

Does national feedback about the student experience have the potential to improve teaching quality at a course level?

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# Overview

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3. Research approach
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5. Discussion & limitations

# About the QILT surveys

- The Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) survey suite consists of:
  - The Student Experience Survey (SES),
  - The Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS), and
  - The Employers Satisfaction Survey (ESS)
- All are cross sectional, point-in-time surveys except the GOS, which is longitudinal.
- All Australian higher education providers are in-scope for QILT.

# The Student Experience Survey

- The Student Experience Survey (SES) involves:
  - Undergraduate higher education students
  - Who are onshore in Australia, and
  - Commencing their studies or in the final year of their degrees

# The Student Experience Questionnaire

- The current SEQ domains include:
  - Skills Development
  - Learner Engagement
  - Teaching Quality
  - Student Support, and
  - Learning Resources

# Qualitative 'survey' data (context)

- Student satisfaction has become a key focus for higher education institutions
- Proliferation of surveys, many of which collect feedback from students on teaching quality and student engagement
- Suggestions that student feedback data should form part of a continuous improvement cycle
  - This makes sense at a unit, course and institutional level where the data is more immediate and connected
  - Does this hold for national data as well?

# Qualitative survey data (1)

- Insufficient quantitative data at an actionable level (usually course) and/or a misalignment of institutional and national agendas = data that is not as useful as it could be.
- Institutional researchers have started to turn to the open-ended survey data to ‘fill the in gaps’
- Qualitative survey data regarded as ‘first hand account’ of the student experience
- More viable from a timeliness and cost perspective now that many student surveys are completed online

# Qualitative survey data (2)

- Mixed views in the literature regarding the usefulness of qualitative survey data
  - High degree of convergent validity between quantitative items and open-ended questions
  - Used to emphasise previous ratings rather than provide new feedback
  - Open-ended items often general in nature and elicit general responses
  - Feedback tends to highlight the student's lack of insight or unrealistic expectations
  - Comments are self-interested and uncritical



# Research approach

- Data collected in August 2015
- Surveys completed by 136,830 university students and 8,552 students attending private institutions
  - 79 providers in total
- 37% response rate, up from 30% in 2014, 29% in 2013, and 21% in 2012
- Qualitative information grouped thematically using a qualitative coding tool

# SEQ quant items – conceptual groups

Conceptual group	Number of items
Learner engagement	7
Teaching quality	11
Learning resources	7
Student support	13
Skills development	8

# SEQ – open-ended items

- The SEQ also contains two open ended items:
  - What have been the best aspects of your <course>?
  - What aspects of your <course> most need improvement?
- Responses can be made to these two questions using an unlimited number of words.
- Both items are located towards the end of the SEQ, after the quantitative questions have been completed.

# Analytic approach

- Major typographical errors fixed, profanity removed and names of staff and students suppressed.
- A custom-built, macro-enabled Excel template was used to ‘automatically’ code the data.
  - Search for exact keywords, ‘and’ relationships and ‘near’ Boolean expressions.
  - The codebook of relevant search terms, developed for previous projects, was used to organise the responses into sub-themes and thematic categories.
- Categories output to a .csv file and matched back into the main data file.
- Separate analyses were undertaken of the ‘best aspects’ data and the ‘most needs improvement’ data.

# Coding summary – overall

	Best aspects		Needs improvement	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Total respondents</b>	145,369		145,382	
<b>No comment provided</b>	28,295	19.5		
<b>Comment(s) provided</b>	117,074	80.5		
<b>Coded 'automatically'</b>	95,541	81.6	95,687	74.7
<b>Unable to be coded 'automatically'</b>	21,533	18.4	32,398	25.3

# Best aspects - gender

	Female	Male	Total
<b>No comment provided</b>	19.2	20.0	19.5
<b>Comment provided</b>	80.8	80.0	80.5
<b>n</b>	<b>95,812</b>	<b>49,557</b>	<b>145,369</b>
<b>Coded 'automatically'</b>	83.4	78.1	81.6
<b>Unable to be coded 'automatically'</b>	16.6	21.9	18.4
<b>n</b>	<b>77,452</b>	<b>39,622</b>	<b>117,074</b>

# Best aspects – broad field of education

Broad field of education	Comment		Coded automatically		
	No	Yes	Yes	No	Total
<b>Agriculture, Environmental &amp; Related Studies</b>	16.5	83.5	84.3	15.7	2,545
<b>Architecture &amp; Building</b>	22.2	77.8	79.4	20.6	3,061
<b>Creative Arts</b>	15.7	84.3	82.6	17.4	12,651
<b>Education</b>	16.4	83.6	86.1	13.9	12,397
<b>Engineering &amp; Related Technologies</b>	22.4	77.6	78.7	21.3	8,832
<b>Health</b>	17.0	83.0	84.9	15.1	31,932
<b>Information Technology</b>	23.5	76.5	74.3	25.7	4,533
<b>Management &amp; Commerce</b>	27.9	72.1	75.1	24.9	21,851
<b>Natural &amp; Physical Sciences</b>	18.5	81.5	82.6	17.4	15,234
<b>Society &amp; Culture</b>	17.9	82.1	81.2	18.8	32,330
<b>Total</b>	19.5	80.5	81.6	18.4	145,382

# Best aspects coded by theme

- 187,930 comments from 145,382 respondents
- Thematic focus area
  - Teaching quality 103,208
  - Skills development 48,688
  - Learner engagement 23,714
  - Learning resources 7,775
  - Student support 4,545
- Other
  - Don't know 531
  - Negative comment 907
  - Uncodable 21,583



# Quantitative ratings on key sub-themes

Focus area	Sub-theme	# comments	Satisfaction rating	
			Students commenting on sub-theme	All students
<b>Teaching quality</b>	Quality of teaching skills	30,497	85.4	81.7
<b>Skills development</b>	Work readiness developed by course	14,782	88.9	81.3
<b>Learner engagement</b>	Student interactions	15,392	75.9	60.2
<b>Learning resources</b>	Quality of facilities & resources	4,375	84.7	85.7
<b>Student support</b>	Administration	3,120	62.6	72.6



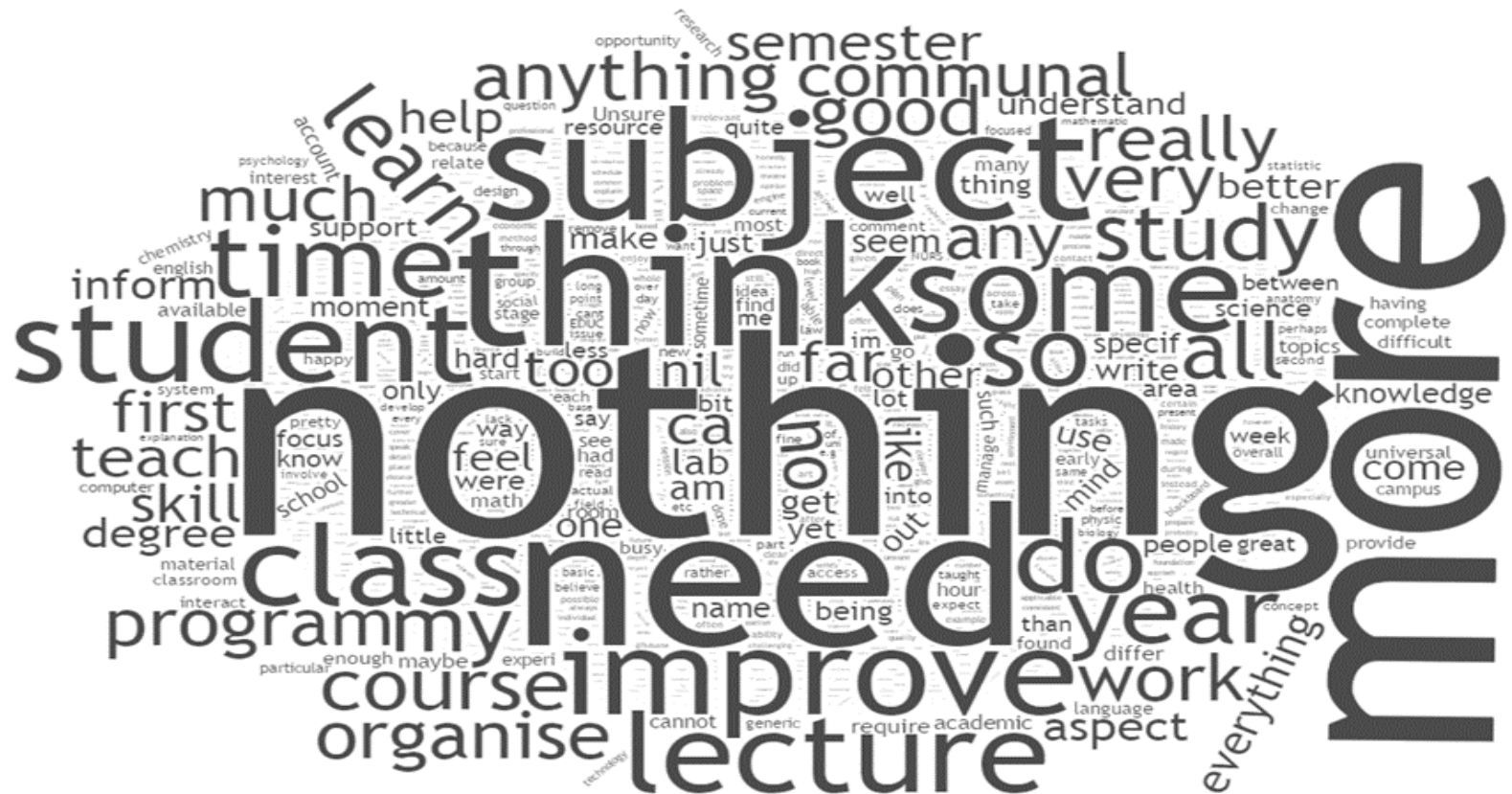
# Most needed improvement coded by theme

- 204,621 comments from 145,382 respondents
- Thematic focus area
  - Teaching quality 116,980
  - Skills development 34,636
  - Student support 22,816
  - Learning resources 19,989
  - Learner engagement 10,200
- Other
  - Don't know 5,366
  - Negative comment 7,766
  - Uncodable 17,297

# Quantitative ratings on key sub-themes

Focus area	Sub-theme	# comments	Satisfaction rating	
			Students commenting on sub-theme	All students
<b>Teaching quality</b>	Course relevance & structure	48,674	79.5	81.7
<b>Skills development</b>	Practical application of theory	11,878	80.6	81.3
<b>Learner engagement</b>	Student interactions	7,679	55.4	60.2
<b>Learning resources</b>	Quality of facilities & resources	8,111	67.1	85.7
<b>Student support</b>	Administration	9,771	55.6	72.6

# Most needs improvement – uncodable responses



# Discussion

- The qualitative open-ended comments
  - Were mostly codable ‘automatically’ with the remainder offering very general feedback
  - Were thematically similar to the quantitative focus areas
  - Typically mirrored the quantitative rating (ie more satisfied = more likely to comment on best aspects, less satisfied = more likely to comment on areas for improvement)

# Discussion (2)

- The time and effort required to make this ‘qualitative’ data useful, should be judged against the number of potentially new insights
- Data could be used
  - To highlight areas for further investigation
  - As a point of triangulation with other data sources
  - To identify ways in which the open-ended items could be focused to provide more specific, actionable feedback

# Limitations

- ‘Just’ a content analysis – no insight into the process or interaction aspects of teaching – which is unlikely to accurately represent the student voice
  - “...the same word can carry quite different meaning, as in ‘I think that. . .’ which simply functions to project an opinion, which is quite different from the more substantial ‘the course really makes me think...’  
(Stewart, 2015:8)
- No sense of sentiment or valence (even though the comments are streamed by the nature of the question)



# Thank you

Questions?

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