

## **Introduction**

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) is a survey undertaken annually by students enrolled in universities in Australia and New Zealand. It is closely linked to the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

Student engagement is an idea focused on students and their interactions with university. It rests on the premise that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities, and on how institutions and staff generate conditions to stimulate involvement.

The AUSSE is important because it provides an indication of students' involvement in activities and experience of conditions that research has linked with high-quality student outcomes. As such, it provides data for framing conversations about quality and a stimulus for guiding policy to improve the educational experiences and outcomes.

The AUSSE collects information about:

- the experiences and activities of students in relation to their studies;
- the experiences and activities of students outside of their formal education;
- the personal interactions students have with staff and fellow students at their university;
- the future study intentions of students;
- students' perceptions of the values and quality of their institution; and
- socio-demographic information about students.

The AUSSE is managed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in close collaboration with participating institutions. The results of the AUSSE are discussed in a variety of reports. Each institution receives a detailed Institutional Report that includes a range of results and benchmarks. The Australasian Student Engagement Report provides a high-level public discussion of findings, and the AUSSE Research Briefings provide more detailed discussion and analysis of the engagement of specific groups of students.

This Executive Summary Report complements the more detailed Institutional Report. Each institution-specific report provides information relating specifically to the engagement of students at the institution who took part in the 2009 AUSSE. The reporting shows the outcomes for this institution in relation to students from a number of aggregated groupings, including Australasia, North America and selected 'like' institutions within Australia and New Zealand.

Student engagement measures at the institutional level are generally divided into two groups – first-year students and later-year students. Subgroup information is also provided in this Executive Summary Report and in the more detailed Institution Report.

Further information about the AUSSE and the publications that result from this annual collection can be found at the following website: [www.acer.edu.au/ausse](http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse)

## Population and sample summary

In 2009 35 institutions participated in the AUSSE, growing from 25 in 2007 and 29 in 2008. The AUSSE 2009 population includes 104,137 first-year and 119,392 third-year on-shore bachelor degree students. Comparisons are made in this report with the results from the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In 2009, 643 institutions from the USA and Canada took part in the NSSE.

Based on instructions provided by La Trobe University in early 2009, a systematic random sample of 2,855 first-year and 2,928 later-year on-shore students was drawn from the total population. This sample was designed to yield 1,156 responses. As shown in Table 1, 1,352 students responded in total, giving an overall institutional response rate of 23 per cent. For the results that follow in this Executive Summary Report and the more detailed Institutional Report the response sample has been weighted to ensure that results reflect the institution’s population as a whole.

**Table 1: Population and response statistics**

	La Trobe University		All institutions	
	First year	Later year	First year	Later year
Respondents	713	639	14879	15743
Target population size	2855	2928	66249	57711
Response rate	25	22	22	27

## Areas of Performance scores

Around 100 specific learning activities and conditions are measured in the AUSSE. Table 2 summarises the areas in which La Trobe University is performing above the Australasian average, and areas in which scores are below the average.

**Table 2: Performance above and below average**

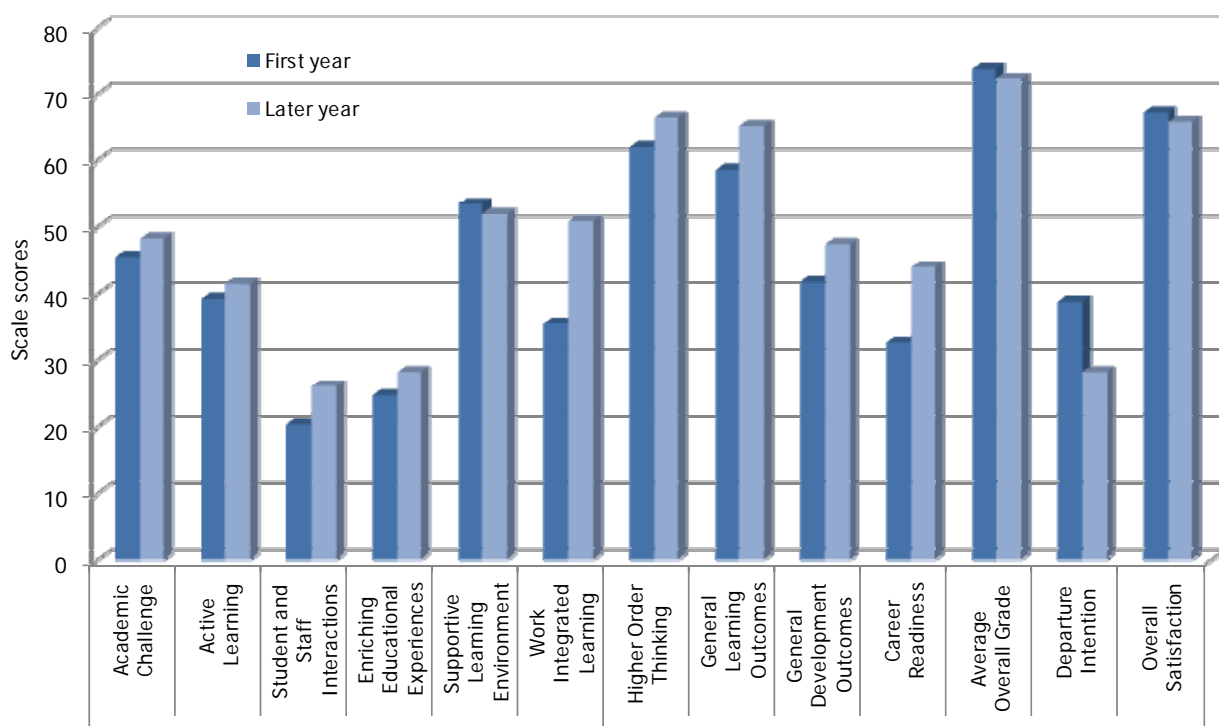
Performance below average	Performance above average
Providing care for dependents	Spent on campus including classes
Paid work relationship to study	Used student learning support services
Preparing for class	Spent on campus excluding classes
Working for pay off campus	Relaxing and socialising
Relationships with administrative personnel and services	Worked with students during class
Using computing and information technology	Assignments fewer than 1,000 words
Relationships with teaching staff	Used an electronic medium for assignment
Blended academic learning with workplace experience	Made presentation
Explored how to apply your learning in the workforce	Worked with students outside class
Acquiring job-related or work-related knowledge and skills	Conversations with students who are very different
Independent study	Conversations with students of different ethnic group
Managing personal business	Working effectively with others

## Engagement scale scores

This Executive Summary Report provides information about the responses to the 2009 AUSSE at La Trobe University. It shows the engagement and outcomes of students as measured on a number of core scales. Scale scores are reported using a metric that runs from 0 to 100.

The engagement scales measured by the AUSSE include: Academic Challenge, Active Learning, Student and Staff Interactions, Enriching Educational Experiences, Supportive Learning Environment and Work Integrated Learning.

Figure 1 displays the differences in both the engagement and outcomes scales for first-year and later-year student respondents from La Trobe University. It is interesting to compare the outcomes of students at these two points in time in order to identify areas of gain and decline.

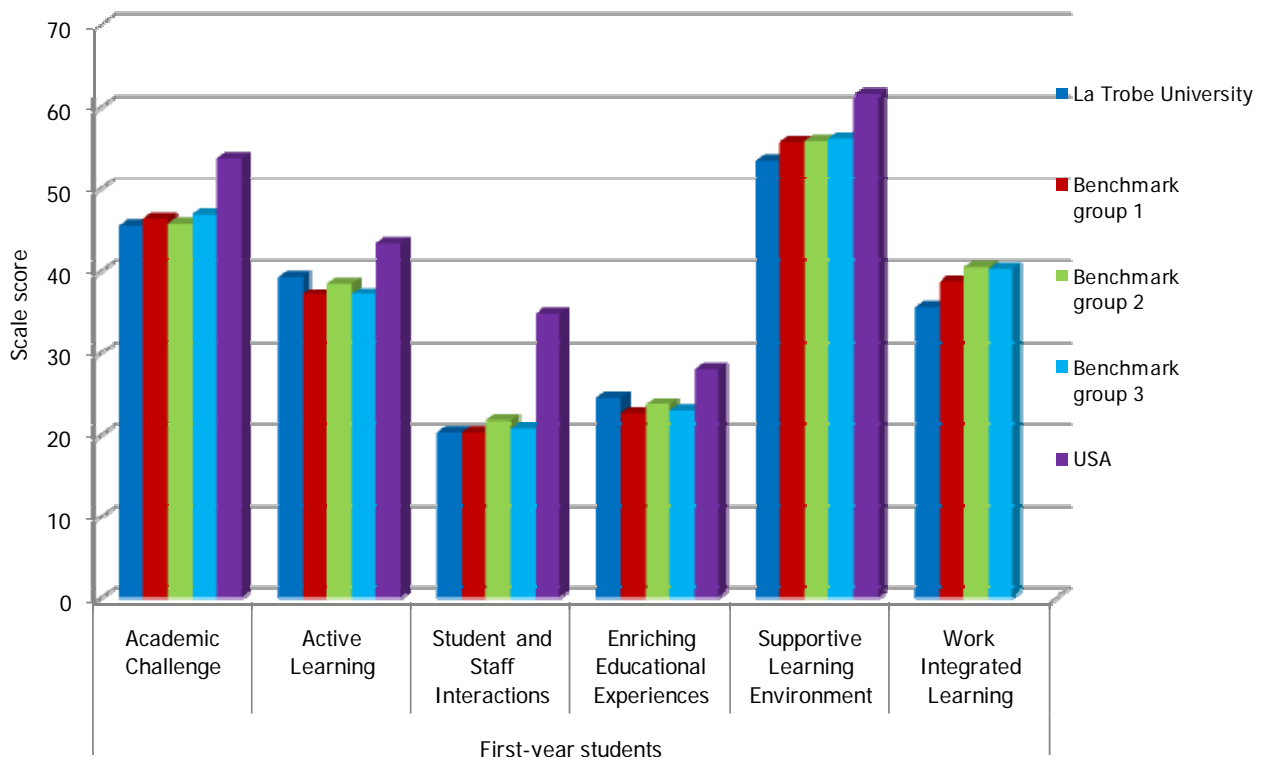


**Figure 1: Engagement and outcome scores for La Trobe University by year level**

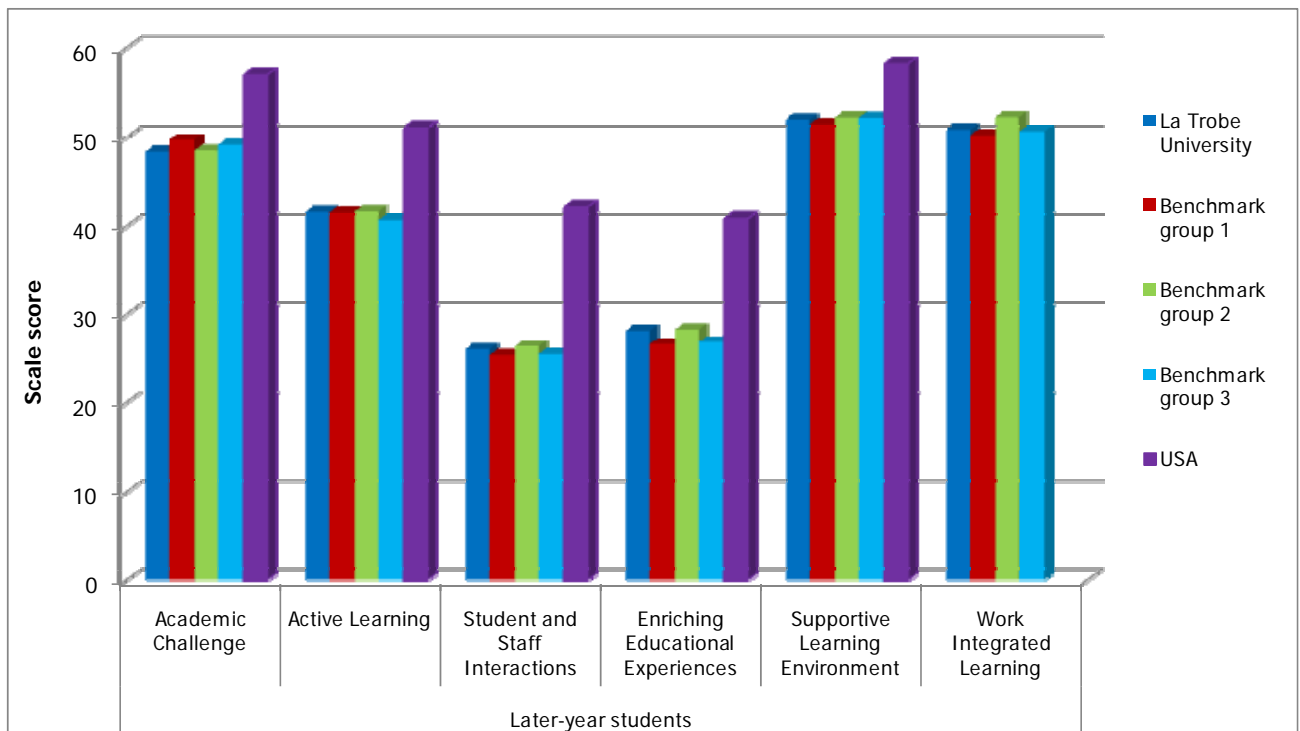
Engagement of first-year students is crucial for a range of reasons. It is important that new students adjust to university life so that their chances of success, likelihood of completing and contribution to the institution can be enhanced. Figure 2 displays the engagement scores of first-year students from this institution alongside those from a number of benchmark groups.

In Figure 3, the engagement scale scores of later-year students are compared with the benchmark group and overall scores for Australasia and North America. Examining these responses can provide further insight into the relative levels of engagement of students in this institution. These later-year figures are important because they provide an indication of the perceptions and experiences of students accumulated over the years they have spent at the institution.

Comparing institutional results against a range of other measures enables universities to assess their relative level of student engagement for this student cohort. It is best to compare results across groups within each scale, rather than make comparisons across scales. In general, a difference of five scale points may be considered a meaningful educational effect. Note that the Work Integrated Learning scale is not administered in the NSSE and therefore there are no comparisons with the USA results for this scale.



**Figure 2: First-year student engagement scale scores**

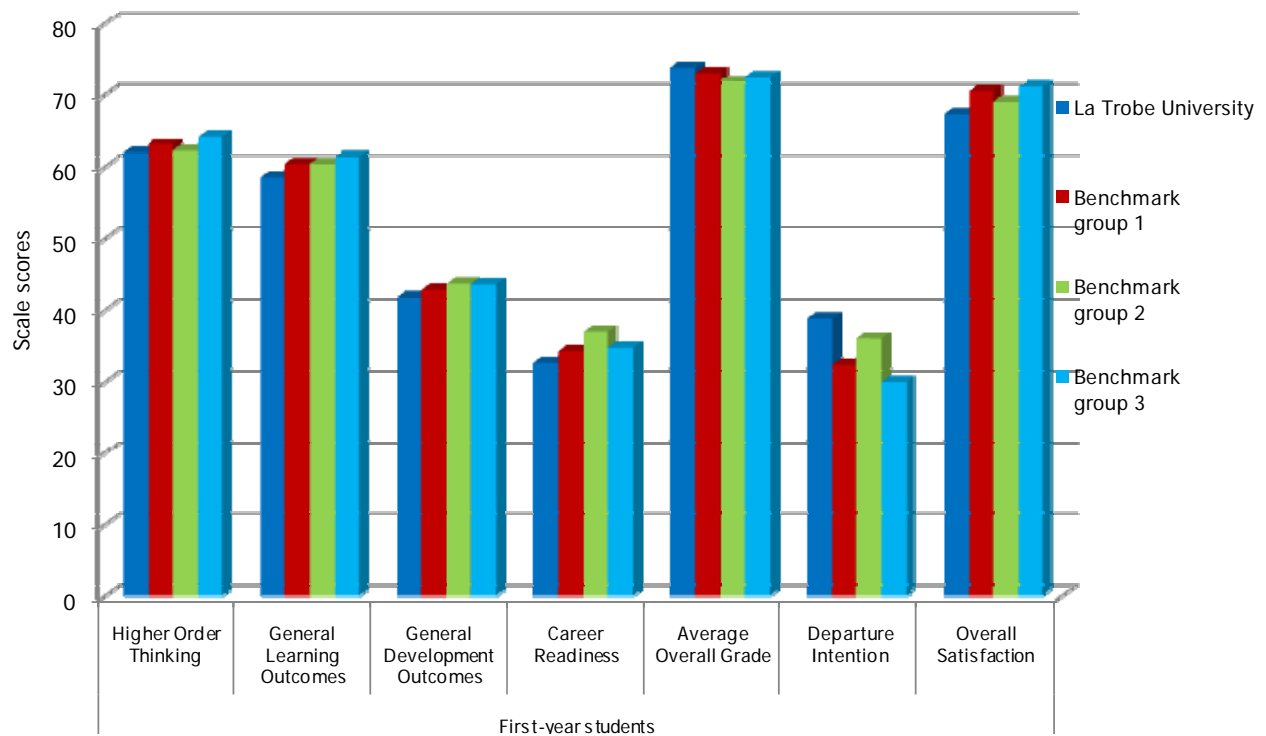


**Figure 3: Later-year student engagement scale scores**

## Outcome scale scores

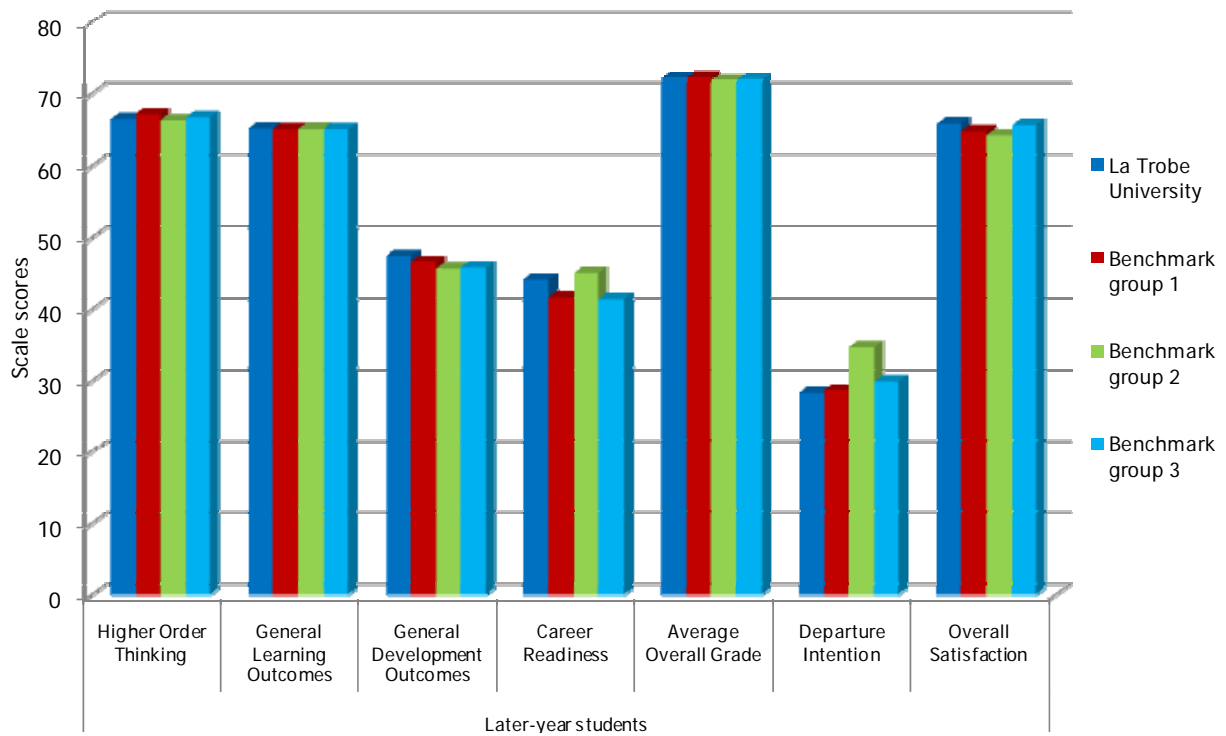
Several educational outcomes are measured in the AUSSE. The outcomes scales are: Overall Satisfaction, Departure Intention, Average Overall Grade, General Development Outcomes, Career Readiness, General Learning Outcomes, and Higher-order Thinking.

The outcomes measures from the first-year cohort of AUSSE respondents are displayed alongside several benchmarks in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: First-year student outcome scale scores**

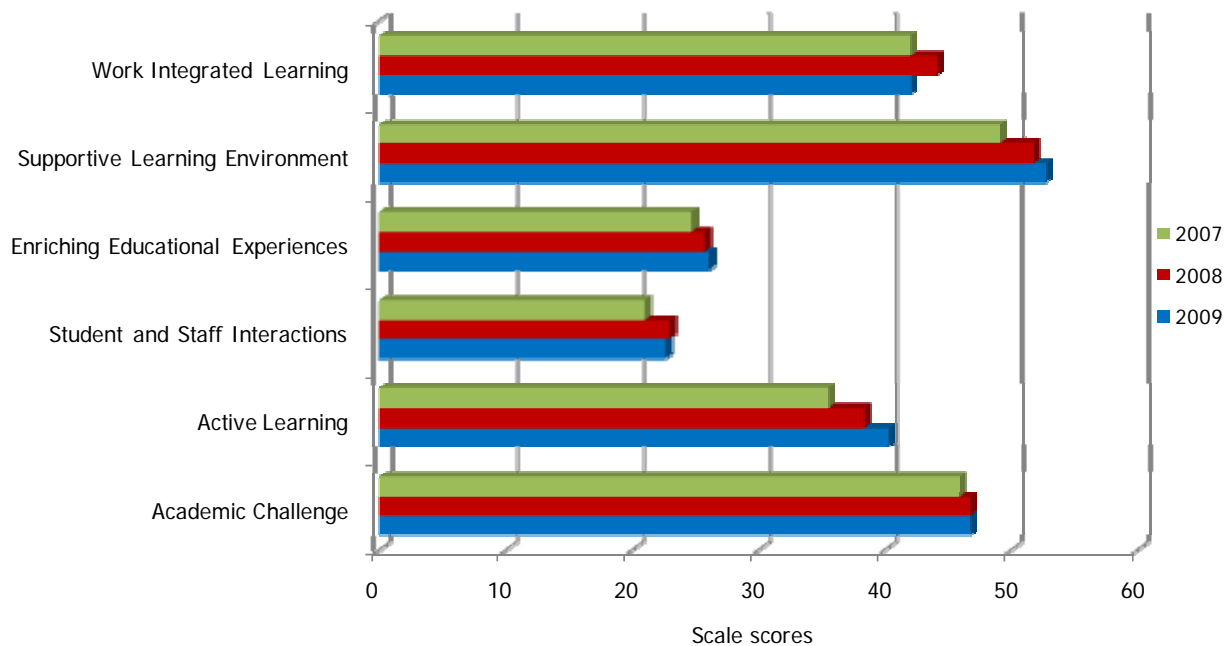
Similarly, Figure 5 shows the outcomes scale scores for the final-year cohort of this university, with scores from the institution's benchmark group and the overall Australasian score providing contexts for the institution-level results.



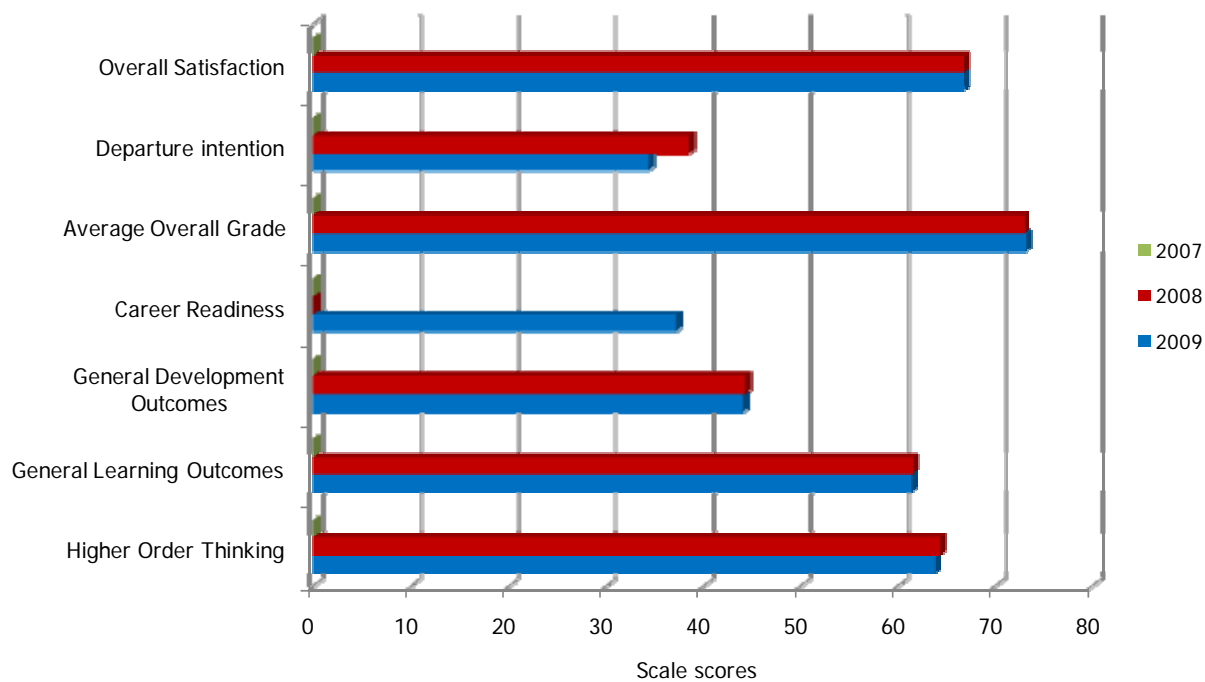
**Figure 5: Later-year student outcome scale scores**

### Cross-year comparisons

Looking at how the AUSSE results change over time helps identify areas for improvement, set targets to improve outcomes and monitor the impact of improvements. Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the scale scores for student engagement and student outcomes respectively at La Trobe University for each year of participation in the AUSSE.



**Figure 6: Annual engagement scale scores La Trobe University**



**Figure 7: Annual outcome scale scores La Trobe University**

## Subgroup summary results

Engagement varies across groups of students. For La Trobe University, the distributions of the responses across a number of key demographic and context characteristics are shown in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5.

**Table 3: Demographic subgroup scores for La Trobe University**

	La Trobe University	Female	Over 20 years of age	Equity group	Part-time or external	International	Non-English speaking background	First in family
Academic Challenge	47	48	48	49	47	48	47	47
Active Learning	40	41	41	40	40	41	40	40
Student and Staff Interactions	23	22	25	23	23	31	27	22
Enriching Educational Experiences	26	27	27	26	26	27	27	25
Supportive Learning Environment	53	52	53	54	53	53	53	54
Work Integrated Learning	42	44	48	43	42	40	41	42
Higher Order Thinking	64	65	66	66	64	65	64	64
General Learning Outcomes	61	62	63	62	61	64	63	62
General Development Outcomes	44	45	45	46	44	49	52	44
Career Readiness	37	39	40	40	37	43	44	37
Average Overall Grade	73	74	72	72	73	70	70	73
Departure Intention	34	33	30	36	34	30	34	34
Overall Satisfaction	67	66	66	67	67	63	63	67

**Table 4: Context subgroup scores for La Trobe University**

	<b>La Trobe University</b>	<b>Internal mode</b>	<b>Full-time attendance</b>	<b>Living on campus</b>	<b>Government funded</b>
Academic Challenge	47	47	47	46	47
Active Learning	40	40	40	41	40
Student and Staff Interactions	23	22	23	23	22
Enriching Educational Experiences	26	26	26	27	26
Supportive Learning Environment	53	53	53	57	53
Work Integrated Learning	42	41	42	41	42
Higher Order Thinking	64	64	64	63	64
General Learning Outcomes	61	61	61	61	61
General Development Outcomes	44	43	44	45	44
Career Readiness	37	37	37	33	37
Average Overall Grade	73	73	73	74	73
Departure Intention	34	34	34	29	34
Overall Satisfaction	67	67	67	68	67

**Table 5: Field of education subgroup scores for La Trobe University**

	Science	IT	Engineering	Architecture	Agriculture	Health	Education	Business	Humanities	Creative Arts
Academic Challenge	43	45	42	41	44	48	46	44	49	48
Active Learning	35	35	28	40	37	46	45	39	37	42
Student and Staff Interactions	22	30	21	23	21	23	21	26	21	29
Enriching Educational Experiences	23	20	18	27	23	29	29	23	26	22
Supportive Learning Environment	51	59	48	63	51	52	54	55	53	53
Work Integrated Learning	34	39	35	47	36	50	56	46	35	37
Higher Order Thinking	58	65	53	57	59	66	63	61	67	67
General Learning Outcomes	58	61	54	59	65	62	60	60	63	61
General Development Outcomes	36	51	36	52	41	45	44	43	47	38
Career Readiness	36	34	33	37	25	39	41	41	34	45
Average Overall Grade	70	75	71	73	75	74	78	70	74	77
Departure Intention	42	34	42	27	16	33	27	23	37	34
Overall Satisfaction	68	70	62	82	65	64	64	66	70	68

## Using AUSSE data to promote change

AUSSE results provide a foundation of evidence for planning and monitoring change. This Executive Summary Report provides a broad outline of this institution’s results for 2009. Using this report in conjunction with other resources and results from previous years will help to build evidence for identifying areas where improvement in engagement can be achieved.

For example, institutions have used their data to:

- run seminars with students, managers and teachers;
- benchmark results between institutions;
- prepare reports for specific divisions;
- run student focus groups and interviews;
- enhance teaching practices and learning space designs;
- hold institution-wide meetings to address problem areas; and
- integrate student management activities.

A range of resources are available to assist individual institutions, including:

- AUSSE 2009 Institution Report, which includes a copy of your institution's unit-record data file;
- 2009 Australasian Student Engagement Report (released in early 2010); and
- AUSSE Enhancement Guides, available at [www.acer.edu.au/ausse](http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse).