

Academic Progress Monitoring – Optimising Outcomes for International Students

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Background

In response to the Educational Services Overseas Student (ESOS) Act 2000, Macquarie International undertook the task of implementing an academic performance monitoring project to assist those students who were not progressing satisfactorily and to help students at risk resolve problems which could impede successful completion of their study.

International students studying on a student visa must achieve an academic result that is certified by the education provider to be at least “satisfactory” for each semester.

What Defines Satisfactory Progress?

A 50% pass rate has been used as a default minimum by Macquarie International in the absence of any comprehensive progression measure or requirements at Macquarie University.

Relevant ESOS Requirements

The education provider must keep a record of each student's academic performance for each requirement of the course for which the student is enrolled. Procedures must be in place for advising DIMA of a student's failure to meet their visa conditions relating to attendance or academic performance under the Migration Act 1958, and for notifying the student of their non-compliance.

This session will outline the statistical and anecdotal results as well as related outcomes of the interviews that were conducted with international students as a part of the academic monitoring project in 2003.

The results will be presented by:

- Level of study
- Division and program of study
- Country of origin
- Anecdotal feedback from students interviewed

The information gathered through this process has allowed Macquarie International to identify areas of support that needed fine tuning or additional resources and will continue to inform Macquarie International's future development not only in the area of support but across the activities of recruitment and admission.

Method

Early in each semester, international students who have failed 50% or more of their subjects in the previous semester are invited to attend an interview with an International Student Adviser to discuss their unsatisfactory performance.

Students are encouraged to talk about the difficulties they experienced in the session and what they were

The advice students receive during the interview can differ according to how many semesters they have failed and individual circumstances for example: Compulsory attendance at study skills workshops.

International Student Performance – Pass Rates – The Global Picture 2003

International Undergraduate 81% Local Undergraduate Students 89%
International Postgraduate 96% Local Postgraduate 96%

International students interviewed each semester for unsatisfactory progress averaged to around 5% of the MU international student cohort.

Results

Table 1 - Number of Students Interviewed Semester 2 2002

Level of study	Semester 2 2002	Number of Students Enrolled	Ratio
Undergraduate	249	1794	13.88%
Postgraduate	25	2355	1.06%

Figure - 1 Number of Students Failing by Country / Region

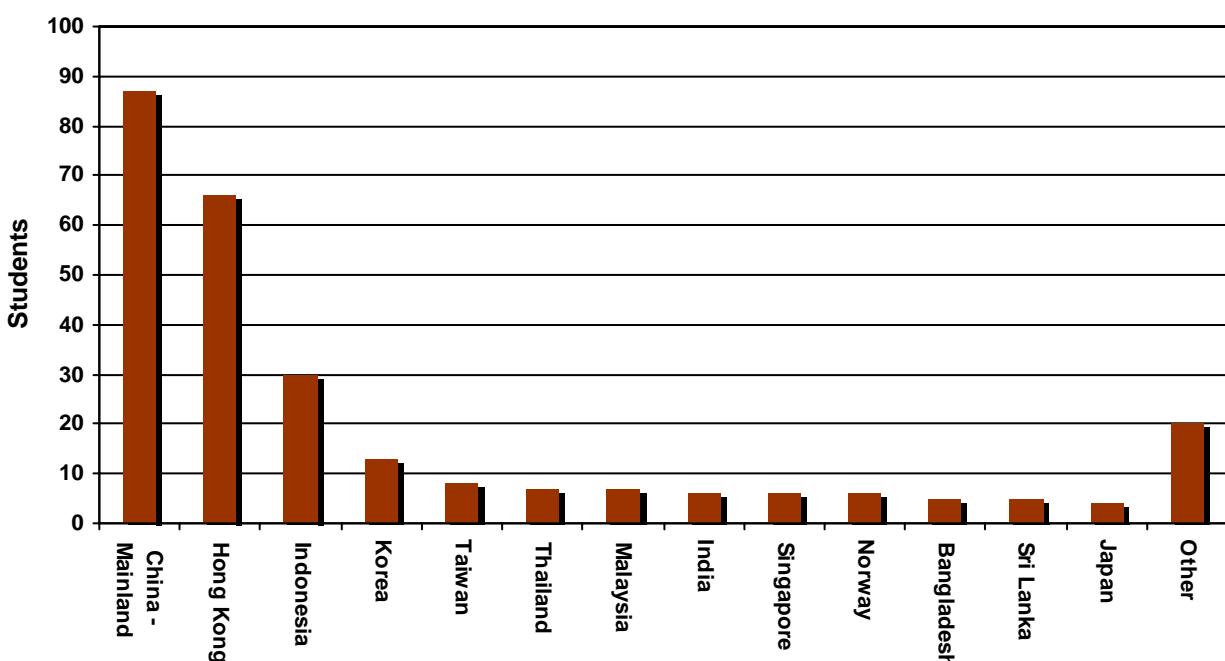
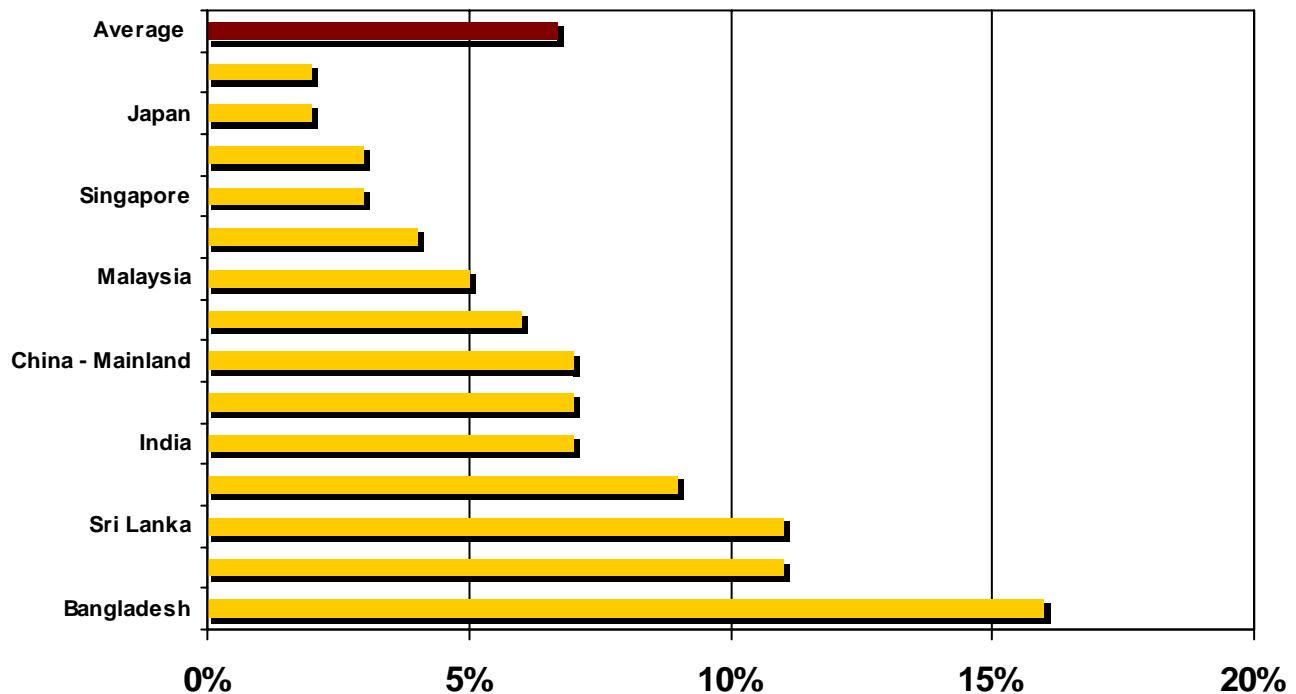


Figure - 2 Percentage of Students Failing Against the Total Cohort**Table 2 - Problems Cited As Reason For Failure**

Problems	No
Poor Time Management / Insufficient Efforts	18
Found 3rd-year courses difficult	16
Sick during exams / semester (NB: students are given opportunity for special consideration)	14
Personal (relationship) problems	9
Problems settling in at Macquarie	9
Language (English) difficulties - Essay Writing 4	9
Sickness / death of family members	9
Adjustment issues	8
Distance from the University (location including moving house)	6
Study skills / methods	5
Difficulty with Math	5
Bad exam timetable	4
Voluntary overseas travel during semester	4
No relevant academic background	3
Other unavoidable incidents	2

How did students perform in their subsequent semester after the interview regarding their unsatisfactory performance and discussions on how to improve?

Table 3 Undergraduate Student Results for the Subsequent Semester (Semester 1 2003)

Undergraduate	Number of students %	
Students who passed all subjects in their subsequent semester	79	31.73%
Students who passed 75% of subjects in their subsequent semester	62	24.90%
Students who passed 50% of subjects (showed improvement)	18	7.23%
Students who continued to pass 50% of subjects (showed no improvement)	5	2.01%
Students who failed more than 50% of subjects	32	12.85%
Total number of UG students who showed improvement	159	63.86%

Table 4 Postgraduate Student Results for the Subsequent Semester (Semester 1 2003)

Postgraduate	Number of students	%
Students who passed all subjects in their subsequent semester	12	48.00%
Students who passed 75% of subjects in their subsequent semester	7	28.00%
Students who passed 50% of subjects (showed improvement)	2	8.00%
Students who passed 50% of subjects (showed no improvement)	0	0.00%
Students who failed more than 50% of subjects	4	16.00%
Total number of PG students who showed improvement	21	84.00%

Conclusion

The monitoring project began in response to Government legislation and was largely about reporting requirements. The resulting success and valuable feedback from the project has meant it has also allowed Macquarie International to better target support to those students most at risk and to inform future decisions regarding resources and support.

Outcomes:

- Introduction of an International Student Study Skills Adviser
- Targeted study skills sessions as well as regular sessions
- Increased support offered to genuine cases
- Input into MI academic criteria meetings
- Fine tuning orientation and student support programs

Challenges:

- Lack of consistent progress monitoring across the board.
- Students “working” the system
- Lack of MU staff awareness regarding conditions that affect international student study
- Timing Issues
- Programs with progression rules