

University of Canberra

Steve Evans and Kate Deller-Evans

True Lies? 1997 Survey of Creative Writing Students

What do students expect to get out of Creative Writing courses? Do they really understand what is being offered? Steve Evans and Kate Deller-Evans have surveyed students undertaking Creative Writing study in Adelaide either as a component of an undergraduate English course or through a postgraduate course focusing entirely on Creative Writing. Why did these students enroll in Creative Writing and how did their reasons differ? What do the results of the survey indicate for the way in which such courses are offered and received? Evans and Deller-Evans reveal whether the students' expectations are being met and consider the effect on future Creative Writing courses.

1. INTRODUCTION

The investigators were interested in the experience and opinions of students of Creative Writing at the Flinders University of Australia and at the University of Adelaide. They distributed a survey to identify areas where Creative Writing studies at these universities were seen to be failing or succeeding in meeting student expectations. Some differences between the two which were related to the nature of the courses were expected. In the process the investigators hoped to learn some things which might apply to courses offered elsewhere.

The key issues to be settled were:

- What do students expect to get out of Creative Writing courses?
- Do they really understand what is being offered?
- Why did these students enroll?
- How did their reasons for enrollment differ?
- What do the results of the survey indicate for the way in which such courses are offered and received?

This survey is particularly interesting in South Australia as the two university offerings are very different. At Flinders University a different Creative Writing topic is offered each semester as part of an undergraduate BA degree. "The Craft & Culture of Imaginative Writing; A Workshop Course" is offered in the first semester and "Writing for Children" in the second semester. At the University of Adelaide there is a postgraduate course, "Creative Writing", which comprises one semester for a Certificate, two semesters (that is, a full year) for a Diploma, and a further year for a Masters. The universities do not appear to be direct competitors in this field.

The Adelaide course was new in 1997. It featured the first Chair of Creative Writing appointed in Australia, Professor Thomas Shapcott, and received substantial set-up funding from Arts SA, the Department for the Arts in South Australia.

A more complete picture might have been possible by waiting to conduct the survey at the end of 1997 when all students had finished a year's work. An earlier survey was preferred as it would more accurately capture the students' original expectations. A further survey is planned to update the present results.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

All respondents were asked to provide a few personal details in case clarification of any answers was needed. There were no anonymous respondents but identities and individual responses were made known only to the investigators. Students were asked to identify their course of study and, if it was an undergraduate one, to identify the Creative Writing component. A series of questions were asked of the students' background and expectations before commencing the Creative Writing study. These related to:

- reasons for enrolling
- reasons for selecting the particular course
- the significance of study fees

- educational achievement
- employment
- publishing history
- expectations
- whether there were personal interaction issues
- whether there were other concerns
- intended level of study (for postgraduate students)

Students were asked about:

- current expectations and opinions
- how these compared with their original expectations
- whether they had raised concerns with others, and the outcome
- what significant factors inhibited or assisted their study
- details of other matters of importance which they wanted to raise

There were similar numbers of responses from both campuses. The survey questionnaires were issued in the early stages of the second semester at Flinders University so most of the responses from students there related to the first semester offering. 11 of the 15 students in the first semester's "The Craft & Culture of Imaginative Writing: A Workshop Course" replied, plus two of the 25 students in the second semester's "Writing for Children".

At the University of Adelaide, 15 of a possible 21 students responded. All had completed semester one, the Certificate stage, and were studying to achieve Diploma status at the end of the semester two. One of these 15 had originally intended stopping at the Certificate stage but continued. Ten planned to do the Masters. The Adelaide University figures exclude the co-author of this paper.

The results were collated and, where appropriate, coded to assist comparison. Results are presented in two main sections; those covering expectations before enrollment and then those dealing with the students' feelings after being involved in the study for some months.

3. STUDENTS' INITIAL VIEW OF THEIR CREATIVE WRITING STUDIES

3.1 Reasons for Enrolling

What were your main reasons for undertaking Creative Writing study? (e.g. love of writing, previous involvement, reputation of the presenters, future employment prospects)

The first two questions dealt with the reasons for enrolling in Creative Writing generally and then for enrolling in the particular topic or course. The students tended to mix the responses to these two questions. They are presented here as they were initially received, and then considered as a whole. Firstly, however, it is worthwhile considering the information which was available to the prospective students.

Flinders University

The English Handbook states that the aims of "The Craft and Culture of Imaginative Writing" are to:

- encourage students to read and write short fiction and poetry
- discuss their own reading and writing in a collaborative atmosphere
- encourage writing for possible publication
- present major critical issues of the day to enhance personal creativity
- expose students to works of influential writers

The objectives are to:

- develop writing, reading and editing skills
- write for possible publication
- share and respond to other people's writing
- become confident editors
- relate current critical debates about writing to their own work
- take both inspiration and direction from prominent local writers and from their reading

The English Handbook states that the aims of "Writing for Children" are to:

- introduce students to contemporary Australian children's literature
- examine the critical issues affecting children's writers
- develop students' understanding of the relationship between verbal and visual narratives
- develop creativity and polish writing skills
- sharpen critical abilities

Taken together, the above aims and objectives emphasise an understanding of current issues in writing, and the development of critical and writing skills likely to improve the chances of publication. How do these aims and objectives compare to the reasons cited by the 13 Flinders students? The reasons given for enrollment, sometimes more than one reason per student, were:

- enjoyment or interest in writing (9 mentions)
- expected greater employment or earnings (3)
- improvement of writing skills and confidence (3)
- study of writing techniques (2)
- wanting to write a book (2)
- wanting to explore fiction (1)
- looking for spill-over benefits in other areas of study (1)
- a chance to gauge one's own talent (1)
- simply to write! (1)

There is obviously some overlap in the responses. It is difficult to relate the "interest in writing" type of response to any specific aim or objective expressed in the discipline's handbook. If the large number of such answers does more than simply reflect the first prompt in the survey question, it could be inferred that most students were not particularly looking for improved writing skills and publication. Instead they could be seen as pursuing a less focused goal of reading and talking about writing, a broader "pleasure" motive.

University of Adelaide

The Certificate and Diploma courses were created late in 1996. There was little material available to prospective students which detailed the courses. The front of the small brochure for the University of Adelaide postgraduate courses bears the statement: "Develop your craft to the highest professional standard". The brochure explains briefly that the Certificate and Diploma study involves:

- presenting and discussing current student writing in various genres
- focusing on literary themes, theories and models through analysis and exercises

The students gave their own reasons for enrolling as:

- improving skills and repertoire (8)
- love of writing (5)
- improving publication prospects (4)
- a need for discipline, structure, pressure, motivation (4)
- wanting the culture and company of other writers (4)
- increasing earnings and employment prospects (3)
- obtaining feedback on own writing (2)
- having been directed to the course after the closing of the Drama Department (1)
- getting a further qualification (1)
- doing something imaginative (1)
- the reputation of the Professor (1)
- tapping into others' knowledge and experience (1)
- increasing output (1)
- to be a writer (1)

These show a very different mix compared to the Flinders responses, with much more emphasis on development of skills. Some of the difference might be explained by the Flinders topics being imbedded in a BA and comprising only a small part of that. The University of Adelaide students were tackling a dedicated writing course and might be expected to justify their investment in a more particular way. The student profiles are developed later in this paper.

3.2 Course Selection

Why did you select your particular course for Creative Writing rather than another?

Flinders University

Eight of the 13 respondents said no more than that their Creative Writing topic was the only one available at the time which would fit into their BA. It might be presumed that it was still preferable to other non-Creative Writing topics but nothing else is known about their basis of selection despite the prompts contained in the question. The other five students gave varying reasons, which could have been presented in answering the previous question. They cited:

- creative freedom
- creative stimulation and sharing with like minds
- cheaper than undertaking a similar course outside Flinders University
- fun and interesting

One student expected several benefits; creative thinking, feedback, some improvement in publication prospects, discussion of writing techniques, exploration of genres, and a process of discovery.

University of Adelaide

The students at Adelaide addressed the question directly. They focused much more on the competing courses in the city, such as those offered by TAFE, and found such offerings unsuitable and/or they had a particular preference to stay with the University of Adelaide, an institution they apparently already knew and respected. The reasons given for undertaking the Adelaide University course were:

- most demanding local course (4)
- stay with English Department or Adelaide University (3)
- reputation; prestige of the qualification (3)
- no up-front fees in 1997 (2)
- the only other graduate degree courses were interstate (2)
- logical next step in study (2)
- University environment (1)
- only known course of the kind (1)
- convenience (1)
- the professor (1)
- something new (1)
- no particular reason (1)

3.3 Study Cost

How significant was the cost of study to your enrollment decision?

This question could have related to a number of costs such as the opportunity cost of lost earnings, travel expenses, course fees, etc. It is probably no surprise that the Flinders undergraduates did not see cost as a problem. The Creative Writing topics were available to them as part of their degree, i.e. at no additional expense. In contrast, the Adelaide University students were very sensitive to cost and only one of them rated this issue as less than a major concern. It was always the course fees which worried them, both the likelihood of an increase and the uncertainty of the final figure.

The Adelaide course was subject to semester fees of \$1,643 in 1997; a total of \$3,286 for the first year's Diploma qualification. Payment could be deferred under the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. Students were advised during 1997 that up-front fees would be required for 1998 and subsequent years. Initially there was no mention of an increase in charges for 1998, then there were successive rumours of the fees being over \$4,000, over \$5,000 and over \$6,000. After the survey responses were received, there was written advice that 1998 up-front fees would be \$6,792 and that between 10 and 12 of the 1998 places would be eligible for HECS.

Table 1: SIGNIFICANCE OF COSTS

	Nil	Low	Medium	High
Undergraduate	100%	-	-	-
Postgraduate	-	-	8%	92%

3.4 Educational Achievement

What were your main prior educational achievements? (e.g. degree title and year of achievement)

Only one of the Flinders students already had a tertiary qualification (law degree). All but one of the Adelaide respondents held an Arts degree, the other having gained a Bachelor of Science. Given the different entry requirements, the variation in prior study is not unusual. What might be surprising, however, is the extent to which the Adelaide students also held one or more other postgraduate qualifications. These were mainly Diplomas, predominantly in educational disciplines.

Table 2: MAIN PRIOR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

	School	Degree	Postgrad
Undergraduate	92%	8%	-
Postgraduate	-	40%	60%

3.5 Employment

What was your employment background before starting this study and was this in a field related to Creative Writing?

With a younger survey population expected in the undergraduate group, it was likely that the Flinders students would show a lower rate of prior employment and this was borne out. Just over half of this group had been employed. By comparison, all of the Adelaide students had been employed.

Prior employment might be a useful indicator of a number of skills, such as group interaction, conflict resolution, time management, and assertiveness. In other words, it could signal a greater ability to maximise the potential of the postgraduate course.

Table 3: EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND BEFORE THIS STUDY

	None	Some
Undergraduate	46%	54%
Postgraduate	-	100%

3.6 Publishing History

Please give brief details of your history in publication, performance, broadcast, etc.

The undergraduate students had a reasonably high rate of previous publication. The extent of this varied considerably but exposure of their work tended to be minor. This was consistent with the opportunities likely to have been available to a generally younger group.

An unexpected feature was that three of the postgraduate students had no prior history of public exposure of their work. Presumably, the quality of their portfolio of work was sufficient to demonstrate the prospects of future success when their enrollment applications were being considered. All of the postgraduate students were required to produce a portfolio for consideration when enrolling.

Table 4: HISTORY IN PUBLICATION, PERFORMANCE, BROADCAST

	None	Some
Undergraduate	46%	54%
Postgraduate	20%	80%

3.7 Expectations

What were your expectations of the course before enrolling? Consider issues such as personal nervousness, contact

hours, group workshops, extent of personal attention from tutors, writing exercises, possibility of publication, scope of topics available, number of genres studied, etc.

The positive/negative split in expectations of the course or topic before enrollment was very similar between the two student groups but the postgraduates' concerns covered a wider range of issues. For the undergraduates, the presence of some negative responses reflected caution about their ability to produce work of quality or to critically discuss work freely. The postgraduates with lower expectations were concerned about the pressures of time, doubted their own abilities, or worried that the course might not cover the technical skills they were seeking. The last point may have reflected a wish for more information before enrolling, something which could have been addressed in the course literature or through personal enquiry.

Table 5: EXPECTATIONS OF COURSE BEFORE ENROLLING

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
Undergraduate	-	8%	15%	23%	54%
Postgraduate	-	14%	8%	26%	52%

3.8 Personal Interaction Expectations

Did you expect any problems when discussing your work with others or criticising theirs?

Considering their greater experience and the degree to which the postgraduates' work would have been exposed to criticism and feedback in the past, their level of concern about interaction with other students was rather high. Both student groups were less concerned about others' comments on their work than they were about providing feedback to others. A couple of students said that the latter was the job of the course or topic leader, which suggests an incomplete and very passive role for the students concerned.

This finding also suggests that some discussion needs to be held at the outset with new students to communicate guidelines on feedback and group interaction, as well as the value of such feedback. A positive approach could make the feedback process much more rewarding and less traumatic.

Table 6: PERSONAL INTERACTION PROBLEMS EXPECTED

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
Undergraduate	-	46%	8%	8%	38%
Postgraduate	-	40%	-	8%	52%

3.9 Other Concerns

Did you have any other concerns and doubts about starting in such a field of study? Please explain whether they were to do with your own experience, teachability of the craft, etc.

The undergraduates were comparatively calm about their impending study in Creative Writing. There was one mention of self doubt and another of cultural differences possibly creating problems in judgement of the student's work, but there were relatively few concerns overall.

A remarkably high proportion of the postgraduate students was worried about dealing with criticism. They were nervous about how they might constructively comment without offending the other party, particularly with different levels of expertise in the class. This issue could be covered in promotional material and in the initial classes in order to overcome concerns.

Table 7: ANY OTHER CONCERNS AND DOUBTS

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
Undergraduate	-	23%	8%	8%	61%

Postgraduate	-	67%	-	-	33%
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3.10 Intended Level of Study

If you enrolled as a Postgraduate, at what level did you intend to finish; Certificate, Diploma or Masters? Why did you intend this level?

The one University of Adelaide student who originally intended stopping at the Certificate has since decided to continue on to Diploma level. Of the other 14 students, four intending to gain a Diploma said this was originally chosen because of the cost of Masters course, i.e. they could not afford the up-front fees for the second year. Students intending an MA gave a number of reasons for their choice:

- stretching themselves to the maximum
- publishing their work
- completing first full length work within the course
- boosting confidence
- continuing on to a PhD when possible

As if forecasting their responses to a later question about changes in expectations and plans, three of the students initially intending to complete an MA said that the costs of the second year made that original goal unlikely or impossible.

Table 8: POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' INTENDED LEVEL OF STUDY

	Certificate	Diploma	Master
Number of Students	1	4	10
Percentage	8%	27%	65%

4. STUDENTS' LATER VIEW OF THEIR CREATIVE WRITING STUDIES

4.1 Current Expectations

Are your current expectations of the course higher or lower than when you enrolled? How have your original expectations changed?

With this section of the survey and these two questions in particular the investigators began to see variations from the students' original expectations and why these occurred.

Almost half (46%) of the Flinders students changed their expectations, split evenly between lower and higher outlooks, i.e. 23% to each. There was a much greater movement to a more positive outlook by the postgraduate students at Adelaide, 54% of the students having a more optimistic outlook than previously. Students' reasons for revised expectations are discussed below.

Table 9A: EXPECTATIONS NOW HIGHER OR LOWER?

	Lower	Unchanged	Higher
Undergraduates	23%	54%	23%
Postgraduates	20%	26%	54%

Table 9B: REVISED EXPECTATIONS

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
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Undergraduates	8%	31%	8%	23%	31%
Postgraduates	-	14%	14%	20%	53%

The revised opinions and expectations of the students reflected a real mixture of dissatisfactions and pleasures. At the risk of appearing to present a biased slice, the investigators have concentrated on the positive comments immediately below. The difficulties encountered by the students are dealt with in some detail shortly afterwards (See 4.3 Student Concerns and Interaction).

Flinders University: Revised Opinions

Undergraduate students felt that their study of Creative Writing gave them confidence in other subjects, a greater ability to understand texts and better written expression. One was very effusive: "this course is the best I've done so far at Flinders. Nothing else comes close".

University of Adelaide: Revised Opinions

The postgraduate students were even more positive, frequently citing a large improvement in their self confidence and writing, and complimenting the role of Professor Thomas Shapcott. Some typical comments:

"I leaped ahead with Tom's encouragement and have found every session rewarding and often challenging. When I'm out of my safety zone of writing, I know I'm learning."

"Writing is a lonely business. The value of this kind of in-service training is immeasurable."

"I have gained more from this course than I had ever hoped for."

"This course has been - is - enormously important to me. I'm committed to writing as a viable work option. The broad exposure to a vast variety of writers has been enormously stimulating."

4.3 Student Concerns and interaction

If you had issues concerning the course, did you raise these with someone else (e.g. other students, a subject/course liaison person, University staff) and what was the outcome?

There was a large proportion of the students at each campus who did raise concerns with others, the undergraduates being less likely than the postgraduates to do so (5 of the 13 respondents at Flinders and 9 of the 15 at Adelaide). Was there more for the postgraduates to complain about or were they more confident in dealing with those concerns? What were the issues?

It is interesting that the Adelaide University group organised student representatives to take up matters with the administration. The Flinders students were not organised in this way.

Table 10A: ISSUES RAISED

	None	Some
Undergraduates	61%	39%
Postgraduates	40	60%

Flinders University: Undergraduates' Concerns

Some of the issues which worried the students were significant. Almost all dealt with matters of marking. Several students specified the lack of a clear basis of assessment and of formal feedback until the final stages of the semester one topic. Other comments were that the assignments were unclear, that marking was contentious or unexplained, and that marking relativities between students were unsound. One student thought of dropping out through lack of feedback but persevered and passed.

The students' concern about marking at Flinders is clearly a significant one.

University of Adelaide: Postgraduate Concerns

The Adelaide students were concerned about a wider range of issues; the cost of the course, group dynamics and class size, the facilities available to Creative Writing students, and communication with the English Department.

Students argued that in view of the fees increase the University should be offering HECS places and/or scholarships in 1998:

"I need to get scholarship to continue or mortgage the kids".

"I find this to be an absurd situation - particularly for a course that has just started - one which is supposed to recognise and nurture SA writers."

The size and the dynamics of the class also concerned students. The class contained more than 20 students which was considered too many. There were complaints that too little of some individuals' work or opinions could be heard due to the number of students or the dominance of a few students. The introduction of smaller genre-focussed classes in the second semester and the increasing familiarity of the members of the class seemed to overcome those criticisms. An initial tendency to use extensive class time to deal with house-keeping matters was also not a concern later.

A longer lasting complaint was that there needed to be better space available:

"We would like a room of our own!"

".. there never seems enough chairs and tables to go around. I find this incredible!"

"I anticipated better physical conditions and accommodation. The facilities are poor, they are crowded, overheated and unattractive."

"There is nowhere private to... study."

Some of the comments reflect a sense of poor value for money, sometimes through direct comparison with others, e.g. offices were being provided to non Creative Writing English postgraduates to share. The criticisms softened a little when the a new seminar room was provided but the level of facilities for these fee-paying students remains a sore point. There is little sympathy given to the University's apparent preference for research students where the distinction is made that Creative Writing is by course work.

Lastly, there were numerous times when the students felt that the English Department was not being clear or full in communicating on important matters such as those above. This was partly excused on the basis that the course was new and there was an expectation that some problems were likely to be "teething" ones. This goodwill may not last indefinitely.

The Flinders students were much more likely to have been unhappy with the outcome of raising their concerns. Two of the five students raising concerns at Flinders stated that nothing had happened after they had raised problems. This number, though, may be too small to be meaningful.

Table 10B: OUTCOME OF RAISING ISSUES

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
Undergraduates	-	40%	-	60%	-
Postgraduates	-	11%	44%	11%	33%

The investigators felt this aspect of the survey pointed out an important opportunity for both universities to deal with and be seen to deal with existing concerns of the students (in business jargon, to be much more customer orientated) and to establish a channel for future concerns to be handled in a quick and sympathetic manner.

4.4 Inhibiting Factors

What were the most significant factors inhibiting achievement of your study plans?

This question was intended to discover any significant matters which made study difficult. It was also important to establish which of these might appropriately be addressed by the universities. As well as noting the particular concerns which the students had, responses were graded to gauge differences between the two student groups.

Table 11: ATTITUDE REGARDING PROBLEMS

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
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Undergraduates	15%	38%	8%	-	38%
Postgraduates	13%	79%	-	-	8%

The postgraduate students were markedly more negative about obstacles to their studies than were the undergraduates.

Flinders University: Inhibiting Factors

Many Flinders students did not specify the nature of the inhibitors but lack of time was sometimes mentioned.

"As a mature age student with husband, kids, house, pets, etc., etc., time was often a problem. I was pleasantly surprised by my ability to neglect them."

Two students referred to the nature and the number of the exercises as inhibitors -

"set exercises... killed any imaginative process"; "too much material and not enough time to fully develop each element".

All students mentioned workload issues.

University of Adelaide: Inhibiting Factors

All but one of the problems afflicting the postgraduate students were raised in answers to the previous question. Worries about finances and course fees dominated and there were concerns about how to find time to do the necessary work, particularly with family and employment pressures. One student commented that producing the assignments meant her other writing "had come to a standstill".

4.5 Enabling Factors

What were the most significant factors enabling achievement of your study plans?

Table 12: ATTITUDE REGARDING ENABLING FACTORS

	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
Undergraduates	-	-	-	38%	62%
Postgraduates	-	-	-	40%	60%

Unlike the responses regarding perceived inhibiting factors, the two groups were almost identical in their attitude to enabling factors. In both cases the significant factor was the quality of the teaching.

Flinders students concentrated on the "warmth and enthusiasm of the lecturers". At Adelaide University, the responses seem best summed up by the comment on the Professor, Thomas Shapcott as an "excellent teacher with a broad knowledge base and impeccable ability to communicate...".

5. OTHER

If we've omitted a question on any other Creative Writing matter which is important to you, please add your comments here. It may help us to identify an issue of significance which should be raised.

Several Flinders students queried why their Creative Writing topic could not be counted as part of an English Major. Another common point was that similar topics should continue to be offered in future years. Adelaide students did not raise other issues at this prompt.

6. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Nature of Original Expectations

The undergraduate students were more likely to have expectations of their Creative Writing topic which were based on a general interest in writing than on developing particular writing skills. The postgraduates had more specific,

craft related hopes such as developing their skills and improving their prospects for publication. There was less information available to the postgraduates about their course prior to enrollment. The University of Adelaide could expand and clarify the information provided to prospective students in its Creative Writing courses.

6.2 Students' Later Opinions

The postgraduate students were critical in a wider range of issues but also more positive overall. With the exception of the postgraduates' reference to writing skills, neither group later referred to their own original expectations in detail. Instead they tended to refer to any particular complaints or satisfactions based only on their post-enrolment experiences. The universities could gather and use such feedback to develop and increase a satisfaction rating.

6.3 Course Fees

Financial considerations were very significant to the postgraduates at the University of Adelaide. This was heightened by the announcement during their Diploma year that up-front fees for 1998, the first Masters year, would be roughly double the 1997 charges. The fees change may be severe enough to place continuing enrollments in jeopardy, according to student comments. Where fee reductions or offsets (scholarships, for instance) are not available, it will be critical that a good reputation is maintained through high quality of course delivery, principally in teaching, facilities and responsiveness to student feedback.

6.4 Critical process

The undergraduate students were less nervous than the postgraduate students about the prospect of criticising the writing of their peers. This might have been due to the greater chance that a class of postgraduates would contain writers with substantial experience. Nevertheless both groups showed some concerns in this area, which the universities could address through clear guidelines and discussion at an early stage each semester.

6.5 Raising Concerns

Overall, the postgraduate students seemed more prepared to raise concerns and were happier with the outcome when they did so. They still have some important matters requiring continuing attention by the university. For students enrolled in a fee-paying course of a dedicated nature, this "customer activity" is perhaps not surprising. The universities need to establish effective channels to deal promptly with concerns raised by students.

The undergraduates' main concern was with the lack of information about the basis of assessment. The postgraduates wanted lower fees, smaller classes and better facilities, and clearer communication with the English Department. They regarded these issues as serious.

6.6 Enabling and Inhibiting Factors

The groups were very similar in attitude to enabling factors (see Table 12: Attitude Regarding Enabling Factors) and in identifying the key ingredient as the quality of teaching. The postgraduates were particularly appreciative of their teaching.

6.7 Conclusion

The investigators believe that the survey served a number of important functions. It was a medium for student comments to be relayed to the course providers. It highlighted differences, some expected and others not, between the pre-enrolment expectations and subsequent study experiences of the undergraduates and postgraduates. It identified some areas of concern which the universities can act on to improve the quality of their offering.

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