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INITIAL STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION SURVEY

Results

UNIVERSITY OF RUHUNA, SRI LANKA



**Integrating Talent Development into Innovation Ecosystems in Higher Education
Ecosystems in Higher Education**

586227-EPP-1-2017-1-BG-EPP

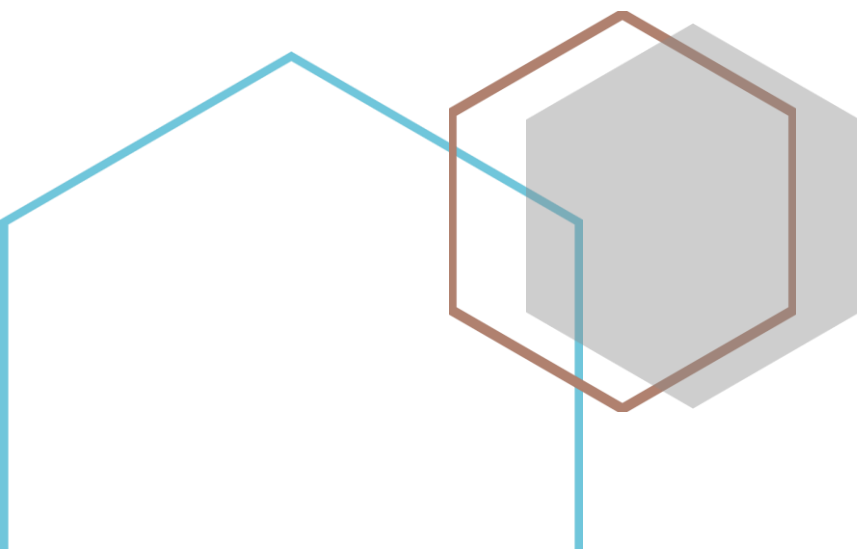




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Each INNOTAL Partner University in Asia has carried out a survey campaign aimed at mapping the initial positions and perceptions of key University stakeholders on issues of relevance to the project.

Representatives of administration and management have been asked to give their opinion about the way graduates' employability and relations with external stakeholders are currently handled at their University.

Students have provided feedback about the state of current student representation at the University, which is an important determinant of the ability of the institution to attract and retain talent.

Faculty members have been asked to share their interest in, and expectations from, future plans to embed employability in the various activities and operations at the University, to further develop talent development and improve the quality and relevance of education.

This document presents and analyses the results from this survey.

Editor: Gergana Cisarova-Dimitrova, European Center for Quality



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Summary and Analysis

For studying the perceptions of various stakeholders at the University, a survey was carried out. 134 respondents participated, including (A) Management and (B) Administration, (C) Students, (D) Faculty Members. The distribution of the respondents is quite acceptable considering the relative number of representatives of these target groups. Management and administration was represented by over 23% of the respondents.

Based on the responses from Category (A) Management and (B) Administration, the findings of the survey can be summarized as follows:

A small majority of respondents (51.6%) replied positively about having a strategy in place for increasing employability, and an overwhelming majority (nearly 84%) assessed the university's performance in terms of promoting employability as average. This indicates that the potential positive impact of INNOTAL activities is substantial. The majority of respondents feel that the University is not monitoring the external conditions in the economy and society impacting employability to a sufficient extent and a similar percentage of respondents believe that the University should learn from other Universities in this area. More than half of the respondents (nearly 65%) feel that for the design and development of curricula, external shareholders' opinion should be considered, although academics should have the final word. However, a rather substantial percentage of respondents also feel that academics should primarily be responsible, with input from governmental agencies. This unwillingness to consider the employers needs to be further researched and understood. It is very positive that in the next question about developing students' talent and employability all respondents suggest that the advice of employers should be considered or that students should be assisted in any possible way in coming into direct contact with the world of work. Only about 1/3 of the respondents feel that the teaching process at the University provides sufficient autonomy, responsibility and freedom to students. The rest of the respondents see some positive trends in this regard but do not assess them as sufficient.

Based on the responses from Category (C) Students, the findings of the survey can be summarized as follows:

Around 1/3 of the respondent students rate positively their participation in official decision-making bodies of the University. Another 1/3 believes that their voice could count more, and yet another 1/3 believes that students are not adequately represented in University governance. The opinion is quite similar as regards the degree to which students feel they are consulted on the quality of teaching and the study programs. Here, interestingly, almost 8% state that they are not consulted at all. With regard to consulting students on matters of support services, health and other services related to social life, there is a larger percentage of respondents (over 17%) who do not feel that they are sufficiently consulted. We believe that these results are not out of the ordinary, although students' perceptions about not being sufficiently consulted need to be addressed. On a positive note, 64% of the students feel that the University attracts and retains talented students. Again, the large percentage of those who believe the opposite (36%) should raise a red flag. The future of INNOTAL activities seems to be promising as the great majority of respondents are ready to participate in an innovation or research project with their Professors (some 40% of them feel that they need prior training). In response to the question about type of activity which will improve their employability, 77% feel internship with industry is the best choice. It is promising that over 55% also indicate participation in research projects as contributing to employability. There is a notably high percentage (48%) of students who consider an internship in a non-profit organization as conducive to employability. Involvement in community work and volunteering are also quite valued as skills-building experience. This is good news for the upcoming INNOTAL activities.



Based on the responses from Category (D) Faculty members, we can summarize the findings of the survey as follows:

The majority of faculty members felt that the University is doing a lot to guarantee employment to students, but at the same time they also feel that more efforts will help us achieve better results. Over 55% of the respondents believe that the University has to focus more on maintaining beneficial links with employers as what is currently being done is not enough. It is positive that the remaining respondents feel that the University is already doing enough or at least a lot. All respondent faculty members declare readiness to contribute to the University's efforts in developing students' employability. Almost 35% of the respondents feel that their workload would increase due to their contribution to activities aimed at improving the employability of students. This issue needs to be addressed in order to prevent internal resistance to future changes in this area. The issue of rewarding and acknowledging faculty efforts towards improving students' employability appears to be more problematic. No respondent is happy with the situation. 30% explicitly state that such extra efforts are not acknowledged and rewarded, while a substantial majority believes that there is some recognition and reward, but it is not enough. Almost all of the responding faculty members agree with the idea of involving employers in the design, delivery and evaluation of courses. There was a balanced reply to the question whether the involvement of employers in design, delivery and evaluation of courses will disrupt the teaching process at the University. The majority of faculty members believe there will be no disruption or that it would be bearable. Yet there is a notable 15% that believes that involving employers in the design and delivery of courses will cause serious disruption of work at the university. This issue needs to be addressed in future project activities. The majority of faculty members do not feel that their academic freedom will be compromised if employers are involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of courses but again there is a 7% of negative attitude.

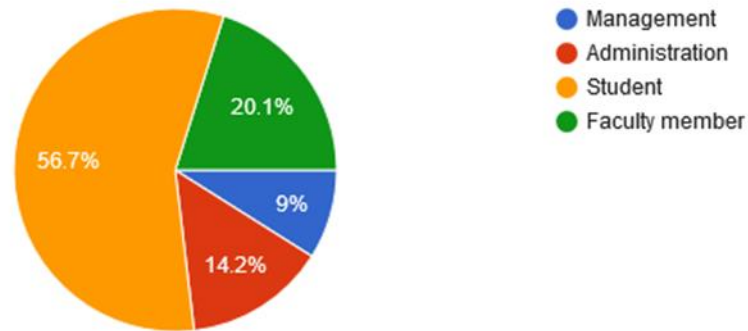
The majority of Faculty members feel that they are providing sufficient responsibility, autonomy and freedom to the students. Almost 80% of the respondents have shown willingness to develop and deliver training in Innovation and Entrepreneurship in some form. This is very positive and shows that future INNOTAL activities are likely to be well received. Almost all responding faculty members have shown eagerness to facilitate the participation of their students in innovation or research projects which also involve employers, although some 33% indicate that they would need additional training. Again, the activities of the INNOTAL project would be welcome in this regard and there appears to be interest and need for such additional training.

Detailed Results

Participants in the survey

Position at the University:

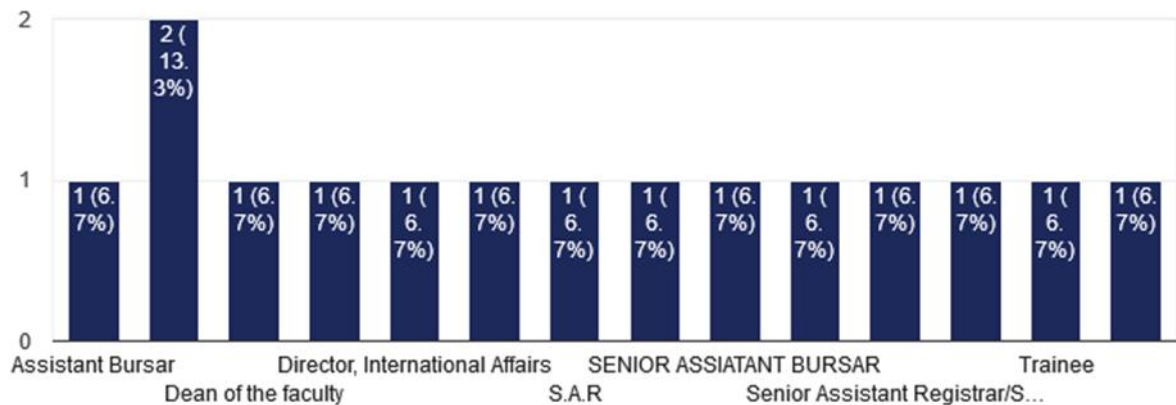
134 responses



Positions of the involved representatives of administration and management

Exact position (optional)

15 responses



Assistant Bursar:1

Dean: 2

Deans of Faculty:2

Director International Affairs: 1

S.A.R: 1

Unspecified: 1

SAIA: 1



Senior Assistant Bursar:1

Senior Assistant Registrar:1

Lecturer:1

Trainee:1

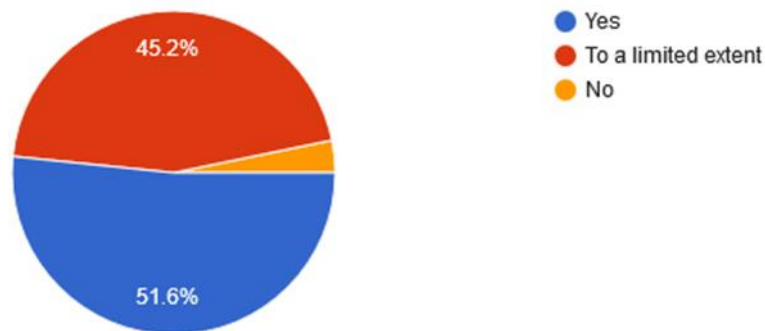
Vice Chancellor: 1



Responses from Management and Administration

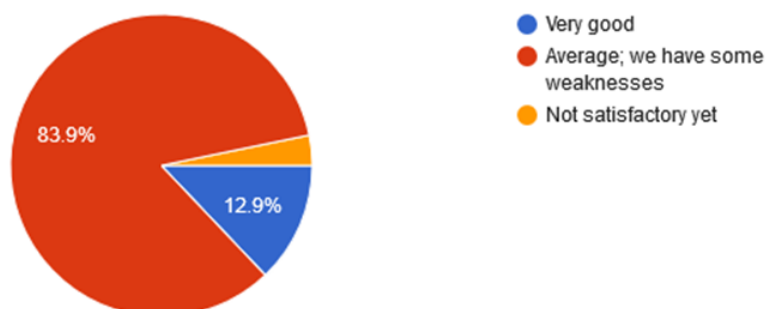
Does our university have a strategy for increasing the employability of our graduates and developing links with business? Are we monitoring our performance in these areas?

31 responses



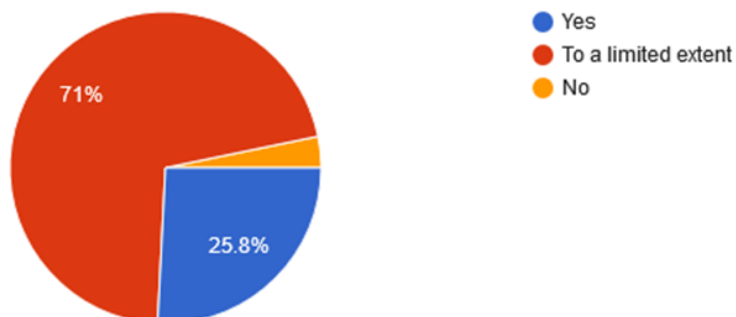
In your opinion, how satisfactory is our university's performance in these areas?

31 responses



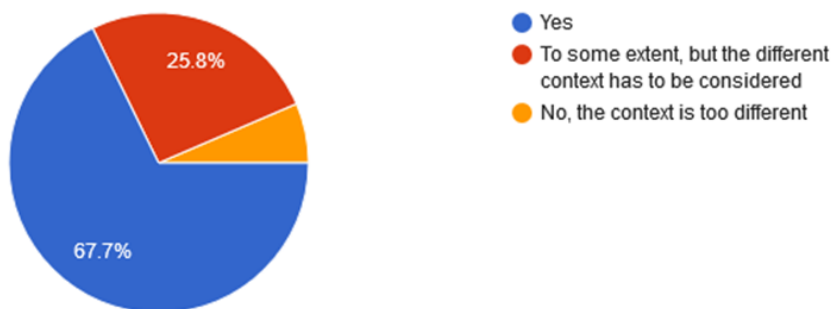
Is our university monitoring the external conditions in the economy and society that may affect the employability of our graduates?

31 responses



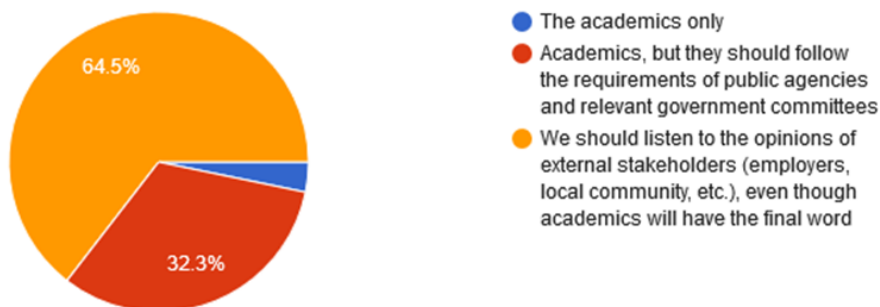
Is it useful to research and learn from the experience of other universities in these areas?

31 responses



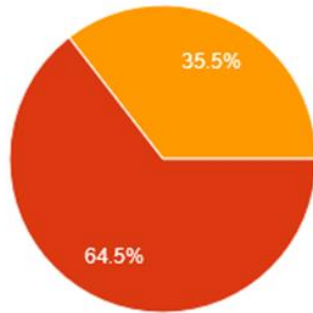
Who should be responsible for the design, delivery and evaluation of curricula at our university?

31 responses



How can we develop our students' talent and employability?

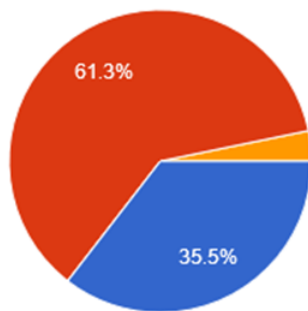
31 responses



- It is up to academics to find the best way to provide students with knowledge and skills
- Academics should have the leading role, but they should look for advice from employers and the world of work
- We should help our students to come in direct contact with the world of work as much as possible

Does the teaching process at the university give sufficient autonomy, responsibility and freedom to students?

31 responses



- Yes, we are doing our best
- We are trying but there is still much to be desired
- No, this should not be a priority

You can share with us any additional comments or observations you might have on the above topics or on related issues: 5 detailed responses

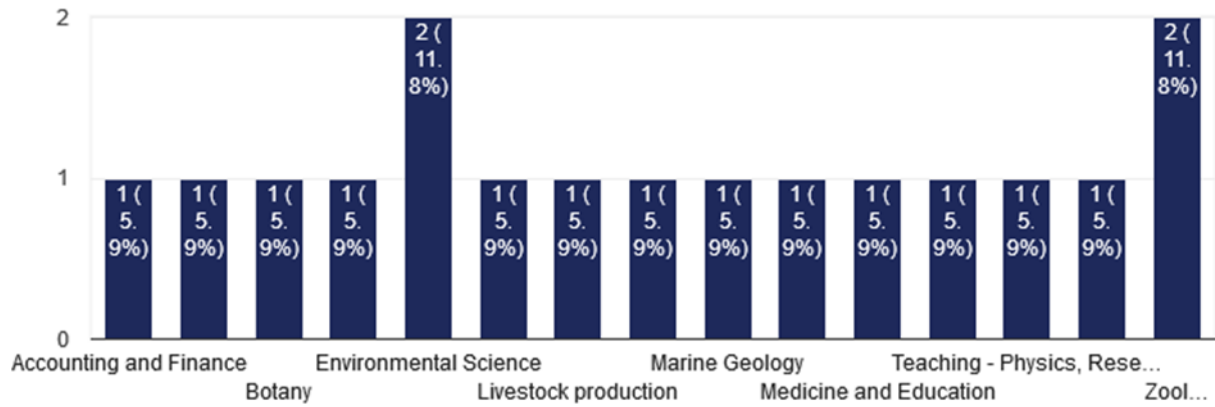
1. Curriculum should be design in a way to match the requirement of the market, Stakeholders and the Society. continuous revision & improvement of Curriculum is essential
2. We have started to develop a mechanism to collaborate with industries where academics and students can jointly come up with research ideas and solutions for existing issues. At the same time we are conducting employability surveys to identify important issues with our graduates.
3. It is essential to convince the need of real life learning and embed societal needs in the curriculum balancing university education to majority of the academics who still exist reluctant to change.
4. It is better to conduct seminars on requirement of market opportunities Sri Lanka.
5. It is better for university students given seminar and workshops by the employers and their organizations and made awareness how to work in practically.



Responses from Faculty Members

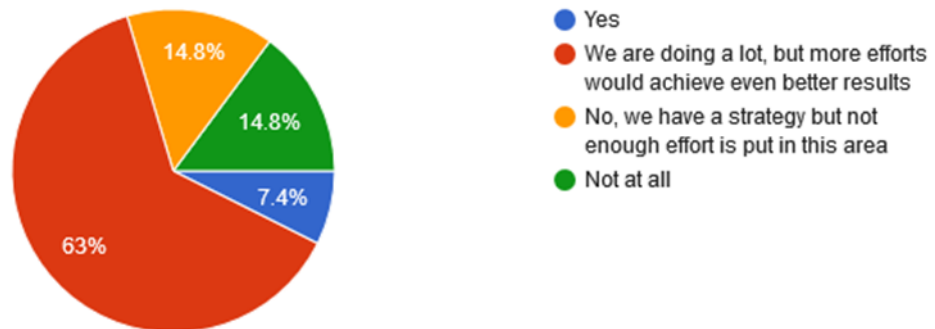
Area of teaching and research (optional)

17 responses



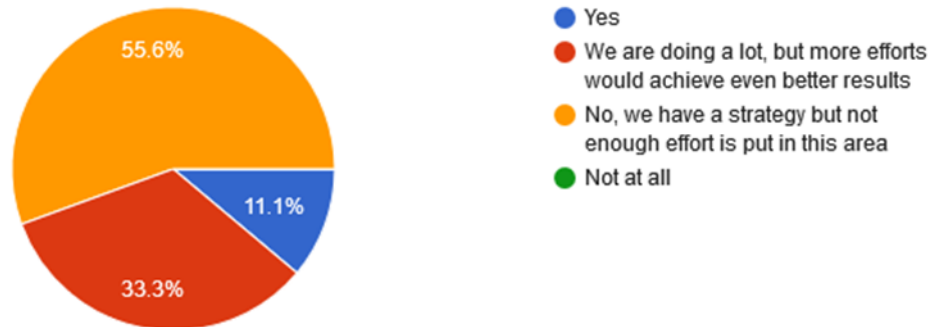
Do you think that our university is doing enough to guarantee the employability of our graduates?

27 responses



Do you think that our university is doing enough to maintain beneficial links with employers?

27 responses



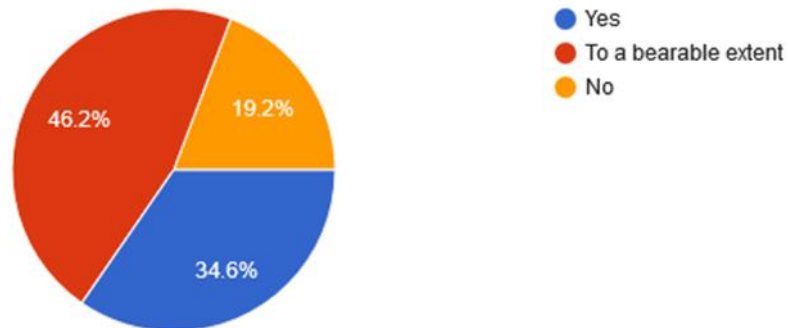
Would you be willing to contribute to university efforts to develop the employability of students or create links with employers, if the conditions are right?

26 responses



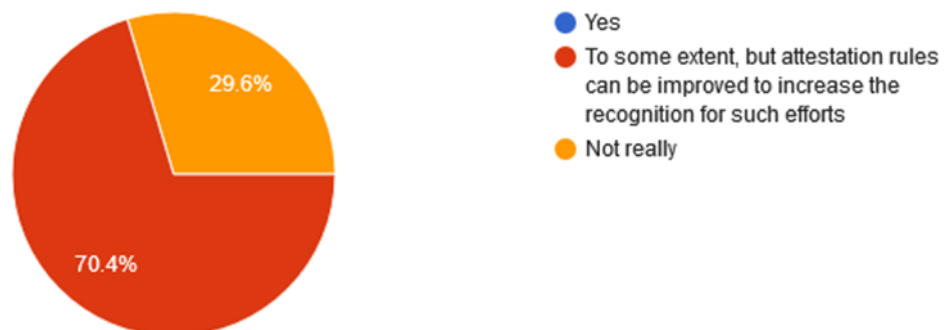
Do you think your involvement in activities aimed at improving the employability of students or creating links with employers will increase your workload?

26 responses



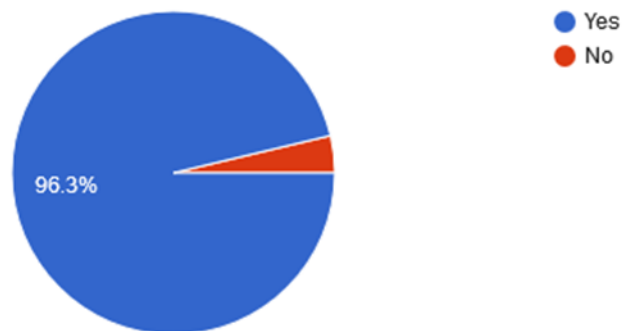
There are faculty members already involved in activities aimed at improving the employability of students or creating links with employers. Do you think their efforts are sufficiently recognized and rewarded?

27 responses



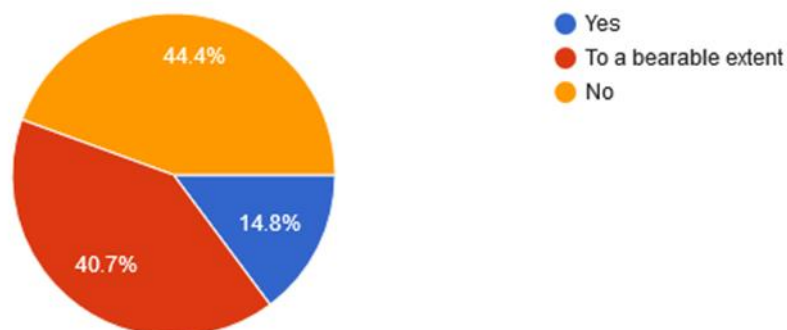
Do you think it is a good idea to involve employers in the design, delivery and evaluation of courses?

27 responses



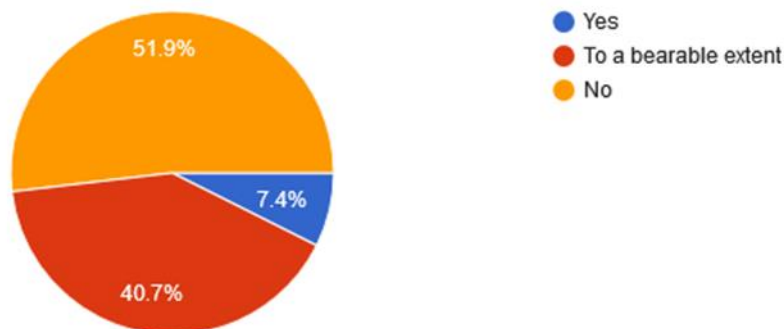
Do you think involving employers in the design, delivery and evaluation of courses will disrupt the teaching process and call for changes in the way teaching is done?

27 responses



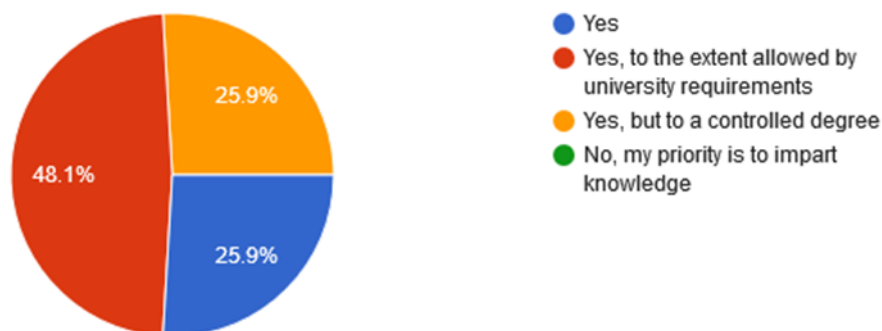
Do you think involving employers in the design, delivery and evaluation of courses will compromise your academic freedom?

27 responses



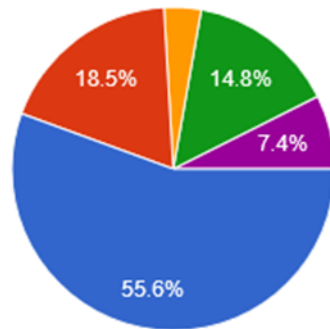
In your teaching, are you trying to give students more responsibility, autonomy and freedom?

27 responses



Would you be willing to develop and deliver innovation and entrepreneurship training?

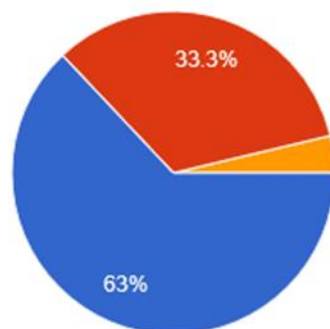
27 responses



- Yes, as separate elective course(s) within the program
- Yes, but only as topic(s) within existing courses
- Yes, but only as short extra-curricular training(s)
- No, I have no expertise in these areas
- No, these topics are not relevant to my field of teaching

Would you be willing to organize and facilitate the participation of your students in innovation or research projects that also involve employers?

27 responses



- Yes
- Yes, but only if some guidance is provided or if there is a support structure within the university that could assist me
- I don't feel up to it, but if something is done at university level, I would support it
- No, this is outside my competences at the university

You can share with us any additional comments or observations you might have on the above topics or on related issues

4 detailed responses

1. Excellent area to research. There is a huge need to align curriculum and training in degree programmes to the needs of the employers in order to increase employment of trained graduates.
2. Faculty of Science is involved already in organizing workshops to promote inventions/innovations as well as organizing provincial invention competitions
3. I do not agree with the concept that university curricular should be changed in order to increase the employability (Of course, the curricular should be improved to increase the fitness of the employee eg. soft skills development). Universities are established to function as universities, not to function as technical colleges.



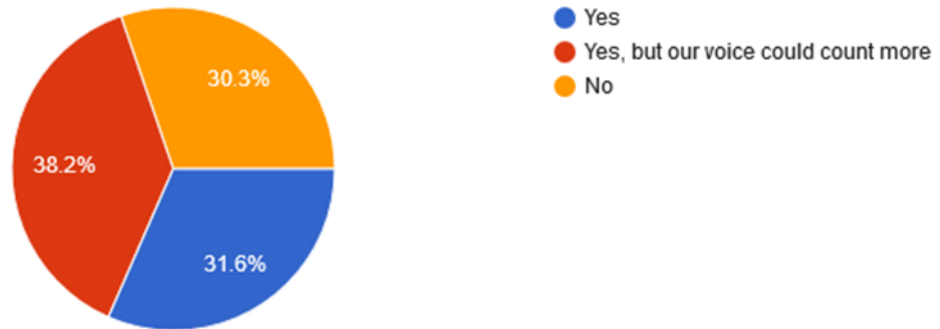
4. Degree programs which are conducted by the universities should be more specific according to the related employment. Skills of the students should be upgraded to meet the expectations of the modern business community. It would be better if the university is able to create a better employee or better entrepreneur who can perform far better in the modern competitive business world.



Responses from Students

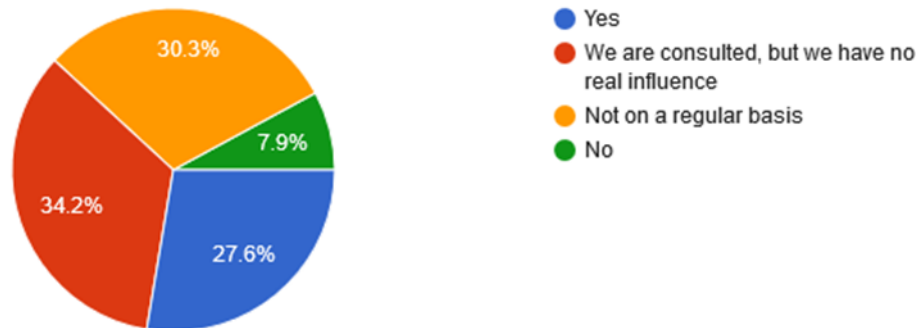
Do you think students are properly represented in official decision-making bodies at the university?

76 responses



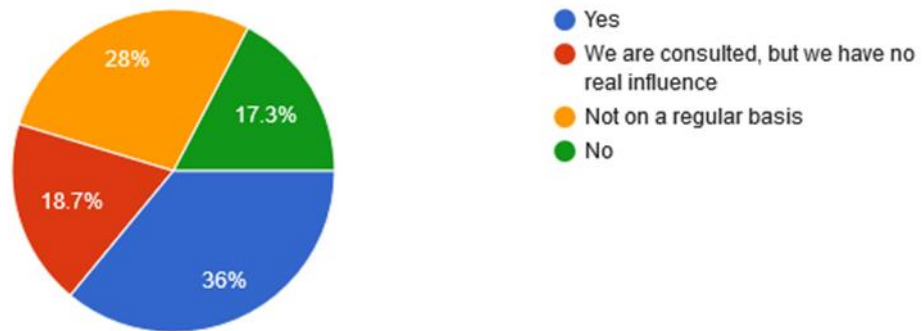
Do you feel that students are sufficiently consulted on the quality of the programs and teaching?

76 responses



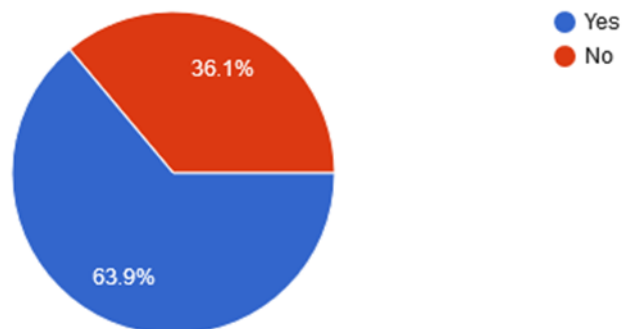
Do you feel that students are sufficiently consulted on the provision of student support services at the university, health services and social life?

75 responses



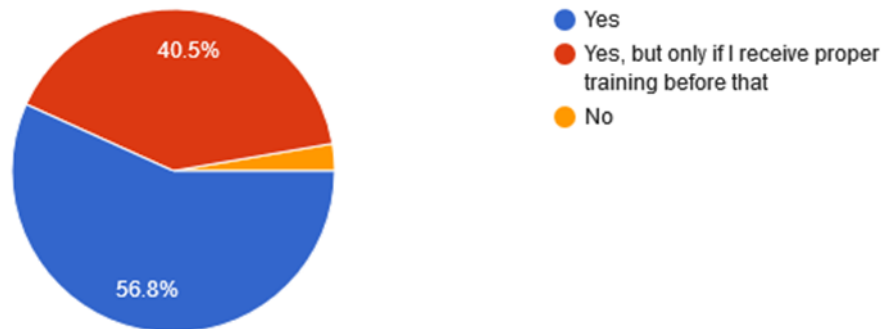
Do you feel that your university attracts and retains talented students?

72 responses



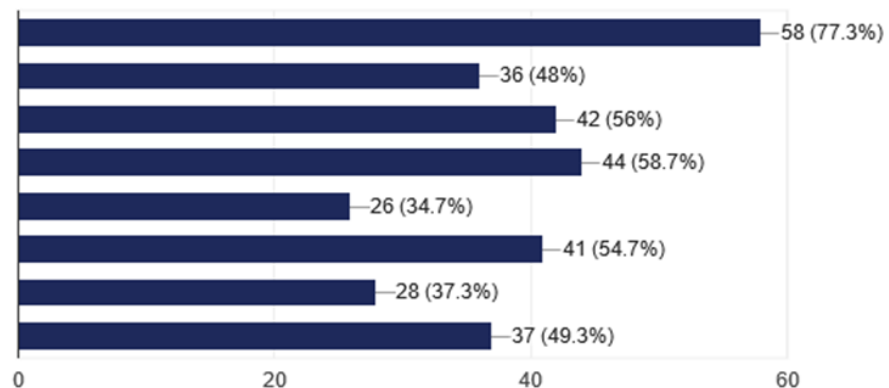
Do you feel confident and prepared to become involved in an innovation or research project together with your professors?

74 responses



What type of activities do you think would best serve to improve your employability? (more than one answer is possible)

75 responses



- Internship or training placement in business/industry: 77.3%
- Internship or training placement in a non-governmental organization: 48%
- Research or innovation projects where employers also participate: 56%
- Job fairs and meetings with potential employers during my studies: 58.7%
- Courses and assignments based on case studies and practical tasks: 34.7%
- International mobility or periods of study abroad: 54.7%
- Volunteering: 37.7%
- Involvement in community work while at the university: 49.3%

You can share with us any additional comments or observations you might have on the above topics or on related issues

13 detailed responses

1. When talking about my University, actually we had less opportunities to develop are skills. Students should be given the practical training in the industry throughout the university carrier.
2. Please give chance to get working experience in 3 rd year first semester. That is make huge competition with working environment.
3. Increasing International mobility is very important to get good experiences in relevant fields. My opinion is Chances should be given to undergraduates as well.
4. University of Ruhuna is a research university. I believe giving time for students to interact with real Research Studies and laboratory work must be a priority. Providing research grants and internship programs by non-governmental organizations will decrease the unemployment rates and will increase the skill set of student as well as the university status
5. The awareness among the students about the job field and the recommended requirements for a job seems to be very poor.
6. University students should be focused to the job field from day you started studying there
7. There are only few lecturers / professors those who are talented enough to build a strong bond with the students.. naturally students are stubborn.... therefore proper guidance is highly needed.... should increase enrolment of special students... even though there are so many vacancies some departments don't enrol sufficient students even students are over qualified... only few academic staff members are involved in supporting students to increase employment of the students.... most of others are doing their day to day life and forgets even to supervise their own special students.... 1st students must obey rules and regulations... then academic staff members should be more friendly.... if the students are well disciplined it would very easy to improve employment of the students... most of the fault is with the students... that doesn't mean that all the academic staff members are devoted to increase the employment
8. For the beginners, when professor doing research with their students, I think professor should guide them to do particular things step by step instead of doing everything by his/her self. It's very helpful to improve learning process of student and then student can do any projects, anywhere, without depending on their supervisor for everything.
9. University support us in some cases but some cases not support us. It may be necessary issues so that each side have problems.
10. proper internship placement in industry and that should be relevant to his/her specialized area
11. Should facilitate students to participate in several conferences conducted by professional ties with a view enabling them to establish robust ties with industry experts and being recognized.
12. Actually we need more subjects with current competitive industry more than now and university should try to build up those subjects link with companies and industry and they try to give practical degree program more than now. As well as Duration of degree program should decrease.

