the future.

You pay a large amount to go to uni so the least it is expected is them helping you find a job related to your field of study.

## SKILLS AS THE PURPOSE OF A DEGREE

It is not the university's responsibility but they should still equip us with the skills

It's the universities responsibility to make you as employable as possible, not to secure a job for you.

No but resources and help as to how to get into the workplace.

I think Uni's teach the skills and students should implement it to find a job

The amount of students makes it hard. I do like that they have careers services and help for students, and opportunities sent straight to your email!!! Its a great incentive for students and allows them to choose the deserving ones.

"I think a university should equip students with the skills relevant to the field of study, and perhaps some skills such as constructing resumes and how to do interviews.

However, the ""getting a job"" part should be the student's responsibility."

To assist students by teaching them the skills and knowledge that is required.

### Q30a. If answered yes, why?

Students who agreed that it is part of a university's responsibility to help students get a job (76%) attributed their response to the following reasons:

It's part of the education process	23%
<b>To help transition students from the classroom to the workplace</b>	<b>64%</b>
That's what people pay for	13%

### Q30b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

The students who said 'yes,' universities are responsible for helping a student get a job after their degree, clarified further here. Students said that it is the purpose of going to university "it's pointless to have said education without practical work skills...". Financial reasons were also cited, "I also feel it is what people pay for". Students also expected that the university would act as an employment influencer - "connections," "avenues," "opportunities," "link," "bridging." One student said, "Also they have more information about the workplace that we might not know of." These responses suggest that student satisfaction may be tied at least partly to students' confidence with finding a job after graduation. Suggested solutions are focused on either a guaranteed placement or opportunity.

### **Themes:**

#### **EMPLOYMENT AS THE PURPOSE OF UNIVERSITY**

I feel like universities have this responsibility. They can't just give people a degree and move on. They are preparing people for their future and for me that involves helping them find a job.

Teaching students all these skills should be adaptable into the workforce. Therefore by helping them find a job it shows these skills weren't taught for nothing.

We as students need to be educated of the right things so we can be successful in our career. That's what we're here for.

#### **EMPLOYMENT AS PART OF THE FEE-PAYING SERVICE AGREEMENT**

You pay so much for your course so that should definitely be part of it.

I also feel it is what people pay for.

We pay so much money to get an education, it's pointless to have said education without practical work skills and as people who are paid to teach us, helping us get a job is part of the learning process

#### **THE UNIVERSITY AS INFLUENCER**

Also they have more information about the workplace that we might not know of

If we have to pay for our education than our University, which mine does, should help make connections in the specific workplace to help graduates ease into a job from their studies

It shouldn't be their responsibility but they should provide avenues and connections

not duty, but they play an important role in bridging the industries and human resources.



### Q31a. If answered yes, how do you think they should help?

When it comes to how universities could help, 48% believe they should partner students with jobs after they graduate.

By offering more work placement courses	33%
By incorporating more practical elements into classes	19%
<b>By partnering students with jobs after they graduate</b>	<b>48%</b>

### Q31b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Student responses here suggested that they would like all three options listed, with frequent references to the 'transition' from study to work: "Between high school and university, there are many incentives and programs that allow a bridge towards the two institutions. I feel as if this does not apply between university and the 'real world'."

Today, especially where employment is competitive, employment criteria extends beyond the name of the degree achieved or university reputation.<sup>3</sup> The ability to communicate effectively is a learned skill that should be part of any student's degree, students express that they are committing to the cost of their degree with the opportunity to succeed in the workforce.

#### Themes:

#### LEVERAGING UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDUSTRY

Having partnership opportunities with the Businesses who require jobs in the particular field. It will also boost our reputation and be recognized for our works in this University.

also by partnering students with jobs after they graduate

#### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Practical elements where applicable are great learning tools

Definitely helping students connect with workplaces is a good way to start, plus providing more practical elements. I did not even do any placements in my research degree until 3rd year!! Should have been first year.

I found it infinitely easier to get a job when I could say I'd done an internship in a lab

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With work placement we get more experience and in today's society experience is everything

## HELP WITH JOB SKILLS

More support in finding a job and the transition, etc.

Or by giving students tips, running courses that help students find jobs, hosting career events etc etc

Work-placement courses would be ideal to get a genuine sense of alumni networks.

I don't think it's the role of the university to guarantee students jobs, but by incorporating more practical elements, students are given the opportunity to learn more and those who take responsibility for their learning will utilise these to help in their search for jobs.

### Q32a. If answered no, why not?

Students who did not agree that it is part of a university's responsibility to help students get a job (24%) attributed their response to the following reasons:

It's only a university's duty to teach general skills	14%
<b>Students should take this responsibility on themselves</b>	<b>65%</b>
It's too difficult for them to help everyone	22%

### Q32b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students expressed here that they didn't believe a personal approach was "feasible" for the university: "It is also too difficult to help everyone, specifically with the unemployment in a certain degrees." Fortunately, personalisation is feasible with at-scale, online formative feedback.

#### Themes:

## PERSONALISATION

It is also too difficult to help everyone, specifically with the unemployment in a certain degrees

They do provide a bit of assistance and prestige, but it's a nomination process

And as it not feasible for them to get everyone a job it is unfair if they target only selected people

## STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

Universities give you the skills, knowledge and resources to secure a job and the responsibility of applying them is on the students.

Should they be punished for not meeting this responsibility? Some kind of monetary fine? Or perhaps just a stern look and finger waggle?

How do you control for all the external factors - social, political economic etc.? Who takes responsibility for all those factors? To what extent should the university be held accountable for these factors?"

## FAIRNESS

It is unfair for the students who worked very hard in university and excelled if the university ends up helping even the people who put in no effort.

I feel if they tried to, then a lot of students would be passed over and just not given the value and support each and everyone of us should deserve.

### Q33a. How prepared do you think you will be for a job in your field after graduating?

Most students (78.5%) indicated they are prepared to some extent for a job after graduation.

Very prepared	17%
<b>Somewhat prepared</b>	<b>61.5%</b>
Not very prepared	18.5%
Not prepared at all	3%

### Q33b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

To expand on whether they think they are prepared for a job, students described their need for either more practical skills while studying, or focused on work experience and placements after graduation. Practical skills are undeniably essential, though students may not be attaching enough value to core skills - literacy, communication, comprehension - as a competitive advantage to employers. Helping students with their communication, written English, as well as conveying the underlying purpose of other skills during their degree may improve students' satisfaction and confidence around employability.

## PRACTICAL SKILLS WITHIN THE DEGREE

Because everything you learn is only taught in a way for you to regurgitate on the exam and not to learn any practical or applicable skills.

Work place conditions are not going to be the same as exam conditions and thus the assessments are irrelevant..

There is always a difference between real life and uni. That is to be expected.

It is all well and good to know about a topic in theory, but if you cannot apply it in practice it is useless.

Theoretical skills are mostly taught at my uni and it is expected that we search out on our own for ways to gain practical experience

## WORK EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE THE DEGREE

we need more work experience

Workplace experience is different from classes

they do all this teaching and minimal teaching what to do after life in uni

I have no idea how I will get a job as a solicitor after graduating.

### Q34a. If answered no, why not?

Students who did not feel that they were well-prepared for a job in their field after graduating (21.5%) attributed their response to the following reasons:

I still feel like I have no idea about what to expect from the field I'm going into	43%
<b>I still feel like I don't have enough relevant skills</b>	<b>47%</b>
I still feel like I am not independent enough	10%

### Q34b. Do you have additional comments / Why do you feel this way?

*Indicative responses for supporting narrative, further insight, or areas for further investigation.*

Students expanded on their responses around their field, relevant skills, and independence here. Although varied, students are concerned by getting experience and not having enough core skills. This is also consistent with employers' expectations that as a basic standard applicants have core skills in written and verbal communication.

## COMMENTS

*Skill shortage*

*Most jobs require 2+ years experience*

*I did not learn skills like manuscript and grant writing, although I am good in the lab.*

*My course does not offer any prac or internships which makes it hard to learn the basic workplace needs of my area of study*



A leading education expert passionate about this issue is Professor Judyth Sachs, Chief Academic Officer at Studiosity and founder of the award-winning PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) program. The PACE program was developed during her time as Provost at Macquarie University, and is centred around experiential learning, through either internships, service learning, placements, and other forms of work-integrated learning, with organisations across Australia and around the globe. It aims to bridge the gap between university and the workplace, for students.

Judyth comments, *“It’s critical that all universities make building relationships with students and catering to their personal needs a top priority. By doing this, student confidence and employability levels will improve, which will also benefit society on a wider scale.”*



# Conclusion

A positive student experience is essential. This requires academic support, as well as feeling a sense of belonging.

Students have strong views on academic integrity and plagiarism, but when plagiarism is done unintentionally it devalues the quality of their degree. Students need to understand the boundaries of academic integrity, and universities need to provide the necessary support to ensure students understand plagiarism.

While it is understandable that students want a return on investment for undertaking a degree, it is not a university's responsibility to find jobs for students. Part of the experience for the student is to build confidence and competence, to assist with finding employment.

Given that students come to university with different experiences and expectations, universities need to rethink course delivery and assessment to ensure work readiness, but at the same time provide a challenging intellectual experience.

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