



STUDENT ATTENDANCE: Finding the Facts

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INTRODUCTION

Student numbers attending classes are on the decline. We put forward theories and have discussions as to why this is happening, but we need to ask the students themselves to get at the facts. The difficulty in getting the feedback from students is of course that they are not attending classes, so talking to them is not an option.

There are a number of papers on why students do attend classes (Friedman, Rodriguez, McComb 2001, Gump 2004, Launis 1997, Petress 1996), but few we could find on why they do not attend (Friedman, Rodriguez, McComb 2001).

It was decided in semester 2 2003 to survey a one semester certificate student body and the programme's lecturers.

THE SURVEY

The pilot used a base of 66 students and 6 lecturers and produced some interesting results. Students were asked questions relating to their regular/irregular attendance and work and family commitments. Staff were asked to comment on attendance and lateness of students. There was a 20% return rate from students and a 50% return rate from lecturers.

RESULTS

The major group of student respondents were Male, under 25, joined the programme because they loved computing, but had previously only used Office Software. Most did not have jobs, were Chinese and wanted to continue with further Study. 75% of respondents felt they attended regularly and the main reasons were - Want good grades - Feel I should - Want to learn - Want to pass. The major reasons for non attendance were - Don't understand the subject - Workload too high. There were few

suggestions as to how we could improve attendance. The most popular class time slot was 10:30 start followed by 8:45 start.

Staff opinion was that an average of 81.5% of students attended regularly and there was no difference between theory and lab classes.

THE FUTURE

The pilot was successful and resulted in minor changes to the forms. In semester 1 2004 the survey is being opened up to include all of the school's certificate and undergraduate programmes (including the initial trial programme). For 2005 we are interested in other programmes within Unitec and other computing programmes in NZ.

REFERENCES

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