

Introduction

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) is a survey undertaken annually by students enrolled in higher education institutions in Australia and New Zealand as well as Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics in New Zealand. It is closely linked to the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In 2011, a pilot study was undertaken with students at New Zealand Private Training Establishments (PTEs).

Student engagement is an idea focused on students and their interactions with their institution. It rests on the premise that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities, and on how institutions and staff generate conditions to stimulate involvement.

The AUSSE is important because it provides an indication of students' involvement in activities and experience of conditions that research has linked with high-quality student outcomes. As such, it provides data for framing conversations about quality and a stimulus for guiding policy to improve the educational experiences and outcomes.

The AUSSE collects information about:

- the experiences and activities of students in relation to their studies;
- the experiences and activities of students outside of their formal education;
- the personal interactions students have with staff and fellow students at their institution;
- the future study intentions of students;
- students' perceptions of the values and quality of their institution; and
- socio-demographic information about students.

The AUSSE is managed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in close collaboration with participating institutions. The results of the AUSSE are discussed in a variety of reports. Each institution receives a detailed Institution Report that includes a range of results and benchmarks. The Australasian Student Engagement Report provides a high-level public discussion of findings, and the AUSSE Research Briefings provide more detailed discussion and analysis of the engagement of specific groups of students.

This Executive Summary Report complements the more detailed Institution Report. Each institution-specific report provides information relating specifically to the engagement of students at the institution who took part in the 2011 AUSSE. The reporting shows the outcomes for this institution in relation to students from a number of aggregated groupings, including Australasia, North America and selected 'like' institutions within Australia and New Zealand.

Student engagement measures at the institutional level are generally divided into two groups – first-year students and later-year students. Subgroup information is also provided in this Executive Summary Report and in the more detailed Institution Report.

Further information about the AUSSE and the publications that result from this annual collection can be found at the following website: <http://www.acer.edu.au/research/ausse>.

Population and sample summary

In 2011, 41 institutions participated in the AUSSE and related surveys. In 2010, 54 institutions participated in the AUSSE, as did 35 in 2009, 29 in 2008 and 25 in 2007. The AUSSE 2011 population includes 77,134 first-year and 113,752 later-year on-shore students. Comparisons are made in this report with the results from the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In 2011, 751 institutions from the USA and Canada took part in the NSSE.

Based on instructions provided by Otago Polytechnic in early 2011, a systematic random sample of 534 first-year and 1021 later-year on-shore students was drawn from the total population. This sample was designed to yield 311 responses. As shown in Table 1, 718 students responded in total, giving an overall institutional response rate of 46 per cent. For the results that follow in this Executive Summary Report and the more detailed Institutional Report the response sample has been weighted to ensure that results reflect the institution’s population as a whole.

Table 1: Response statistics

	Otago Polytechnic		All institutions	
	First year	Later year	First year	Later year
Respondents	226	492	10818	10912
Target population size	534	1021	48242	55275
Response rate	42	48	22	20

Areas of performance scores

Around 100 specific learning activities and conditions are measured in the AUSSE. Table 2 summarises the areas in which Otago Polytechnic’s students score above the Australasian average, and areas in which scores are below the Australasian average. It is important to note that a below average score is not necessarily a negative finding, similarly an above average score is not necessarily a positive finding.

Table 2: Performance above and below average

Above average	Below average
Relationships with administrative personnel and services	Working for pay off campus
Relationships with teaching staff	Assignments of between 1,000 and 5,000 words
Relationships with other students	Foreign language
Sought advice from academic staff	Used library resources on campus or online
Being on campus, including time spent in class	Number of assigned textbooks
Talked about career plans	Writing clearly and effectively
Blended academic learning with workplace experience	Number of assigned textbooks
Explored how to apply learning in the workplace	Integrating from various sources
Discussed grades with teaching staff	Community service or volunteer work
Acquiring job-related or work-related knowledge and skills	Travelling to campus
Tutored other students	Making judgements about value of information
Worked with students during class	Analysing basic elements

Engagement scale scores

This Executive Summary Report provides information about the responses to the 2011 AUSSE at Otago Polytechnic. It shows the engagement and outcomes of students as measured on a number of core scales. Scale scores are reported using a metric that runs from 0 to 100.

The engagement scales measured by the AUSSE include: Academic Challenge, Active Learning, Student and Staff Interactions, Enriching Educational Experiences, Supportive Learning Environment and Work Integrated Learning.

Figure 1 displays the differences in both the engagement and outcomes scales for first-year and later-year student respondents from Otago Polytechnic. It is interesting to compare the outcomes of students at these two points in time in order to identify areas of gain and decline.

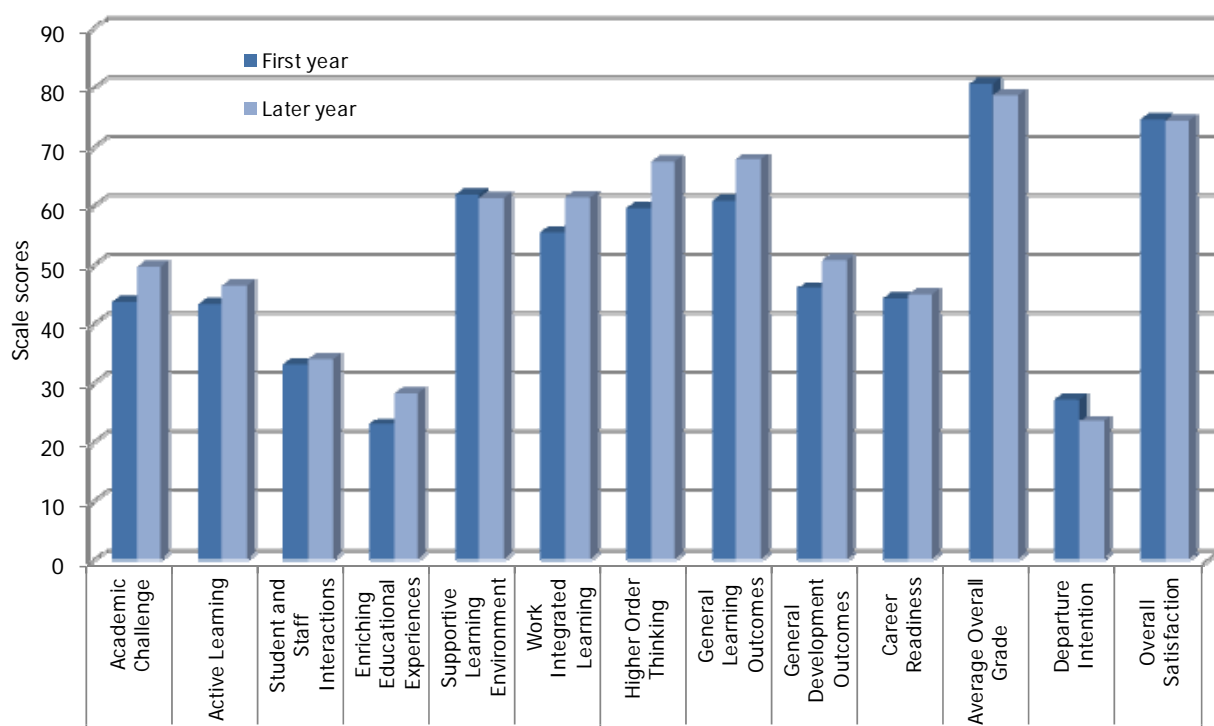


Figure 1: Engagement and outcome scores for Otago Polytechnic by year level

Engagement of first-year students is crucial for a range of reasons. It is important that new students adjust to university life so that their chances of success, likelihood of completing and contribution to the institution can be enhanced. Figure 2 displays the engagement scores of first-year students from this institution alongside those from a number of benchmark groups.

In Figure 3, the engagement scale scores of later-year students are compared with the benchmark group and overall scores for Australasia and North America. Examining these responses can provide further insight into the relative levels of engagement of students in this institution. These later-year figures are important because they provide an indication of the perceptions and experiences of students accumulated over the years they have spent at the institution.

Comparing institutional results against a range of other measures enables universities to assess their relative level of student engagement for this student cohort. It is best to compare results across groups within each scale, rather than make comparisons across scales. In general, a difference of five scale points may be considered a meaningful educational effect. Note that the Work Integrated Learning scale is not administered in the NSSE and therefore there are no comparisons with the USA results for this scale.

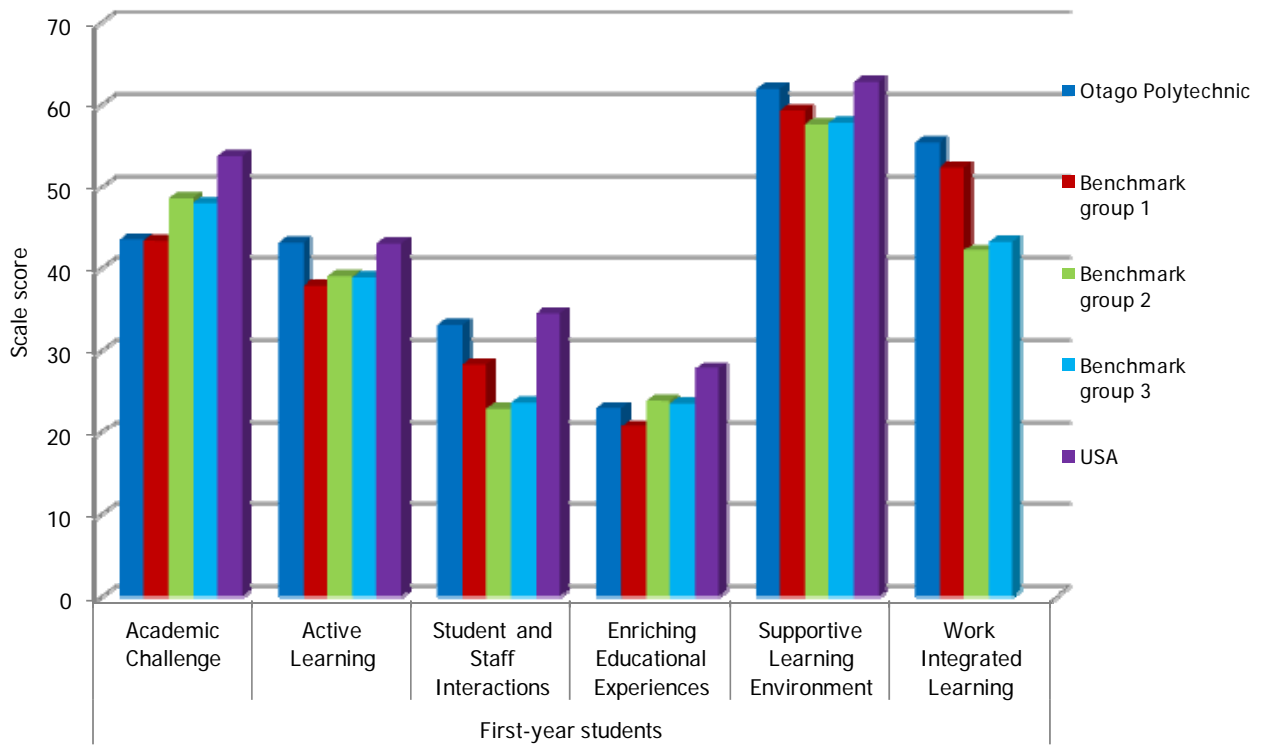


Figure 2: First-year student engagement scale scores

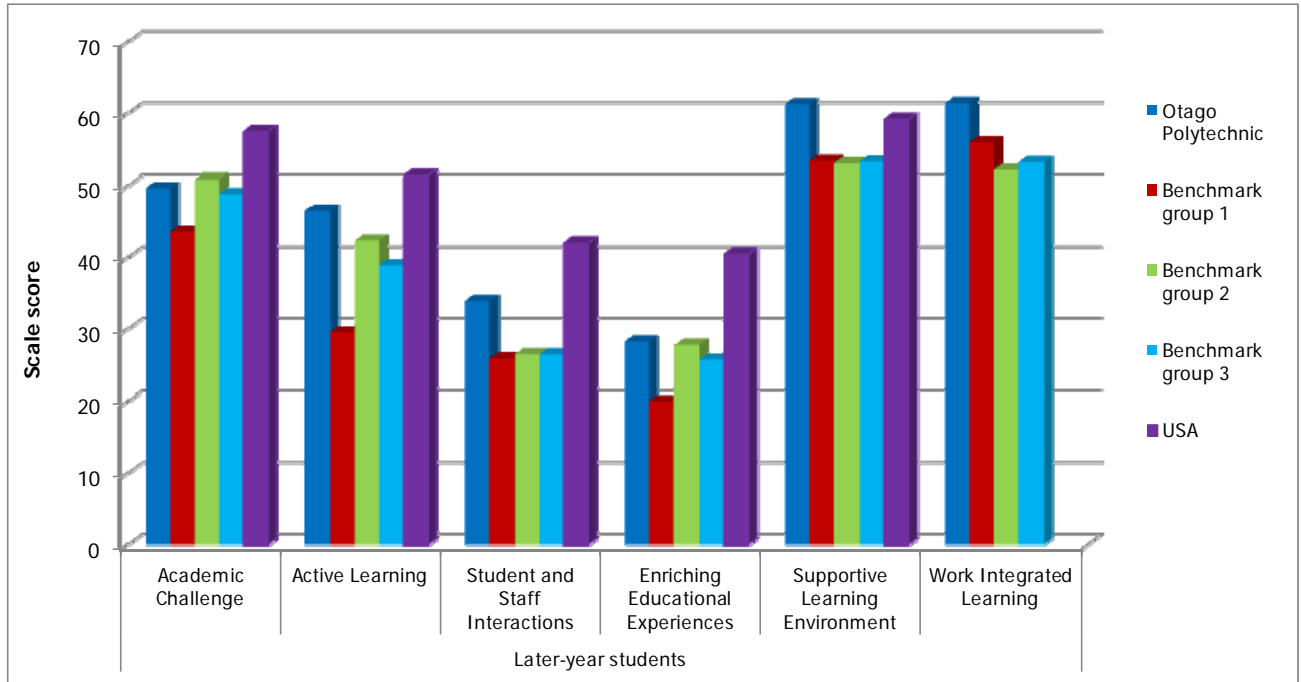


Figure 3: Later-year student engagement scale scores

Outcome scale scores

Several educational outcomes are measured in the AUSSE. The outcomes scales are: Overall Satisfaction, Departure Intention, Average Overall Grade, General Development Outcomes, Career Readiness, General Learning Outcomes, and Higher-order Thinking.

The outcomes measures from the first-year cohort of AUSSE respondents are displayed alongside several benchmarks in Figure 4.

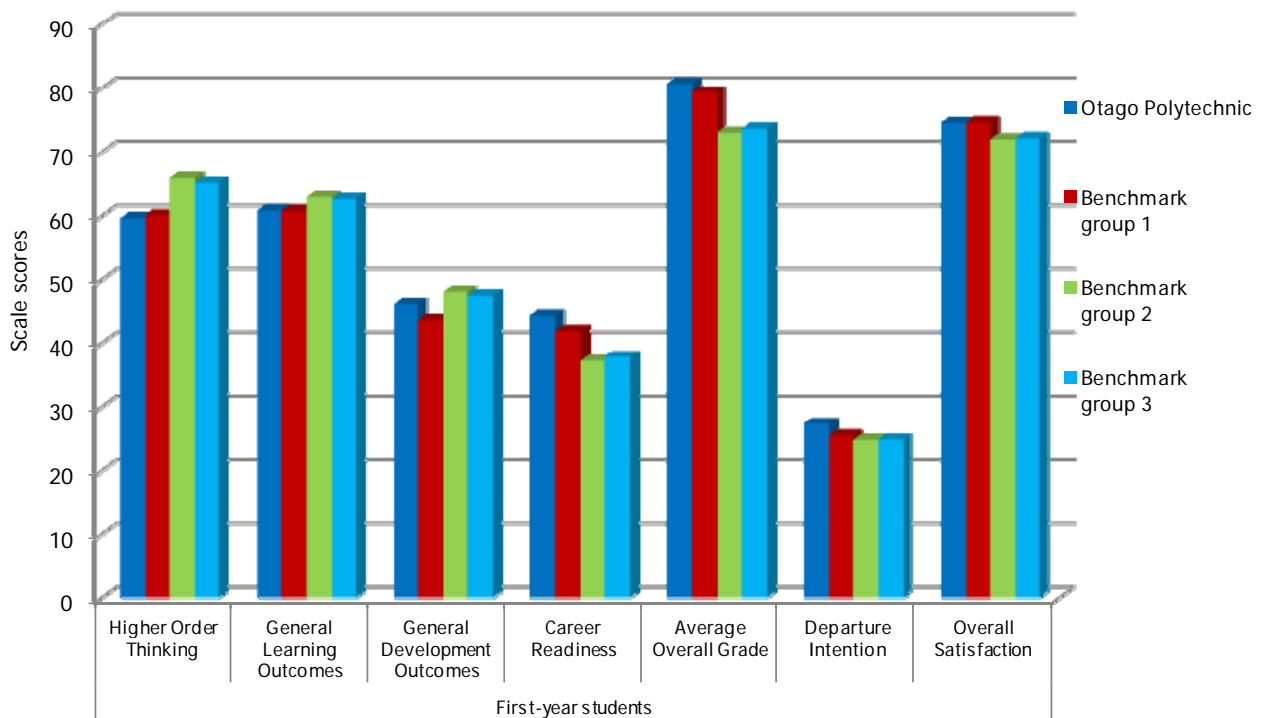


Figure 4: First-year student outcome scale scores

Similarly, Figure 5 shows the outcomes scale scores for the final-year cohort of this university, with scores from the institution's benchmark group and the overall Australasian score providing contexts for the institution-level results.

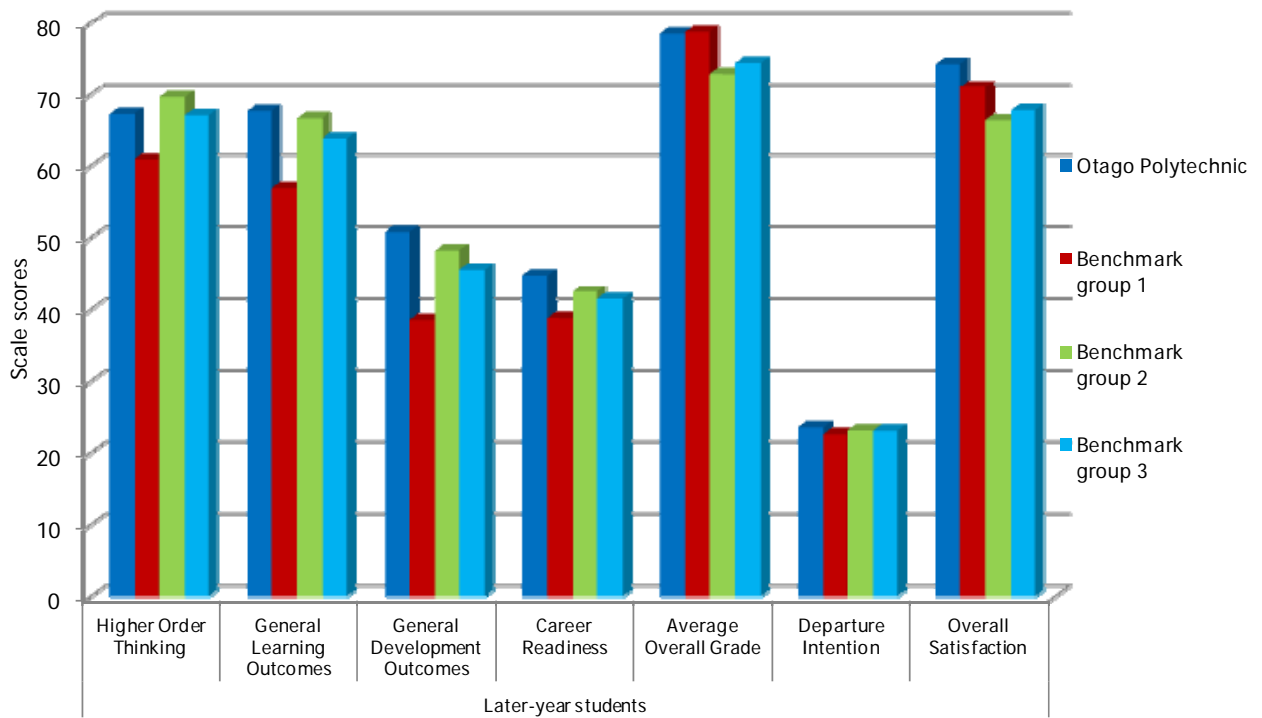


Figure 5: Later-year student outcome scale scores

Cross-year comparisons

Looking at how the AUSSE results change over time helps identify areas for improvement, set targets to improve outcomes and monitor the impact of improvements. Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the scale scores for student engagement and student outcomes respectively at Otago Polytechnic for each year of participation in the AUSSE.

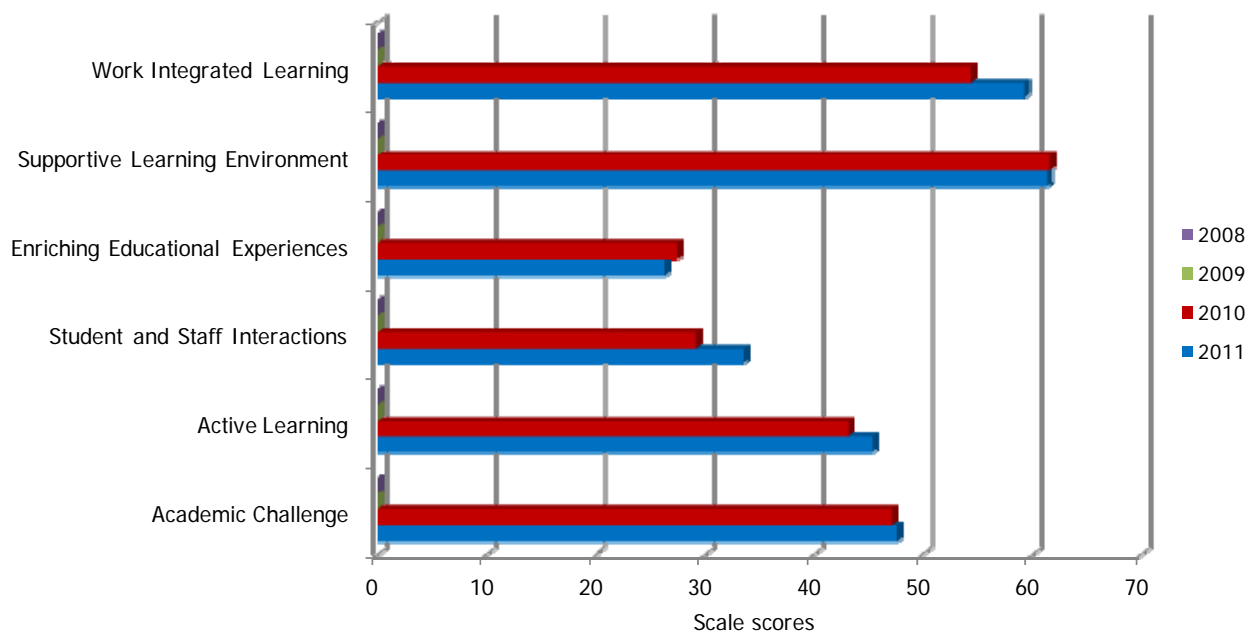


Figure 6: Annual engagement scale scores Otago Polytechnic

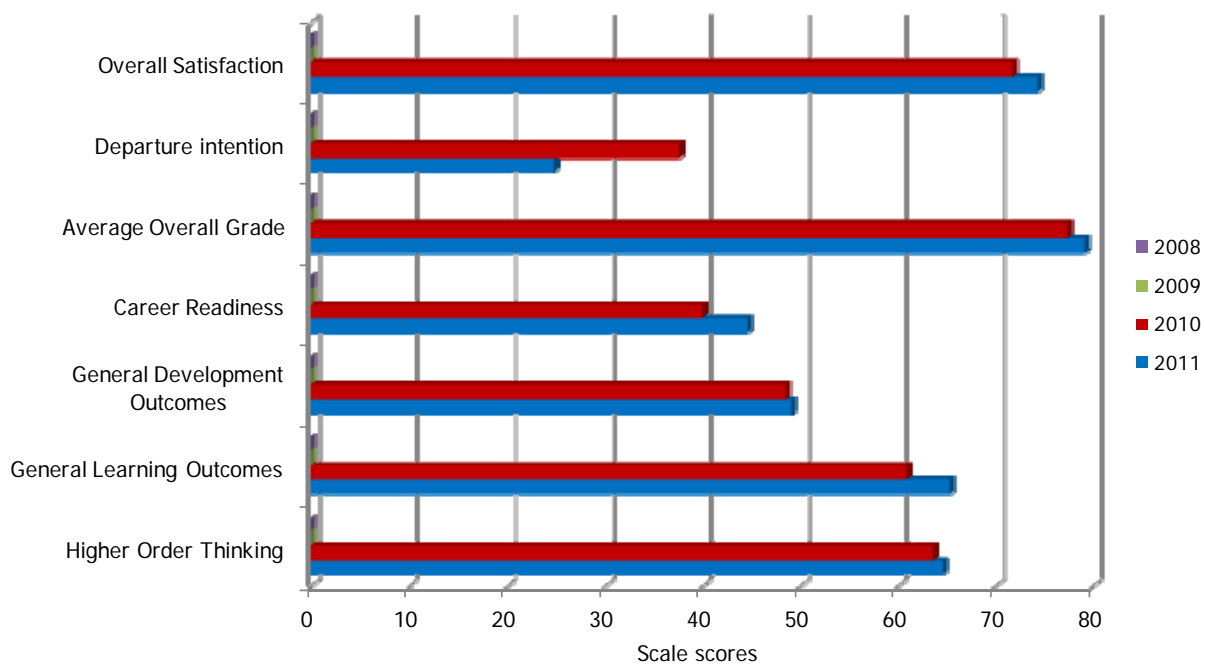


Figure 7: Annual outcome scale scores Otago Polytechnic

Subgroup summary results

Engagement varies across groups of students. For Otago Polytechnic, the distributions of the responses across a number of key demographic and context characteristics are shown in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 3: Demographic subgroup scores for Otago Polytechnic

	Otago Polytechnic	Female	Over 20 years of age	Equity group	Part-time or external	International	Non-English speaking background	First in family
Academic Challenge	48	49	49	47	48	51	45	47
Active Learning	45	46	46	46	41	44	40	45
Student and Staff Interactions	34	33	34	34	31	40	34	32
Enriching Educational Experiences	26	29	28	25	28	37	26	26
Supportive Learning Environment	61	62	61	58	59	60	58	62
Work Integrated Learning	59	63	61	56	66	53	43	62
Higher Order Thinking	65	67	66	63	66	63	58	64
General Learning Outcomes	65	66	66	62	65	69	64	65
General Development Outcomes	49	52	50	48	46	56	48	47
Career Readiness	45	45	45	44	41	39	35	44
Average Overall Grade	79	80	79	78	80	75	76	80
Departure Intention	25	26	25	33	26	34	32	24
Overall Satisfaction	74	75	73	71	72	69	67	75

Table 4: Context subgroup scores for Otago Polytechnic

	Otago Polytechnic	Internal mode	Full-time attendance	Living on campus
Academic Challenge	48	47	48	47
Active Learning	45	46	47	49
Student and Staff Interactions	34	34	34	28
Enriching Educational Experiences	26	26	27	24

Supportive Learning Environment	61	62	62	64
Work Integrated Learning	59	57	59	65
Higher Order Thinking	65	64	65	68
General Learning Outcomes	65	65	66	67
General Development Outcomes	49	49	51	54
Career Readiness	45	45	46	44
Average Overall Grade	79	79	79	70
Departure Intention	25	25	25	25
Overall Satisfaction	74	75	75	69

Table 5: Field of education subgroup scores for Otago Polytechnic

	Sciences	IT	Engineering	Architecture	Agriculture	Health	Education	Business	Humanities	Creative Arts
Academic Challenge	27	43	44	46	40	52	44	46	43	48
Active Learning	29	45	44	42	40	47	52	45	43	47
Student and Staff Interactions	22	33	31	31	30	33	38	32	35	35
Enriching Educational Experiences	12	20	19	16	23	34	34	26	26	21
Supportive Learning Environment	81	64	59	60	57	63	60	59	69	55
Work Integrated Learning	33	44	53	59	67	70	73	53	56	45
Higher Order Thinking	33	60	58	62	46	72	71	62	58	66
General Learning Outcomes	70	65	66	69	47	68	69	64	63	59
General Development Outcomes	72	44	39	40	30	57	51	45	54	43
Career Readiness	20	44	43	45	45	47	21	45	35	40
Average Overall Grade		82	73	81	83	79	70	78	77	82
Departure Intention	0	16	23	19	45	21	0	34	33	36
Overall Satisfaction	100	75	72	75	67	76	77	71	82	70

Using AUSSE data to promote change

AUSSE results provide a foundation of evidence for planning and monitoring change. This Executive Summary Report provides a broad outline of this institution's results for 2011. Using this report in conjunction with other resources and results from previous years will help to build evidence for identifying areas where improvement in engagement can be achieved.

For example, institutions have used their data to:

- run seminars with students, managers and teachers;
- benchmark results between institutions;
- prepare reports for specific divisions;
- run student focus groups and interviews;
- enhance teaching practices and learning space designs;
- hold institution-wide meetings to address problem areas; and
- integrate student management activities.

A range of resources are available to assist individual institutions, including:

- AUSSE 2011 Institution Report, which includes a copy of your institutions' unit-record data file;
- 2011 Australasian Student Engagement Report (released in 2012); and
- AUSSE Enhancement Guides, available at <http://www.acer.edu.au/research/ausse>.