



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

GRADUATE SCHOOL RECRUITMENT SURVEY (1996)

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Since 1991, all newly enrolling graduate students have been invited to complete a simple questionnaire indicating what factors they considered significant in their decision to come to the ANU to do graduate study. The purpose is to obtain a continuous evaluation of various recruiting procedures. It is recognised that a survey of this type has limitations. For example, it gives no indication of why students choose not to come to the ANU. However, it does indicate the factors that were influential for students who did come.

Results obtained for 1992 and 1993 were presented in Graduate School Occasional Paper 94/3. The present report gives results for 1996.

The questionnaire used in 1996 is reproduced in Figure 1. Responses were received from 791 students (21 Graduate Certificate, 247 Graduate Diploma, 161 Master (coursework), 32 Master (Research) and 307 PhD). Of these, 278 were from international ("overseas") students, ie 35%, as compared to international student enrolments at about 27% of all students.

The results, itemised for Australian/International and male/female, are presented in Tables 1-6. In Table 7 the results are shown as percentages for selected factors.

Overall, the results are broadly similar to those of previous years.

ANU's Reputation is the most significant single factor, more so for research students (70%) than for coursework students (36%). For research students, there is no significant difference between Australian and international students. For coursework students, ANU's reputation may be marginally more important for Australians (40%) than for internationals (29%).

ANU Promotional Literature (Handbook, Prospectus, Brochure etc) is a major factor (23% overall). It is much more important for coursework (32%) than research (13%), and is more influential for internationals than Australian (31% and 19% respectively, with the difference existing both in research and coursework). There is some evidence that ANU literature is becoming increasingly significant over time. The present overall value (23%) is greater than for 1992-1993 data (17%), which maintains a trend noted in Occasional Paper 94/3.

Personal Recommendation continues to be highly significant (20% ANU staff, 22% staff of student's own institution, 17% former ANU students). Staff recommendations are more important for research (29% and 31%) than for coursework (14% and 14%). Recommendations from ANU staff are equally important for Australian and international students, but recommendations from staff of the student's own institution are slightly more important for internationals (30%) than for Australians (17%), both for research and for coursework.

Impressions Gained from Visit to ANU Campus are a substantial drawcard (15% for research, 11% overall). Given that a large proportion of students would not have had a chance to visit the campus, these are significant numbers. It still seems to be largely true that "once they see the place they are hooked!".

The Canberra Environment was significant for 15% of students overall, being somewhat more important for research (21%) than coursework (11%).

Experience as an ANU Vacation Scholar was nominated by 7% of research students. A recent analysis (paper 610/1996) showed that of 823 vacation scholars hosted by research schools for 15 or so years up to 1996, 22% subsequently enrolled as graduate students at the ANU.

Newspaper or Magazine Advertisement has not been particularly productive (7% overall) but is somewhat more effective for coursework (9%) than for research (4%). The relative ineffectiveness of print-media advertising also showed up in previous surveys (eg 4% overall for 1992-1993). There is evidence that newspaper advertising, particularly in overseas countries, does produce a lot of inquiries, but it would seem that most of these inquiries are unproductive (and possibly even wasteful of ANU resources?). Nevertheless, as noted in OP 94/3, "it is difficult to dismiss newspaper advertising out of hand; it may well be indirectly effective, eg by raising awareness in academic staff, who then recommend the ANU to their students". Of course, the problem may not be in the medium per se, but rather in the quality and quantity of ANU advertising; the ANU advertising budget is certainly much smaller than that of some of its major competitors.

ANU's Presentation at Education Exhibition/Fair received surprisingly small ratings (2%). Even for international students, it was significant for only 3% of students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Σ Clearly the ANU should continue to exploit its reputation as much as possible.
- Σ The University should maintain and enhance the quality (and quantity) of its promotional literature, especially in targeting international coursework students.
- Σ In view of the demonstrated effectiveness of personal recommendation, ANU academics should be encouraged and assisted to contact academic colleagues and potential students, both in Australia and overseas (eg initiatives such as the Stopover Grants scheme). Alumni associations are potentially very important for recruitment.
- Σ The Vacation Scholarships scheme (now known as Summer Research Scholarships) is a useful recruiting device, apart from its other virtues. It should be continued, and extended more widely within the University.
- Σ Visits to the ANU by potential graduate students should be encouraged.
- Σ It is not clear what should be done about print-media advertising. The data from this survey suggest that spending more money may not help a lot. However, it would be interesting to know the experiences of universities that spend a lot more on advertising than does the ANU.
- Σ The special features of the Canberra environment should be stressed in all promotional initiatives, eg climate, "dreaming trees", proximity to beaches and mountains, physical beauty, access to national institutions.
- Σ The apparent ineffectiveness of ANU presentations at education exhibitions/fairs is surprising, particularly with respect to international students. The significance of the data should be further investigated. It should also be recognised that, apart from anything else, these initiatives have value in raising the ANU's profile, and contribute significantly to the dissemination of ANU promotional literature.
- Σ Future surveys should seek information on the recruiting impact of the following:
 - ANU's WWW entry
 - availability of ANU housing and accommodation

- provision of support services such as Study Skills, Statistical Consulting, Counselling, Graduate Teaching Program etc.

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