

2019 Student First Impressions Report

The First Impressions Survey (FIS) is conducted annually to gather the student perspective on how well provision of EIT services has enhanced their experience and met their needs in the first weeks of study. Results contribute to self-assessment, particularly how students are supported and engaged in their learning. A summary of results is available to all staff and students through Staffnet and My EIT.

In order to capture the perspective of learners under-represented in recent online surveys, student focus groups were initiated in 2019. The groups listed below were identified based on previous survey response rates and with input from key stakeholders. One hundred students participated in the focus groups.

- Pacifica Students - Taradale Campus
- Central Hawkes Bay Regional Learning Centre
- Hastings Regional Learning Centre
- Regional Studies Unit (RSU) - Gisborne
- Ideaschool - Taradale Campus
- School of Trades and Technology –Taradale Campus
- International Students - Taradale Campus
- International Students - Auckland Campus

The open ended focus group questions covered the same topics as the online survey and are listed below with general themes identified by participants.

Enrolment

“Got a quick response which was personal and helpful.”

Overwhelmingly, students at all sites reported their enrolment went smoothly. Most students commented on the helpful support from knowledgeable staff, easy online application, quick responses to enquiries and a prompt confirmation letter. Meeting a programme tutor was regularly mentioned as a key element in a smooth enrolment. International students at the Auckland Campus made specific comments about the value of information on EIT’s website. Pacifica students highlighted the key role secondary school staff had in supporting their enrolment at EIT.

Improving Enrolment

"It would be good to have clear timeframes earlier in the process"

A number of students said more support for Studylink would be useful. International students in Hawke's Bay indicated their desire for a temporary accommodation option at the Student Hostel. A few international students wanted more information on fees, total class teaching room hours and an indicative timetable. A few noted delayed response times in December (*three weeks*).

EITOnline

"100% positive in helping us study"

It is important to note some student responses to this question were related to their experience with Google Classroom, the online library catalogue or a class Facebook page and not necessarily EIT's Moodle platform. Some tutors make use of a variety of online platforms to support learning and effective communication. Students at the regional campuses indicated that social media communication with classmates and the tutor was preferable as the phone is always close at hand.

Students generally report EITOnline was easy to access, easy to use and offered useful up-to-date information on course requirements, assessments and assessment weightings. EITOnline was particularly useful when the tutor provided a "walk through" on how to use it. Having upcoming class topics and assignments visible helped students manage their time. Although some students reported a strong relationship between online content and classroom activity, others said there was a disconnect between the two.

Improving EITOnline

"Why can't we be automatically enrolled on the EITOnline course?"

Students suggested a programme's EITOnline could display a tutor / lecturer contact page. Some suggested a whole year course overview would be beneficial. Several students reported seeing a previous year's assignment online and not assignments for the current year. Many students reported problems with accessing their online timetable and indicated this was crucial to planning and seeking employment. International students, particularly wanted to be able to see the online course environment and the proposed timetable before enrolment.

Orientation

"The tutor arranges activities that help us know each other and work as a team"

The nature of this question brought about a range of responses to different activities – some of which are tutor-led; others are managed by central student support services. This question also surfaced student feedback on a wide range of topics including course selection, campus tours, academic expectations and classroom ice-breaker games. Some

students, particularly in Hastings and Auckland, mentioned the valuable and detailed orientation they received. Others indicated their introduction to services was incomplete. Generally, students reported the value of the tutor-lead induction into what is expected of them, an informative student newsletter and activities to help them know classmates. Health and Safety requirements were covered comprehensively at RSU. Many International students commented positively on the comprehensive orientation they received.

Improving Orientation

Orientation? What's that?

Although many students were confused by the term “orientation”, most confirmed they had a comprehensive introduction into their programme and the Campus. Generally, students whose programme of study began either before or after the majority of other EIT programmes, felt they had missed out on organized orientation activities. Suggestions for improving orientation included better promotion of orientation days to trades students, a Studylink help desk, and a campus tour. Students in Hastings were not aware they could use campus services in Taradale and proposed Taradale Campus tour. International students suggested having information about academic requirements before arriving in NZ would have been beneficial. A few suggested an online academic enquiry course or a dedicated week of academic enquiry skills before other classes start. Some students reported being overwhelmed by too much information during their orientation.

Library and Learning Services

“Beautiful when I went there, nice people”

Students at Taradale and Auckland Campuses confirmed the helpfulness of Library and Learning Services staff, particularly the availability of learning advisors. Learning advisors at CHB and Hastings RLCs were also highly valued by students. International students were impressed with the wide range of publications and online resources available to them. Several Trades students mentioned how their tutor gave them a comprehensive tour of the Library and the range of services available to support their studies. Students at the RSU and the RLCs noted although there was no library at their location, their tutor provided a range of study resources.

Improving Library and Learning Services

“Maybe a mobile library or small library with Hort and Ag books or topical magazines”

Some students suggested better signage in the Taradale Library to indicate the offices of liaison staff and better signage on how to operate printers. A few students reported wanting extended time to borrow laptops (more than four hours). Students in Hastings were not aware they could use the Twist Library in Taradale.

The EIT Computer Network

When the tutor can't fix something, he calls IT and they come right away to help"

Many students indicated there were no significant problems with the computer network although almost all students described the network and the log on process as "slow". Students said there was good IT support from their tutors and EIT secretaries. Many students indicated they were aware of the challenges of WIFI. They knew and used places on Campus where signals were strongest. The few students who were aware of their free access to Microsoft office products and Office 365 commented on its value to them. Many students were not aware of this access to software.

Improving the Computer Network

"We need training on what is available"

Many students said that operating printers was confusing. Students in Hastings requested access to wireless printing. It would save them extra steps when using their own device. These students had problems logging on if they had been enrolled at EIT previously, however the Hastings Centre Coordinator was able to quickly sort their log-in issues. Some Hastings learners were frustrated by the Content Keeper blocking access to sites that contribute to their class activities (predominantly hair and beauty product sales sites). Some Trades students were not aware there was an IT help desk. The availability of access from home through **student farm** was not widespread. Those who had used **student farm** found it slow and had difficulty submitting work.

The First Weeks Overall

"Pretty Awesome!!"

A common theme in the student experience overall was the helpful teaching and admin staff. Students felt all staff were dedicated to student success. One student noted how important staff attitude was to helping him overcome the fear of a new environment. The sense of belonging and making new friends were noted as key to creating a positive student experience.

Improving the first weeks overall

"We need timetables with all courses on it"

The lack of parking spaces and the cost of parking frustrated many Taradale students. Some did not know where free parking was available. Some recommended having more clubs and student social activities. Easy access to customized timetables, healthy food options and industry based field trips were suggested as ways to improve the student experience.

Overwhelmingly students said EIT has lived up to their expectations.

Comparisons to Online survey

The use of focus groups in 2019 confirms the positive student experience with EIT services and processes as recorded through the previous online surveys.

Previous online survey respondents identified the need for more prompt communication and follow up about enrolment. The enrolment experience of focus group participants however, was overwhelmingly positive. It was regularly described as swift and comprehensive.

Results of the online survey in past years indicated that less than 50% of learners in regional campuses participated in orientation. In group discussion however, it was evident there were different interpretations of the word “orientation”. All students in Regional Learning Centre focus groups felt they received a comprehensive introduction to EIT.

As noted above, student interpretation of ‘EITOnline’ gathered responses about a range of online services. The feedback from these groups will be used to revise questions in the online survey for better clarity. Question revision would gather more targeted information about blended learning environments and online services.

Recommendations for 2020 First Impressions Survey

- Revise questions about EITOnline to gather more specific feedback on the range of online environments in use.
- Revise questions about orientation to gather more targeted information