

# LEADING COURSES

Answers for Deakin staff who offer students  
a brilliant education where they are  
and where they want to go

## CHAPTER 7: EVALUATING LEARNING AND TEACHING



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# CHAPTER 7: EVALUATING LEARNING AND TEACHING

This chapter explains:

- the eVALUate survey and how to interpret student comments
- other course information and indicators of quality
- awards recognising teaching excellence.

Evaluating learning and teaching is core to the Deakin curriculum framework. Evaluation provides the evidence for course improvement and ensures changes will improve student outcomes. Deakin collects evidence on course and unit performance from multiple sources including student feedback and evidence of outcomes.

## EVIDENCE OF COURSE AND UNIT PERFORMANCE

### What evidence is available to help improve courses, units and student outcomes?

Student feedback helps course and unit teams to understand the lived experience of the students. Student surveys are administered through the Strategic Intelligence and Planning Unit (SIPU) with reports available to course teaching teams online through the [SIPU website](#) which includes links to the course dashboard.

Student feedback is collected through:

#### 1. Deakin surveys

- **eVALUate** surveys all students in all units and runs every time a unit is delivered. It is a crucial and up-to-date source of information. The eVALUate survey is a key component of the unit and course review process
- **Getting Started@Deakin**: surveys new students every two years regarding their experience in their first six weeks at Deakin

#### 2. National surveys

Deakin participates in a number of surveys run by government agencies. These surveys offer national benchmarks for outcomes (discussed below).

Evidence on quality learning and teaching also comes from **monitoring student success** in units and courses (pass rates, grade distributions), student demand and participation (applications, retention) and longer-term outcomes (employment, transition to other degrees, return to further study).

This evidence is reviewed through an integrated system of quality assurance comprising trimester unit review, annual course review and major course review. Deakin also benchmarks its courses through external peer benchmarking of assessment, major course review and course advisory committees.

Evidence of the outcomes of learning and teaching is relevant to everyone contributing to a course. Teaching teams at unit and course level should regularly discuss the evidence from their course and use the information to refine course planning and delivery. Regular discussion promotes continuous improvement and encourages shared solutions.

## STUDENT FEEDBACK ON TEACHING AND UNITS

### What is the eVALUate survey and how is it used to improve units and teaching?

The **eVALUate survey** collects student feedback in accordance with the [Evaluation of Teaching and Units Procedure](#). All units must use formal evaluation. Unit chairs are notified on release of the eVALUate data after each teaching period and are expected to review the results with their teaching team. A limited group of units uses alternatives to eVALUate with permission from their faculty and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education: HDR research units, exchange units, cross-institutional units and some work experience in industry units.

The eVALUate survey was developed at Curtin University and is used in four Australian universities. The questions have been validated to ensure student responses are consistent and meaningful. The survey is administered over a period of around five weeks every trimester and semester. A detailed [calendar of survey tasks](#) is developed by SIPU each year and is available to staff.

Detailed information on eVALUate and how it is administered is available on the [SIPU website](#).

The survey comprises three sections: quantitative responses on unit design and delivery, student motivation and engagement and overall satisfaction, qualitative responses to allow open commentary and feedback on individual teachers. Students are asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a four-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* or *unable to judge*. Results are reports as percentage agreement with the statement, that is, the percentage of students that responded with either 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

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#### Unit design and delivery

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- 1 The learning outcomes in this unit are clearly defined
  - 2 The learning experiences in this unit help me to achieve the learning outcomes
  - 3 The learning resources in this unit help me to achieve the learning outcomes
  - 4 The assessment tasks in this unit evaluate my achievement of the learning outcomes
  - 5 Feedback on my work in this unit helps me to achieve the learning outcomes
  - 6 The workload in this unit is appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes
  - 7 The quality of teaching in this unit helps me to achieve the learning outcomes
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#### The student's motivation and engagement in learning

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- 8 I am motivated to achieve the learning outcomes in this unit
  - 9 I make best use of the learning experiences in this unit
  - 10 I think about how I can learn more effectively in this unit
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#### Overall satisfaction

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- 11 Overall, I am satisfied with this unit
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#### Qualitative questions (open comments)

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- 12 What are the most helpful aspects of the unit?
  - 13 How do you think this unit might be improved?
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Feedback on individual teaching (teaching satisfaction) comprises two items:

- agreement with 'I was satisfied with the quality of teaching from this teacher in this unit' via the same four-point scale
- open commentary prompted by: 'Please provide any comments on the teaching of this unit by this teacher.'

All staff teaching into the unit are included in the survey. Students who have not worked with a particular staff member can opt for 'unable to judge'.

### ***Analysis of student feedback***

All student feedback is valuable. It is important to look at the quantitative scores which illustrate consensus from all students, as well as the student comments which elicit individual experiences and can provide insight. Students' views may vary considerably so look for trends and consistency between data sets and complementary forms of data.

Help your teaching team to put student comments into perspective. Check the frequency that topics or issues are raised and the balance between positive and negative comments. Student feedback often appears confusing with contradictory messages. Look for other sources of data that could provide insight, for example, information from the unit or course site and information from classroom teachers.

Assistance with interpreting student comments is available on [Deakin's eVALUate blog](#).

### ***Response rates and communication with students***

The quality of the information obtained from eVALUate relies on good response rates from students. eVALUate is administered online and the University regularly reminds students to complete their surveys. However, **communication from unit and course leaders is easily the most effective way to lift response rates**. Remind your students that we value their feedback and explain what you and your team have done in response to past feedback. Students are much more likely to complete surveys where they are aware of consequential action.

Regular discussion with your students during delivery can provide you with informal feedback on-the-go. This approach can rescue a challenging situation or simply remove obstacles to learning. However, **do not** administer your own formal surveys without express permission and ethics permission if you intend to use the results for research or publication. Other surveys must not be administered during the eVALUate collection phase as this can deter students from completing eVALUate surveys.

Talk to your associate head of school or associate dean teaching and learning before making any plans to survey your students and check the [Surveys Procedure](#).

## **OTHER COURSE INFORMATION**

### **Where can I find information about course quality?**

#### ***Course dashboard***

The [course dashboard](#) is a website that consolidates information about each Deakin course. It presents information drawn from the student management system, eVALUate and other Deakin systems. The dashboard identifies and links nested courses (masters, postgraduate diploma and postgraduate certificate).

The dashboard lists: ATAR, equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL), revenue, retention, success, eVALUate (Q11 overall satisfaction) and three scales from the national graduate survey where available. Data are also presented as graphs for an individual course. Data from the course dashboard and other parameters are used to create a data pack for self-review during course review processes.

#### ***National student surveys***

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training endorses a suite of higher education surveys which collectively form the [Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching \(QILT\)](#).

The surveys cover the student life cycle from commencement to employment and include:

- Student Experience Survey (SES)—formerly called the University Experience Survey (UES)
- Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS)—replaces the Australian Graduate Survey (AGS)
- Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS)
- Graduate Outcome Survey - Longitudinal (GOS-L)—replaces the Beyond Graduation Survey (BGS)

Data from these surveys are provided to participating universities and published on the QILT website which allows comparisons between study areas (categorised by Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) Field of Education) and institutions. These surveys help Deakin to benchmark itself against peers. Deakin has been ranked first in Victoria for student satisfaction from 2011–2017.

Data from national surveys are provided as part of annual and major course review, providing additional measures of course outcomes.

## RECOGNISING TEACHING EXCELLENCE

### How is teaching excellence recognised?

#### ***Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Learning***

The **Vice-Chancellor's Awards (VC Awards)** are aligned to the *LIVE the future* strategic plan: learning, ideas, value, experience, and are administered annually. These awards are coordinated by a human resources (HR) team and associated committees. These committees review the award applications and provide recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor via the HR team.

The learning awards applications are reviewed by the Learning Awards Committee (LAC), chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, and coordinated by the LAC secretary (email: [learningresearch@deakin.edu.au](mailto:learningresearch@deakin.edu.au) for information). The VC Awards opening and closing dates are publicised online and through the VC Awards wiki page.

The VC learning awards are closely aligned to both Deakin priority areas and the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT), allowing for possible progress to a national award.

There is an established internal process for the VC Awards for Learning, which are self-nominated and all information including nomination forms and guidelines can be found on the [VC Awards wiki page](#).

#### ***Australian Awards for University Teaching***

The AAUT are extremely competitive awards. These awards include Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, Teaching Excellence Awards and Awards for Programs that Enhance Learning. Further information is available on the [Department of Education and Training](#) website.

There is an established internal process around the national awards where those Deakin staff who have won a Vice-Chancellor's Learning Award, and are selected and then invited to nominate in the AAUT, are closely supported and provided guidance throughout the process.

For further information please [email](#) the awards coordinator.