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Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT): Semester One 'Learner Experience' Survey Report

Monday, 2 August 2010

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1 Project Overview

1.1 Project Context

As part of its commitment to students (and its reporting requirements to TEC), NMIT regularly surveys its students and graduates to gather information about their perceptions of programme offerings, and of graduate employment patterns. This suite of surveys comprises:

1. The First Impressions Survey;
2. The Learner Journey Survey;
3. The Learner Experience Survey; and
4. The Graduate Destination Survey.

In 2010 Research First Ltd will complete seven student surveys for NMIT. This will comprise two each of the First Impressions, Learner Journey, and Learner Experience surveys (i.e., one of each survey per semester), and one Graduate Destination Survey.

This document reports the results from the First Semester Learner Experience Survey. The key messages for NMIT from this survey are outlined on page six of this report, and the results are outlined in depth starting on page seven. The information in this report is accurate to the best of the knowledge and belief of Research First¹.

1.2 The Objectives for the 'Learner Experience' Survey

The Learner Experience Survey is designed to measure the satisfaction levels of students about to complete their programme regarding teaching experienced, the programme and all student support services.

The Learner Experience Survey is conducted across NMIT during the last two to four weeks of programmes of 40 credits or greater. Note this is before exams and only students about to complete their programme are surveyed.

In keeping with this requirement, this First Semester Learner Experience Survey collected data in late June and early July 2010.

*As part of its
commitment to
providing an
excellent
student
experience,
NMIT conducts
a number of
surveys with
its students
and graduates
each year*

¹ While Research First Ltd has exercised all reasonable skill and care in the preparation of the information in this report, Research First accepts no liability in contract, tort, or otherwise for any loss, damage, injury or expense, whether direct, indirect, or consequential, arising out of the provision of information in this report

2 Research Design

2.1 Choice of Method

In 2010 NMIT chose to conduct its suite of student surveys using an online design. Online surveys can be seen as offering a useful compromise between the speed of interviewer-administered surveys (such as with telephone surveys) and the complexity possible in self-completed questionnaires (such as conventional mail surveys). As with all self-completed research designs, with e-mail surveys:

- The asynchronous nature of data collection lowers the initial refusals; and
- It is possible to provide reference material with the questionnaire, increasing the complexity of the topics the survey can address.

Recent evaluations of online survey designs have argued that e-mail surveys offer several additional benefits to traditional data collection techniques, including:

- Lower costs;
- Faster turnaround;
- Lower respondent error; and
- Flexibility in question structure.

2.2 Achieved Sample

For the First Semester Learner Experience Survey, Research First e-mailed 388 survey invitations. From this first cycle of invitations, 53 surveys were completed. A reminder e-mail was sent 10 days later, and from this a further 15 completions were received. This sums to a total of **68 survey completions** from 388 valid invitations, for a response rate of 17.5%.

Only 68 Responses?

The size of the achieved sample for this survey is explained by the fact that while 642 students qualified to participate in this survey, NMIT had e-mail addresses for just 388 students. Interestingly, the 68 completions² from the 388 invitations provides a response rate of 17.5%, which is essentially the same for the First Semester First Experience Survey (17.3%), and better than for the First Semester Learning Journey survey (14.3%). All three achieved samples underscore the low response rates typical with online surveys.

In 2010 NMIT chose to conduct its suite of student surveys using an online surveying design

The 2010 first semester Learner Experience Survey was sent to 388 students, and achieved 68 completions

² Research First received 75 responses in total, counting partially complete surveys (which explains why some of the tables in this report have more than 68 responses listed). However, only 58 students gave details of their programme of study.

2.3 Caveats and Limitations

Given the size of the achieved sample, the results of the First Semester Learning Experience Survey need to be treated with some caution. In addition to the small size of the sample, it is important to remember that the nature of online surveys means the sample is not randomly selected and, consequently, no sampling errors for these survey results can be calculated. As a result, the survey results may not provide an accurate representation of the population's attitudes because only those motivated to participate completed the survey questionnaire. Researchers call errors like self-selection bias 'systematic' because they are a product of how the research is designed.

Note: Another consequence of the small sample size is that results for programmes cannot be calculated. As Table 2.1 demonstrates, this is because the 'cell size' for individual programmes is vanishingly small.

Table 2.1: Programme Survey Participants Enrolled in

Programme of Study	%	N=
Diploma in Career Guidance	32.76%	19
Certificate in Quality Assurance	10.34%	6
Certificate in Inshore Launch Master (ILM)	6.90%	4
Certificate in Business Administration (Level 2)	5.17%	3
Certificate in Community Support Services	5.17%	3
Certificate in Horticulture	5.17%	3
Trainee Ranger Certificate	5.17%	3
Certificate in Basic Mechanical Engineering (Trade Skills)	3.45%	2
Certificate in Business Administration (Level 3)	3.45%	2
Diploma in Aviation Science (International Aviation Academy)	3.45%	2
Diploma in Creative Writing	3.45%	2
Certificate in Aviation Industry (Flight Crew), (Nelson Aviation College)	1.72%	1
Certificate in Distribution	1.72%	1
Certificate in NZ Offshore Master (Unlimited)	1.72%	1
Diploma in Aviation Science (Mainland Aviation College)	1.72%	1
Diploma in Aviation Science (Ardmore Flying School)	1.72%	1
Diploma in Aviation Science (Helipro Aviation Training)	1.72%	1
Diploma in Mate of a Deep sea Fishing Vessel	1.72%	1
Diploma in Second Mate Foreign Going Ship	1.72%	1
National Certificate in Carpentry (Level 4)	1.72%	1
Total		58

3 Key Findings and Messages

Keeping in mind the caveats about the sample size and the nature of its selection (see 2.3, above), the First Semester Learner Experience Survey reveals a very satisfied group of students at NMIT. In particular:

- Fully 94% of the participants in this survey said their 'learner experience' at NMIT had met or exceeded their expectations; and
- When asked what they thought NMIT did well, these students identified the staff; the tutors; the nature of the teaching; the teaching environment; and the support services offered.

In addition:

- These students report high levels of satisfaction with the teaching in their programmes and the course materials used in those programmes; and
- Students were particularly happy with their personal development in terms of their willingness to learn, their self-confidence, and their ability to work in teams.

This does not mean that the survey results are unconditionally good news for NMIT however. In particular:

- Many of the respondents in this survey did not complete questions about particular support services and facilities because they had not engaged with them in their study. For instance, almost half of the survey respondents were unable to rate the library resources and services because they had not engaged with the library; and
- Satisfaction scores were low for the information and enrolment centre, and the management of timetables; and
- When asked what NMIT could do better, students highlighted the need to communicate more with students.

Keeping in mind the caveats about the sample size and the nature of its selection, the First Semester Learner Experience Survey reveals a very satisfied group of students at NMIT

4 Survey Results

4.1 Overall Satisfaction with Teaching

The first question in this survey asked students to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the teaching they had experienced to date. This rating was done on a four point scale, ranging from 'outstanding' (1) to 'inadequate' (4). For ease of reporting, these scale scores have been reduced to a composite 'more than satisfied' score. A 'more than satisfied' (MTS) score combines the numbers of students who rated aspects of teaching as either 'outstanding' or 'good' (i.e., scores of 1 and 2 on the four point scale).

Using these composite MTS scores, the results show that:

- Students are generally very satisfied with the teaching on their programme, 80% were 'more than satisfied';
- Just 16% rated the teaching satisfactory and 3% inadequate; and
- 77% overall were satisfied with the course material, and 62% the online information and services. (see Chart 4.1 and Table 4.1).

Overall, students are generally very satisfied with the teaching they had experienced in their courses

Chart 4.1: Overall Satisfaction with Teaching and Course Material

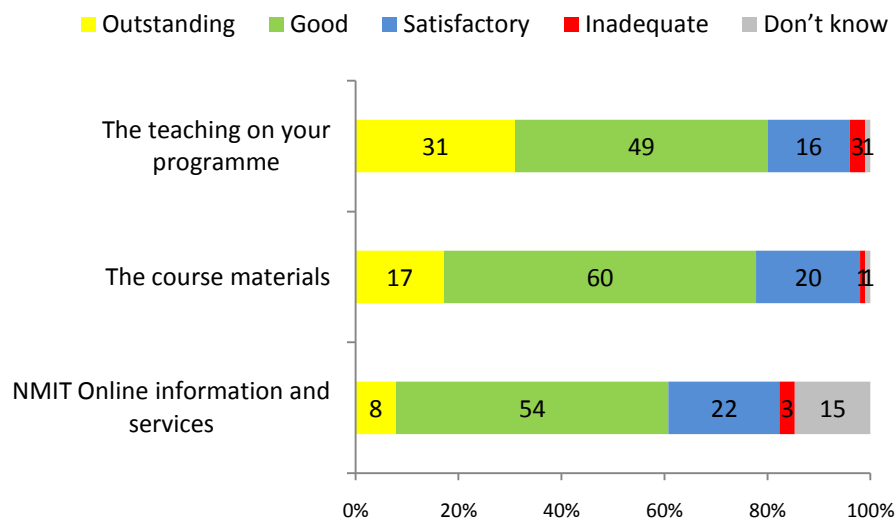


Table 4.1: Overall Satisfaction with Teaching and Course Material

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Don't know	Base
The teaching on your programme	31%	49%	16%	3%	1%	75
The course materials	17%	60%	20%	1%	1%	75
NMIT Online information and services	8%	54%	22%	1%	15%	74

Students were asked if they had any comments about teaching, course materials or online information:

- Most comments were positive in regards to the teaching and the knowledge, support and attitude of the teachers;
- There were a small number of comments about some course material being confusing or incorrect, although the majority of students that commented were positive, and found the material useful; and
- Among those that used the online service and commented on it, most were positive, although there were a couple of negative comments about navigation and access, and that the service needed more promotion to students

Note that the verbatim list of comments is provided in Table 5.1, Table 5.2, and Table 5.3 in Appendix One of this report.

The unprompted open-ended questions about teaching experience reinforce the message that these students have valued the way they have been taught at NMIT

4.2 Personal Development

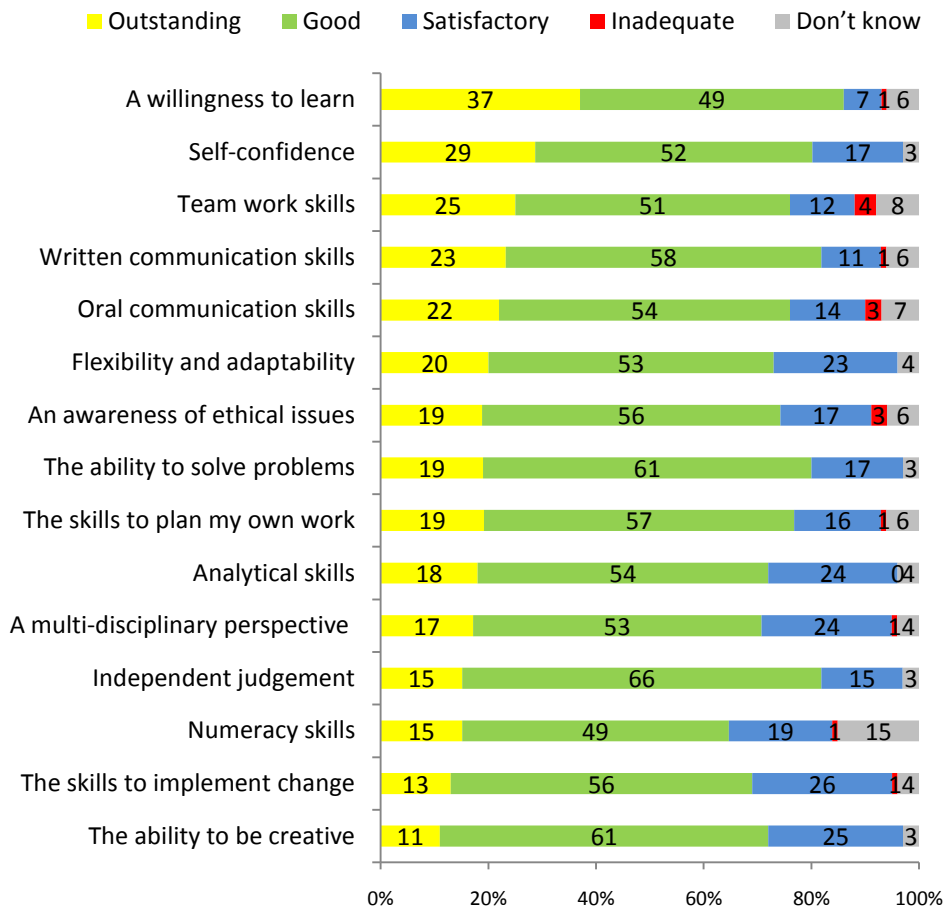
Students were asked to what extent they felt they had developed in a number of attributes. Here:

- Overall students were positive about their personal development, especially in terms of a willingness to learn self-confidence and team work skills; but
- Students were less positive about the development of skills to implement change and the ability to be creative (Table 4.2 and Chart 4.2, overleaf).

Table 4.2: Rating of Personal Development

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Don't know	Base
A willingness to learn	37%	49%	7%	1%	6%	73
Team work skills	25%	51%	12%	4%	8%	73
Oral communication skills	22%	54%	14%	3%	7%	69
Written communication skills	23%	58%	11%	1%	6%	72
Numeracy skills	15%	49%	19%	1%	15%	67
The skills to plan my own work	19%	57%	16%	1%	6%	68
The ability to solve problems	19%	61%	17%	0%	3%	72
Self-confidence	29%	52%	17%	0%	3%	72
Independent judgement	15%	66%	15%	0%	3%	71
The ability to be creative	11%	61%	25%	0%	3%	71
Skills to implement change	13%	56%	26%	1%	4%	70
Multi-disciplinary perspective	17%	53%	24%	1%	4%	70
Analytical skills	18%	54%	24%	0%	4%	71
Flexibility and adaptability	20%	53%	23%	0%	4%	70
An awareness of ethical issues	19%	56%	17%	3%	6%	72

Chart 4.2: Rating of Personal Development



When asked if they had any comments about personal development, the most common response was that respondents felt they had these attributes prior to attending NMIT. The verbatim comments regarding personal development are provided in Table 5.4 in Appendix One of this report.

4.3 Satisfaction with Guidance and Support Services

The next set of questions in the Learner Experience Survey related to students' satisfaction with the guidance and support they received while learning. As with the previous questions, satisfaction with guidance and support was measured on a four point scale, ranging from 'outstanding' (1) to 'inadequate' (4). And as with those previous questions, these scores have been reduced to a composite 'more than satisfied' (MTS) scores.

The students rated the guidance and support services they had experienced at NMIT highly

Using these composite MTS scores, the results from this part of the survey show:

- 83% were positive about the support they received from their tutors (with no students rating this support as 'inadequate'); and
- Almost half were unable to rate the Library resources and services, but among those that did, almost all rated them outstanding or satisfactory (Chart 4.3 and Table 4.3).

Chart 4.3: Overall Satisfaction with Tutor Support and Library Resources

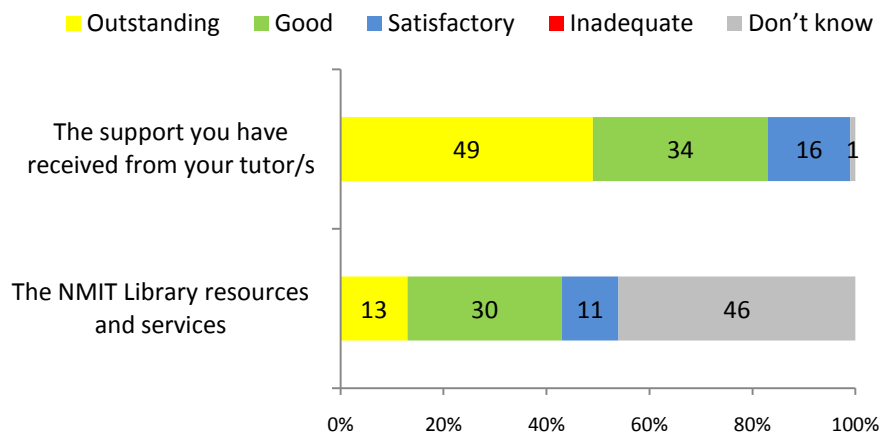


Table 4.3: Rating of Tutor Support and Library Resources

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Don't know	Base
The support you have received from your tutor/s	49%	34%	16%	0%	1%	70
The NMIT Library resources and services	13%	30%	11%	0%	46%	70

A few students commented on the tutor support and library services. Nearly all were positive about the tutors, and focused on helpfulness and availability. The verbatim list of 'other' comments is provided in Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 in Appendix One of this report.

4.4 Satisfaction with NMIT Learning Support Services

The next set of questions in the Learner Experience Survey related to students' satisfaction with the learning support services they had received. As with the previous questions, satisfaction with these services was measured on a four point scale, ranging from 'outstanding' (1) to 'inadequate' (4). Using composite 'more than satisfied' (MTS) scores, the results from this part of the survey show:

- Around half were unable to rate the learning support services;
- Rating was highest for their personal tutor and one-on-one training; and
- Responses were a little less positive for seminars and group sessions, and the Online learning resources (Chart 4.4 and Table 4.4 overleaf)

When asked about NMIT learning support services, about half of the participants in this survey said they couldn't comment as they had not engaged with those services

Chart 4.4: Overall Satisfaction with NMIT Learning Support Services

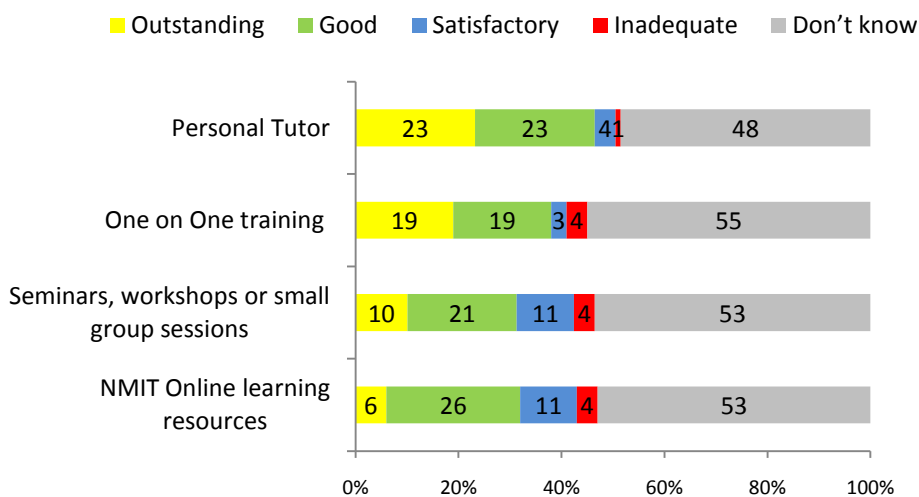


Table 4.4: Overall Satisfaction with NMIT Learning Support Services

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Don't know	Base
Seminars, workshops or small group sessions	10%	21%	11%	4%	53%	70
One on One training	19%	19%	3%	4%	55%	69
NMIT Online learning resources	6%	26%	11%	4%	53%	70
Personal Tutor	23%	23%	4%	1%	48%	69

Only a small number of comments were made about learning support services, and these are provided verbatim in Table 5.7 in Appendix One of this report.

4.5 Rating of Other Services

The next set of questions in the Learner Experience Survey related to students' satisfaction with 'other' services they had received. Using composite 'more than satisfied' (MTS) scores, the results from this part of the survey show:

- The majority were unable to rate most of the services as they had not used them; and
- 52% were more than satisfied with the information and enrolment centre, although a quarter rated it satisfactory or inadequate. (Chart 4.5 and Table 4.5, overleaf).

Chart 4.5: Rating of Other Services

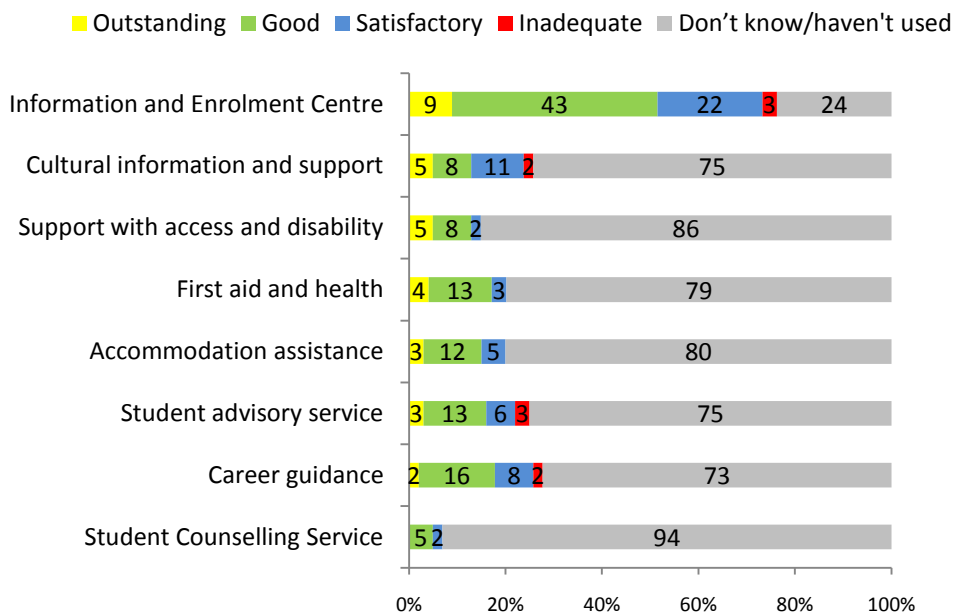


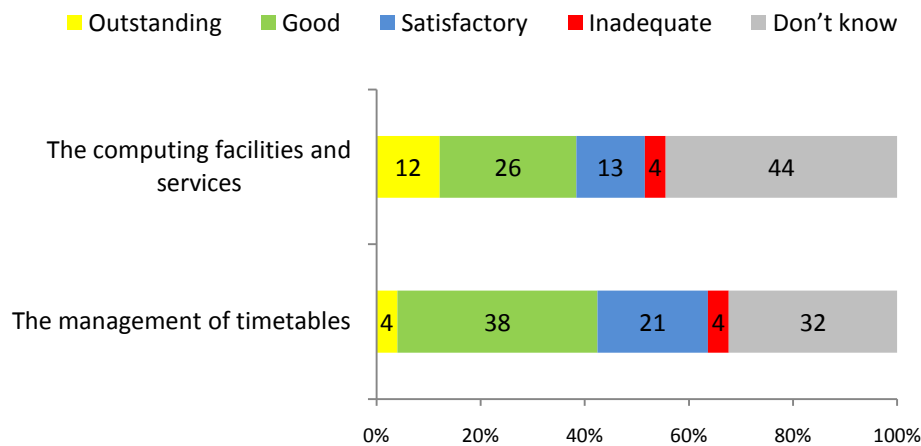
Table 4.5: Rating of Other Services

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Don't know/haven't used	Base:
Information and Enrolment Centre	9%	43%	22%	3%	24%	68
First aid and health	4%	13%	3%	0%	79%	68
Student advisory service	3%	13%	6	3%	75%	69
Support with access and disability	5%	8%	2	0%	86%	66
Cultural information and support	5%	8%	11	2%	75%	64
Accommodation assistance	3%	12%	5%	0%	80%	65
Career guidance	2%	16%	8%	2%	73%	63
Student Counselling Service	0%	5%	2%	0%	94%	65

4.6 Computing and Timetables

The next set of questions in the Learner Experience Survey related to students' satisfaction with computing and timetables. As with the previous questions, satisfaction with these services was measured on a four point scale. Using composite 'more than satisfied' (MTS) scores, the results from this part of the survey show that among those that rated these services, most were more than satisfied, however a quarter did rate the management of timetables satisfactory or inadequate. (Chart 4.6 and Table 4.6)

Chart 4.6: Rating of Computing and Timetables



Of those students that used NMIT's computing facilities and services, the majority were 'more than satisfied' with the facilities and services

Table 4.6: Rating of Computing and Timetables

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Don't know	Base:
The computing facilities and services	12%	26%	13%	4%	44%	68
The management of timetables	4%	38%	21%	4%	32%	68

Only a small number of comments were made about computing facilities and timetables, and these are provided verbatim in Table 5.9 and 5.10 in Appendix One of this report.

4.7 The Teaching Facilities

The next question addressed students' satisfaction with the teaching facilities. As with the previous questions, satisfaction with these facilities was measured on a four point scale, ranging from 'outstanding' (1) to 'inadequate' (4). The results from this question show:

- Over half rated the teaching facilities at NMIT outstanding or good, and a further 15% satisfactory;
- Just 1% rated the teaching facilities inadequate; and
- Just over a quarter did not know, or was not applicable (Chart 4.7 and Table 4.7)

Over half of the students in this survey rated the teaching facilities at NMIT as 'outstanding' or 'good'

Chart 4.7: Satisfaction with the Teaching Facilities

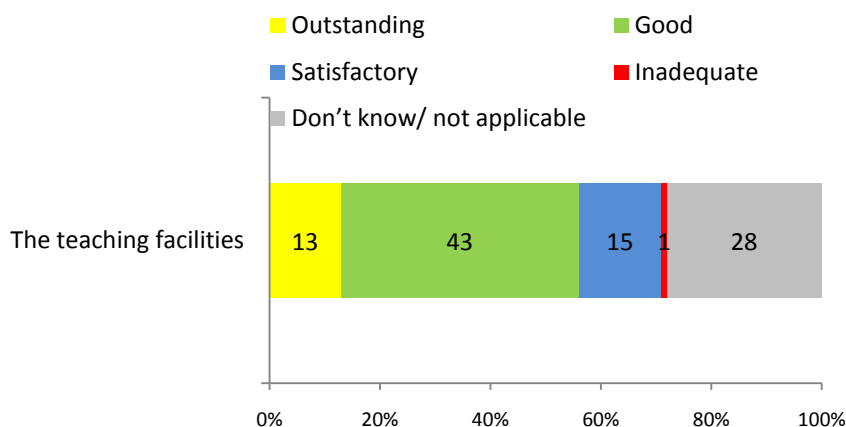


Table 4.7: Satisfaction with the Teaching Facilities

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Don't know/ not applicable	Base:
The teaching facilities	13%	43%	15%	1%	28%	68

Only a small number of comments were made about teaching facilities, and these are provided verbatim in Table 5.11 in Appendix One of this report.

4.8 Experience Studying at NMIT

To capture an overall sense of their 'learner experience', survey participants were asked if that experience had met, exceeded, or failed to meet their expectations. Two-thirds of students said that the experience had met their expectations, around a quarter said it had exceeded their expectations, and just one in seventeen (6%) said the experience had not met their expectations (Chart 4.8). **Note** that this means that fully 94% of the participants in this survey said their 'learner experience' at NMIT had met or exceeded their expectations.

94% of the participants in this survey said their 'learner experience' at NMIT had met or exceeded their expectations

Chart 4.8 Overall Learner Experience at NMIT

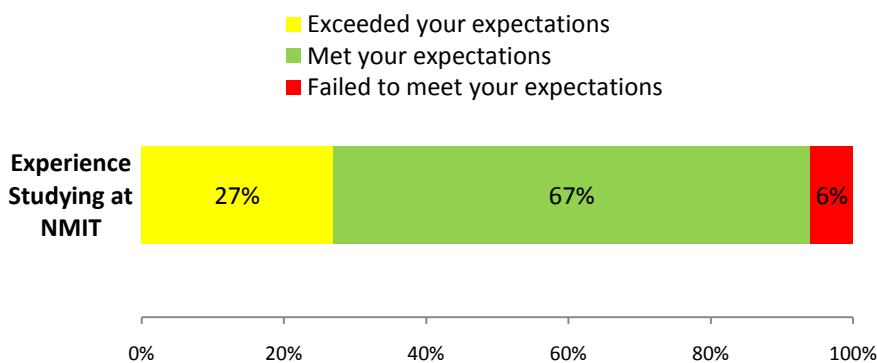


Table 4.8: Overall Learner Experience at NMIT

Exceeded your expectations	Met your expectations	Failed to meet your expectations	Base:
27%	67%	6%	67

4.9 What Did NMIT Do Well, and What Could NMIT Do Better?

Finally respondents were asked a series of open ended questions about their overall experience with NMIT, what they did well, what if any concerns they had, and what NMIT could do better:

When asked about what NMIT did well, responses were clustered around:

- The quality of the staff;
- The quality of the tutors;
- The quality of the teaching;
- The teaching environment; and
- The support students received.

A full list of the responses to this question is provided in Table 5.12 in Appendix One of this report.

Those with concerns about the teaching programme highlighted:

- The need for NMIT to communicate more, and more effectively, with students;
- The suitability of some students; and
- Frustrations with administration issues.

A full list of the responses to this question is provided in Table 5.13 in Appendix One of this report.

When asked about what NMIT could do better, responses were clustered around:

- The need for better organisation; and
- Upgrading the computer system.

A full list of the responses to this question is provided in Table 5.14 in Appendix One of this report.

- **Research First**, Christchurch
Final Report Complete
Monday, 2 August 2010