

# AUSA e-Voice Diary Report: 2020, Semester 2, Week 8

Report completed as of 11/10/2020



AUSA STUDENT VOICE OFFICE

## 1.0 Aim

The following report aims to summarise the information received from the week eight e-Voice diary submissions from Class Representatives within the university.

## 1.1 Methodology

The e-Voice diary is created by utilising google forms as the surveying instrument. The survey was distributed to all registered Class Representatives via email. Class Representatives are allowed a week to fill out the survey. **In total, AUSA received 848 responses.**

## 1.2 Introduction

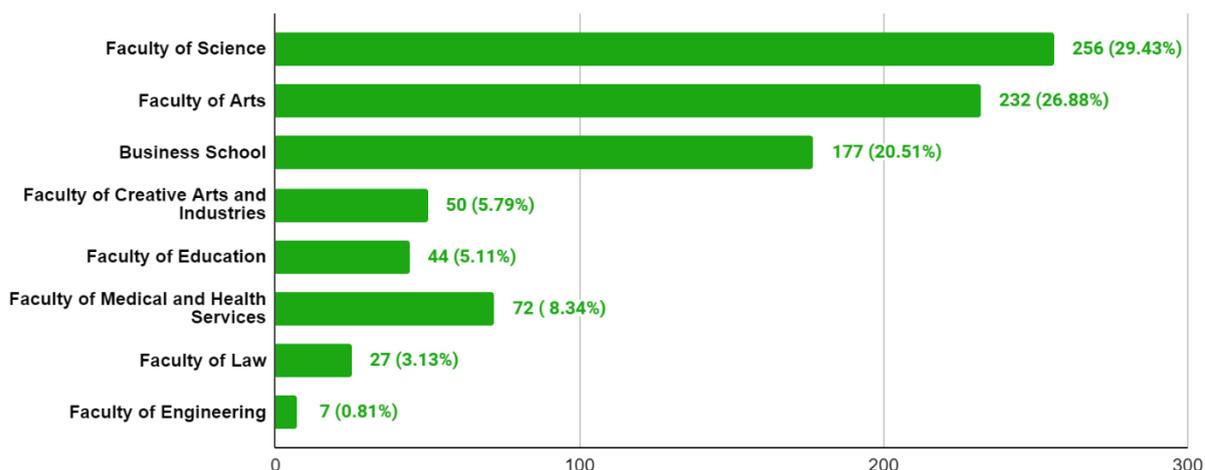
The report will follow the structure of summarising the results of each question before going into further analysis of the results for that question. A summary will be provided at the end of the report with implementations, recommendations and further implications following from here on forth.

In comparing week eight's e-voice diary entries with week four's e-voice diary entries, we can notice that there has been a slight decline in overall responses received, which is shown by week eight's e-voice diary being **29** responses lesser (decrease in **0.97**).

## 2.0 Faculty Contributions

The following information provided details on which faculties took part in the survey and which faculties had the most respondents. The total amount of submissions received for this section is from **848**.

### Faculty (This is the faculty of the course you are representing)



- Faculty of Science | 256 | 29.43% \* 865
- Faculty of Arts | 232 | 26.88% \* 865
- Business school | 177 | 177% \* 865
- Faculty of Medical and Health Services | 72 | 8.34% \* 865
- Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries | 50 | 5.79% \* 865
- Faculty of Education | 44 | 5.11% \* 865
- Faculty of Law | 27 | 3.13% \* 865
- Faculty of Engineering | 7 | 7% \* 865

The order for which faculties generated the most responses has remained the same since the week four's e-Voice diary results.

Similar to week four's e-Voice diary report; Faculty of Science, Faculty of Arts, and Business school have generated the highest number of responses.

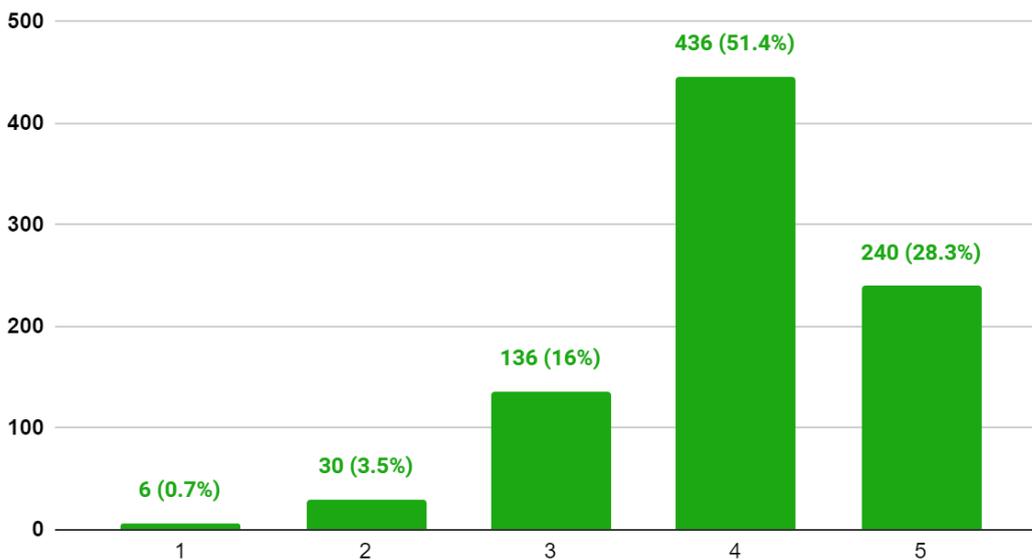
The **three** reasons for low response rates among certain faculties might be:

1. There are fewer courses within the faculties.
2. Because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a general lack of engagement university-wide.
3. There is a lack of engagement by Class Representatives from these faculties with low response rates. That said, AUSA could conduct enquiries into why this is the case.

### 3.0 Course Experiences

The following information outlines the overall rated experience of courses provided at the University of Auckland across all faculties up to week eight of semester two, 2020. Class Representatives were asked to select how they would rate the respective courses they represent, from '1' being 'Poor', to '5' being 'Excellent'. The overall amount of responses to this question was **848**.

#### Overall Course Experience



- 5 (Excellent) | 240 | 28.3%\*848
- 4 | 436 | 51.4%\*848
- 3 | 136 | 16%\*848
- 2 | 30 | 3.5%\*848
- 1 (Poor) | 6 | 0.7%\*848

-We can note that overall course experiences have been mostly positive up to week eight of semester two, 2020.

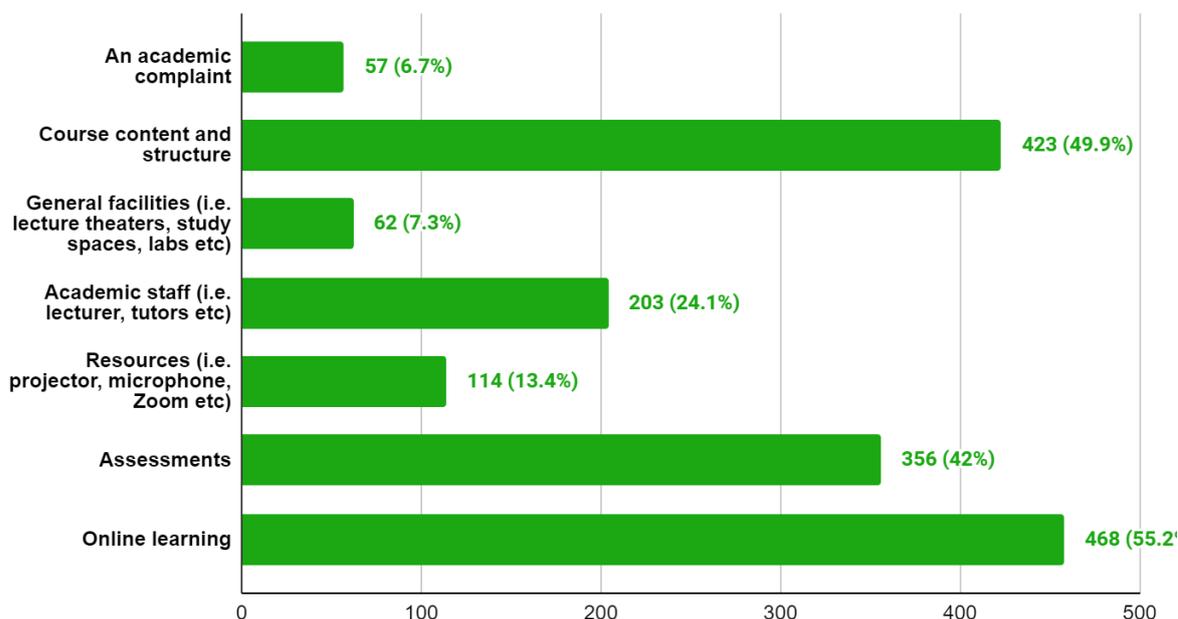
-We can also note that there has been a slight increase in negative course ratings being from 1 to 3 with quite a large decrease in the positive course ratings being 5.

-We could note that these responses may have limitations - for example, Class Representative's biases.

#### 3.1 Outlining what Categories Class Representative 'Course Experience' Feedback Relate to

The following diagram displays what specific area of course experience related feedback students wished to cover. The total amount of responses to this question was **848**.

## Class Rep Course Experience Feedback is About



Online learning	468	55.2%*848
Course content and structure	423	49.9%*848
Assessments	356	42%*848
Academic staff (i.e. lecturer, tutors etc)	203	24.1%*848
Resources	114	13.4%*848
General facilities	62	7.3%*848
An academic complaint	57	6.7%*848

-It is shown from the data above that 'Online learning' is the number one key area of course experience feedback received from Class Representatives. Online learning encompasses 55.2% of the overall feedback.

-The following two other areas of course experience feedback are 'Course content and structure'- 49.9% and 'Assessments'- 42%.

-The lowest area of course experience feedback relates to 'Academic complaint'; which is similar to week four's e-Voice diary results.

### 4.1 Course Content & Structure / Lecturers & Tutors / Student Academic Complaints

- **Students have raised concerns around the lack of support during this semester**
  - *"Whilst students acknowledge the difficulties faced with online learning they're comfortable with the reasoning behind it; it is more the lack of university support that they're concerned with"*

- *"However, this semester has been a really hard struggle where we are deprived of support, and the covid measures provided to us this semester are dismal! Other universities overseas frequently allow for pass/fail grading or special provisions to help students in difficulty, such as deferring exams, even before covid."*

## 4.2 Assessments

- **Students have raised their concerns towards the upcoming on-campus exams and fairness**
  - *"Also, assessments were a concern given that the overseas students are set to be given different conditions for their in-class test."*
  - *"An overwhelming number of students want the University to stay online and assessments to be online"*
  - *"Students want the format of the exam too to be shifted online as much of the course and other assessments have been too."*
  - *"Some students feel isolated and without help, they are nervous or shy to interact in zoom feel extremely limited on resources"*
  - *"Students think that not only it is unfair as overseas students would still be able to do the exams online with the advantage of open book resources, but also it being highly unsafe with the covid situation."*
  - *"There is a clear majority preference for online exams for three reasons; the majority of the year has been online delivery so we should have online exams. Secondly, there is still worry about community transmission"*
- **Students are concerned about the fairness around restricted book exams**
  - *"Many students would appreciate a grade bump, but more importantly open book exams. Students outside of NZ are getting the advantage of open book conditions when those in NZ do not have this."*
  - *"Due to the pressures placed on students from quarantine conditions students are requesting open book exam as the paper has been taught near-totally online for the entire year"*
- **Students are concerned with their safety towards having to go on-campus for exams**
  - *"A number of students have compromised whanau in their bubble so they are very careful about where they go. Thirdly, having online exams simply makes it easier should Covid Levels change suddenly."*
- **Students have also raised their concerns regarding ongoing assessments**
  - *"The class felt that the course was extremely content heavy and that assessments weren't clearly defined, but this has since been brought up with the lecturer and addressed."*
- **Students have raised issues on clarification around the final exams**

- *"Students have expressed that hopefully there will be more clarification, guidance, and support for the final exam in terms of what to expect, structure, and more leniency for time, marks"*

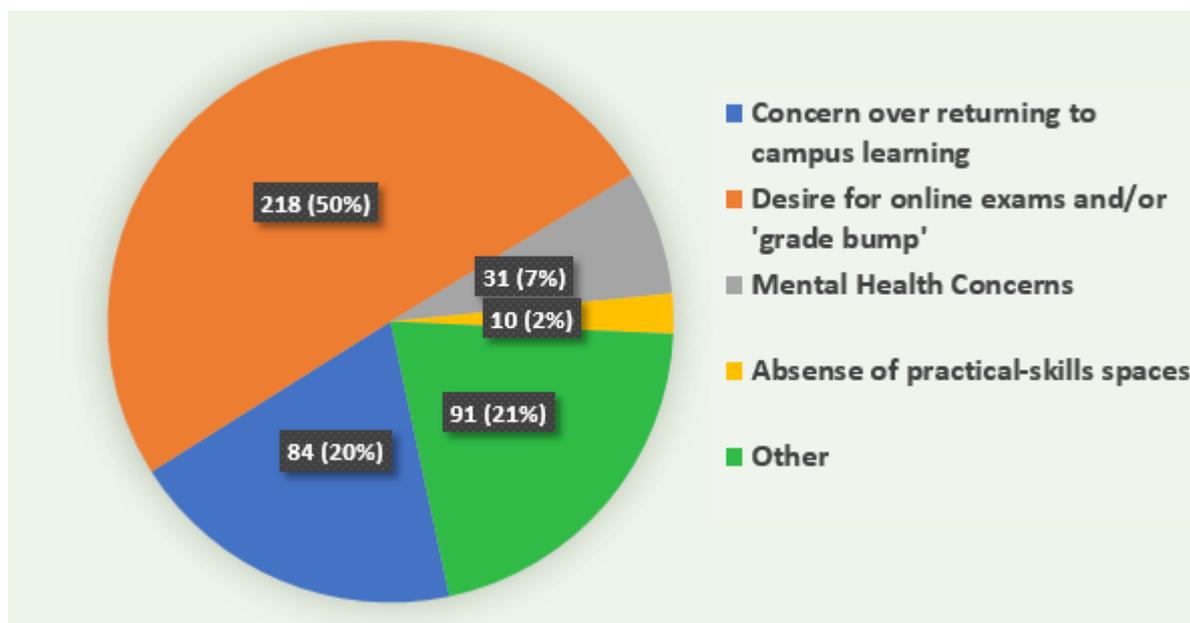
### 4.3 Resources / General Facilities Concerns

- **Students have raised concerns about provided resources and the lack of ease in accessing them**
  - *"There is, however some complains that the resources provided for the assignment are hard to find on canvas"*
  - *"However, many of them have asked for extra resources to clarify the content such as some focusing questions at the end of each lecture."*
  - *"It would be great if the resources are located together and in the same place for easy finding and access."*
- **Students have raised concerns around the lack of resources / the use of them**
  - *"Some even requested a slight refund as we haven't gotten the education we payed for at the start of the semester. This is especially true for the components of our tuitions that may have gone towards buying laboratory resources which we did not use."*
  - *"With a prominent issue being a lack of rehearsal spaces that we would normally have on campus. For many students who are not living at home (and for some who are), there is no space for them to practice their instruments, which is detrimental to their degree"*
  - *"Currently we still don't have access to our studio and computer rooms"*
- **There has been concerns around the mental health of students**
  - *"Unfortunately, when asked about their own mental health this semester, students are feeling unwell. For the 67 responses, on a scale from 1 to 10, with the higher number representing better mental health, the mean score for mental health is a 3.7, with a standard deviation of 2.1. The most common score is 2. Many students have stated that this semester has been more difficult and more stressful than semester 1."*

### 5.0 Further Comments

This newly added section documents the other significant comments from Class Representatives which we might not have captured with our predefined questions. AUSA is lucky to have the support and contribution of Christopher McCormick for this part of the report. While we have touched on some of the points briefly, below is an expanded version of what our representatives are saying:

Of our 848 respondents, 434 chose to contribute further comments as representatives of their class. These comments were examined and coded, with a small number of reoccurring themes present. Their representation is displayed in the graph below. Note that some comments contained comment or concern in more than one theme. In these cases, they have been coded one time in each respective category.



- **Concern over returning to campus**

Concerns over returning to campus generally stemmed from two sources. Firstly, fear over COVID-19, and secondly, the disruption it would cause in relation to the rest of the semester.

Regarding the first source, COVID-19 was highlighted as a general fear amongst the student population. Comments acknowledge the potential for community transmission and clusters to appear unexpectedly (as with the recent Auckland outbreak), the intermingling of high-volume classes, and the practicality of social distancing on campus. In one comment, a representative claimed that member of their class would not return to campus this semester, even if the university did not provide another alternative. Another commenter themselves plans to unenroll next year until COVID-19 is controlled within New Zealand. Similar to many comments, these were rooted in fear of transmitting the virus to the immunocompromised households.

The second source of concern to returning to campus was the sudden change this is perceived to bring to the students. With the demonstrated ability for alert levels to quickly change, there is a perceived potential for further disruption. First-year students were noted as particularly vocal with the discomfort with repeated change. The overarching notion is that without the confirmed status of online learning, the instability of COVID-19 and UoA's response leaves them feeling in limbo.

It should be noted that a small number of representatives claimed that members of their class had an overall preference for returning to campus, which have been included in 'other.' However, these comments were far under-represented in comparison to those who did not favour the action. Many representatives utilised polls to confirm their cohorts' stance on the issue.

- **Desire for online exams and/ or 'grade bump'**

This theme was by far the most crucial feedback received within comments. The two features have been included together while coding as predominantly they were highlighted within the same statement.

Aside from reportedly desiring recognition for a disruptive and uncertain semester, as to parallel semester one, the overarching drive noted in comments for these compassionate considerations was the interest of fairness. With regard to a grade bump, it was frequently re-iterated that the uncertain and changing nature of the semester made things more difficult for students than semester one. This presented issues, for example in the case of classes repeated in semester two, particularly for competitive programmes or for those seeking a scholarship, as some cohort members received a bump while others did not. There were concerns for those taking full-year papers who have missed out on previous grade bump.

Concerning exams, there seemed to be an underpinning understanding of preference and sense of ease in doing exams online from home. Concern centred around student fears of their future performance, as in-person exams differed from how they had spent the vast majority of their year engaging with the university, including previous exams. Representative comments acknowledge how students find this daunting, particularly without a grade bump to fall back upon. There is also frequently noted concern that students offshore may sit their examinations online, and how this would provide the students in New Zealand with an unfair advantage.

Interestingly, against the trend, there was one comment (again, noted among 'other' comments) that stated their class has a split perspective on whether they desired a grade bump similar to semester one. This was influenced by the competitive nature of the programme and desire to outperform their class members for prospective placing in the following programme, stating:

- *"Additionally, there have been mixed opinions about a grade bump - some students are in support of this as it will improve their overall GPA, while some students are against this as it hinders their competitive edge for getting into clinical programmes, and the last thing the cohort wants is another Clinical Selection Test."*

- **Mental health concerns**

While it is good to see students engaging with concern for their mental health, the number of such comments are shocking to see. Many representatives held surveys regarding their class' mental health, out of which their statements are based. Anxiety was the predominantly noted mental health concern within comments, which was acknowledged as being rooted in concern over how they will perform this semester with the changing learning and examination platform, and without a grade bump. Some comments also noted students as feeling uncared for by the University and unmotivated with their studies. A rep suggested that more advertising of mental health support facilities should be done within lectures during this extraordinary time.

- **Absence of practical-skills spaces**

There was concern among a few comments of the impact off-campus teaching has had on students who have had their learning impacted through inability to access practical-skills spaces. This included labs, design rooms, and practicum experiences. Comments highlighted a desire to still have this experience, interestingly with the suggestion of providing them over the summer to the affected students if possible.

- **Other**

All other comments from the e-Voice diary could not realistically be coded within themes and thus categorised here. Excluding the sparse comments in support of on-campus learning, occasional claims of displeasure with the university, or thanking AUSA and the class rep programme, these comments were class-specific. Such statements were a mixture of positive and negative, including praise or critique of specific lecturers, assignments, and teaching styles, for various reasons.

## 6.0 Commendations

Aside from all the general concerns listed earlier, for the most part, many Class Representatives and other students have expressed their gratitude and encouragement towards the university, academic staff, and AUSA so far for semester two of 2020.

- *"Not anything negative, just lots of praise for our lecturer for doing amazing work and going above and beyond in order to help us during the lockdown!"*
- *"I would also thank AUSA for constantly supporting all the students and helping them during this hard time."*
- *"The course feedback that I receive is good. All very positive concerning content and structure."*
- *"Overall positive with compliments on how fast the lectures response is and how efficient it was. All complaints just came from no more field trips in which everyone was understandable of due to Covid-19."*
- *"Lecturers and University staff have been very accommodating as they worked to shift and adjust our Online Learning and Assignments to allow us to gain additional Practicum Experience"*
- *"Students were appreciative of how easily we switched to online learning and how accessible lecture content and course material is. They were also appreciative of the clarity given by the lecturer and tutor in how assessments and classes would run whilst online."*

## 7.0 Key Takeaways

This report has outlined the general information Class Representatives of the University of Auckland have provided regarding how the semester two of 2020 has been going until week eight of the university calendar.

The following listed are some key takeaway information that should be considered from the entirety of this report.

- Majority of students are satisfied with how the lecturers have adapted and responded this semester, especially with how excellent and quick their response was with the shift into lockdown
- Majority of students would also like the university to consider changing the exam conditions to online under many reasons
- Students have requested that the university should place a grade bump
- Students continue to call upon the university and academic staff to have compassion towards students, and to be considerate of their assessment conditions, course content, marking, deadlines and general learning environment

## 7.1 Possible Recommendations to Consider

### Online exams

- There has been a significant amount of responses related to online exams. Throughout the year, students felt that they have been deprived of quality education/ study through online learning as per their 'lack in engagement.' This semester, students have also expressed concerns around the 'fairness' of off-campus students having online exams. Because of this, students do not feel like it would be reasonable to have physical exams on-campus.
  - There is the recommendation of having all students within the university do their exams online
  - Another recommendation is to have two different exams for each course: one for overseas students and another for on-campus students. Lecturers can scale the grades of each group appropriately

### Restricted book

- If the university does not conduct their exams online, there is the recommendation of making all on-campus exams open-book

### Grade bump

- Due to the lockdown and pandemic, students have been affected in multiple areas. Student health has been at an all-time low this semester, and believes that the value of their learning and education have decreased.
  - With that said, there is a recommendation of implementing a grade bump for students