

MEDIA RELEASE
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Regional universities lead the pack in student experience outcomes during pandemic

Regional universities are leading the pack when it comes to student experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the latest Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) and Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS) results.

The federal government-funded survey provides transparent information about all of Australia's higher education institutions, from the perspective of recent students and graduates.

The survey found that regional universities performed exceptionally well across a wide range of quality indicators in learning, teaching and overall experience, despite student satisfaction in the sector as a whole declining nine percent compared to 2019 results.

In a coup for regional universities, all seven RUN institutions scored higher than the national average of 68.4 per cent satisfaction for quality of undergraduate educational experience. Of the four universities with the lowest decline in student satisfaction year on year, three were RUN institutions.

Chair of RUN, Professor Nick Klomp, said the results for regional universities were pleasing and proof of the effectiveness of regional universities in managing the transition to online learning and support during COVID-19.

“Regional universities were already ahead of the game in terms of online learning capability and were able to pivot quickly to a full online delivery model once COVID-19 restrictions came into force,” Professor Klomp said.

“This served to minimise disruption for our students during the pandemic and maintained the quality of education they received, which in turn has led to these exceptional QILT outcomes.

“Regional universities have been delivering innovative online and distance education to rural, remote and regional students for over 50 years. Our business model has always been about driving equality of access to tertiary education, irrespective of the physical or social barriers.

“The necessity to provide these quality learning options for dispersed regional students gave regional universities a head start against the rapid change experienced by the sector last year”.

The survey results indicate that regional graduates are also better off when it comes to employment outcomes. Despite graduate employment rates falling to 68.7 per cent in 2020, three RUN universities experienced an increase in undergraduate employment rates – the only universities to achieve this feat.

Professor Klomp said he was confident regional universities would continue to lead the sector in student experience, quality teaching and graduate employment outcomes post-pandemic.

“These results are just the beginning of a regional university renaissance in the new digital age.

“The pandemic has reinforced that digitalisation is the way of the future in tertiary education, and regional universities already had their foot on the pedal” Professor Klomp said.

“We will continue to see regional universities go from strength to strength, driving new digital capabilities and innovations to meet the rapidly changing market.”

The findings of the survey can be found at: <https://www.qilt.edu.au>

Contacts: Dr Caroline Perkins, Executive Director, 0408 482 736
Bernadette Smon, Media Adviser, 0478 495 457

Website: www.run.edu.au

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