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**THE QUALITY OF PROPERTY EDUCATION
IN AUSTRALIA**

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INTRODUCTION

Property education in Australia has received wide coverage over the last 35 years. While initially focussed on valuation education (Bird, 1967; Kroll, 1975; Martin, 1974; Woodruff, 1969; Worthington, 1978), this was subsequently extended to cover the broader property education areas (Sheehan, 1981; Whipple, 1968, 1980). More recently, specific aspects of property education has included:

- course curriculum developments: Blundell (1999), Newell and Eves (2000), Newell et al (2001), Robinson (1998a)
- international curriculum developments: Geltner (1998), Robinson (1998b), Schulte (2001), Webb (1997)
- education and careers: Avdiev (2000), Mannix (1999)
- needs of property professionals: Boyd (2000a, 2000b)
- history of property education: Avdiev (1994, 1995)
- property education paradigms: Dasso (1980), Epley (1996), Fischer (2000), Yu (2001)
- specific issues such as problem-based learning (Anderson et al, 2000), use of simulations (Allen and Kayhobadi, 2001), curriculum integration (Butler et al, 1998; Gibler, 2001), and use of the internet (Cannon, 1997; Pettijohn, 1996; Ray, 1996; Redman, 2001)
- property academics adding-value to universities (Manning and Roulac, 2001).

In an increasingly competitive university environment, assessing the quality of the property education experience for property graduates is also an important property education consideration. The Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) surveys over 150,000 university graduates annually, using a 25-item Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) to assess the quality of teaching, the clarity of goals and standards, appropriate workloads, appropriate assessment, generic skills and overall satisfaction.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the GCCA surveys for property graduates from the seven “property” universities in Australia over 1994-2001. In particular, the issues of whether the standard of property education in Australia has improved in recent years and how the standard of property education compares to other related disciplines will be assessed.

GRADUATE CAREEERS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA CEQ SURVEYS

The Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) has conducted the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) on an annual basis since 1993. Conducted jointly by the Australian universities and the GCCA, this survey is administered to all students approximately four months after completing their studies. The purpose of the GCCA CEQ is to obtain details of the graduates' perceptions of the quality of the courses undertaken in Australia.

The GCCA CEQ has 25-items to assess:

- good teaching: 6 sub-items
- clear goals and standards: 4 sub-items
- appropriate workload: 4 sub-items
- appropriate assessment: 3 sub-items
- generic skills: 6 sub-items
- overall satisfaction: 1 sub-item,

with full details of each of these six categories shown in Table 1. Each question is scored on a 5-point Likert scale of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, scored as -100, -50, 0, 50, 100 respectively. The CEQ has been a rigorously tested survey instrument since 1989 (GCCA, 2001). In 2000, the GCCA CEQ survey response rate was 58.0%, resulting in 90,585 completed surveys of the 156,273 surveys distributed. 50,455 (or 61%) of the completed surveys were for bachelor degrees. Response rates from the seven Australian “property” universities were QUT (72.2%), USA (59.6%), RMIT (57.6%), UTS (54.4%), UWS (51.6%), UQ (51.0%) and Curtin (50.3%).

For each of the above six CEQ categories, average results are presented for each course, as well as national averages presented for each discipline area, including property, accounting, building, business, economics, law and planning. Similarly, percentages in each of the “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” categories are presented for each course. In specific discipline areas, cross-tabulations are also presented by age, sex, level of qualification and field of study. The property degrees are classified under the “valuation and real estate” discipline area.

Further details concerning the GCCA CEQ procedures are given in GCCA (2001). For this study, GCCA CEQ results for the seven Australian “property” universities were analysed over 1994-2001. All necessary annual survey results were obtained from the GCCA CEQ website (www.avcc.edu.au/students/gradlink/gcca/index.htm), with separate downloads available for each annual GCCA CEQ survey results. The use of the standardised GCCA CEQ survey methodology enables an effective comparison across universities, as well as effective benchmarking against other related disciplines over 1994-2001. While the six CEQ categories are available, only the two major CEQ categories of “good teaching” and “overall satisfaction” are presented in this paper.

For convenience of analysis, the 5-point Likert scale of -100, -50, 0, 50, 100 was converted to a scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

“Good teaching” results

Table 2 presents the average scores and corresponding ranks (within years) over 1994-2001 for the various property degrees for the “good teaching” category of the GCCA CEQ survey. The national property results over 1994-2001 and the equivalent national results for accounting, building, business, economics, law and planning are also presented.

Key features from this analysis of the good teaching results in Table 2 are:

- (i) the national property average has consistently been in the range of 2.80-3.05, having slightly increased over this 8-year period
- (ii) the national property average over 1994-2001 of 2.91 (out of 5) shows consistent levels of student concern over the quality of teaching in property degrees in Australia
- (iii) the national property average per year was consistently below the national averages for the various related disciplines
- (iv) typically, property and the related areas did not have high average scores for good teaching over 1994-2001; this is in contrast to the significantly higher average scores for good teaching generally seen in the humanities/arts areas (eg: in 2001, the highest average scores were womens studies (4.1), history (3.8), humanities (3.8), aboriginal studies (3.8))
- (v) Curtin University was clearly seen to be the best performed property university in the good teaching category, being ranked first in each of the last five years, with an average score of 3.16 over 1994-2001 and an average score of 3.36 over 1997-2001
- (vi) the only other property university to achieve an average good teaching score above 3.0 over 1994-2001 was QUT, with QUT being consistently ranked in the top 3 for good teaching in each of the last seven years.

Table 3 presents the percentage of students who were satisfied (either responding “agree” or “strongly agree”) with the standard of teaching over 1998-2001. Similar trends are evident to those seen in Table 2. In particular, the students’ views on the calibre of the good teaching at Curtin is further reinforced, both in Curtin being ranked first in each of the four years, and in the gap between Curtin (48.0% satisfied) and its nearest competitor, QUT (34.7% satisfied).

“Overall satisfaction” results

Table 4 presents the average scores and corresponding ranks (within years) over 1994-2001 for the various property degrees for the “overall satisfaction” category of

the GCCA CEQ survey. The national property results over 1994-2001 and the equivalent national results for the six related areas are also shown.

Key features from this analysis of the overall satisfaction results in Table 4 are:

- (i) overall satisfaction results were, in each case, higher than the good teaching results, at both a national and individual property course level; this is likely to reflect the strong property industry focus evident in most Australian property degrees, as well as high employment rates for property graduates
- (ii) the national property average was consistently in the range of 3.39-3.72, having steadily increased over this 8-year period
- (iii) the national property average of 3.51 (out of 5) over 1994-2001 shows general high levels of student overall satisfaction with property degrees in Australia
- (iv) the national property average per year was consistently below the national averages for most of the related disciplines
- (v) while property and the related areas had higher scores for overall satisfaction (compared to good teaching), they were still significantly below the average scores for overall satisfaction seen in the humanities/arts areas (eg: in 2001, the highest average scores were womens studies (4.5), history (4.3), arts (4.2), anthropology (4.2))
- (vi) UWS was seen to be the best performed property university in the overall satisfaction area, with an average score of 3.70 over 1994-2001, being ranked first in four of the eight years
- (vii) QUT were ranked second for overall satisfaction over 1994-2001, further consolidating its second place in the good teaching area (as discussed in previous section).

Table 5 presents the percentage of students who were satisfied (either responding “agree” or “strongly agree”) with their overall property course over 1998-2001. Slightly different ranks are seen here compared to Table 4, reflecting more diversity in student opinion concerning overall satisfaction over 1998-2001. Importantly, an average of 60.0% of students were satisfied with their overall property course over 1998-2001, nearly double that seen to be satisfied with the teaching standard (31.5%) in their overall property degree.

Property education implications

These GCCA CEQ survey results have provided some important insights into student perceptions of the quality of property education in Australia in recent years.

While students had high levels of overall satisfaction with their property degrees, these high levels were not seen in the students’ views in the calibre of the teaching in their property degrees. Similarly, while average levels of teaching quality and overall satisfaction increased over this eight-year period, they were still generally below those

seen in the related disciplines of building, business, accounting and law. Also, the strong leadership role of Curtin and QUT in good teaching, and UWS and QUT in overall satisfaction is clearly evident.

The issue of the lower than expected levels of good teaching across most property degrees is a key concern regarding the quality of property education in Australia. Since equivalent studies to the GCCA CEQ surveys have not been done in the USA or UK, international benchmarks for property teaching or overall property course satisfaction are not readily available.

As such, major efforts should be placed in improving the quality of teaching in property degrees in Australia. While flexible learning and use of the internet are seen as potential strategies for addressing this issue, a broader property education strategy is clearly needed. This broader strategy is likely to draw on teaching approaches from other disciplines, integrating national and international best practice (eg: see *Journal of Real Estate Practice and Education* for recent teaching developments), as well as expanding the benefits of the property industry assisting more effectively in property education.

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Table 1: GCCA course experience questionnaire: 2001*

Good teaching scale

- the teaching staff of this course motivated me to do my best work
- the staff put a lot of time into commenting on my work
- the staff made a real effort to understand difficulties I might be having with my work
- the teaching staff normally gave me helpful feedback on how I was going
- my lecturers were extremely good at explaining things
- the teaching staff worked hard to make their subjects interesting

Clear goals and standards

- it was always easy to know the standard of work expected
- I usually had a clear idea of where I was going and what was expected of me in this course
- it was often hard to discover what was expected of me in this course
- the staff made it clear right from the start what they expected from students

Appropriate workload scale

- the work load was too heavy
- I was generally given enough time to understand the things I had to learn
- there was a lot of pressure on me to do well in this course
- the sheer volume of work to get through in this course meant it couldn't all be thoroughly comprehended

Appropriate assessment scale

- to do well in this course, all you really need is a good memory
- the staff seemed more interested in testing what I had memorised than what I had understood
- too many staff asked me questions just about facts

Generic skills scale

- the course developed my problem-solving skills
- the course sharpened my analytical skills
- the course helped me develop my ability to work as a team member
- as a result of my course, I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems
- the course improved my skills in written communication
- my course helped me to develop the ability to plan my own work

Overall satisfaction index

- indicate your overall level of satisfaction with your course
-

*: 25th CEQ question was not used; namely: the assessment methods employed in this course required an in-depth understanding of the course content.

Table 2: Analysis of GCCA CEQ “good teaching” results: 1994-2001*

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	1994-2001
Curtin	2.54(6)	2.91(3)	2.98(2)	3.04(1)	3.14(1)	3.80(1)	3.22(1)	3.61(1)	3.16(1)
QUT	3.00(5)	3.03(2)	3.10(1)	3.02(2)	2.99(3)	2.98(3)	3.21(3)	3.28(2)	3.08(2)
RMIT	3.13(1)	3.04(1)	2.94(3)	2.89(4)	2.83(6)	2.97(4)	3.20(4)	2.86(6)	2.98(4)
UQ	3.08(3)	2.89(4)	2.84(4)	2.92(3)	3.09(2)	2.87(5)	3.22(1)	2.98(4)	2.99(3)
USA	2.23(7)	2.65(6)	2.58(7)	2.39(7)	2.60(7)	2.75(7)	2.55(7)	2.79(7)	2.57(7)
UTS	3.12(2)	2.39(7)	2.78(5)	2.74(5)	2.94(4)	2.87(6)	2.97(5)	2.92(5)	2.84(6)
UWS	3.01(4)	2.82(5)	2.64(6)	2.61(6)	2.89(5)	3.05(2)	2.96(6)	3.14(3)	2.89(5)
National “property” average	2.85	2.81	2.84	2.80	2.92	3.01	2.97	3.05	2.91
Related areas									
Accounting	2.88	2.86	2.86	2.92	2.97	3.00	3.02	3.02	2.94
Building	2.87	2.99	2.98	2.88	2.98	3.01	3.26	3.10	3.01
Business	2.97	2.89	3.00	3.06	3.14	3.18	3.21	2.97	3.05
Economics	2.84	2.86	2.88	2.93	3.04	3.09	3.05	3.06	2.97
Law	2.77	2.80	3.06	2.83	3.04	3.09	3.53	3.06	3.02
Planning	2.93	2.85	3.10	2.95	3.09	3.04	3.14	3.17	3.03

*: Average result is followed by rank (in brackets) within property degrees within each year.

Table 3: Percentage of students “satisfied” with standard of teaching: 1998-2001*

	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)	1998-2001 (%)
Curtin	37.5(1)	61.5(1)	40.3(1)	52.7(1)	48.0(1)
QUT	32.3(3)	23.2(6)	38.9(2)	44.2(2)	34.7(2)
RMIT	29.6(4)	31.8(3)	37.5(3)	31.6(5)	32.6(4)
UQ	34.6(2)	28.0(4)	36.1(4)	33.3(3)	33.0(3)
USA	16.7(7)	27.8(5)	18.5(7)	22.6(7)	21.4(7)
UTS	27.8(5)	23.1(7)	30.4(6)	28.5(6)	27.5(6)
UWS	20.2(6)	33.9(2)	32.1(5)	32.2(4)	29.6(5)
National “property” average	29.2	31.5	31.5	33.9	31.5
Related areas					
Accounting	29.0	30.7	31.9	31.8	30.9
Building	32.6	35.0	44.8	36.8	37.3
Business	37.3	39.2	40.9	29.7	36.8
Economics	33.9	36.2	35.0	35.2	35.1
Law	34.4	35.2	54.1	36.3	40.0
Planning	36.2	35.1	40.2	39.1	37.7

*: Percentage is followed by rank (in brackets) within property degrees within each year.

Table 4: Analysis of GCCA CEQ “overall satisfaction” results: 1994-2001*

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	1994-2001
Curtin	3.08(6)	3.07(6)	3.56(2)	3.65(1)	3.46(4)	4.15(1)	3.67(3)	3.36(7)	3.50(5)
QUT	3.71(3)	3.85(2)	3.54(3)	3.50(2)	3.47(3)	3.68(4)	3.33(6)	4.04(1)	3.64(2)
RMIT	3.74(2)	3.37(5)	3.50(5)	3.42(3)	3.34(7)	3.68(3)	3.71(1)	3.59(5)	3.54(3)
UQ	3.58(4)	3.50(4)	3.54(3)	3.29(6)	3.38(5)	3.55(6)	3.50(5)	3.78(2)	3.52(4)
USA	2.75(7)	3.55(3)	3.36(6)	3.16(7)	3.35(6)	3.57(5)	3.14(7)	3.64(4)	3.32(7)
UTS	3.40(5)	2.81(7)	3.08(7)	3.42(4)	3.50(2)	3.39(7)	3.71(2)	3.58(6)	3.36(6)
UWS	3.80(1)	3.90(1)	3.68(1)	3.32(5)	3.73(1)	3.86(2)	3.64(4)	3.70(3)	3.70(1)
National “property” average	3.43	3.40	3.48	3.39	3.46	3.72	3.53	3.68	3.51
Related areas									
Accounting	3.66	3.64	3.64	3.68	3.69	3.70	3.72	3.70	3.68
Building	3.37	3.57	3.64	3.45	3.53	3.56	3.95	3.84	3.61
Business	3.49	3.64	3.68	3.70	3.75	3.78	3.78	3.68	3.69
Economics	3.48	3.53	3.60	3.57	3.65	3.69	3.71	3.66	3.61
Law	3.57	3.55	3.52	3.47	3.67	3.80	4.09	3.62	3.66
Planning	3.28	3.25	3.44	3.15	3.35	3.37	3.46	3.46	3.35

*: Average result is followed by rank (in brackets) within property degrees within each year.

Table 5: Percentage of students “satisfied” with overall course: 1998-2001*

	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)	1998-2001 (%)
Curtin	50.0(6)	92.3(1)	66.6(2)	54.6(6)	65.9(1)
QUT	46.8(7)	64.2(4)	53.4(5)	82.6(2)	61.8(5)
RMIT	54.5(4)	68.2(2)	66.7(1)	62.1(4)	62.9(3)
UQ	69.2(1)	54.5(6)	50.0(6)	88.9(1)	65.7(2)
USA	53.0(5)	57.2(5)	39.3(7)	64.2(3)	53.4(7)
UTS	58.3(3)	52.2(7)	64.7(4)	51.5(7)	56.7(6)
UWS	63.6(2)	65.0(3)	65.9(3)	56.6(5)	62.8(4)
National “property” average	54.5	63.6	58.9	63.1	60.0
Related areas					
Accounting	65.4	65.6	67.0	66.4	66.1
Building	58.2	60.9	71.2	71.1	65.4
Business	69.1	69.5	70.0	65.4	68.5
Economics	63.5	63.8	65.7	63.7	64.2
Law	63.3	70.2	78.2	60.9	68.2
Planning	51.7	54.7	53.1	58.5	54.5

*: Percentage is followed by rank (in brackets) within property degrees within each year.