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The Analysis of Qualitative Survey Comments using Thematic Content Analysis

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Background

All Massey large institution-wide surveys and evaluations have either qualitative close-out or integrated qualitative questions or opportunities for comment

- SES
- PREQ
- GDS
- Course evaluations

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SES

Please provide us with more detail about those aspects of your experience which you described as poor or very poor.

During the year, what have been the best aspects of your university experience?

During this year, what aspects of your university experience most need improvement?

PREQ

What has been the best aspect of your research experience?

What is the one thing that Massey could do to enhance your development as a researcher?

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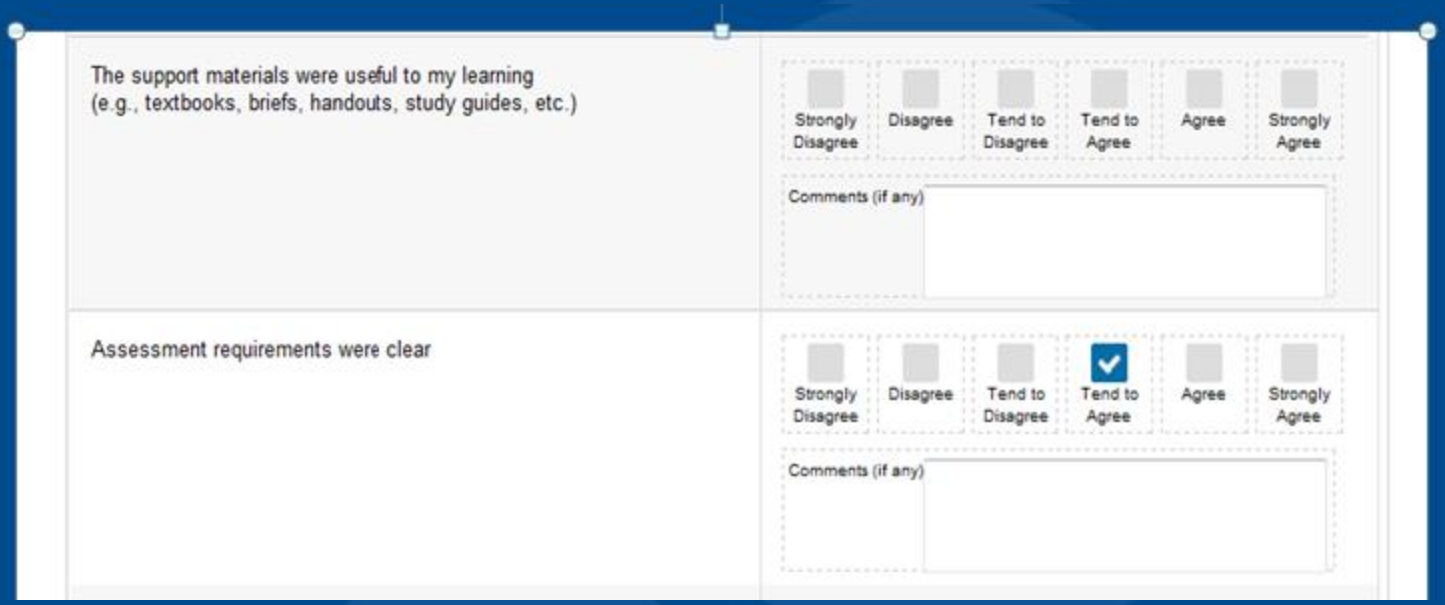
GDS

In your view what could Massey University do to improve the transition of its graduates into the workforce?

Course Evaluations



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Qualitative responses

	SES			PREQ	GDS	Total
	Best aspects	**Needs Improvement**	**Commencement**			
2013	7325	7221	1604	n/a	2159	**18300**
2014	5859	5526	1314	620	721	**14000**
2015	7973	6659	1607	774	1429	**18500**
2016	7393	7311	1327		1093	**17000**

Computer **A**ssisted **Q**ualitative **D**ata **A**nalysis **S**oftware

- Atlas
- NVivo
- Quirkos
- MAXQDA
- Hyperesearch

Thematic Content Analysis

"Thematic Content Analysis is a method for identifying analysis and reporting themes in data". (Braun &Clarke, 2008)

"A research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through a systematic classification procedure of coding and identifying themes."

(Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)

Coding process

Structure the data to ease later analysis

- Separate positive from negative
- Remove unwanted demographic content

Familiarise yourself with the data

- Clean data based on business rules

Generate initial nodes

- Inductive. From the data
- Deductive. Known to exist or needed
- Autocode e.g. word frequencies
- Visualise tools available in NVivo
- Develop a coding framework

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Coding process

1. Search for themes in the data
2. Consider the complexity of coding i.e. Description, Topic, Analytical.

   "*Autocoding is no substitute for your interpretation*"
   (Richards, 2015, p. 111)

3. Code inductively but deductive content also possible
   - Create only as many nodes as are necessary
   - Think about patterns in the data
4. Review the themes
   - Create node hierarchy by aggregation and merging
5. Name the high level nodes
6. Report findings but design in the reporting from the start

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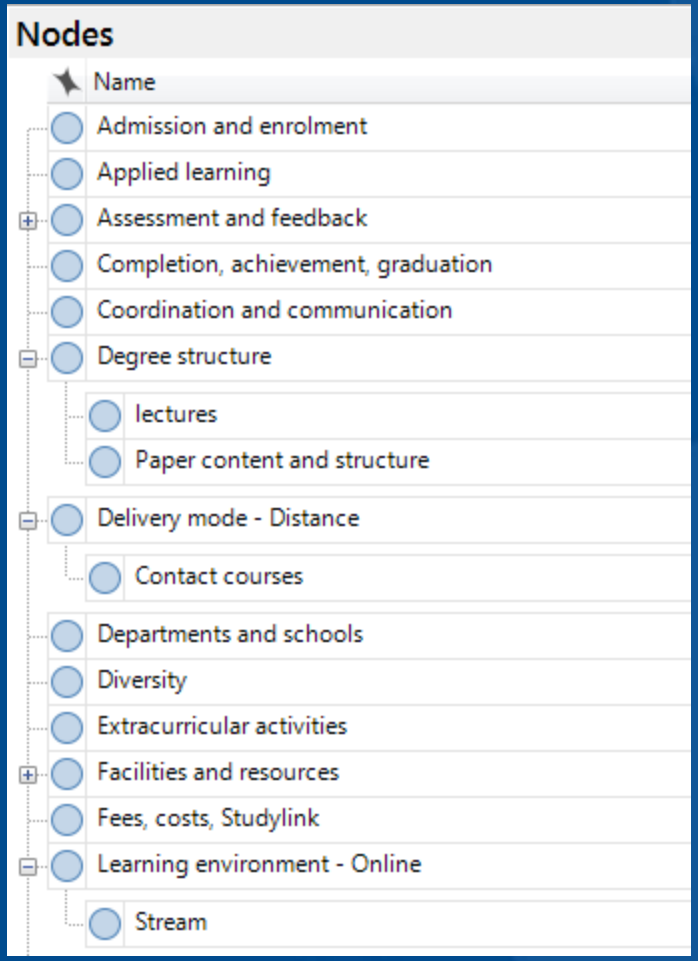
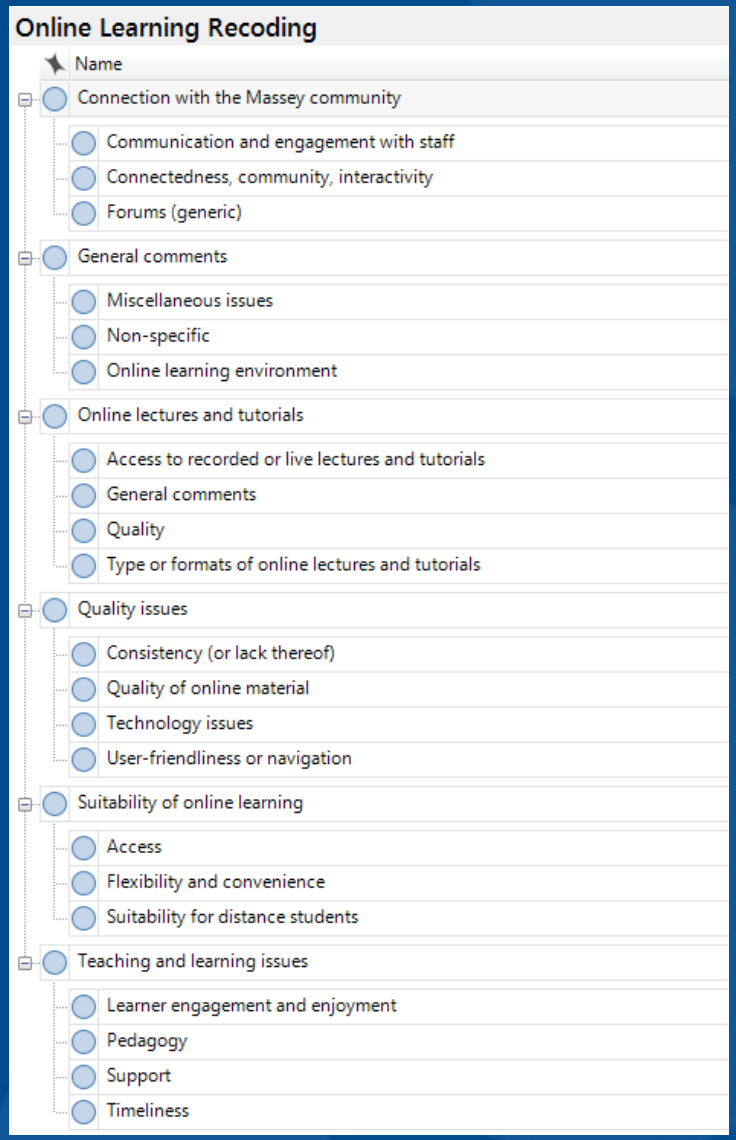


SES 2015

- 65 Nodes
- 7 major themes with sub nodes

Sub-node analysis online environment



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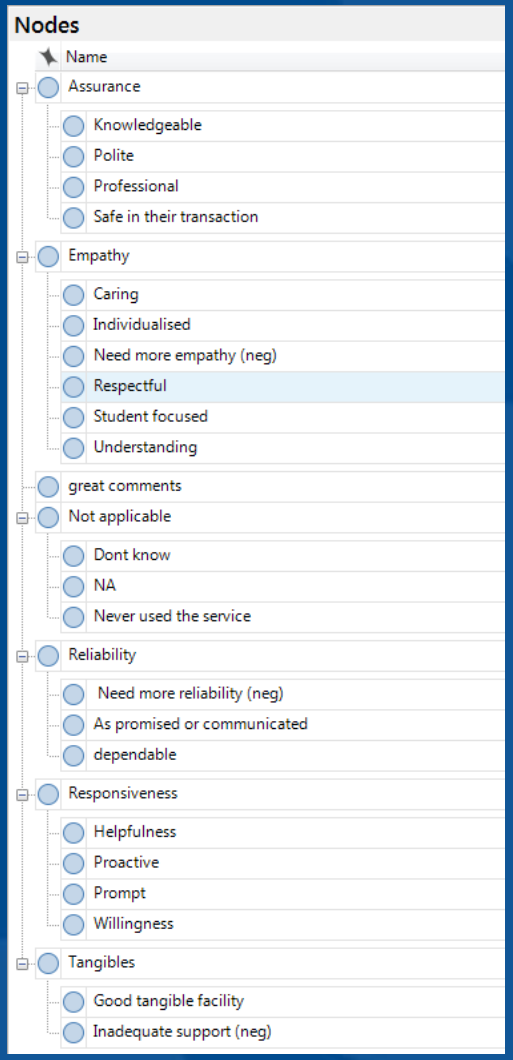
Coding framework

Code name	Code description
Quality issues	
Consistency (or lack thereof)	Comments here primarily relate to a lack of consistency across paper delivery or website/Stream layout, and consistency issues within papers. Also includes requests for consistency across papers.
Quality of online material	References to good or bad quality of online material (excludes quality of online lectures which are coded at 'Online lectures and tutorials/Quality'). Includes general comments such as "Online services are excellent", "Stream is great" etc.
Technology issues	Technical issues or other comments relating to technology. Some comments overlap with 'Online lectures and tutorials/Quality' and 'Online lecture and tutorials/Types or formats of online lectures and tutorials'). Also includes references to the upgrade of Stream.
User-friendliness or navigation	Comments relating to ease of use, user-friendliness, navigation, locating information etc.
Online lectures and tutorials	
Access to recorded or live lectures and tutorials	Reference to the need for either recorded or live lectures. Also includes non-specific comments such as "recorded lectures" and "ability to attend live lectures".
General comments	Comments such as "online lectures" which do not specify further detail or general comments about online lectures and tutorials which do not fit into other categories.
Quality	Quality of online lectures and tutorials (includes generic comments such as "online lectures were great").
Type or formats of online lectures and tutorials	Comments about different types of lecture – audio versus video, streamed lectures versus downloadable, need for ability to view on mobile devices etc. Comparisons between formats or requests for specific formats. Excludes requests for live or recorded lectures.
Suitability of online learning	
Access	General comments relating to ease of access, access to information, or accessibility.
Flexibility and convenience	Flexibility of delivery, lecture times and formats as well as being able to study at their own pace, manage work-life balance etc.
Suitability for distance students	Comments relating to online learning being suitable or a good match for distance learners.
Connection with the Massey community	
Communication and engagement with staff	Communication and/or interaction with Massey staff specifically, including a sense of engagement with staff (or lack thereof). Where comments related to a connection with both students and staff, this was coded at 'Connectedness, community, interactivity' rather than at this node.
Connectedness, community, interactivity	Sense of connection with fellow students or the wider Massey community, comments relating to participation or the ability to interact. Comments regarding Massey staff specifically are coded at 'Communication and engagement with staff'.

Deductive coding structure: Disability Services



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Strengths

- We build a very powerful picture of the student experience, both positive and negative.
- No need for supplementary data collection
- Filter the responses by any of the demographic variables or questions thus providing very targeted outputs
- Simple to extract specific comments by theme or variable

Pitfalls

- Scale
- Slow process
- Coding consistency
- Subjectivity
- Inadequate data to start with
- Very sensitive comments
- Reporting the prevalence of themes
- Too many nodes
- Erroneous themes

Reporting

- **Create specific outputs for each audience**
- **Link to topical issues**
- **Tell the story. Include some context for comments**
- **Make them visual**
- **Explain the methods (but briefly). Stay away from the academic debates**
- **Promote your outputs. Make them accessible long-term**
- ***Keep them brief***

http://www.quirkos.com/blog/archive/201608

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