AUT

Master of Business Programme

BALANCING THE DESIRABLE WITH THE FEASIBLE: A STUDY OF HOW MARKETING AND OPERATIONS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT BRANDING PROMISES CAN BE DELIVERED IN PRACTICE.

Thesis in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Business
Auckland University of Technology
Auckland
New Zealand

Student: Catherine Mary Robertson
I.D. 9500184

Supervisors

Dr. J. Nevan Wright - Associate Professor
Ms. Martie-Louise Verreynne - Senior Lecturer

January 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the following people. Without their assistance the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

To the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee for granting Ethics Approval No. 05/132 on the 31st July, 2005, enabling this research to be conducted.

To Dr. Nevan Wright, for his enduring patience, sound advice, sense of empathy, on-going support and friendship. It has been an utmost privilege to work with one who has so readily passed on the light of his knowledge and experience with such grace and skill. This true master of quality teaching has profoundly influenced my sense of self-efficacy through increased self confidence.

To Martie-Louise Verreynne who opened the door of further knowledge for me through encouraging me to enrol on the course in the first place.

To Stuart Young for his assistance with the qualitative data analysis.

To Ken Lee, the AUT MBA Course Director, for his patience in understanding the personal circumstances which necessitated the completion of the thesis in different parts of the world.

To Eather Abdul-Ghani of AUT for her professionalism. Her cheerfulness and willingness to assist reflect what quality customer service is all about.

To Mr. Abdulla Al Sharhan, Dr. Neil Otway, Mr. Paul Murphy and Ms Dora Andritsos of the Australian College of Kuwait, for their support and encouragement of my studies - a reflection of the ACK "culture of care".

To my student Walid Aryan for his assistance in the development of graphic models.

Finally, no task of this nature can be accomplished without the understanding of one's family. To my wonderful husband Atholl, who has endured solitary weekends and transporting heavy books and notes on aeroplanes all over the world. He assisted in the development of the Excel spreadsheets and histograms representing the findings from the raw data, proofreading and final editing. His love and support has enabled me to complete this thesis.

ABSTRACT

The concept of student as customer and marrying the concept of treating the student as a customer whilst delivering tertiary education which is both effective and rigorous is an issue which is currently being strongly debated.

The objective of this thesis is to consider the student as a principle customer in the delivery of a particular brand of knowledge product, and the level of customer satisfaction they receive relative to the knowledge brand of their choice. Brand refers to the name and reputation of the knowledge provider, Auckland University of Technology, and the level and type of qualification achieved, the MBA degree.

The marketing function promotes the brand. The day-to-day management of the process of learning is performed through operations. Thus, in providing tertiary education, how is the brand and the desired objectives of customer satisfaction promoted with the brand, balanced with organisational competencies when applied to the AUT MBA learning process.

A triangulation approach has been applied in conducting both qualitative and quantitative research involving MBA students, lecturers and management staff at AUT in order to ascertain whether marketing promises were met.

Key findings were that the perception of the quality of the MBA programme showed a statistically significant difference between satisfaction levels of graduate MBA students and undergraduate MBA students in the areas of flexibility, student orientation and support provided with applications and enrolment. Furthermore, the collective responses for both groups of students for all questions showed that although both groups of students appeared to demonstrate a general level of satisfaction with the MBA course, there was a general movement away from strong agreement for graduate students towards strong disagreement for undergraduate students.

The results were analysed and recommendations made to enhance the marketing, management, delivery and assessment of the AUT MBA programme.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Index of Figures

Index of Tables

ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the demand for business education has steadily increased. (Rapert, Smith, Velliquette and Garretson, 2004; Grayson. 2005). Grayson (2005) states that owing to the increased pace of global business, managers find themselves needing to make complex decisions quickly. Key forces including the rise of information technology as a business tool require executives to maintain a state of constant learning. More organisations agree that valued employees need on-going training. Grayson claims that statistics show a dramatic increase in the number of executives taking MBA courses, making this one of the fastest-growing sectors in the education economy. Rapert et al cite Yerak (2000) who refer to a survey conducted by Accountemps. Findings were that 80% of top executives say that a graduate business degree is critical to achieving senior management rank.

In New Zealand there has been significant growth in the number of business courses offered generally. Statistics show out of all New Zealand university graduates in 2003, 27.1% graduated with a degree in business. Furthermore, enrolments in business programs have remained steady in relation to percentage of total enrolments. Business programmes attract international students. 45.2% of graduates of New Zealand Universities in 2003 were international students (Buisson, D.B. 2006).

AUT, formerly The Auckland Institute of Technology, (AIT) was awarded university status on the 1st January, 2000, after undergoing the exhaustive and lengthy approval process through the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), which is a subcommittee of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' committee. At that time AIT was the only polytechnic in New Zealand to achieve this status. (Paxton and Wright, 2002). Since that time the university has journeyed through a process of re-inventing itself. AIT was previously known as an organisation which focused on the development of practical rather than academic skills. This position has changed dramatically and AUT is now strategically committed to fostering research at the highest level.

The MBA degree has been offered in New Zealand since the 1970s. From 1996 to 2005, approximately 407 MBAs have graduated nationally. During the 1990s AUT offered an MBA in partnership with Henley Management college in the U.K. This partnership continued until 2003 when AUT made the strategic decision to offer its own MBA course which launched on the 26th November, 2003 after gaining CUAP approval. AUT competes with 11 institutions offering MBA's in New Zealand, including the recent addition of Lincoln University which gained approval to offer an MBA in 2005. There are two providers of distance learning MBA's, namely Henley Management College, U.K. with offices in Auckland, and Southern Cross University through the Manukau Institute of Technology Business School (Mitchell, 2006).

Table 1 gives a comparison between MBA providers in New Zealand in terms of numbers of students enrolled in 2005, accreditation status and course fees. Lincoln University has not been included as the Lincoln MBA is only due to commence in early 2007 and no statistics were available at the time of writing this thesis. No statistics were available for MIT at the time of writing.

Institution	**No. of Enrolled Students 2005**	**Accreditation Status**	**Course Fees ($NZ)**		
			Full-Time Domestic	**Full-Time International**	**Part-Time**
AIS St. Helens	290	NZQA 1999	17,825	27,300	17,825
Auckland	24	CUAP 1983 AMBA (UK) 2002 EQUIS (Europe) 2004 AACSB 2004		44,780	35,580
AUT	115	CUAP 2003	23,296	31,896	23,296
Canterbury	62	CUAP 1984 AMBA (UK) 2002	20,340	39,840	20,340
Henley	128	AMBA (UK) 1997 EQUIS (Europe)2000			32,320
Massey	186	CUAP 1984 AMBA (UK) 2002	20,580	35,080	27,580
Otago	40	CUAP 1976 EQUIS (Europe)2004	27,844	36,000	
Southern Cross	147				22,200
Victoria	103	CUAP 1984	24,080	33,080	24,080
Waikato	39	CUAP 1990 AMBA (UK) 2004 EQUIS (Europe) 2004	Not available	Not available	Not available

Table 1 - Comparative Analysis of MBA Providers in New Zealand

Source: Mitchell, R. 2006. The Guide to New Zealand MBA Programmes

Table 1 shows that AUT is well placed in the market in terms of number of students enrolled and is therefore well placed to provide stiff competition against the more established programmes. AUT is the only MBA provider in New Zealand which offers a highly flexible delivery schedule. Students have six entry points per annum with terms of 8 weeks each. Therefore any student can begin the course, study for 8 weeks, take a break for 6 weeks if necessary and come back later. In addition, courses are delivered three times a day in order to accommodate student needs. The AUT fee structure lies well within the market average and its location in the heart of Auckland gives AUT the geographical advantage in terms of attracting international students. Indeed, in a recent interview with Ian Grayson on CNN World Business, the MBA Director claimed that in addition to high enrolments from the Southeast Asian region, interest is also being expressed from countries such as Mexico, Germany and South America (Grayson, 2006). Notwithstanding the fact that it has the lowest accreditation rating, AIS St. Helens is a strong contender in the field and enrolled 290 students in 2005.

The marketing of the AUT MBA prior to its launch was strongly supported by the AUT International Department which primarily made use of AUT's international network of agencies and contacts. The founding MBA Director stated that this fortunately offset the apathetic and lack-lustre approach of what he termed the "centralised and bureaucratic" AUT marketing function, which operates on a strictly centralised basis with minimal input from faculty staff. This hindered the process of advertising the course at every turn by the rejection of many sound advertising ideas presented by the founding MBA Director. In addition, the MBA programme launch was awarded a limited budget which added to the difficulties associated with the launch owing to the non-availability of sufficient human resources. Notwithstanding this apparent lack of moral support and limited budget allocation the launch was a success with a student intake of 115. The course material was developed internally by tenured staff with previous international and local experience in delivering MBA programmes, and delivered by permanent business faculty staff as well as fixed term contracted lecturers.

Marketing material developed independently by the central marketing office created student expectations that the MBA programme would be flexible, possess relevant links to industry, employ a high quality of lecturing staff, provide employment opportunities and strong student support. This material provided the basis on which the literature review was developed, within the context of the marketing, management, delivery and assessment of the MBA course.

A value-added operations management approach will be applied to analyse and discuss these five themes using quantitative and qualitative data obtained from questionnaires and interviews involving students, lecturers and key administrative staff connected with the MBA programme at AUT.

To establish the extent to which marketing and operations need to work together in order to effectively meet student expectations, an attempt has been made to identify gaps in what actually was delivered compared to marketing promises made. Recommendations based upon the discussion are proposed to enhance the quality of the marketing, delivery and assessment of the MBA programme. In this study, students who were close to graduating or had already graduated are referred to as "graduate students", and students who were still in the process of completing the MBA course are referred to as "undergraduate students".

Research Question and objectives

The philosophy of this research is that students are customers. The product which is considered is Auckland University of Technology's MBA degree. In the promotion of the degree it is distinguished from degrees offered by other universities with a "brand". "Brand" refers to the name and reputation of AUT and to the level and type of qualification, the MBA degree. The marketing function determines and promotes the Brand. The day-to-day management of the process of learning is performed through operations.

Thus, in marketing, managing, delivering and assessing the AUT MBA programme, the research question is to what extent is the objective of customer satisfaction promoted with the AUT MBA brand, being achieved through addressing stakeholder needs.

This study will focus on factors influencing student perceptions of the value of benefits gained through investing in the brand of their choice, in relation to availability, utilisation and management of resources used in marketing, management, delivery and assessment of the brand.

This research is important because it highlights the problems currently being experienced as a result of the growth of internationalisation of business education and increased competition among educational providers. Business schools are challenged to become more flexible and innovative in course delivery whilst maintaining the relevance and rigour of education. Analysing interrelationships between elements of resource utilisation and customer satisfaction in the context of a value-added operational management model enables problem areas to be identified and recommendations made to improve quality processes.

This study involved gathering data determining perceptions of value which the students derived from the MBA learning experience. Data were gathered from 72 MBA students from the inaugural intake in November 2003 who had either graduated or were due for Graduation in December 2005, as well as students who were currently enrolled in December 2005. Qualitative interviews were conducted with MBA management and lecturing staff to provide contextual data against which student responses could be analysed.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

According to Wright and Race (2004) the twin objectives which operations managers must achieve is the provision of customer satisfaction as well as the efficient use of resources. "To achieve optimum service levels it is essential that customer satisfaction and efficient operation and resource utilisation are simultaneously, consistently and sustainably achieved" (2004:19).

In this thesis the provision of education is regarded as an integrated service operating system in which inputs are organised and used to provide a service output. Quality results have to be delivered just at the right time within cost and specification. According to Porter (1985) the value chain separates the company into strategically important activities in order to understand organisational behaviour and obtain potential sources of strategic advantage. Using Wright's Matrix (1999) an analysis can be conducted of the elements of resource utilisation and customer satisfaction needed to produce effective results. Without customers a good service cannot be delivered. The customer is therefore an input to the system which provides the service. Without knowing exactly who the customer is as well as the *exact* needs of the customer, the objective of achieving a quality service output cannot be effectively met. In this thesis students are regarded as direct customers of the university. If the operating system is effective, then student perceptions of the value gained from the learning process, will be positive. The product (knowledge gained through utilising resources in the process of learning) matches the specification (student perceptions of value.)

To determine the needs of the customer it is necessary to examine the contextual influences on customer perception of quality customer service. In the case of students, there are strong external stakeholder influences in determining customer needs. A stakeholder is any person or organisation having an interest in an organisation (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills and Walton, 1985; Wright & Race, 2004; Boxall, 1997; Inkson & Kolb, 2002). Wright (2001) claims that in a public sector organisation such as a provider of education, the individual who has a direct input into the system, has to be satisfied, because without that person, there is no need for the service, and it will disappear. In many cases the individual does not personally pay for the service which they receive. Many of the MBA students (the target group in this research), are international students, and most of these have parents who pay for their education. Parents are therefore important stakeholders who could possibly influence student perception of quality customer service.

There are also businesses which will pay for their employees to gain management training to enhance the value of their individual and company performance. In the case where student studies are paid for by the employer, the employer becomes a valuable stakeholder to the university and is therefore also a customer in the delivery of the learning process. If the employer derives short term value through improved employee management skills as a result of employee education, then positive attitudes are created which increase the possibility of developing long-term industry relationships. Through developing strong ties with industry, the university creates on-going value in creating a situation in which it is possible to extend the relationship with industry beyond the period in which the student gains a qualification. Fazio, Powell and Williams(1989) maintain that consumers who have high accessibility attitudes towards a product display greater attitude behaviour correspondence than those with less accessible attitudes (refer to page 22). This suggests that if AUT wishes to develop strong ties with industry, it is necessary that the potential industry partner and students have a good attitude towards the quality of knowledge product which AUT delivers. Thus, as postulated by Fazio, developing sound industry as well as student relationships is essential to ensure the success of a qualification, and in this study this applies to the MBA programme. Thus, establishing links to industry is an important factor in ensuring that customers develop high accessibility attitudes towards the AUT MBA "brand".

The demands of an increasingly global management marketplace has resulted in an increased demand for business courses which place the emphasis on functional aspects of business (Ramaswamy & Li, 1997) Providers of tertiary education are developing new strategies to anticipate and adapt to changes in the business environment. Leaders of business schools are, in essence, business managers seeking to sustain and increase enrolments, ensure profitability, keep pace with changing customer demands and maintain a public perception of value for product delivered. Business schools therefore need to become highly competitive in the marketplace and offer business management courses which are aligned to industry needs.

This opinion is supported by Gore, Stephen and Bailey (1998), who state that business schools in the UK have experienced significant change in the unification of the sector, changed funding, reduction in student funding whilst at the same time coming under pressure for increased student numbers. As a result, business schools in the UK have experienced significant growth. They claim that according to the Department of Education and Employment figures, the target number of 8000 business management graduates set by Constable and McCormick in 1987 was exceeded by almost 100% in 1994. It would therefore be necessary that AUT determine from business associates, factors influencing the perceived value of the MBA programme offered by AUT through employees who are also students (and therefore customers). Without gaining the support of industry as stakeholders in a programme, a university will fail to keep pace with global trends in the provision of tertiary education. (Ramaswamy & Li (1997).

The role of the relationship between universities and business cannot be underestimated in terms of developing total quality customer service. In constructing a new model of strategic planning for colleges and universities to address the changing international needs, Tischler, Biberman and Alkahafaji (1998) claim that broader types of relationships between industry and educational institutions will be necessary. In order to keep a market (and therefore customer and society) focus, they maintain that the changes needed are transformational in nature. A resource-based view of strategic educational management focuses on developing and nurturing key resources such as depth and breadth of curricula, libraries, recreational facilities and support services.

In New Zealand the increase in the percentage of business management students is characterised by the fact that a high percentage of international graduates are Asian or Indian in origin. The New Zealand University Vice Chancellors Committee, in a survey of 9285 graduates in 2003, published statistics in March 2004 which reveal that of the 2310 graduates in 2003, 42% were of international origin, dominated by China and then Malaysia. (www.scoop.co.nz, 2004). Knowing the extent and the quality of the elements by which successful relationships are built with New Zealand knowledge providers will assist AUT in (a) identifying and exploiting factors influencing consumer knowledge brand choice and (b) knowing the extent to which the influence of developing industry relationships can extend the life expectance of the brand both nationally and internationally.

AUT boasts in its newspaper advertisements and programme information booklets, that 92% of its graduates gain employment after graduating. In order to develop future marketing strategies it is important that AUT develop a precise analysis of the breakdown of post graduate student placements, whether local or international, and in what specific industries. (International Student Prospectus, Faculty of Business Profile, Course Information Booklet, 2005). Rapert et al (2004) recommend that students integrate with the business community and are provided with career preparation and job-placement assistance. It is therefore important that the percentage of students on the MBA programme who have actually been assisted by AUT to gain employment be known. If there are students who have not been assisted in gaining employment, methods can be developed to ensure that marketing promises are met through pro-active assistance to students in providing employment opportunities.

Current debates on strategy, branding and public relations in international tertiary education will now be examined in order to determine current international trends in delivering tertiary education.

Strategic trends in tertiary education

Gore, Steven and Bailey (1998) analyse the effect of external changes in provision of higher education in the U.K. Student numbers and types of awards have changed as a result of a higher demand for a wider curriculum to be delivered to businesses. The process involved adopting modular programmes allowing more flexibility and integrating elements taken from historically discipline-based studies. This resulted in the emergence of a different organisational structure within providers of higher education into interest groups. This process, according to Mintzberg, Quinn & Ghoshell (1995), is a reaction to changes in the external environment whereby interest groups expand into larger elements. Thus, MBA programmes were created as a result of pressure on providers of tertiary education by industry, to meet its changing demands. Gore et al (1998) claim that in many universities it was the business schools which led the response to changes through reduced government funding and increased pressure to increase student numbers.

Ramaswamy and Li (1997) support the view of Gore et al in stating that business schools in the United States have reacted to dramatic changes in demands for tertiary education through becoming more flexible. Business schools have become similar to other business organisations and operate in several business environments demanding a flexible approach in meeting industry demands. According to Ramaswamy and Li, business schools continually battle with constricting environmental conditions such as declining student enrolments, shortage of revenue, changing industry demands and public discontent.

Tischler et al (1998) state that changes in industry demands will result in a broader array of relationships between business schools and industry organisations influenced by tighter budget demands and different sources of financing. Ramaswami and Li (1997) comment that although tertiary institutions are changing their strategies and structure to adapt to the environment, little is known about whether they outperformed competitors that did not change their strategies. If students and their associated businesses place a high value on the quality of the MBA programme then university records should show an increase in the number of enrolled students and demonstrated satisfaction in terms of perceived value for money invested.

The process of learning is taking place in an organisational climate which is increasingly encouraging a culture of learning. This would suggest that today's organisations need to continually adapt and change in order to retain their competitive edge through embedding learning into the organisation.

Business schools are challenged to adapt their programmes to meet the needs of industry. Ramaswamy and Li (1997) in their analysis of strategic dimensions related to program offerings of MBA programmes in US business schools, claim that because of the greater flux in the business environment, business schools have been forced to anticipate changes to the business environment so that they can tailor suitable adaptation strategies through the MBA programmes which they offer. Thus business schools are tailoring their MBA programmes to meet the needs of industry. This is occurring in an environment of radical and constant change and the perceived need to seek global differentiation and requires that course developers remain flexible in attitudes to keep pace with trends. Industry has therefore become an important stakeholder in the development of business education curricula.

Balmer (2001) claims that to date the parameters of business identity and corporate management have been largely obscured. A growing number of management scholars regard business identity as an important research activity. Bickerton (2000) supports Balmer by arguing that the hitherto largely separate areas of marketing and corporate identity are in transition as a result of the hitherto "top-down" organisational perspective versus a "bottom up" customer perspective. More organisations will be seeking to satisfy the customer and enhancing their corporate identity through organisational change in order to meet customer expectations. Kim (1993) maintains that all organisations learn, whether they consciously choose to or not, and proposes that individual learning advances organisational learning. Thus organisations are changing to meet customer needs, and all change involves learning.

Thus not only does industry require to re-engineer itself to keep pace with global trends, but the learning of its employees has to embed itself into the organisation for the organisation to remain viable. Kim (1993) maintains that fundamental change takes place in organisations when total re-engineering occurs. This change requires the development of double-loop learning aimed at challenging deep rooted mental models. It is therefore important to examine student ability to apply the knowledge they have gained through the MBA programme in the workplace, and to suggest areas where change is needed in order to ensure that industry organisational learning needs are being met.

The notion of developing a customer focused organisational culture is supported by Juttner & Werli (1994) who state that every single relationship with every single customer should be treated as an investment for the company. These values can only be implemented when the basic philosophy of being totally committed to customer satisfaction is rooted within the entire organisation. Therefore for any changes in MBA course content and delivery methods in response to industry and student feedback to be successfully implemented, every single member of AUT staff involved in the delivery of the MBA programme needs to be customer focused and readily embrace any changes required. Thus the espoused value of flexibility as a feature of commitment to customer satisfaction will become reality through entrenchment within the AUT organisational culture. The strength of this suggestion is underpinned by Balmer (2001) who claims that successful companies retain the image they create through marketing and establishing strong frameworks to support that image in reality.

Students in the MBA programme were also promised small and interactive classes delivered by high quality lecturing staff. Thus, in addition to the element of flexibility, the delivery of small interactive classes and the employment of high quality lecturing staff will also be analysed. The need to see espoused values translated into values in practice is summarised by Balmer (2001:16) when referring to a recent statement by the Anglo-Dutch Shell Group regarding organisational customers. "Our business touches too many lives for us to evade our role in wider society. We must communicate our values and demonstrate that we live up to them in our business practices (in Lewis, 2000)."

The implications for marketers of knowledge brands is that basic elements in building lasting brand relationships provide a fertile area for developing new marketing strategies to retain consumer loyalty in the long term. McCracken (1986:71) maintains that "cultural meaning in a consumer society moves ceaselessly from one location to another". It is suggested that developing meaningful relationships with local and international businesses which provide employment for MBA students provides a feedback reference point for continuous improvement initiatives as well as the examination of movements of cultural meaning in a business context. This can be achieved by analysing how the practical skills and knowledge which students gain through the MBA programme evolves within their own cultures in terms of new methods of conducting business to suit those cultures. These changes can be fed back into the system and possibly incorporated into future MBA programmes, providing valuable marketing opportunities to gain long-term customer brand loyalty from local and foreign business.

Having referred to the expression "knowledge brands", it is necessary to define the term "brand" and to subsequently apply the branding concept to the tertiary business education industry.

Brand Definition

Corporate branding is described by Balmer (2001:15) as "a conscious decision by senior management to distill and make known the attributes of the organisation's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition. This proposition underpins organisational efforts to communicate, differentiate and enhance the brand vis-à-vis key stakeholder groups and networks". Balmer suggests that the corporate brand proposition needs total commitment in an organisation at all levels and that management of the corporate brand lies within the area of the CEO and not the traditional area of marketing. He claims that corporate brands have three distinctive advantages - the ability to communicate, differentiate and to enhance, and suggests that the corporate brand proposition should be used as a "template" for evaluating organisational activities. Bickerton (2000) advocates the integration of two perspectives - bottom up customer focused marketing and top down organisational focus, into a new marketing model which determines organisational culture.

Brand Choices in Tertiary Education

In order to further inform customer perception of brand value, it is necessary to examine marketing literature on factors which influence brand choice.

Contextual influences on brand choices in the international education market are important. McCracken (1986) refers to the fact that most academic literature reassures us that the study of the cultural meaning carried by goods is a “flourishing academic enterprise" and further investigates the question of the "mobile quality of cultural meaning”. Meaning is drawn from an object (or product) and transferred to the individual consumer. The consumer develops meaning from his own culturally constituted world. In the context of this study, the product refers to the MBA knowledge "brand".

Cultural meaning, according to McCracken, is located in three areas; a culturally constituted world from which the consumer derives perceptions and meaning, the product, and also the individual consumer who purchases the product. Through identifying with the knowledge product, or "brand" of choice, the customer derives cultural meaning from his choice. This transferral of cultural meaning from product to consumer takes place within the framework of four rituals. Possession (e.g. factors influencing purchase); Exchange (e.g. cultural and individual meaning and value derived from purchasing an item and giving it as a gift); Grooming (the process of reassurance), and divestment (the process of emptying goods of meaning) e.g. aged people who give away their worldly possessions because they no longer gain meaning from their possession). It is therefore important to explore the context within which students derive cultural meaning during the learning process, when they enter business, as they progress in business and when they resign from business.

McCracken (1986) claims that the notion of gift giving between parents and children are symbolic of the properties that the parent would like to transfer to the child. One of the most significant gestures that a parent can give a child to express the meaning of their relationship is to give that child the gift of education. In giving the gift of knowledge to the child through the exchange ritual, the parent conveys significant cultural meaning to the child because the parent is ensuring that the knowledge which he has given the child during the child's lifetime, is carried forward to future generations. Thus, satisfying the parent as stakeholder has wider implications than a short term transaction. Mazzarol (1998), in analysing critical strategies for marketing international education, maintains that marketers should not underestimate the significance of the decision which students and their parents make to study overseas.

Elements of the familial relationship are therefore integrated into the choices of knowledge providers by the customer and attain cultural meaning as a result of the strong influence of the parent-child relationship. This view is supported by Fournier who refers to the fact that brands received as gifts are likely to evoke personal associations serving to animate the brand as a "vital entity" (1998:345). If these strong feelings are evoked simply by giving a gift, how much more likely would be the parental influence in terms of evoking strong emotions in their children, of a duty to succeed in order to fulfil parental expectations.

On the other hand, Petty, Unnava and Strathman (1991) claim that understanding consumer behaviour involves understanding the ways in which people are persuaded to purchase a product or service through being provided with information from which negative or positive attitudes towards the product are developed. The result of this process is known as "brand attitude" (Aaker & Meyers, 1987:160). Empirical studies conclude that attitudes are stored in long-term memory and are based on evaluation of "evaluations of objects, issues or persons (Petty, Unnava & Strathman, 1991:242). Petty & Cacioppo (1981) summarised all the variables in the decision making process into two areas, the central and the peripheral route to persuasion.

The central route to persuasion focuses on the information about a certain object under consideration for purchase because the object or service is of high importance, e.g. purchasing life insurance. The peripheral route involves making decisions without thinking about the information central to the merits of the attitude issue, e.g. deciding on purchasing one or another brand on a supermarket shelf. Purchasing a knowledge brand involves deep consideration because of the importance and influence which the decision to purchase will have on the life of the customer. (Aaker & Meyers, 1987).

Fazio, Powell and Williams (1989) maintain that consumers who have high accessibility attitudes towards a product display greater attitude behaviour correspondence than those with less accessible attitudes. High accessibility is attained when the prospective customer has been motivated to want to make a purchase. Attitude behaviour correspondence is attained when the prospective customer makes the purchase. Marketing initiatives should therefore be geared towards gaining high levels of attitude accessibility, underpinned by perceptions of excellence in delivery which will produce attitude behaviour correspondence.

To create a long-term customer perception of brand quality, it is therefore necessary that once the customer has developed a positive brand attitude, that attitude be maintained through perceptions of excellent quality service before, during and after the purchase has been made. Studies show that although customers can initially be stimulated into perceptions of brand quality, maintaining those positive attitudes towards the brand is a complex process.

Gatignon and Robertson (1991) refer to personal influence as a basic underlying part of diffusion theory. The diffusion process refers to the rate at which an innovation penetrates a social system or target market. The adoption process concerns the way in which a consumer decides to adopt a new product (the MBA course in this case). Gatignon and Robertson have identified that personal influence is a basic underlying factor which influences information seeking and information giving behaviour.

Thus, students seek information through interpersonal communication to decide on the value of the information, to relieve themselves of decision anxiety and to gain a social definition for consumption. Factors which inhibit the information giver (in this case all people involved in interacting with students at AUT), from interacting and providing information include time commitment and the risk of providing inappropriate advice.

The process of diffusion has also been described as the process though which an innovation, or new product, is "communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers, 1983:5). Mahajan, Muller and Bass

(1990) identify communication channels and the social system as two of the key elements of this diffusion process. In order for a product to extend its lifetime, Handy (2002) takes the view that it is not sufficient for businesses to create new ideas and innovations during the down-turn of the diffusion curve. He maintains that in order to extend the life cycle, a second curve needs to be initiated during the rise of the first curve in an ever changing dynamic process of continuous improvement. Handy claims that customer or client complaints, if viewed objectively and not defensively, can point to areas where changes are needed. Wright (2001) underpins this theory in stating that services are always changing and service providers are constantly needing to change their areas of endeavour. It is essential he claims, that these responses be incorporated into company adaptation and product revision processes to optimise and extend the service product life cycle. Therefore student feedback mechanisms on the AUT MBA programme need to be vigorously acted upon and included in the process of continual improvement in order to improve the MBA knowledge product and therefore its product life-cycle.

Gatignon and Robertson (1991) further claim that factors which inhibit information search from individual consumers through interpersonal communication are the risks of accepting poor information and adopting a subordinate position. For example, lecturers in the MBA programme may inhibit their search of information because of the view that they are adopting a subordinate position by viewing the student as the customer. Among the factors which enhance the influence of interpersonal communication are the prestige of the source, strength of commitment, consistency with other information, positive vs negative information, clarity and frequency of interaction. Thus the quality of the way in which information is provided both during and after a consumer has decided to purchase a product, will influence the product life-cycle, or diffusion process. In the case of students at AUT, this would suggest that it is important to communicate effectively with students before, during and after the learning process.

This would suggest that maintaining excellent relationships with students through consistency and quality of information which is given in terms of course content, and quality of communication through interpersonal relationships between students and

AUT staff and industry would contribute towards extending the product life cycle. If good relationships are forged and information is relevant and considered authoritative, students will be encouraged to continue their learning and interaction with AUT after graduation. Continued interaction with students (and their employers) will ensure that information about the quality of the AUT MBA "brand" will continue to be disseminated. Continued communication with students and industry to determine post graduation performance in industry will also ensure that new ideas are fed into the system, thereby providing feedback to provide input to continuous improvement initiatives. The MBA operational system should therefore be flexible in its approach and involve alumni in forming strategic alliances with companies. In addition this continual exchange would provide marketing opportunities for AUT (Richards-Wilson, 2002).

The peripheral and central routes of attitude formation outlined above form the basic theory on initial attitude formation (Petty, Unnava and Strathman, 1991). Maintaining a favourable customer attitude after initial persuasion requires the marketer of a product to be aware of what Friestad and Wright (1994) refer to as the development of "tactic recognition heuristics" by the customer. Tactic recognition heuristics can be defined as the way in which customers learn to identify persuasion tactics by developing mechanisms which signal to the customer that the marketer or advertiser is trying to gain their trust. Gaining and maintaining that trust through experiencing the value of a product whilst in use has hitherto been largely applied tangible products which are purchased. Educational institutions have become more receptive to the concept of students as customers and therefore the concept of a knowledge brand as an educational "product" (Rapert, Smith, Velliquette and Garretson, 2004). Therefore students develop tactic recognition heuristics in the process of being persuaded to purchase a knowledge product.

Any person or organisation which gains the initial attention of the student becomes an agent conveying knowledge about that product or service. Today's student is sophisticated and is able to research and learn more about the knowledge product which they are purchasing than ever before. Because students seek knowledge and more information they will question and learn more about the organisation. Thus it is suggested that organisations (in this case AUT faculty of business) maintain the attitude and trust formed by recognition heuristics through living up to the expectations during the learning experience. This is equally true for organisations providing a knowledge product, in this case the AUT faculty of business.

Juttner and Wehrli (1994) propose that customer trust is gained through integrating the customer into a value-generating process. Petty, Unnava and Strathman (1991) maintain that although memory plays a part in recalling positive attitudes towards brand, the quality of the message has to be good and the person has to believe that the message comes from an informed source. Thus it is important to research student perceptions of whether they felt that the information they received about the course came from an informed source and whether the actual delivery lived up to perceptions created through initial marketing efforts.

The delivery of a quality learning outcome will enhance the probability of newly formed attitudes towards a brand persisting over time. In this study the process of learning is being regarded as an integrated service operating system which demonstrates the effective combination of resources (lecturers, time, equipment) and customers (students) as part of a value chain (Porter, 1985; Wright, 1999). If the operating system is effective, then student perceptions of the value gained from the learning process will be positive. The product (knowledge gained through utilising resources in the process of learning) matches the specification (student perceptions of value.) As the delivery of an effective learning product relies largely on relationships with lecturing staff, supported by administration and technology, gaining student trust is essential for survival. Through gaining and providing effective feedback in a flexible environment, the customer whose trust has been gained continues to add value to the organisation through providing feedback on the service obtained, and is thus an important marketing resource. In order to make this happen within the delivery of a business education, it is therefore necessary that business schools be flexible and open to receiving feedback.

This would suggest that relationships and feelings of self-efficacy are excluded from the decision making process because of the notion that people process information mechanically, form beliefs and then act. Fazio (1989) maintains that consumers who have high accessibility attitudes towards a product display greater attitude behaviour correspondence than those with less accessible attitudes. Bagozzi et al (2002) propose an improvement in contemporary theoretical shortcomings with the addition of the theory of trying. They make three proposals in this context (a) the addition of consumption goals, (b) that intentions, particularly intentions to try, directly precede the action of trying, and (c) the incorporation of prior learning and past behaviour in the explanation of trying. These three elements, when taken together, can be expanded to include psychological and physical processes which intervene between intentions and goal achievement, such as "planning, monitoring of progress toward a goal, guidance and control activities, commitment to the goal and the person's intention and effort." This rationale underpins the notion of participative, communicative performance management of the delivery of tertiary learning as part of the relational process in achieving goal congruence for learning outcomes. In the delivery of the MBA programme this would be achieved through developing psychological and physical intervention processes aimed at enhancing effective student relationships. Providing high quality student feedback and technological support would further support the smooth transition between student intentions to learn and achieving their goal through passing. Thus students who gain feelings of self-efficacy through passing their courses will gain positive perceptions in relation to the quality of the AUT MBA brand during the learning process.

Fournier (2004) claims that there has been a paradigm shift towards the replacement of short-term exchange notions by relationship principles. This implies that people develop relationships with the brands which they purchase. In spite of this, the relationship perspective has been "vastly underrealised" (2004:343) in the marketing literature. The focus continues to fall on marketing practice and not on the relationship itself, neglecting the development of the core construct concerning relationship theory in consumer research. Fournier's work underpins the concept of integration of psychological, sociocultural and relational concepts of relationship principles by stating that relationships "both affect, and are affected by the contexts in which they are embedded". She suggests that a fruitful way to establish the developmental pathways of relationships is to specify the "identity activity" in which the relationship is grounded" (1998:346). An attempt is made in this study to examine the pathways of relationships with knowledge providers through considering the MBA product as a "brand". The quality of the relationship with students is seen as the key identity activity in which student/lecturer interaction takes place. Therefore the quality of lecturing staff and their interaction with students during course delivery are key factors to consider in this study.

Mollenkoph and Moore (1999) cite Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) in the identification of empirical support for the concept of consumer behaviour as a function of the match between self-image and the individual's perception of a product image, known as congruity. The self congruity hypothesis implies that consumers seek to express their own self image through selecting out products whose images match the person's own self image. When these match, congruity between self-perception and perception of brand as self is high. Thus, through achieving learning objectives the student achieves self-congruity and therefore congruity with the brand.

The question of whether and to what extent consumers develop ongoing relationships with brands remains largely unanswered. Identifying elements of relationship formation involving the learning process is a more complex process because it involves not only feelings towards the brand itself but also feelings within the psycho-socio-cultural context of the learning process. Self concept is changed through the development of meaningful relationships and reinforced through the development of self-esteem. Wood & Bandura (1989) in their development of social cognitive theory, explain psychosocial functioning in terms of "triadic reciprocal causation" (1989:362). Their model of reciprocal determinism proposes that behaviour, cognitive, personal and environmental factors operate as "interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally". Thus, feelings of self-efficacy are forged through the development of meaningful relationships.

The self evaluations that people generate about their own behaviour dictates which activities they are most likely to pursue. Thus if good relationships are forged with providers of learning, customers will develop feelings of self-efficacy through achievement and this will serve to re-enforce the relationship with the knowledge provider and therefore the brand of their choice.

In order to analyse student perception of whether branding and marketing meet customer expectations it is necessary to identify salient aspects of customer satisfaction against which the effectiveness of the AUT MBA educational "brand" can be measured.

Customer Satisfaction

To harness and sustain the potential of both human capital and information capital invariably requires a customer focused organization and leadership (Theunissen, 1998; Theunissen and Theunissen, 2004). The modern business environment dictates that business schools be flexible and responsive to customers. This can be achieved through ensuring that leaders are mission-driven and committed to continuous improvement. Faculty driven processes are ways in which flexibility and customer responsiveness are encouraged. This is essential in light of increased competition among educational providers, who are developing more and more innovative processes in order to take market share from those business schools which do not respond to customer needs. (Hatfield and Taylor, 1998; Lunsford, 1998; Rapert, Velliquette, Smith and Garretson, 2004). Flexibility is therefore a key element determining customer satisfaction.

Delivering quality to the customer should also be defined in terms of student learning outcomes (Tischler et al, 1988). In this way universities might be able to serve their stakeholders better while lowering costs and prices. Tischler et al further cite Senge, (1990) and Stacey (1995) in claiming that the creation of an inflexible planning bureaucracy to support and focus on building resources (and private political turf) defeats the purpose of creating a genuine, natural open system which learns for its own future needs and remains flexible in order to meet customer demands. Therefore any change initiatives need to be supported by customer focused leadership which implements strategies for continuous improvement.

The term "customer satisfaction" conjures the picture of a person who is happy after sacrificing money to purchase a product. This would suggest that the customer has gained some kind of value from purchasing the product and it is the value which the person attributes to the product which produces happiness. Woodall (2003) refers to an 18th century utilitarian discourse examining the balance between pleasure and pain which offered the suggestion that the process of human choice in balancing pleasure of acquisition of a desired object and the pain of having to part with money gives rise to the notion of value-related choices.

Woodall (2003) has chosen the term "Value for the customer" (VC) to represent the customer demand notions of value. The notion that consumer satisfaction is a response to an evaluation process is supported by Bagozzi (1984), Frondizi (1971) and Rokeach (1973). Frondizi referred to the role of object quality as a result of how people seek specific services to bring advantage to our lives. This would imply that a person's concept of value is dependent on perceptions of adding quality to their life and therefore also the motivation behind the purchase decision. It is therefore conceivable that student perceptions of value would be dependent on whether the process of learning increases or decreases the anticipated value motivating the original decision to study. Because students are being regarded as the customer in this thesis, it is now necessary to examine educational literature to more closely analyse the concept of students as customers.

Students as customers

The question of regarding the student as the customer has been the subject for much debate. There are strong opinions from some authors who question the validity of regarding the student as a business customer. Scrabec (2000:298) sees "a fundamental problem in a customer-driven model for education". He agrees that students pay for education, but argues that the analogy should cease at that point and recommends that students be regarded as "recipients" and other stakeholders should be regarded as "beneficiaries". Scrabec agrees that students pay for service, but claims that this is as far as the analogy should be set. In a business environment, he states, customers are more than purchasers because customers define what determines a quality product or service. Allowing this to happen with students, he claims, would degrade the very service being sold. He excludes the notion of students as customers by stating that the student is not the only "customer". In conceding that student satisfaction should be achieved as a result of a total quality education approach in which student feedback is one element in the system, Scrabec implies that students do, in fact, play a part in setting educational standards, and are therefore internal customers. He therefore contradicts his earlier statement that students are not customers.

Franz (1998) is more vociferous and focused in his criticism and paints a picture of students shopping around for their classes and majors as the cause for a change in the role of educators for whom the sole purpose now becomes attracting and retaining students on courses. He castigates managers of education for allowing the "Nordstromisation" of education where universities become new types of shopping malls and the sole purpose of the educator is to delight the customer. Pedagogy, he claims, becomes sheer entertainment, where being flexible means a "flood of self-designed majors, conveniently rescheduled examinations and bending rules through exceptions". He bemoans the fact that this results in "unrelenting grade inflation - keep the customer happy and give him or her what they want" (1998:63-64). He takes the view that the educator is there to mould the student - to "paint the canvass", claiming that the canvass does not tell the painter what to paint. This simplistic view would imply that the student is totally void of any knowledge or cognisance of what they want and ignores the fact that today's MBA student is mature, knowledgeable and ambitious with experience in industry. (The entry requirements of most business schools are that students should possess a prior degree, have experience in the working environment and pass a GMAT test if required).

Guolla (1999) moves closer towards the notion that the student is an important part of the value chain and takes the view that students are both customers and clients. They are customers because they experience a highly valued service. As clients, he claims, students receive the services of well-trained educational professionals. In this capacity, clients have an understanding of their service needs but rely on professional advice. Students as clients expect to be "personally improved" at the end of the process with achievement as the ultimate measure of success. He claims that this view is consistent with the commonly used criterion variable contained in educational psychology literature. In addition, he regards students as producers who produce a result through actively participating in the learning process, using the instructor as a resource. Students, he claims are also products which are more marketable for future employers. Satisfied students are therefore an essential component in the marketing mix as they are the product of the university.

Contemporary literature defines the student as customer in an increasingly competitive knowledge based world of business. Rapert et al (2004) claim that student expectations are high, focused and diverse and that the meaning of quality should be seen from the student perspective. Gilbert et al (1993) regard the student as the primary customer amongst other customers such as the board of directors, parents, future employees and government bodies, all stakeholders whose needs have to be met. Hatfield and Taylor (1998) go as far as to state that it may be a matter of sheer survival for business schools to ensure that they are responsive to customers. Innovative Colleges and universities are set to take market share and any business school which fails to respond to trends is ultimately doomed to fail.

Thus, the concept of student as customer is here to stay, and the challenge for educators is to ensure that high quality programmes are developed and delivered by quality lecturers, ensuring the application of academic rigour whilst remaining highly responsive to the needs of all its customers.

Education as a value-added operational system

Current literature on the delivery and assessment of tertiary education and in particular MBA programmes seen from an integrated value-added operational management point of view, is limited. Wright (2001) claims that in a value-systems approach, the customer becomes drawn into the management process. The customer, therefore, is a valuable resource in the value chain. Woodall (2003) cites Buttle (2000) as follows:

> "The means of customer retention is via the development, communication and delivery of value propositions that meet or

> exceed customer expectations. Value propositions are those multi-faceted bundles of product, service, price, communication and interaction which customers experience in their relationship with a supplier. It is the customer's perception of the proposition that is important, not the suppliers."

The above statement implies that value lies in the complex interrelationships of all factors contributing towards perceived success. The concept of customer satisfaction in relation to a value system is reflected in the marketing literature by Juttner & Werli (1994:1) as a "comprehensive integration of the customer into an interactive value-generating process, based on interdependence and reciprocity".

In terms of educational literature, Gilbert, Keck & Simpson (1993) maintain that, in delivery of education, students may be primary customers but there are other customers, such as the Board, future employees, parents and government. Thus the literature suggests that in all business, quality initiatives should include the needs of all stakeholders. For MBA courses in particular, in addition to developing systems to improve the educational process, educational institutions should be seeking means to keep pace with business trends in terms of course relevancy, and rigor of teaching and assessment in terms of student development (Karathonos, 1999; Richards-Wilson 2002; Rapert et al, 2004; Hahs, 1999; Yang and Lu, 2001). Adopting a value-added operations management approach overcomes the subjective view that the student is the only customer the value chain.

Wright (1999) describes the elements of customer satisfaction as specification, time and cost. It has been demonstrated in Chapter 1 that the AUT MBA course offers a highly flexible delivery schedule, the only MBA provider in New Zealand which does so. Therefore the element of time is being effectively met. The AUT fee structure lies well within the market average with the additional advantage of being offered in the heart of Auckland, giving AUT the geographical advantage. The concept of "specification" requires further analysis because the ways and the extent to which customer expectations are met affects customer perception of brand effectiveness through the learning experience. In addition, it is necessary to analyse the ways in which key elements of effective resource utilisation through the availability and performance management of human resources, quality of information technology, administrative and marketing support, contribute to student perceptions of the quality of the MBA programme.

The way in which customer perception is measured and translated into services producing greater customer satisfaction is a complex issue. Giese and Cote (2002) claim that from an operational viewpoint, there has been considerable difficulty in identifying constructs which are consistent in the ability to clearly define the satisfaction process. In analysing a framework of conceptual and operational definitions of satisfaction derived from empirical studies, Giese and Cote concluded that organisations should develop a context-specific definition of satisfaction. They claim that it is almost impossible to interpret what consumers mean by satisfaction by analysing numbers which are marked on a scale.

In examining the context-specific definition of satisfaction and seeking deeper levels of understanding of the complexity of the process through which satisfaction is achieved, some contemporary market researchers are focusing on satisfaction as a product of the development of satisfactory relationships with suppliers within the matrix of product, service, price, communication and client interaction. To achieve this in the context of tertiary education means that faculty have to be drawn into the value chain. The quality of leadership by administrative staff and the dean should strenuously support the concept of flexibility and customer responsiveness through continuous improvement, mission-driven programs. This requires that faculty input needs to be increased (Hatfield and Taylor, 1998; Lunsford, 1998). The difficulty with the concept of delivering tertiary education within the context of operational process management including faculty is highlighted by Hatfield and Taylor who state that being faculty driven means that faculty must be actively involved in, if not in charge of creating procedures for continuous improvement. The move towards faculty driven management is seen as a move towards employee empowerment and ownership.

Pritchard and Willmott (1997) criticise what they regard as the growth of consumerism in the development of "Marks and Sparks" and "McUniversities". Pritchard & Willmot cite Parker and Jary (1995) who refer to the progressive McDonaldisation of universities. Universities, they claim, are being reconstituted as knowledge factories organised by managers whose goal is to "intensify" and "commodify" the production and distribution of knowledge and skills to whoever has the means to purchase them (1997:297). They claim that although universities are now being imbued with greater managerial power, no explanations in terms of how this is actually achieved, are given.

The need to regard the delivery of tertiary education, and in particular MBA programmes within the context of a value-added operational management scenario in which the whole organisation is committed to continuous improvement, is gradually being addressed in contemporary management literature. Franz (1998) maintains that managers need a new guiding metaphor - one which treats students as partners in the educational process, and that as co-workers in the educational enterprise, this gives them the responsibility for their own action. Scrabec (2000) proposes a Total Quality Education model in which student satisfaction occurs as a result of a total quality education process and is not the sole feedback to improve the system. Yang and Lu (2001) recommend developing practical assessment instruments directly linked to industry requirements, thus drawing industry into the value chain. Richards-Wilson (2002) states that many deans of business schools are aware of the criticisms surrounding MBA education by employers. She cites several researchers including Pearce (1999), Hahs (1999), Eberhardt and Moser (1997), Jennings (1999), Merritt (2001), Hancock (1998) and Heinfeldt and Wolf (1998), amongst others, who have noted that employers have criticised business graduates for being unable to transfer their knowledge to the fast paced realities of the modern business world. She recommends that all stakeholders - students, businesses, trade organisations, business school administrators and faculty need to be involved in continuous improvement and change processes in MBA programmes. Karathanos (1999) refers to the view of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, United States (1999) who claim that for the first time in history the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach those of their parents. She advocates the application of learning-centred education, strong administrative leadership, continuous improvement programmes, partnership development, valuing faculty and staff, effective course design, strong information technology, taking a long-range view of the future, being a role model of an organisational unit to the community, fast and flexible response to customer requirements, and results orientation. Thus in adopting a value-added operational management approach to the MBA programme it can be seen that key factors contributing to success are flexibility, course relevance and links to industry.

Foreman and Money (1995) analyse performance ambiguity, goal congruence and internal marketing. Goal congruence, they claim, is attained when performance ambiguity is low and goal congruence is high. Performance ambiguity refers to the effectiveness of performance of employees within an organisation, and goal congruence refers to the ability for employees and employers to achieve simultaneous goals. Therefore if staff are able to perform well, achieve their own personal and organisational goals, high performance is assured and both individual and organisational goals are met. AUT relies to a large extent on personal relationships and procedures developed by lecturers when working with students. Low performance ambiguity (i.e. high regard of their own performance) means that students are less likely to search for other providers of knowledge brands because they perceive that the ties which they have with the knowledge provider are valuable. Goal congruence is achieved by AUT achieving success for the MBA programme, good pass rates and enhanced reputation. For students, becoming successful graduates ensures that their goals are met.

Through improving student performance by ensuring "increased levels of competence, motivation, congruence and commitment", extrinsic and intrinsic needs are met (Beer et al, 1985:20). Extrinsic needs are internalised as intrinsic motivators through increased self-confidence. Competence grows through ensuring that the student progress at their own capacity to develop and demonstrate skills. Congruence is attained because expectations of fairness and needs are addressed through the development of meaningful relationships in the learning process. Commitment is achieved by gaining extrinsic rewards through attaining grades and intrinsic rewards through developing self-confidence. This is referred to by Wood & Bandura as "guided skills mastery" (1989:363). Lecturers, through managing students as customers, achieve goal congruence. Lecturing staff, therefore, are a crucial resource in the delivery of a quality learning product. This further underpins the notion that quality lecturers should be employed to deliver learning.

Wright (1999) states that managers need to manage the most valuable resource, the human resource, just as carefully as any other resource. Lecturers and support staff are primary resources in the delivery of education in the activity of developing and transferring knowledge. It is therefore important that lecturers and administrative staff develop excellent relationships with students. Mazzarol (1998) states that educating students requires the development of a long-term relationship with the customer as well as continuous delivery of service. This is referred to by Lovelock (1983) as a "relational membership".

If the relationship is strong, the service provider has the opportunity to develop strong client loyalty and enhanced client service features through effective performance management. It will therefore be necessary to identify human relational activities in the performance management of the learning process which enhance student perceptions of excellence. This will assist in identifying areas in the management and delivery of the MBA programme which affect student perception of the value of the MBA programme and introduce methods and systems to continually enhance value. The effective performance management of lecturers will further ensure that the quality of lecturing staff continues to improve.

Wright (1999) suggests that four control elements apply in terms of performance management: Setting standards of performance; Feedback of actual performance; Measuring performance against standards and Correcting deviations from standards. This would ensure a stable system, where standards are known and consistently achieved, feedback is timely, accurate and relevant, actual performance vs desired performance is known, and finally that staff have the authority and the will to act. In addition, managers have to "stop being bosses and trust staff". (1999:180). This would imply that for lecturing staff to achieve high levels of efficacy, communication in terms of performance standards has to be clear. Through creating a climate of trust, lecturing staff are likely to be motivated and develop a high sense of self efficacy through achieving good learning outcomes and satisfying students. In this stable system, as Wright suggests, feedback should occur at the right time and be relevant to the performance of the lecturer. This further underpins the notion that the performance management of lecturers is an important element in shaping student perceptions of excellence.

Gibson and Dembo (1984) claim that efficatious teachers persist with struggling students and criticise less after incorrect student answers. Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy tend to experiment with methods of instruction, seek improved teaching methods and experiment with instructional materials (Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1988; Stein and Wang, 1988). Furthermore Coladanci (1992) claims that higher professional commitment occurs when teachers have a high sense of self efficacy. According to the above literature, therefore, it would appear that motivated lecturers with a high sense of self-efficacy, a flexible attitude and understanding of student needs within a customer focused organisation culture, are likely to develop good relationships with students and therefore create positive customer perceptions. This emphasises the importance of motivating staff through effective performance management and constructive feedback.

The importance of feedback during the learning process is further underpinned by Gilbert and Simpson (1993) who cite Wilson (1988) in offering a definition of teaching quality as the planning, delivery and evaluation of optimum curriculum for individual students in the context of a range of learners. They claim that the simple completion by students of an evaluation tool at the end of the semester comes far too late for the instructor to improve the quality of delivery because it comes too late for the instructor to include in the next course session. Instead, at the beginning of the following semester, many weeks have passed by and substantial changes are unlikely. They recommend Total Quality Management in the classroom to enhance the process of instructional delivery as it is happening, thereby having maximum impact on students. Gilbert and Simpson further cite Patricia Cross (1973:257) who claims that "The challenge for higher education is not to convert new learners to traditional learners, but to convert traditional education to a new education that will serve everyone better." Educators, they say, have to view the delivery process from the stakeholders' viewpoint. Gilbert further cite Chaffee (1991) in expressing the frustration of the Chancellors Club Professor at the University of Kansas in that somehow educators have lost their way and do not know who the customer is or how to satisfy them. They claim that the interest for educators is in delighting the student in the college education experience. Total quality management, they claim, starts with understanding what customers want. Three concepts defining quality are provided: a well-conceived strategy for service, customer-oriented front-line people and customer-friendly systems, otherwise known as the service triangle with the customer at the centre. In the classroom, thus, the well conceived strategy is contained in the course syllabus, the instructor in the classroom is the customer-oriented front-line person, focusing on the needs of all customers and stakeholders, and customer-friendly systems include all other support mechanisms. All three components have to be in place for quality education to be delivered.

This is underpinned by Wright (1999:25) who claims that “organisations generally aim to attain standards of quality which are laid down through business policy. The decision about the level of service which is to be provided will be an economic one, and will be driven by what the competition is doing. To achieve optimum service levels it is essential that customer satisfaction and efficient operation and resource utilisation are simultaneously, consistently and sustainably achieved.” This, in a service organisation, is achieved through people, including management and staff at all levels. If the organisational culture is right, any member of staff, when faced with a problem, will react in the manner in which management would wish they would act. Students therefore need to know that they will receive maximum student support during their studies. Misra and McMahon (2006) recommend various methods of providing student support, particularly in a diverse student body. They claim that it is up to business schools to create a sense of belonging in students and to ensure that they are integrated both socially and academically, engage students in professional development activities, ensure faculty-student interactions such as hiking trips, retreats and conferences and getting to know the families of students where possible.

Conclusion

Strategic changes in the delivery of tertiary education relevant to global business requirements of flexibility, cost effectiveness and practical application have been analysed and the salient factors affecting the MBA programme delivery have been identified. In this study, the brand as a relationship partner is examined in the context of the performance management of the students and lecturers. An integrated performance management control system achieves results. The process of learning is regarded in this paper as an integrated service operating system demonstrating the effective combination of resources (lecturers, time, equipment) and customers (students) as part of the value chain. (Porter, 1985; Wright, 1999).

It may be concluded from the brand choice literature (McCracken, 1986; Fournier, 2004; Kirby, 2000, Bickerton, 2000; Balmer 2001; Mazzerol, 1998; Mollenkoph & Moore, 1998) that brand choices are influenced by the cultural meaning derived from the brand by the customer. Knowing the factors which contribute to maintaining the positive brand attitude initially generated upon student enrolment will assist in informing the future planning of content and programme delivery methods. The notion that consumer satisfaction is a response to a complex evaluation process is widely supported by contemporary literature. (Fazio, 1989; Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli and Priester, 2002; Petty, Unnava and Strathman, 1991; Aaker and Meyers, 1987; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Fazio, Powell and Williams, 1989; Gatignon and Robertson, 1991; Mahajan, Muller and Bass, 1990; Rogers, 1983; Handy, 2002; Friestad and Wright, 1994, Giese and Cote, 2002; Fournier, 2004).

In summarising the literature on global trends in post graduate study (Ramaswamy & Li, 1997; Tischler et al (1998); Gore, Steven and Bailey (1998, Mintzberg, Quinn & Ghoshell (1995); Tischler, Biberman and Alkhafaji (1998), it can be seen that strategic trends in tertiary knowledge providers are shaped by the effect of global changes in higher education. Interest groups are expanding into larger elements demanding tertiary education to be more flexible in providing cost-effective, practical courses. Teacher efficacy is an important factor to consider in terms of providing quality outcomes in the delivery and performance management of tertiary education at a time when industry demands place stresses on universities who battle with declining enrolments and tighter budgets. (Wood and Bandura, 1989, Mazzarol, 1998; Foreman and Money, 1995; Wright, 1999; Lovelock, 1983; Gibson and Dembo, 1984; Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1988; Stein and Wang, 1988; Coladanci, 1992; Beer et al, 1985; Boxall, 1997, Inkson & Kolb, 2002)

AUT has kept pace with global demands by introducing its own MBA programme. Contextual analysis of the value which students attach to the course will assist in the formation of short and long term business strategy and operational planning to extend the product life-cycle or diffusion process, of the MBA brand. (Rogers, 1983, Mahajan, Muller and Bass 1990; Handy, 2002).

From the literature it is clear that five key elements are essential to the success of any business programme. Firstly the management process in the delivery of business courses needs to be flexible in its approach. Secondly, the programme needs to be responsive to industry needs through the relevance of its content. This requires that strong links to industry be developed. The quality of lecturing staff as a prime resource in the development, delivery and assessment of material is paramount. Student support mechanisms need to be strong and should include methods of providing employment opportunities. (Fazio, 1989; Ramaswami and Li, 1997; Tishler et al, 1998; Mazzerol, 1998; Hatfield and Taylor, 1998; Lunsford, 1998; Rapert et al; Richards-Wilson, 2002; Wood and Bandura, 1989; Wright, 1999; Gilbert and Simpson, 1993; Misra and McMahon, 2006).

Student perceptions within these key elements will be analysed. The conclusions will be discussed and recommendations relating to the marketing, delivery and performance management of the MBA programme will be made.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

Preparation

The reason for setting out a methodological section is to establish the paradigm for data collection and analysis. The term "paradigm" refers to the "progress of scientific practice based on people's philosophies and assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge, and in the research context, about how research should be conducted" (Hussey & Hussey, 1997:47). There are two main research philosophies, or paradigms, namely quantitative and qualitative, referred to by Hussey & Hussey as "Positivistic" and "Phenomenological" respectively. Characteristics of positivistic research are that the data is analysed quantitatively, objectively and scientifically in a traditional experimental manner. The phenomonological paradigm involves gathering qualitative data which is subjective, humanistic and subject to individual interpretation. There are many ways in which people understand their world. Qualitative research lies at one end of a continuum which moves from the highly controlled quantitatively described scientific experiment to the "fictive" end of the continuum without being fictional in the "narrow sense of the term". (Eisner, 1991:30-31, cited in Hoepfl, 1997).

Cronbach (1975:124-126) claims that "the special task of the social scientist in each generation is to pin down the contemporary facts". He further states that situations and personal interactions are complex and questions whether social science should aspire to reducing behaviour to laws. He criticises hypothesis testing in becoming the ruling ideal and the fact that research problems have historically been chosen to fit that mode. From an educational viewpoint, Cronbach cites Majasan (1972) who suspected that an instructor communicates better to students whose beliefs on key matters concur with his. He further cites Thelen (1967) who established that the characteristics which constitute "teachability" in students vary from teacher to teacher. Furthermore, the performance of students is affected by individual differences in knowledge and experience. The student who seeks challenges and takes responsibility is at best when challenged by the instructor and then left to pursue his own thoughts and projects. In contrast, the defensive student tends to profit when the instructor lays out the work in detail. The rapid growth and globalisation of business schools in a situation where the private sector is a significant player has led to intense competition between knowledge providers. Students have become the ultimate "customer" in an age where scholastic achievement has become imperative. Furthermore the mix of students in classes has changed - lecturers are faced with having to instruct students with different nationalities who have developed different learning styles (Loo, 2002; Kolb, 1985). Since teaching involves interacting with human beings, it would seem logical that student perceptions of excellence must be influenced by the quality of that interaction. However the contextual influences such as the impact of technology, nature of course content and assessment instruments, teacher self-efficacy and the influence of performance management methods also need to be taken into consideration. Other factors influencing student perception lie in cultural differences, different levels of English language skills, differing student learning styles.

Bloland (1992) claims that it is becoming clearer that our understanding of college students and their culture is limited if we rely on quantitative research only. The use of qualitative research approaches, alone or in combination with quantitative methods in the same study can broaden and expand our understanding of students in higher education within their developmental participation in the individual learning process.

Wolstenholme (1999:422) claims that both qualitative and quantitative systems dynamics are important to management problem solving and therefore related to the purpose of analysis. He suggests that the power of systems dynamics in solving problems rests in a "judicious blend and intertwining of both qualitative and quantitative ideas, aimed at addressing as broad an audience as possible whilst remaining sufficiently rigorous to be useful."

Caution should, however be exercised when combining qualitative with quantitative research. Haase & Meyers (1988) criticise Patton and other advocates of combining methods for bypassing the underlying paradigms and assumptions by simply combining the two methods on the basis that the unique perspective of each person affects outcomes. They claim that many such efforts lack a balanced integration and valuing of both approaches at the outset. This results in a identification of surface themes without efforts to identify the underlying meaning. Qualitative studies often describe the meaning of experience and develop a theory but then fail to follow through on testing and refining of that theory because an integrated programme of research has not been planned. They recommend that it is necessary to reconcile the assumptions upon which each approach is based rather than simply to mix methods.

Haase & Myers (1988) emphasise the need to classify experiences whilst differentiating individual characteristics as a method to overcome the problem of achieving a balanced integration. It was therefore decided to classify student experiences in terms of perception of whether or not marketing promises had been kept in practice and to provide students with the opportunity to add individual perceptions or characteristics by including a qualitative aspect to answers when designing the research questionnaire. In order to further integrate the data, it was decided to triangulate the research through conducting qualitative interviews with administrative and lecturing staff in an attempt to produce a powerful system of dynamics to address a broad audience whilst remaining sufficiently rigorous to be useful. (Silverman, 2000).

This approach is supported in the literature. There has recently been a growing emphasis on combining approaches and many researchers are of the opinion that studies can be improved by adopting a combined approach and that it is time to stop creating obstacles to combining approaches and to start building methods to bridge the gap. The researcher must strive towards analysis *and* synthesis. Quantitative researchers should acknowledge the power of the ebb and flow of human emotions, and qualitative researchers in turn should appreciate the solid strength of quantitative research. (Bloland, 1992; Silverman 2000; Leedy 1993; Wolstenholme, 1999; Haase & Myers 1998; Long, White, Friedman and Brazeal, 2000).

Cognisance was taken by the author of this thesis of Haase & Myers' (1998) caution that simply combining the two paradigms should be balanced by weighing up both approaches and ensuring that surface themes are not simply stated without efforts to identify the underlying meanings. An attempt to prevent this problem from occurring was made by providing students with a set of questions directly obtained from marketing material and analysing these in the context of student performance. Because of underlying contextual influences embedded in the complexity of student/instructor relationships, course design, cultural and learning differences and the juxtapositioning of internal and external strategic agendas of the university, depth interviews were conducted with lecturers and management staff in order to more readily understand the complex interplay of relationships and systems affecting student perceptions of programme excellence.

The five key elements which, according to the literature review are essential for the excellence of the MBA programme, namely flexibility, relevance and links to industry, quality of lecturers, employment opportunities and student support, were used to develop qualitative questionnaires to be completed by students. Actual statements from marketing hand-outs given to students determined the questions.

Data Gathering

Prior to conducting the research, care was taken to adhere to the strict protocols demanded by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC). Quantitative Student Questionnaires for students (see Appendix C) and Semi-structured interview formats for gathering qualitative data from management and lecturing staff (Appendices A and B) were developed and submitted for approval. Questions asked of the students were gained directly from marketing material available to students (See Appendix (D). All participant consent forms and research data will be stored in a secure facility on AUT premises for a period of at least six years. Consent forms will be stored separately from research data.

A target population was selected from the first and second intake of students onto the MBA programme. The first intake had either graduated or were close to graduation and the second intake had completed approximately a third of the course. The combined group comprised 100 students. Studies by Yu and Cooper (1983) clearly indicate the superiority of personal interaction to ensure high questionnaire response rates. Dommeyer, Baum and Hanna (2002) claim that achieving high levels of response rates using the in-class method of obtaining student responses is enhanced if students have a good relationship with the person requesting the students to respond. In this case, although the actual responses were not completed in class, but on a voluntary and anonymous basis outside of the classroom, the fact that a high response rate of 75% was attained can be attributed to the excellent relationship which the lecturer who handed out the forms had with the students. In addition, the succinct way in which the forms were developed, enabled their completion in approximately half an hour whilst at the same time gaining qualitative comments. The success rate is remarkable when it is considered that MBA students are under particular pressure due to time constraints. It is a tribute to the relationship building skill of the particular lecturer when it is taken into account that in this particular case, students were not in a receptive mood and had lodged a formal complaint against another lecturer who had tried to involve them in research requiring the completion of lengthy questionnaires in class time.

Qualitative research has been subject to a great deal of controversy. Leedy (1993:137) claims that the "methodology of research is in continual ferment", and that anyone who reads the literature should be aware of this turmoil. He further states that qualitative research has not been welcomed as a valid form of methodology because it has been dwarfed by powerful academics who consider that work which is not experimental or statistical is not research

In conducting qualitative research, therefore, the standard of research needs to be valid and meaningful if it is to gain credibility. In assessing the effectiveness of in-depth interviewing as a qualitative research method, the report which is generated should firstly be of a high standard. To achieve this high standard, quality data are to be generated. Qualitative research has the potential to be considered subjective and thus invalid because it involves one person conducting interviews with individuals. If I, as a qualitative researcher am to gain credibility for my research then the results of the report should be unbiased, valid, reliable and conducted in a spirit of strong ethics. During the interview process care will be taken not to cause bias by asking leading questions or influencing responses. Participants will be encouraged to talk freely without interruption. The validity of quantitative interviewing techniques will be ensured by making minimal reference to anecdotal evidence, rigorously analysing responses in the context of empirical literature and finding other similar cases within the literature against which the conclusions can be discussed and compared. All data will be critically investigated and the author will not depend on a few well chosen examples. This will address Silverman's claim that to ensure reliability, the qualitative researcher must always attempt to locate another case through which to test a provisional hypothesis (2000:179). Prior to conducting interviews and gathering data the AUT Ethics Committee place thesis proposals under strict scrutiny. It is ensured that all processes involved in gathering, interpreting, analysing, retrieving and storing data are completed within their stringent requirements prior to commencing the research. In addition, the Supervisor of the thesis reports on its progress regularly to ensure that these processes are adhered to for the duration of the research. The above measures ensure that the research is conducted in a spirit of strong ethics. The issues of data verification, validity and reliability are explained in greater detail further in this chapter.

Taylor and Bogdan have described in-depth interviewing as “the favoured digging tool” of social researchers (1998:87). Qualitative interviewing is a useful tool as it enables the researcher to apply a flexible approach through “using interviewing methods which do not constrain interview response through being too prescriptive” (1998:87).

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), selecting informants for qualitative interviewing calls for a flexible research design. Neither the number nor the type of informants needs to be specified beforehand. The researcher starts out with a general idea of which people to interview and how to find them, but is willing to change course after the initial interviews. Kvale (1996:101), when asked how many interview subjects to use in a qualitative study, answered that one should interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know. Taylor and Bogdan suggest that there is an inverse relationship between the number of informants and the depth to which each is interviewed. Therefore it was decided not to select a specified number of respondents for the qualitative survey but to conduct interviews with key management staff and sufficient numbers of lecturing staff until themes became evident. In this case, qualitative data were gathered in a relatively short space of time. After interviewing three of the respondents, the themes which related to student responses emerged. The same themes emerged when interviewing the remaining five lecturers, and therefore it was decided that no further interviews were required. A total of eight interviews were conducted with lecturing staff and two with management staff. After the data had been gathered, comments made by lecturers were highlighted manually on the interview transcripts and then used contextually when discussing the student response results as recommended by Taylor and Bogdan and Kvale.

Prior to conducting the interviews, respondents were contacted personally, given the relevant information in terms of the nature of the research and requested whether they would be willing to be interviewed. When inviting respondents to participate, I used the approach that it would be a privilege to interview them. I found that, as Taylor and Bogdan (1998) claim, respondents were willing to be interviewed because I chose a humble approach and valued the contribution which they would make.

Mason (2002) suggests that the qualitative interviewer should play an interactive part in reacting quickly and effectively within the range of research questions. Taylor & Bogdan (1998) refer to three different interview techniques. Firstly, life history, secondly learning about past events that are impossible to directly observe and thirdly gaining an impression of different circumstances, events or situations and people. For the purposes of this thesis I chose the third interview technique. Patton (1990) refers to the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide and the standardised open-ended interview. These methods agree on one fundamental principle which is to gain a solid base of rich, detailed data which can meaningfully be analysed by finding out what a person has to say and how they feel through describing their own private perspectives. In-depth interviewing is the tool which enables the interviewer to explore individual and organisational responses to situations through the emotional responses of individuals. The researcher gains insight into the contextual influences such as location, communication patterns and individual responses. From these the researcher builds a picture of the events and interactions. It is essential therefore that the interviewer be prepared to interact and respond during the interview itself to guide the interviewee in certain directions and yet at the same time not to influence the interviewee's thinking.

There were two reasons why I took this approach. Firstly, the limited amount of time available, being half an hour per interviewee, meant that I needed to gain information quickly and to eliminate any wasted time by asking questions which were irrelevant. Having a standardised interview format meant that I could quickly obtain similar information from respondents. Secondly, because I previously worked for the same organisation and knew a few of the respondents quite well, I needed to be as objective, unbiased and non- judgemental as possible to ensure that my professional integrity was maintained, that I did not influence the respondents' thinking. Patton (1990:354) stresses that the purpose of the interview is to gather data, not change people. The interviewer is neither a judge nor a therapist. Staying focused on the purpose of the interview is essential for quality data to be collected. Kvale (1996) suggests that the interview guide is a list of general areas to be covered with each respondent. The interview guide serves to remind the interviewer to ask about certain aspects. Thus, by having a framework to refer to the process was kept under control, interviews were conducted efficiently within a relatively short period and gathered relevant data.

For the purposes of this study I chose a combination of Patton's general interview guide which enables similar information to be obtained from respondents, and the standardised open-ended interview format which provides a systematic approach and reduces interviewer effects. Whilst the interview was in progress I planned to apply the suggestion of Mason (2002) which entails using a flexible and pro-active approach in reacting to interviewee responses within the framework which I had devised.

Patton (1990) emphasises that the interviewer should ask truly open ended questions which enables the respondents to respond in their own terms, use whatever words they want in order to represent what they have to say. At all costs, the use of dichotomous questions inviting a "yes" or "no" response, e.g. 'Are you satisfied with the programme?', 'Was this an important experience for you?' should be avoided as they are unsuitable for interviewing, wasting valuable time and causing frustration on the part of the respondent, turning the interview experience into an interrogation rather than a depth conversation. I therefore took great care to use open-ended questions and listen carefully without interrupting, to allow respondents to freely express their views and feelings.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) state that interviewing requires an ability to relate to others on their own terms. I took care to ask each question in an open ended manner which invited the respondent to explore their own experiences and feelings. I asked management respondents to talk me through their perception of the value of processes, reaction to outside competition, relationships with industry, perceived quality of the MBA programme, financial success, resource allocation, brand effectiveness, launch strategy, patterns of student enrolments and feedback and ways in which the MBA course could be improved. Taylor and Bogdan cite Spradley (1979) and McCracken (1988) when referring to the best manner in which to ask questions. It is recommended that descriptive, or so-called "open-ended" questions be applied in order to allow the respondent to open up and talk freely. The interviewer needs to look interested and use eye contact and good body language in order to put the respondent at ease. Lecturers were asked about the way in which industry demands transcribed into their own classroom teaching practice, perception of the elements determining quality of content and delivery standards of the MBA programme, success in terms of student learning outcomes, classroom management in relation to student performance, resource availability, operational effectiveness and student enrolment patterns, and their own personal motivation and method of achieving total quality teaching. All respondents were asked to suggest improvements to the programme in terms of course delivery, administration, managerial support and available resources.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) maintain that one of the keys to successful interviewing is knowing when and how to probe. Throughout the interview, the researcher should follow up on topics that have been raised. This requires active listening skills on the part of the interviewer, and the ability to think rapidly and steer the interview, leaving room for movement within the interview process to probe for contextual influences in an appropriate way. Patton (1990) emphasises that when an interviewer probes, the interviewer should take great care that sufficient rapport has been built with the respondent to ensure that the respondent does not feel that the interviewer does not feel superior in any way. Therefore probing questions should be asked in a manner which indicates to the interviewee that the inteviewer *values* their opinion and is not *questioning* their view. e.g. "I am really interested in hearing more details on that point could you please elaborate" and not "Why did you say that". Through probing, contextual elements affecting the five themes in terms of perceived quality of course delivery and assessment which were previously identified in the literature could be more easily identified. It was important to probe for these qualities as they were key issues in determining whether marketing promises had indeed been met in course delivery

Establishing rapport with respondents is an important part of the interview process. Having gained consent from interviewees, I then conducted the interviews which were audio-taped. Patton's methodologies are carefully calculated, taking one through each step of the interview process. Although Patton acknowledges that "rapport is built on the ability to convey empathy and understanding without judgement" (1990:317), he focuses more on *what* to do than what *feelings* to consider. Taylor & Bogdan (1998) and Mason (2002) suggest a more ontological view in terms of establishing the basic principles of building trust. They claim that this can only be achieved through acknowledging the emotional side of interviewing, building true rapport, being non-judgemental, letting people talk, paying attention and being sensitive. These are essential ingredients if one wishes to reach and explore deeper perceptions in interviewees. Therefore, while using a combination of Patton's interview formats, I carefully applied the principles suggested by Taylor & Bogdan and Mason to establish good relationships with respondents. Prior to interviewing I introduced myself, thanked the respondents for taking the trouble to make time for me and reassured them once more of confidentiality and anonymity. I put them at ease by asking them to choose a place to sit around a coffee table, not sitting directly opposite them or above them and dressing conservatively in non-threatening neutral colours.

For the purposes of this study I audio taped the interviews. This has the advantage that verbal interaction between interviewer and respondent is recorded in a permanent form that can be returned to repeatedly for re-listening (Kvale, 1996). I requested all respondents to suggest positioning of the tape recorder and to assist me in setting up. Respondents therefore developed a sense of involvement and ownership of the taping process and were noticeably more comfortable and relaxed.

Active listening skills are one of the key elements in gaining successful interview results. Applying effective listening skills whilst interviewing anyone requires the application of a sense of participation on the part of the interviewee. This needs to be applied carefully in order not to interrupt the respondent at a point where they are opening up and offering information - regardless whether the interviewer feels that the information is not relevant. While the respondent is speaking, the interviewer should show approval of what is being said, by nodding the head slightly and paying close attention to what the respondent is saying, even if the information appears to be irrelevant. Through staying highly focused the interviewer is able to make a mental note of key phrases which may relate to information which the interviewer is actively seeking. Once the respondent has finished what they are saying, the interviewer gently steers the conversation by saying, for example: "The point you made on so-and-so is interesting - I would be interested to hear more about that aspect". This re-assures the respondent that they are on the right track and increases the confidence of the respondent. (Dwyer, 2003; Silverman, 2000; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Patton, 1990). Thus, while each participant was responding to questions (See Appendix A and B), I would use active listening skills to identify key words which linked to the themes identified in the literature. Having the interview structure readily available enabled me to remain focused on the main issues after taking careful notes of any avenues of information the respondents identified whilst talking. Care was taken not to interrupt the participants to encourage them to explore their own paradigms and express themselves freely. I was careful to remain non-judgmental, calm and show quiet support by nodding occasionally.

Data Verification

In order to ensure the total confidentiality of the data obtained during the interview process, I personally transcribed all the audio tapes. Patton (2002), stresses that a fundamental requirement for qualitative analysis is that the raw data is presented in verbatim form. I transposed the tapes myself. Although this was a lengthy and time consuming process it insured that I could make a note of voice tones and subtle nuances which may have been excluded if an outside person were to have been responsible for the transcription. After transcribing the interviews I requested that all respondents read the transcripts carefully, making any alterations they thought appropriate. All participants were requested to supply written attestation that the transcriptions were a true verbatim record of the interview and that nothing whatsoever had been altered. Some participants wished the transcripts to be slightly modified. However these modifications were trivial and did not alter the interpretation in any significant way. The transcripts were altered in accordance with participants' wishes and the participants were notified accordingly.

In order to conform to AUTEC requirements, all audio tapes were handed to the Supervisor to be destroyed upon completion of the transcription. Transcripts will be kept with other raw data and stored under secure conditions for a minimum of six years.

Validity and Reliability

> "The dogmas of the quiet past sleep quietly beneath the turbulence of the present; and those who bestir that turblunce: The thinkers of today, the pioneers of tomorrow, create new methodologies that affect us all." Leedy (1993:137).

Because of the controversy surrounding the value of quantitative research, the question of validity and reliability when conducting qualitative research has been a subject of much debate. Leedy (1993:137) claims that the academic disciplines whose origins lie in the "trivium" of medieval education are possibly less vulnerable to "methodological turbulence". He claims that all research methodology rests upon the principle that the "nature of the data and the problem for research dictate the research methodology" (1993:139). Qualitative research has always been a method of investigation, however it has not always been welcome in serious graduate research owing to the fact that it has been overshadowed by what he terms the "inordinate" recognition given to quantitative research. Academia, he claims, have proclaimed that if it is not experimental, empirical or statistical, it is not research.

As this research involves students and the various processes and interactions which affect their perception of the quality of a knowledge product, the research must take into account current opinions of what research methods best suit management and educational paradigms. Bloland (1992) states that while most graduate preparation programs in student affairs tend to provide research training that emphasises statistical comparisons of metric data, because of the complexity of student development it is becoming increasingly important to understand students. The environment of the campus and its student culture represent a very rich and complex social structure that cannot readily be studied holistically by statistical means alone. He advocates the use of a qualitative research approach which is conducted either alone or in combination with quantitative methods in the same study. This, he claims, will expand the breadth and depth of our understanding of the student in higher education as a developing participant in the learning process.

Silverman (2000) suggests that validity is another word for truth, and that the researcher must clearly make an attempt to convince themselves, and therefore their audience, that their findings are genuinely based on critical investigation of all their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen examples. In this thesis an attempt has been made to ensure the authenticity of findings through choosing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and including a qualitative aspect to student questionnaires, discussing student responses in the context of management and administrative perspectives.

Silverman (2000) further suggests that validity can be ensured through including aspects of refutability by avoiding using correlations which are not based on facts, constant comparison through finding similar examples, treating the data comprehensively by attempting to ensure that any generalisation can be applied to all relevant data and by using appropriate tabulation by simple counting methods. In terms of refutability, an attempt has been made to underpin student comments in the context of the management and delivery of the MBA course. Through finding similar examples in the literature of problems being experienced by MBA students in different localities an attempt was made to attain constant comparison. An attempt to ensure that any generalisation is applicable to all relevant data was made through carefully identifying themes emerging from the qualitative interviews and applying the guidelines suggested by Hoepfl (1997) that data collection should stop once regularities of responses emerged. These themes were then discussed in the context of student responses, thus enabling the incorporation of all relevant data. Tables were constructed to produce a numerical analysis of student responses.

Thus through identifying areas of concern in terms of reliability and validity of qualitative research contained in the literature, a strong attempt was made to justify the research design, data collection and analysis processes applied to this research and gain credibility for the research through producing an unbiased, objective, validated result in a spirit of strong ethics.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF STUDENT RESPONSES

Quantitative Data Analysis

An analysis of student responses was carried out by setting up a Likert Scale where strongly disagree scored 1 and strongly agree scored 5. Data from the individual responses were collated in the rows of an Excel spreadsheet. At the end of each row the average score of the individual and the number of instances of each score are shown. (See Appendix E) Similarly, the averages of the total number of responses to each question and the number of instances of each score for that question are summarised at the end of the column corresponding to that question. A strong response level of 62.6% was achieved. Of the 115 students enrolled on the MBA course, 72 students completed questionnaires. The data sets for the past or near Graduates (12) were considered separately from the data sets for the undergraduates (60).

10 of the Undergraduates returns had missing data. One respondent answered only 3 questions. Therefore the data for this response were discarded, leaving a further 9 questionnaires where between 1 and 4 answers were missing. A strategy had to be chosen between retaining the nine incomplete data sets and applying the "cold deck imputation" method, or to simply discard all incomplete data sets.

A comparative study was carried out to determine the effect of substituting missing data with the mean value or rejecting any data sets with missing data. The effect of discarding data sets with missing data was to marginally change the determined p value in Question 11. Consideration was then given to applying "cold deck imputation" (substituting missing data with the mean). Hair, Anderson Tatham and Black, 1998). It was concluded that replacing the missing data with "not sure" answers had not significantly affected the general outcome of the particular questions, or of the total data, and it was therefore decided to use the complete case approach. This supports the view of Downey and King (1998) who, in their analysis of replacing missing data in Likert scales, concluded that as long as missing data did not represent more than 20% of the total data it would not affect the validity of the outcome. This view is further underpinned by Hair et al (1988:51) who state that the complete case approach is suitable when "the extent of the missing data is small, the sample is sufficiently large to allow for deletion of cases with missing data, and the relationships in the data are so strong as to not be affected by any missing data process". The sample of cases was large (62.6% of the total number of students). It was proved that the relationships in the data were strong because including the missing data and applying "cold deck imputation" through substituting missing data with the mean, had not significantly altered the results. In addition, the use of complete data is, according to Hair et al, the most simple and most direct approach. Hair et al also claim that the complete case approach should be used only if the missing data are Missing Cases at Random (MCAR). MCAR means that a test is conducted to see whether the missing data are randomly distributed, in which case their inclusion would not affect the overall outcome. If, however, missing data are non-randomly distributed, the result would significantly alter the result of the analysis. Because including the missing data had not affected the outcome, it was concluded that the missing data were randomly distributed, which further strengthened the conclusion that the missing data could be declared MCAR.

The Student *t* test is widely used to determine whether significant differences exist in given parameters (usually the mean). The Null Hypothesis is that samples come from population groups with equal means where there is no difference between the mean responses of the two groups. The *t*-test results indicate the extent to which the two samples need to be different in order for the null hypothesis to be rejected. If the *t* value is sufficiently large, then it can statistically be concluded that the difference between the two groups was not due to sampling variability, but represents a true difference. (Hair et al, 1998:331).

Analysis was carried out using the Microsoft Excel *t*-test function which allows options for the t-test to be defined and can take account of unequal variances of both ranges of data - this is referred to as a heteroscedastic t-test. The *t*-test function does not return the actual *t* value but calculates a variance weighted value for degrees of freedom and returns a *p* (or alpha) value reflecting the probability that the differences in the means are due to chance and that the Null Hypothesis is erroneously rejected. The analysis returned a low *p* value for some questions indicating that there are cases where the Null Hypothesis is rejected and the responses are statistically significantly different between the two data sets. Table 2 below shows the results of this analysis.

Question	Mean 12 Graduates	Mean 50 Undergraduates	*p* value	Evidence of significant difference
Q01	4.667	4.320	0.051	Some*
Q02	4.000	3.860	0.606	None
Q03	4.083	3.720	0.110	Bordering†
Q04	4.583	4.500	0.625	None
Q05	4.417	4.280	0.634	None
Q06	3.833	3.940	0.743	None
Q07	4.000	4.180	0.501	None
Q08	3.833	3.220	0.094	Bordering†
Q09	3.750	3.820	0.818	None
Q10	4.333	4.000	0.058	Some*
Q11	3.917	3.300	0.104	Bordering†
Q12	3.583	3.220	0.162	None
Q13	3.583	2.940	0.035	Some*
Q14	3.500	3.120	0.041	Some*
Q15	3.583	3.280	0.345	None
Q16	3.917	3.400	0.056	Some*
Q17	3.750	3.500	0.418	None
Q18	4.667	3.740	0.000	Convincing***
Q19	4.167	3.500	0.010	Strong**
Q20	4.417	3.460	0.000	Convincing***

Table 2 - Evidence of Significant Difference

From the above table it has been concluded that discarding the sets with missing data has not caused a significant difference taken over the total sample population. Some statistical evidence of statistical differentiation is shown for Q1, Q10, Q13, Q14 and Q16, (*)[1] Strong evidence is shown for Q19, denoted by the symbol "**", and convincing evidence for Q18 and Q20 (***). Q3, Q8 and Q11 border on significance (†)

[1] AMR (2006) Styleguide symbols representing p values demonstrating statistical significance

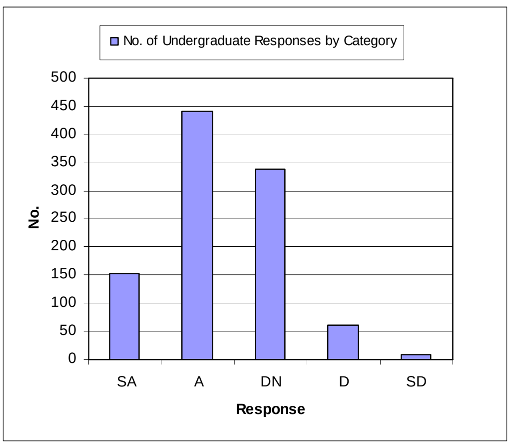
The results are represented in Table 2 and Figure 1 below. It may be deduced that:

1) Both data sets are heavily skewed to the 'Agree' side of the mean.
2) There is a marked difference in the skewness of the data between Graduates and Undergraduates.
3) The percentage "strongly agree" responses in graduate students is approximately 50% higher than "strongly agree" responses for undergraduates whilst the statistics for the "not sure" and "strongly disagree" increase by almost 50% in undergraduate students which shows that whilst student responses for both groups taken together appear to demonstrate a general level of strong satisfaction with the MBA course, there is a general movement away from strong agreement towards strong disagreement.

Response	Undergraduates	Graduates	Difference
Strongly Agree	15.68	32.92	Halved
Agree	43.14	42.92	Small
Not sure	35.08	18.75	Doubled
Disagree	5.25	5.00	Small
Strongly Disagree	0.85	0.42	Doubled

Table 3 - Comparison of Student Responses

Figure 1 - Histogram of Undergraduate and Graduate responses



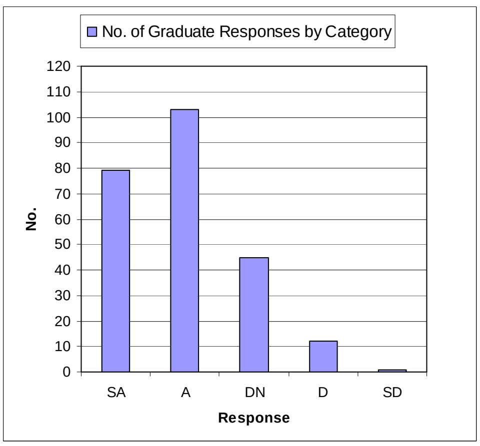


Figure 1 above provides a graphic illustration of the general student trend away from the "strongly agree" category. These figures have been developed as a graphic illustration and the author has selected the number of responses actually shown on the figure to enhance the visual impact of the trends between the two groups.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The responses gained from the quantitative data are now examined within the context of data obtained through conducting qualitative interviews with management and lecturing staff. The possible reasons for the general movement of student opinion of the course towards dissatisfaction is examined in greater detail.

Table 4 shows how the questions have been grouped into themes which were previously identified in the literature review. All the questions were derived from promises made to students in the MBA course information handbook (2005), Faculty of business profile (2005) and International Student Prospectus (2005). A short analysis of the response to each question will be provided, followed by discussion of the theme in the context of data obtained from in-depth interviews with lecturing and management staff.

Theme	Questions
1) Flexibility	01, 04, 05, 07, 11
2) Relevance and Links to Industry	03, 09, 10, 12, 14, 17
3) Quality of Lecturers	06, 15
4) Employment Opportunities	02, 13, 16, 8
5) Student Support	18, 19, 20

Table 4 - Grouping of Questions into Themes

Flexibility

<u>Question 1</u> - "You will find our MBA provides flexibility to fit around your work and personal life." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet - information now available on-line, see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	8	66.67	19	38.00	-28.67
Agree	4	33.33	29	58.00	24.67
Not Sure	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 5 - Summary of Responses to Question 1

Table 5 shows the sharp drop in undergraduate students who strongly agreed that the MBA programme provided flexibility. One Graduate student commented that flexibility may be diminished if subjects were not offered at least twice per term. Undergraduate student comments included the fact that some papers were not offered twice or did not run in the mornings and evenings as they had been led to believe. Another commented that they were not sure about whether the MBA course provided flexibility because the student actually organised and adjusted their working hours to fit into the AUT schedule in order to be able to complete their studies.

<u>Question 4</u> - "Part-time or full time study, your choice." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet - information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	7	58.33	26	52.00	-6.33
Agree	5	41.67	23	46.00	4.33
Not Sure	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 6 - Summary of Responses to Question 4

Table 6 shows a general agreement that the programme offered part-time or full-time study, however it can be seen that once again that there was a general movement of in the undergraduates of 6% away from the "strongly agree" end of the scale.

No comments were received from either group for this question.

Question 5 - "Flexibility to begin and finish when you choose." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet - information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	7	58.33	21	42.00	-16.33
Agree	4	33.33	24	48.00	14.67
Not Sure	0	0.00	3	6.00	6.00
Disagree	1	8.33	2	4.00	-4.33
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 7 - Summary of Responses to Question 5

Table 7 shows that there is a 16% Undergraduate response movement away from the strongly agree end of the scale.

This would indicate a general perception in all students that the course was flexible in terms of beginning and finishing times. There were, however, students in both groups who commented that they disagreed with this statement because of the unavailability of both core and elective papers.

Question 7 - "Classes are small and interactive." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet - information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	13	26.00	1.00
Agree	7	58.33	34	68.00	9.67
Not Sure	1	8.33	2	4.00	-4.33
Disagree	1	8.33	1	2.00	-6.33
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 8 - Summary of Responses to Question 7

All students generally agreed with this statement. One student commented that some classes were not small and have only one class stream. This statement is rather ambiguous and it could mean that the student considered themselves superior in skills to others in the class and that the student expected an even smaller class - the student does not explain what "small" meant. The statement also reflects the problems with different perceptions amongst students which arise when students of mixed origins, learning styles and abilities are placed together in one class.

Question 11 - "Online learning." (AUT 2005 Faculty of Business Profile - information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	5	41.67	1	2.00	-39.67
Agree	3	25.00	21	42.00	17.00
Not Sure	2	16.67	21	42.00	25.33
Disagree	2	16.67	6	12.00	-4.67
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00

Table 9 - Summary of Responses to Question 11

Once again there was a sharp drop in the number of undergraduate students who considered that online learning was available, continuing the general downward trend of responses away from "strongly agree". It is here that the trend towards "disagree of strongly disagree" makes itself evident. No graduate students strongly disagreed with this statement, whereas 2% of undergraduate students strongly disagreed.
A few student comments suggested that there should be more on-line learning.

The reasons for the differences between the groups are now discussed in terms of their general grouping. Firstly, the term "flexible learning" is more closely defined. Four principal aspects affecting flexible learning are discussed under the following headings: First, Learner control of learning, second, Social Interaction and exchange, third, Teachers as supporters of student learning and finally, Feedback in teaching.

Flexible learning

From the in-depth interview with lecturing and management staff, it was found that the perception of the term "flexibility" by the MBA management staff applies to course availability, the six intakes per year and the fact that students can choose course options, starting and finishing times and are offered morning, afternoon and evening lectures. There has not been any reference to flexibility or quality of delivery and assessment in the MBA course information booklet. Although students had online access to course material, this was not mentioned by any of the management or lecturing staff or indeed by the students themselves, as having any significance in terms of learning outcomes. The term "flexible learning" therefore needs to be analysed in the context of current literature, in order to more closely analyse whether there is congruence in management, lecturing and student perceptions of its meaning. This will assist in identifying any areas where flexibility can be improved.

Flexible learning can be defined as a method of learning which is an alternative method to traditional didactic forms of teaching in response to demands from industry for more diverse forms of teaching for continuing education. (Campbell, J: 2000; Beattie, K and James, R: (1997, Brandt, E : (2002). According to Campbell, whilst there is no clear agreement on a universal description of the way in which flexible learning is delivered, it is generally accepted that flexible learning allows students a more autonomous approach to their learning. It also means that students take greater responsibility for their learning outcomes. Access to technology is regarded as an essential component in providing student centred learning. From studies conducted at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia, Campbell suggests that in addressing the need for more flexible delivery methods mature post graduate students prefer that instruction be relevant to their particular job. There should continue to be an element of face-to-face teaching and students should be given the ability to determine at which point they enter and exit the material. Networked technology should allow students to have access to subject content and other resources and how they are progressing. In addition, students may be permitted to select assessment types from a range of sanctioned assessments. Teaching staff are encouraged to make use of seminars, workshops and tutorials as instruments in the delivery of flexible learning.

Beattie and James (1997) examined the results of an Australian nation-wide survey on flexible delivery methods and found that many postgraduate students found new ways of learning, particularly electronic learning, confronting and threatening. This view supports research at AUT by Petrova and Sinclair (2005), when the conclusion was drawn that there was no strong reason to believe that students found on-line learning a better option than face-to-face delivery. Guthrie (1998), in an address to the AIT commerce faculty, claimed that successful institutions, those that attract the best students, will be those that continue to offer some face-to-contact between student and academic. Although educational institutions increasingly offer flexible learning in terms of Information Technology, Guthrie claims that a significant differentiator between institutions will be the quality of the face-to-face offerings. The above factors therefore draw attention to the need for AUT to regard its teaching staff as its primary resource in assuring that marketing promises are to be delivered. This does not preclude the use of information technology as a form of learning.

As observed by Theunissen and Theunissen (2004), throughout human existence knowledge has been preserved and transferred though a variety of means, such as storytelling, letter writing, in books and stored in libraries. This was to continue for centuries until new technology brought about a fundamental change that was to reshape the future of information acquisition, preservation and dissemination. With the rapid application of desk top computers, information technology by the 1980s became as common as the telephone and subsequently with the development of the World Wide Web Internet technology and communication is widely available. It is crucial, therefore, that educational institutions, and in particular business educational institutions, remain flexible and continue to upgrade their information technology resources as well as deliver a quality learning experience. There may well be students who would prefer an increase in interactive on-line methods of delivery and assessment without losing face-to-face contact with lecturers, thus achieving a balance between the two delivery methods.

Beattie and James (1997) identified four major issues concerning the effectiveness of various course delivery methods currently used in post graduate coursework programs in Australia. These are, Learner control of learning; Interaction and social exchange; Teachers as supporters of student learning and Feedback in teaching.

Learner control of learning

Flexible modes of delivery are characterised by their potential to offer students a wide choice in terms of methods of learning and places of learning. Student respondent comments in this study support the notion that postgraduate students view the ability to organise their time efficiently to be of prime value. This point emphasises the importance of sustaining flexible delivery as the MBA methods as the MBA programme progresses at AUT. The difference in levels of satisfaction between graduate MBA students and undergraduate students for flexible learning was significant, which should be an area of concern for AUT. There is a need to examine and address the deeper issues surrounding the current delivery of flexible learning in the MBA programme if student perceptions are not consistently inclined towards the "strongly agree" category. Offering a flexible MBA programme is the prime point of differentiation which distinguishes the AUT MBA from others offered in New Zealand. If AUT has the desire to stay ahead of the pack, it will need to keep on re-inventing itself and changing to meet rapidly changing customer demands in the highly competitive MBA market.

In terms of the value of electronic communication technologies at postgraduate level, Beattie and James (1997) claim that improved communication and access to information should be emphasised, rather than learning on-line as a replacement for face to face teaching. Indeed, non-traditional methods of delivery, such as on-line learning, fare less well when it comes to managing complexity or uncertainty and encouraging lively debate. They conclude that students should have some choice over delivery methods to suit individual study requirements. In addition, steps should be taken to ensure a high level of interaction between lecturers and students and to encourage self reflection. Enabling students to have a greater choice over individual study requirements would assist in overcoming the problem of addressing different learning capabilities through aligning study methods with individual needs. The problem of managing the complexity of on-line learning combined with face-to-face learning can be overcome by encouraging lecturers to excite and encourage their students to make greater use of electronic resources. Dommeyer and Hanna (2002:11) claim that students' willingness to participate in electronically based methods of evaluation is directly related to their satisfaction with the evaluation process and the quality of their relationships with lecturers.

Interaction and Social Exchange

In terms of Beattie and James's analysis of issues affecting postgraduate course delivery methods (1997), notwithstanding the fact that course material is available to students on-line, the emphasis is on the ability of the lecturer, during face-to-face teaching, to engage the students in active debate and social interaction. This would be accomplished in two ways. Firstly the espoused promise by AUT to employ high calibre lecturing staff who are able to offer real-life experiences to demonstrate the theory of what they are teaching as part of class-room interaction, should be rigorously adhered to. Student perception of the quality of classroom interaction and real-life experience at AUT is being negatively affected by the fact that there is no separate dedicated faculty for the MBA programme. Tenured lecturers who also teach on other programmes in addition to conducting their own research may lose enthusiasm and drive in terms of delivering a dynamic learning experience for students enrolled on the MBA programme. Secondly, in terms of social interaction, social exchange takes place through holding regular monthly social get-togethers. Students are encouraged to exchange ideas and socialise with lecturers as well as amongst one another. There may, however, not be opportunities for students who are in full-time employment to socialise as readily. Some students commented that they had been prevented from attending social events due to work commitments causing time constraints.

Teachers as supporters of student learning

The importance of teachers as supporters of the student learning process cannot be underestimated. McKenzie & Swords (2000) suggest that for business courses to remain relevant there is a need to develop learner relationships that improve relevance through enhanced and enriched relationships between teachers and learners and between learners and their peers. They claim that it is unrealistic to expect one lecturer to specify a learning programme which will include all the information a student will need. Discrimination rather than absorption is an essential skill for a modern learner. This would indicate that learners have the need to learn how to learn. A key method suggested by McKenzie & Swords is through applying triple loop learning. Triple loop learners examine the way they learn and develop enhanced ways to learn differently. This can only be achieved if learners overcome anxiety. They suggest that an important element towards overcoming anxiety in students is that whoever manages their learning process acknowledges their humanity and vulnerability and the fact that they do not know all the answers. Teachers as supporters of learning, they suggest, need to have a flexible approach, develop an emotional connection with the students and act as role models and coaches to facilitate through adopting the attitude of customer advocacy towards students. This would also require the teacher to apply an empathetic approach to student problems. None of these qualities are directive, controlling or strongly decisive, but nurturing and empowering.

The above factors would appear to suggest that there are many more personal than functional competencies required of teachers as supporters of learning. In most institutions, including AUT, the learning process is still largely vested in the role of the teacher. If teachers remain inflexible in their attitudes, learning as it currently occurs will become irrelevant.

Another factor affecting the level of support which lecturers provide to students is that there can be a tendency to expect student capabilities to be high because they have been accepted onto a Master's degree programme. This makes delivery difficult for lecturers who are then faced with the dilemma of keeping the balance between learner control and lecturer responsibility in classes where there are differing levels of analytical, writing and information searching skills are evident. (Beatty & James, 1997).

An environment where the majority of students are from international backgrounds, having previously learned using different learning techniques causes difficulties both in teaching and assessment. For example, one lecturer said that his class was neatly split into two - the Chinese learners who were individualistic, theory-based learners, and the Indian learners, who enjoyed group discussions and debate. Developing assessment strategies for both groups requires the ability to overcome the differences and to engage the students in a new learning process. This requires firstly the ability to build effective relationships with students and secondly the ability to recognise where extra tuition or guidance is necessary. Postgraduate students, in particular international students, do not always have the analytical, writing and information-searching skills which are normally expected of post-graduates (Beattie & James, 1997)

The need to address the problem of multiple intelligences and perceived unsuitability for acceptance into the MBA programme is reflected in some of the negative remarks made by different lecturers about student capabilities. Most full-time lecturers had assumed that students who enrolled on the MBA programme would have already developed the English analytical and writing skills required at that level. Indeed, most students had a prior degree or life and business experience in their own countries of origin. The entry criteria is that students have a first degree or equivalent and three years of management experience. The Programme Director may, at his discretion, call for a student to complete a GMAT test (Graduate Management Admission test). However lack of English skills in students remains a problem and would appear to lead to some confusion in the minds of some of the lecturing staff about the difference between analytical conceptual skills and English skills, and a tendency to associate lack of English skills with stupidity. Some lecturers maintained that students were far below the level to be expected, whilst others made the remark that they gained good results from all of their students.

The confusion about student skills levels is also reflected by statements by three lecturers that the first student intake accepted sub-standard students in order to ensure the financial survival of the programme. Contradictory remarks were also made that some students, although lacking in English skills, and notwithstanding never having interacted during class, submitted first class work upon completion. This would indicate that there could sometimes be a mismatch between student learning styles and classroom delivery and assessment strategies. This emphasises the fact that lecturers should be flexible in their approach and not be hasty in making assumptions that students are inferior because they do not appear to understand concepts delivered in the style and manner which suits the lecturer.

The need to more effectively address teaching students with different levels of intelligences and learning styles in a single class is also reflected in the observation of one of the part-time lecturers that there were two distinct student learning styles which presented themselves in the classroom. Through developing teaching methods to suit individual groups, the lecturer achieved a high degree of success notwithstanding individual differences in student learning styles.

Students, particularly ESOL students, have to face the complex challenge of adjusting to a new culture presenting new learning and social paradigms. McKenzie and Swords (2000) refer to the flexible evening programme developed for MBA students at Henley Management College in the U.K. They advocate the use of four stages of learner development developed by Brundage MacKeracher, cited in Boud (1988). These are (a) early stage, (b) reactive stage, (c) proactive stage and (d) integrative stage. During the early stage the learner is heavily supported by the lecturer in a reliable environment which is both explicit and consistent. As the learner gains confidence, the learner could become argumentative or negative. Developmental teachers encourage the learner to express their negative feelings and allow them some leeway in terms of behaviour. Once the learner begins to feel accepted as part of a learning group, the learner begins to explore and accept other ideas and views and engage more in dialogue, group discussions and co-operation. Finally, as the learner matures, the learner is able to integrate his perspective with other perspectives and work with many sources of information. The learner at this stage needs a teacher who develops personal standards in the learner and openly shares their information, feelings and values, acting as a co-learner.

Good learning solutions, therefore achieve triple loop learning through an interactive and flexible learning process where the learning gradually matures from dependency to integration and sharing of information, readily working in teams and supporting other ideas. (McKenzie and Swords, 2000; Fisher and Fisher, 1997; Coleman, 1998). This requires strong teacher teamwork, flexibility and openness towards applying new teaching methods.

Viens and Kallenbach (2005) review Kramer's MI theory which addresses the issues of multiple intelligences and adult literacy and advocates that teachers should be highly aware of students' talents and interests. Teachers should develop material which is meaningful to students by using different teaching methods to suit the individual needs of students. This is especially important in a classroom environment presenting multiple intelligences and literacy levels. This would be difficult to achieve at AUT given the time constraints of meeting 12-15 students in class only once or twice a week. However the need to apply different teaching methods in the classroom to address differing learner needs cannot be ignored and further emphasises the importance of the role of the lecturer in developing flexible learning methods, albeit in such a short period.

At AUT there exists a paradox in that although the students were promised a flexible learning approach, the MBA Course Director does not have sufficient control of the lecturing staff to be in a position to focus closely on delivery methods. Indeed, the initial offer of a choice of morning, afternoon and evening lecturers has in 2006 been reduced to morning or evening. Any performance related issue first has to be taken up with the Department Head through which the Director was allocated a particular lecturer. The system dictates that the Director approaches the Academic Group Leaders from within the different disciplines who recommend lecturers on the MBA programme. Only when a permanent lecturer is unavailable, is the Director able to select outside part-time lecturers. According to the Director, approximately two thirds of the lecturers on the MBA programme are permanent lecturers. AUT's recent strategic drive has been towards becoming a research based organisation. Many of the permanent staff are engaged in studying for their PhD's. This means that staff whose main point of interest lies in research within their own disciplines have to take on the additional task of delivering on the MBA programme. This makes co-ordination and teacher group discussion difficult as the only point of contact which the lecturers have with one another as a group is the occasional focus meeting attended by a few permanent staff members and perhaps one or two part-time lecturers. According to one lecturer who was interviewed, only one meeting was held in 2005. One lecturer claimed that, up to August 2006, no further meetings had been held. The question of low motivation on the part of permanent lecturers may be further exacerbated by the fact that permanent lecturers are not given additional remuneration for delivering on the course whilst part-time lecturers are paid highly competitive rates.

This has been demonstrated in the fact that, as one lecturer intimated during their interview, when the programme was launched, many lecturers showed interest in being part of the programme. However, when the level of commitment required to deliver lessons effectively both in terms of content and in terms of rigour became felt, (three sessions of three hours each delivered three times a day), interest began to wane. The result was that it became more difficult to gain the interest or motivation of permanent staff in terms of dedicated enthusiasm towards the programme. In terms of the actual learning process, the only totally positive comments from students about lecturing staff were about one senior lecturer, the former MBA Director and the person who originally developed the MBA course. The student referred to this lecturer as "understanding how students feel about learning", and that if AUT had "many lecturers like that person, the school would have an incredible future".

Contracted lecturers expressed satisfaction at the contract remuneration rate and also demonstrated enthusiasm and a sense of loyalty to the programme, which was not evident amongst the full-time lecturing staff who were interviewed. One comment made by a contracted lecturer was that "The students come to me and say how much they enjoy my lectures because I make it come alive for them". It is interesting that this particular lecturer also adopts a flexible learning approach, combining power point presentations, presentation skills and incorporating a few interesting visual elements. This provides points of interest for higher level students whilst enabling lower level students with English difficulties to grasp concepts visually. The particular lecturer also has effective communication skills with students who speak English as a second language because he has the patience to repeat concepts over and over until he is sure that students understand. This is important within international groups. Students who are in many cases new to New Zealand and unfamiliar with the way business operates in the local environment will quickly grasp if a lecturer is impatient or unable to explain concepts in clear terms. The lecturer is a former company director who had formerly employed MBA students, and clearly knows the practical requirements in terms of applied skills. A number of students commented on the effectiveness of this particular lecturer.

The fact that the programme is structured to allow delivery of lectures at different times of the day and night adds to the pressure on lecturers who are already working long hours writing their own research documentation as well as teaching on other programmes. Because there were not always lecturers who were readily available to deliver lessons, a few of the courses which had been promised during the first and second intake were in fact cancelled. Therefore not all courses are offered, and when courses are offered, they are not always within flexible time-frames. A major point of marketing differentiation for AUT and other providers of MBA programmes is to ensure that all core courses and electives are available, at flexible times. To enhance its reputation, it is therefore crucially important that AUT rigorously applies its marketing promise of flexibility and ensures that all core courses and electives are available.

Although there were a number of students who were disappointed and failed during the first intake, it is significant to note that student satisfaction levels tended to move away from the "strongly agree" category on the issue of flexible learning, during the second intake, when entry requirements were applied more stringently. This would suggest that applying more stringent entry requirements does not necessarily affect student perceptions of excellence and indicates the need to look for methods to enhance the flexibility of programme delivery.

Feedback in Teaching

There are informal and formal feedback mechanisms in place at AUT. The current MBA course Director referred to formal feedback mechanisms through customer satisfaction surveys both on content and lecturer performance which have returned satisfaction levels of 90% and over. According to the MBA Director, anecdotal feedback from employers would suggest that students "hit the ground running" and are very confident and able to tackle a range of tasks. Many students are being employed in substantial positions and students are giving feedback that they are pleased with their progress. Student feedback forms are issued to all students as part of the AUT Total Quality Management process. However student feedback forms do not address the more subtle classroom delivery issues which could affect the perception of ESOL learners, e.g. whether the instructor cared about student progress, whether assessment instructions were easy to understand, whether the student felt ready for assessments and whether the instructor gave feedback to assist the student to improve. Feedback forms are not presently issued at the end of the delivery of each subject for each lecturer.

Use of class time, for example, is a crucial issue for students who have to be brought up to speed in a relatively short space of time. One part-time lecturer commented that three hours once a week was simply not enough time to impart sufficient knowledge to the students - that they had to be so enthusiastic and motivated about their subject that students were inspired to explore even further, during their own time. Lack of motivation because of tiredness could be a problem for the full time lecturers who are already under pressure to deliver during the day as well as conduct their own research.

The strategic move towards a research based culture at AUT is in direct opposition to the concept of MBA programmes which are designed to be practical courses for people who need to perform practically in the workplace. The quality of face-to-face communication and ability to act on informal in-class feedback and offer practical work-based solutions within the feedback loop are crucial for the success of the MBA programme. It is interesting to note that most permanent lecturers who were asked about how they received feedback, tended to refer to the formal Student Feedback Forms. Most part-time lecturers made extensive use of ongoing feedback in the classroom, emphasizing the importance of developing effective relationships and eliciting on-going informal feedback to create a dynamic classroom environment offering explicit practical solutions to problems. The above facts appear to suggest that part-time lecturers are more likely to respond effectively to students in receiving and providing feedback and offering practical solutions within a highly interactive classroom environment.

The need for the use of a variety of feedback mechanisms is underpinned by Guolla (1999) who states a concern with the value of student feedback via questionnaires only, as an indication of course quality, as traditionally the wording of student questionnaires are ambiguous because it is not clear whether the questions are intended as overall quality ratings or satisfaction evaluations. He cites Marsh (1987) who argues that no single study can demonstrate, or refute, the validity of students' evaluations.

Relevance and Links to Industry

<u>Question 3</u>: "Industry relevant." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	5	10.00	-15.00
Agree	7	58.33	27	54.00	-4.33
Not Sure	2	16.67	17	34.00	17.33
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 10 - Summary of Responses to Question 3

There was a drop of 15% of undergraduate students who strongly agreed with this statement and a slight increase in the number of students who were unsure of this statement, whereas 2% of the undergraduates disagreed with this statement. Student Undergraduate comments included the fact that this MBA was a new programme and that a more professional approach was needed, that AUT involvement in direct placement of students into industry would make it more relevant. One international student commented that they had gained 7 years marketing experience in their country of origin and had found the answers to questions in class unsatisfactory because they were not relevant to industry as that student had experienced it, that it only applied to New Zealand industry. Graduate comments included that it thoroughly equips students for industry. One more perception was that the course was only occasionally industry relevant and that some papers had been offered merely to fill gaps in the curriculum. Another student suggested that more industrial workshops should be given as electives to provide more practical and "live" training. These comments would appear to suggest that it is important to develop strong links with industry in order to obtain higher student satisfaction levels. In addition, strong industry links could directly inform programme content. Rapert, Velliquette, Smith and Garretson (2004) explore expectations of students pursuing an MBA. They identify potential meanings of quality in relation to industry requirements and state that "the role of today's reengineered MBA curricula is to mould well-rounded team players through interdisciplinary courses and real-life learning experiences. They suggest that well-trained faculty members with strong business experience who are focused on effective teaching rather than publishing, should be utilised on the programme. Rapert et al also suggest that opportunities to engage in real-world experiences and networking with businesses through field trips and exposure to guest speakers are essential to develop perceptions of excellence in the minds of students.

Question 9 "Relevant Curriculum." (AUT 2005 Faculty of Business Profile. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	2	16.67	6	12.00	-4.67
Agree	7	58.33	33	66.00	7.67
Not Sure	1	8.33	8	16.00	7.67
Disagree	2	16.67	2	4.00	-12.67
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00

Table 11 - Summary of Responses to Question 9

As can be seen, the general trend away from the "strongly agree" category continues, with one undergraduate strongly disagreeing with this statement. Although in terms of the analysis in Table 11 above, there is no statistical significance in the difference between the two groups, there was, nevertheless a reduction in the number of students who strongly agreed with the statement and an increase of 2% of students who strongly disagreed.

Comments from Undergraduate students were that there were too many marketing papers and too few financial papers, and, as in Question 3 above, that some papers had been offered merely to fill gaps in the curriculum. Yet another comment was that "the MBA programme needs to be more organised in terms of offering various papers, especially elective. Most students find it difficult when elective papers are cancelled towards the beginning of the semester." One suggestion from an Undergraduate student was that the number of subjects could be reduced and semester duration increased, and that there should be a "paper/term review every term." These comments underpin the conclusions reached by Rapert et al (2004) who claim that there should be rigorous, ongoing appraisal of course content directly linked to industry.

Question 10" A broad understanding of business." (AUT 2005 Faculty of Business Profile. Information now available online - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	8	16.00	-17.33
Agree	8	66.67	35	70.00	3.33
Not Sure	0	0.00	6	12.00	12.00
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 12 - Summary of Responses to Question 10

Although most students were generally in agreement with this statement, once again there were fewer undergraduate students who strongly agreed, and a slight increase in students who disagreed. Remarks from several students indicated that students needed more exposure to actual business experience.

Question 12 "Networking through the Breakfast Club" (AUT 2005 Faculty of Business Profile. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	1	8.33	1	2.00	-6.33
Agree	6	50.00	14	28.00	-22.00
Not Sure	4	33.33	30	60.00	26.67
Disagree	1	8.33	5	10.00	1.67
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 13 - Summary of Responses to Question 12

Once again the swing away from strongly agree is evident, and a slight increase in the number of undergraduate students who disagreed. No students strongly disagreed with this statement.

Student remarks included that it was a great opportunity and that they enjoyed attending. Other students commented that they had never attended the Breakfast Club. Several other students commented that they had no knowledge of its existence, or that they had no time to attend. Rapert et al (2004) suggest that administrators should ensure closer cohesion and communication between faculties, by enhancing the clarity with which students are informed of various student support services and programmes offered to them.

Question 14 "AUT Business Faculty is sought out by industry seeking strategic partnerships." (AUT 2005 Faculty of Business Profile. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Agree	6	50.00	9	18.00	-32.00
Not Sure	6	50.00	35	70.00	20.00
Disagree	0	0.00	5	10.00	10.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 14 - Summary of Responses to Question 14

There was a fairly evident swing to the "not sure" and "disagree" end of the scale. Comments received were that students questioned how they were to accept this statement when they had not been shown the facts. Another said that as a student from India, they disagreed with the statement because the programme was exclusively geared to New Zealand Industry. Ramburuth (2002) claims that the internationalisation of curriculum and course content should be encouraged. It is suggested therefore that strategic partnerships should not be limited to local industry and faculty but expanded through wider international contact and input from industries and knowledge providers in other countries.

Industry relevancy is considered one of the primary requirements of any MBA course of merit. According to the information contained in brochures and on the website, AUT considers industry relevancy to be the fact that learning will be based on "real industry examples" and that a business Advisory Committee continues to monitor local and international trends to ensure that the curriculum remains up to date. A list of names of people on the Committee is provided on the AUT general website. Those members of the Business Advisory Committee who are actively in business have informational links to their businesses via the AUT website - however the extent to which local and international trends are monitored, or the manner in which these trends are translated into industry relevant course content for the MBA programme is not being made clear to students.   Therefore, although claims are made by AUT that courses are industry relevant in terms of Advisory board input, there is no informational evidence to back up this statement.

Auckland University, on the other hand, a direct rival of the AUT MBA programme, has taken a pro-active approach in marketing the expertise of its Dedicated Business School Advisory Board. One member of the Advisory Board gained their MBA through Otago University, which ranks as 87th on the Economist Intelligent Unit's 2005 world rankings of full-time MBA programmes. It advertises on the internet that this member has also played an active and key role in the governance and revitalisation of the Auckland University MBA programme. It is significant to note that all the members of the Advisory Board for the Auckland University Business School either have Doctorates in Leadership or MBA qualifications.

The qualifications for the members of the Advisory Board for AUT are not publicised so it is not known whether members of the Advisory Board have, themselves, MBA qualifications.   It is ironic to note that some members of AUT staff directly responsible for marketing and administering the MBA course on behalf of AUT and who represent AUT on external Advisory Boards (The National Scientific Advisory Board have no fewer than seven representatives from AUT), are not members of the AUT internal Advisory Board. No dedicated Industry Advisory Board exists to directly and pro-actively serve the interests of the AUT MBA programme to ensure ongoing quality, currency and industry relevance of the curriculum.

There is a perception amongst students that the curriculum, industry relevance and links and understanding of business apply exclusively to New Zealand. The comment was made by several students that the curriculum is not relevant for their countries of origin. e.g. In India there is a strong tendency amongst business seeking to employ graduates, to ask for the subject of a thesis or dissertation, and several comments were received from lecturers and students that there should be a research component to the course for this reason. The possibility exists that business is conducted differently in Asia and China. International student perceptions are that these factors are not taken into consideration and quite a few expressed ignorance and doubt as to whether the programme was truly internationally relevant.

Question 17 "Committed to Internationalisation." (AUT 2005 International Student Prospectus. Information now available on-line - See Appendix D.)

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	3	6.00	-19.00
Agree	4	33.33	25	50.00	16.67
Not Sure	4	33.33	16	32.00	-1.33
Disagree	1	8.33	6	12.00	3.67
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 15 - Summary of Responses to Question 17

The swing away from "strongly agree" in undergraduate students continues. From the above it would appear that whilst the majority of students are of the perception that AUT is committed to Internationalisation, many students did not know the answer, or were unsure whether AUT is actually committed to Internationalisation. The reason for this reaction could be that students have a plethora of booklets providing general information about AUT and claiming the internationalisation of its approach, but no-where is the exact meaning of the term "internationalisation" broken down into a comprehensive statement about aspects of specific services and courses which support the statement. In the MBA student Information Booklet for 2004, no reference is made to the manner in which the MBA course in particular is committed to internationalisation, apart from one general statement claiming that AUT's courses

and qualifications are "highly respected throughout the world". The International student prospectus refers to the fact that New Zealand has earned an international reputation for its politically independent stance, and comments on the contributions which New Zealanders in general have made towards the worlds of science and technology , the arts, medicine, conservation, food, wine, sports and fashion.
Sadly, New Zealand's contribution towards the international world of business is not mentioned. In particular, no mention is made anywhere of the specific way in which the MBA course translates itself into this contribution.

Quality of Lecturers

<u>Question 6</u> "Lecturers with relevant experience." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	10	20.00	-13.33
Agree	3	25.00	31	62.00	37.00
Not Sure	4	33.33	6	12.00	-21.33
Disagree	1	8.33	2	4.00	-4.33
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00

Table 16 - Summary of Responses to Question 6

Although statistically there is no significant difference between the two groups, once again, it can be seen that there is a general move away from being in strong agreement and an increase in the number of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Graduate Student comments were that the academic level and industry experience of lecturers was relevant, that the programme had started off using good lecturers, but that after its inception, some lecturers did not have much experience. Some students felt that the lecturers were preoccupied with completing their PhD studies. The Undergraduate group commented generally that not all lecturers were experienced. One of the Undergraduate students commented on the excellence of a Part-Time lecturer, another that when new lecturers had arrived the students had ended up being "guinea pigs" in the system. One student was of the opinion that some lecturers did not know "what it means to share knowledge". Another commented that one lecturer was a total mismatch and that they had therefore wasted the time and money invested in that subject. Students also claimed that there were some lecturers with top academic qualifications who lectured students but who had never run a business of their own.

Question 15: "AUT Business faculty attracts top teaching staff." (AUT 2005 Faculty of Business Profile. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	2	16.67	2	4.00	-12.67
Agree	5	41.67	19	38.00	-3.67
Not Sure	3	25.00	21	42.00	17.00
Disagree	2	16.67	7	14.00	-2.67
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00

Table 17 - Summary of Responses to Question 15

Once again, Table 17 shows that although there is no statistical evidence to support a significant difference between the two groups, in each question there was a drop in support of the statement, an increase in the number of people who were unsure or disagreed and strongly disagreed. One of the Graduate students commented that even if AUT does attract top teaching staff they did not hire them, implying that the student had been lectured by someone whom they regarded as not being a good teacher, asking why it was so. The Undergraduate Group questioned the reason for taking on "lecturers who are just fillers". Another Undergraduate said that it was obvious that lecturers had been called in to lecture on the MBA programme who had not designed the courses, and who were not comfortable with teaching it, commenting that the lecturers said so openly to students. The student also commented that "they come with big ideas not understanding the constraints of time and students do not clearly understand the requirements". The comment was also made that the facilities themselves are good, and that it would greatly assist the programme if it used regular lecturing staff who are dedicated to the MBA programme, it would be a "good package".

There are two reasons for the decline in the numbers of students who strongly agreed, and the increase of the number of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above responses. The first is the previously mentioned paradox that although the Director of the MBA programme is held accountable for the successful delivery of the MBA Programme, there is very little autonomy afforded the department in that it does not have a dedicated teaching staff whose primary interest is in delivering and assessing a top quality MBA. The second is the fact that the MBA Director is forced to select most lecturers from an existing pool of permanent lecturers. This affects the ability of the AUT MBA programme to attract top lecturers, in two ways.

Firstly, permanent AUT lecturers have been actively encouraged to focus their energies into developing research because of the recent strategic shift of culture. When the University was known as AIT (Auckland Institute of Technology), its primary focus, and differentiation point from a marketing view, was the fact that it was known for using lecturers who were pragmatic and who could impart the technical skills needed. Students who enrolled at AIT knew that they were receiving the best of practical knowledge from lecturers who, as one lecturing participant put it, "had been there, washed the T-Shirt". The organisational culture swing in terms of strategic objectives to change AUT from a practical teaching based focus to a research based focus has therefore had a negative effect on student perception of the quality of the MBA programme. Because MBA programmes are universally recognised as practical toolboxes to equip graduates to perform to optimum level in the real world of competitive industry, a pragmatic approach should be taken in maintaining a current, flexible and practical MBA programme which offers students "hands-on" practical training.

Secondly, because there is no dedicated team lecturing on the MBA programme, communication channels between lecturers is minimised. Part-time lecturers come in, deliver their subject, and then go home. Tenured lecturers are pressured because they have to fit MBA lecture times into a timetable which is already compacted. At the same time, lecturers who have been selected to go onto the research path are also faced with having to complete their own PhD's and regularly produce academic papers. This means that there is very little exchange of collegiate information, or interaction between the permanent and part-time staff. Because many of the part-time staff also work as consultants to industry, they are engaged on a day-to-day basis with industry. Their experiences should be integrated and discussed as part of a dynamic collegial discussion, with exchanges of new ideas and latest practices. The situation has been exacerbated by the fact that because of the new strategic agenda at AUT designed at remoulding AUT into a research-based University, permanent lecturers at AUT had, in the implementation stages, themselves been forcibly split, in terms of prestige and physical alienation. After new, prestigious offices were erected on a site adjacent to the old office block which had previously housed most lecturing staff, those lecturers who had been placed on the strategic research stream were transferred to the new set of offices. Some loyal and hardworking lecturers, most of whom had been with AUT for many years, were simply left behind in the old offices.

The primary functions of business and support functions of businesses need to know and understand what the others are doing in order to add value to the organisation. (Porter, 1985). As one lecturer put it: "As it stands, no-one really knows what anyone else is teaching" Another lecturer commented that a "them" and "us" culture had been deliberately created by top AUT management staff, allocating implied and explicit benefits for lecturers who had been moved to the new block, leaving the general impression that former Certificate and Diploma staff were no longer regarded as having any significant contribution to make to the University and therefore by implication, to the MBA programme. It is ironical to note that, having been relegated to the "second division" as it were, some of these lecturers were required to teach on the MBA programme. This situation would hardly lend itself to creating high morale or motivation amongst permanent staff who were not included in the research stream. Nor would the high numbers of hours of research added on to already pressured lecturing hours required of the research stream lecturers who had moved to the new block, lead to a highly motivated, dedicated team, striving to deliver a Quality MBA programme.

One lecturer commented that at late notice that person was required to teach an MBA paper but was expected to use material sourced by another lecturer who was located elsewhere. This was frustrating for that lecturer because it affected the quality of the learning which was possible to be delivered at such short notice. This highlights the need for improved communication and closer teamwork between lecturers on the MBA programme.

Employment Opportunities

Question 2: "You can fast-track your career, or open doors to an entirely new career." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	9	18.00	-15.33
Agree	4	33.33	25	50.00	16.67
Not Sure	4	33.33	16	32.00	-1.33
Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 18 - Summary of Responses to Question 2

Graduate students were evenly split into three equal groups in response to this question. In the Undergraduate group, 18% strongly agreed, 50% agreed and 32% were not sure. Once again, there is a shift away from strong agreement to agreement. The high level of "not sure" answers which were received reflected the fact that it was really too early to tell if students had, in fact, been able to significantly advance their careers. Comments received from both Graduate and Undergraduate students intimated that they were using the programme as a springboard and would only be able to make judgement on this question, after completion of their studies.

Question 13: "AUT business has 92% graduate employment - the highest of any university in New Zealand (Do AUT staff actively help you to find employment?)" (AUT2005 Faculty of Business Profile. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	2	16.67	1	2.00	-14.67
Agree	4	33.33	5	10.00	-23.33
Not Sure	5	41.67	35	70.00	28.33
Disagree	1	8.33	8	16.00	7.67
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00

Table 19 - Summary of Responses to Question 13

There is statistically strong differentiation between the two groups for this question. Graduate student comments included the fact that AUT assisted students in developing their CV in preparation for their job-search. Another student commented that the only person to have assisted them was one senior lecturer, and that all other advice received from AUT was of poor quality. Another commented that AUT does nothing about finding MBA's positions after graduation or pro-actively provide information about career development. Comments received from the Undergraduate group included the fact that the student already had employment and that it was too early to make a judgement. Another commented that the statement may be absolutely correct, but that the respondent was being asked something different. (The question quoted directly from the Faculty of Business profile, and then in brackets, as an addition, asked whether AUT staff actively help the respondent to find employment. The question itself therefore could have been confusing in terms of its intent.)

Question 16: "Close links with industry and the professions mean a high graduate employment rate" (AUT 2005 International Student Prospectus. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	4	8.00	-17.00
Agree	5	41.67	15	30.00	-11.67
Not Sure	4	33.33	28	56.00	22.67
Disagree	0	0.00	3	6.00	6.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 20 - Summary of Responses to Question 16

There is some statistical difference in this question, as shown in Table 19 reflecting an increase of 28% in the number of students who were unsure or disagreed with this statement.

One Graduate student commented that the link between industry and the professions and high graduate employment rates depended on the Public Relations skills of individual students. This comment could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it could mean that the student perceived that individual students had to be able to sell themselves to industry, and secondly, that the University did not automatically, or actively, seek to assist students to gain employment. If this respondent were in fact an Asian or Chinese student, it could simply reflect a cultural difference in the way in which business is conducted in possibly Asia or Mainland China when compared to New Zealand. Another student suggested that there should be an automated link between MBA students and recruitment agencies, and that special attention should be paid to the employability of students who were ethnically in the minority. Another comment was that AUT should provide on Campus recruitment, and that they could not believe this unless they spoke to AUT students who had been placed in industry.

There are two possible reasons for the drop in the number of students who strongly agreed with the above statement. Firstly, there are presently no formal and active direct links to industry recruitment bodies which means that those students requiring assistance with finding jobs in New Zealand (or internationally), do not receive any direct assistance with job placement. One lecturer commented that they had to personally assist students in finding positions after they had graduated. Secondly, there is no formal feedback mechanism in place to measure post graduate career pathways, on-the-job performance and employment rates. The creation of formal feedback mechanisms from graduates and their employers would ensure the on-going improvement and relevancy of the curriculum. Researching job search methods, career pathways and job placement statistics will assist in informing student support administration of the latest trends in recruitment, selection and career growth. This information would then enable student services to provide on-going, informed and current advice and possibly direct assistance into finding suitable employment.

Question 8:"Overseas Recognition." (AUT 2005 Course Information Booklet. Information now available on-line - See Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	3	6.00	-19.00
Agree	6	50.00	12	24.00	-26.00
Not Sure	2	16.67	29	58.00	41.33
Disagree	0	0.00	5	10.00	10.00
Strongly Disagree	1	8.33	1	2.00	-6.33

Table 21 - Summary of Responses to Question 8

It is quite evident from the response to this question that many students were unsure of the answer to this question and that quite a few disagreed with the statement. One comment received was that the student had only AUT's word for this so they must assume that it is true. Whilst this comment would indicate a general trust in the word of AUT, nevertheless it would suggest that the term "overseas recognition" should be more clearly defined in the marketing literature or in student orientation.

Several students commented that they could not be sure as the AUT MBA programme is still very new, that they had not as yet seen anyone placed internationally, and that they had not heard any facts about this. This shows that students are interested in learning more about international placements, and needed to be shown some facts in terms of what type of placements. It is interesting that students interpreted the term "overseas recognition" to mean job placement.

Student Support

Question 18: "All students new to AUT must participate in Orientation". Orientation is scheduled two weeks before class starts. It includes sessions covering computer log-ins, time management, assignment preparation, course outlines, campus tours, city tours, understanding the use of email, and introduction of services and facilities available, and the meeting of staff and student mentors as well as the opportunity of socialising with fellow students" (AUT 2005 International Student Prospectus. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	8	66.67	9	18.00	-48.67
Agree	4	33.33	29	58.00	24.67
Not Sure	0	0.00	5	10.00	10.00
Disagree	0	0.00	4	8.00	8.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	3	6.00	6.00

Table 22 - Summary of Responses to Question 18

The disparity between the groups in response to this statement were both statistically convincing and puzzling. Graduate comments were all extremely positive, whilst comments amongst the Undergraduates included the fact that their orientation occurred three days before the commencement of classes, which implies that either there was a 3 day orientation before classes commenced, or that there was a one day orientation, three days before the commencement of classes. Another made a strongly worded comment that the MBA orientation needs improvement, that it had occurred 4 weeks before commencement and that everything had been delayed. A comment was also made that orientation does not work for an MBA programme because it is not semester based.

<u>Question 19</u>: "Assistance with student visas, permits, homesickness and culture shock. Social events are organised throughout the year to make your time at AUT rewarding and enjoyable." (AUT 2005 International Student Prospectus. Information now available on-line - see Appendix D.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	5	10.00	-23.33
Agree	6	50.00	16	32.00	-18.00
Not Sure	2	16.67	28	56.00	39.33
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 23 - Summary of Responses to Question 19

Once again, a strong swing away from "strongly agree" (amongst the undergraduate students. Some positive comments from the Graduate Students were received in terms of academic and administrative support and social activity. Another student remarked that they "wished they could have attended the social events" One possible reason for this response would be that those MBA students who are employed miss out on social events because of time constraints.

<u>Question 20</u>: "International Student Centre located on campus with a team of friendly people to help you with applications and enrolment." (AUT 2005 International Student Prospectus.)

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Strongly Agree	6	50.00	5	10.00	-40.00
Agree	5	41.67	14	28.00	-13.67
Not Sure	1	8.33	30	60.00	51.67
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Table 24 - Summary of Responses to Question 20

The strong swing towards "unsure" and "disagree" amongst undergraduates is once again evident. One Graduate student exclaimed that the above statement was 100% correct. Another commented that if all the lecturers were similar to one senior lecturer in particular (formerly mentioned in paragraph 1.5) who always actively helps the students, it would benefit the programme, especially for international students who do not have any friends when they come to New Zealand for the first time. This could be an indicator that although there are informal social events which are arranged from time to time for students, there are still students who feel lonely and who do not have the social skills to readily adapt to the New Zealand environment (one Undergraduate student commented that they "wished that they could have attended the social events"). Another Undergraduate student commented on the excellent service of the ISCU staff. On the other hand, a student commented that the MBA Departmental staff are good, but that the International Student Centre staff are "not so good."

Possible reasons for reduction in the number of "strongly agree" could lie within the orientation programme. There were numerous negative comments about the MBA orientation programme. Whether a lengthy orientation programme would produce perceptions of excellence in the minds of students in terms of meeting marketing promises can be debated. It is generally accepted that an integrated orientation programme for international students, in particular ESL students, is essential in order for the student to overcome the affects of cultural shock. Whilst well conceived and induction and orientation programmes will assist students in overcoming the affects of culture shock and provide opportunities for socialising and overcoming barriers to learning, there are contradictory studies which suggest that the received view of culture shock as it affects international students needs to be reviewed. McKinley, Pattison & Gross (1996) conducted a comparative analysis on the affect of a three week study skill and cultural orientation course. A group of post graduate students who had participated in a study skills and cultural orientation course at a British university were compared with a group who had not. Results showed that contrary to the hypothesis that students would benefit greatly from the course, it was found that the group who had participated in the course had greater difficulty in overcoming the difficulties of studying in a new environment than the group who had not participated. They suggest that personal and social factors have an effect on the way that international students are assisted in overcoming the negative effects of culture shock, and that students are concerned more with academic matters such as coursework, assignments and examinations which cause anxiety and restlessness. Poor English skills have a direct correlation with psychological distress which is evident even in students with comparatively high levels of English language competence.

Ramburuth (2002) claims that although well managed and conceived academic acculturation courses are of considerable benefit in the acculturation, to be effective, these programs have to involve local students to foster intercultural interactions and friendships from the beginning of orientation. He further suggests that structured intervention is essential to ensure social cohesion to be fostered on campus. Of prime importance is the ability of teaching staff to maximise the learning experience by making the teaching and learning expectations, assessment criteria, course structure and course requirements more explicit. Internationalisation of curriculum and course content, strong teacher knowledge of comparative learning styles which are practically addressed by offering flexible student-focused approaches to the way in which the curriculum is delivered and assessed, should be encouraged. Use of local expressions and "throw away" remarks in class and making negative assumptions about students' prior learning should be undertaken with caution. It is suggested, therefore, that whilst orientation of students is acknowledged as an important part of the acculturation process, the process mentoring of students and providing flexible learning and assessment strategies in achieving successful acculturation and learning outcomes cannot be underestimated. All these factors directly affect student perceptions of quality.

Ham and Hayduk (2003), in a study which analyses methods of gaining competitive advantages in higher education, analyse the gap between student expectations and perceptions of service quality. They claim that students first have their perceptions altered through orientation sessions and discussions of expectations. Universities should be managing student expectations to reduce the gap between student expectations and the perceptions of university performance. Of special importance is that facts presented to students are consistent with information given to incoming freshmen through the recruitment process. Ham and Hayduk stress the importance of conveying and maintaining a "willing to help" attitude and the fact that that faculty should not take this important aspect of service evaluation for granted. Students expect to be treated like consumers rather than students. This is especially true in universities offering more advanced and modern educational experiences.

The author attended one of the MBA orientation programmes held on the 21st February, 2004. All hand-outs to students were comprehensive and well presented in terms of general information about AUT and included the student handbook and information about general locations on the map which was also provided. Students were formally welcomed, and sat in one meeting room for the first two hours of orientation. Great emphasis was placed during this time in terms of the amount of commitment that students needed to have, that they would be placed under a lot of pressure and that student classes were relatively small so that "lecturers could keep an eye on the students". This choice of words is confusing as the impression could be that there is a covertly implied superiority of administration and teaching staff over students. On the other hand the conclusion could also be reached that the statement implied a sense of caring for the students. Students who have already integrated into the socio-economic scenario in New Zealand could view the statement as patronising.

Students were told of the importance of attendance and academic presentation of prepared work, warned about plagiarism and informed about whom to approach in terms of time management, procrastination and psychological issues. Students were also warned that the Director of the programme was entitled to tell a student to withdraw from the programme if attendance dropped below 80%. Thereafter students were handed various business cards, invited to email any requests to the Postgraduate Learning Support lecturer, introduced to the representative of the Student Support Services and invited to lunch at a separate venue, with Student Support Services. The general attitude of the Student Support Services person was one of friendly informality, open encouragement and invitation for feedback. Students visibly began relaxing and holding conversations, asking questions and generally sharing ideas with one another. Students were informed about facilities and general assistance available to them. However the information was delivered verbally and students did not receive any formal handout which comprehensively laid out all the support services available to them, during that all-important first encounter.

Summary

The quantitative analysis of data obtained from students shows evidence of mathematically demonstrated statistically significant levels of differentiation between the two groups, ranging from some evidence to convincing evidence, in questions 1, 8, 10, 13, 14, 18 and 20. Notwithstanding that it is only in these questions that there is any indication of statistically validated differences between the two groups, it is nevertheless interesting to view a graphical illustration of the general trend in Undergraduate respondents to move away from the "Strongly Agree" category as can be seen from Figures 2 and 3 below. Although there was a large difference in the numbers of students in each group, and therefore it can be argued that the opinion of 10 Graduate students is not significant in terms of the overall perception of quality of the MBA programme, nevertheless the opinion of each individual student needs to be taken into consideration. Watson (2003) states that the key to success in closing the feedback loop is to ensure that all student views are taken into consideration and are translated into action. In terms of providing a quality customer service to the student, Rapert et al (2004) state that the meaning of quality is personal, grounded in the future hopes of each individual student and that it is time to examine the meaning of quality from the students' perspective. Therefore the opinion of each individual student should be taken into careful consideration, as well as individual characteristics and propensities to take responsibility for their own role in the learning experience and its quality.

Graphical Analysis

Figure 2 - Comparison of 'Strongly Agree' Responses

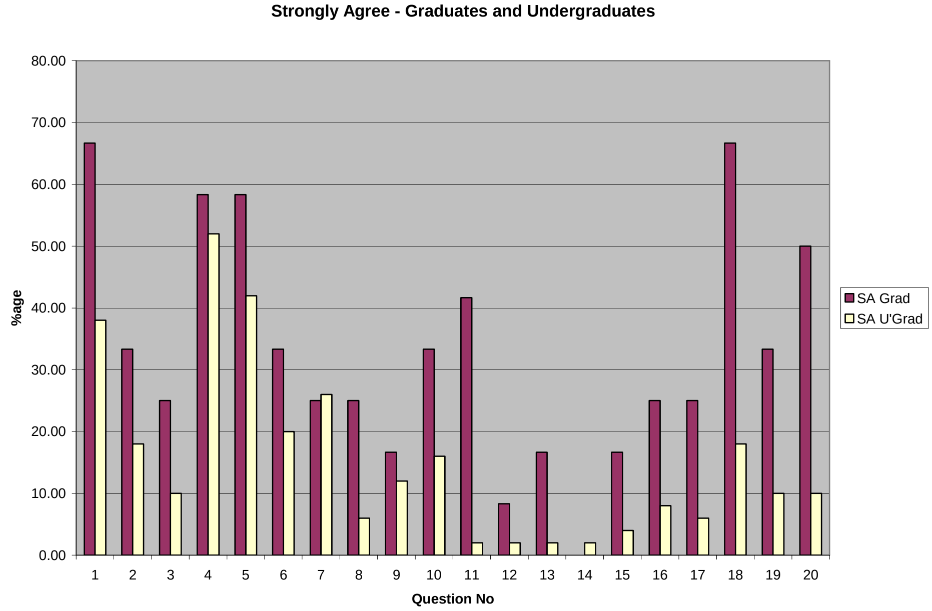


Figure 2 gives a graphic illustration of the Undergraduate move away from the "Strongly Agree" to "Agree", with the exception of Question 7 which showed a very similar response for both groups, demonstrating that both groups strongly agreed that classes were small and interactive. All the remaining questions show a decrease in the number of students in the Undergraduate group of students who strongly agreed.

Figure 3 - Comparison of 'Agree' Responses

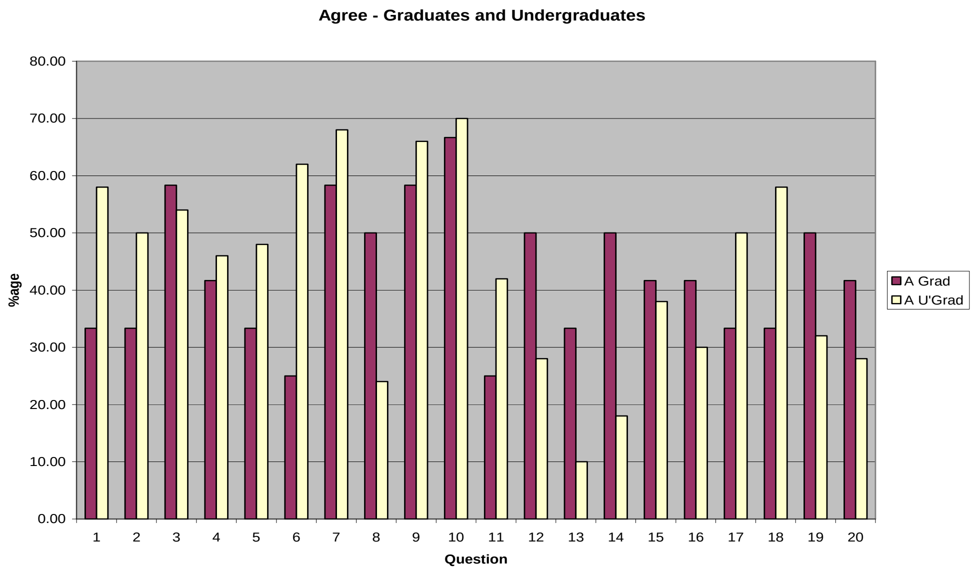


Figure 3 shows that generally, many students agreed with all of the questions - however it can be seen that there is a general drop in "agree" responses in undergraduate students for Questions 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19 and 20.

Figure 4 - Comparison of 'Not Sure' Responses

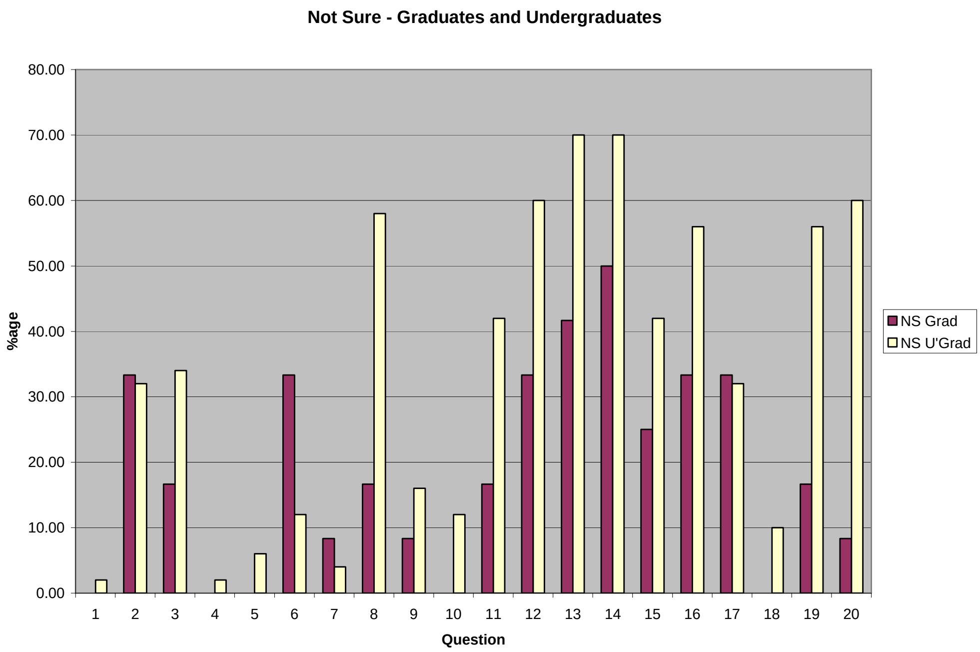


Figure 4 shows the general increase in the number of undergraduate students who were unsure of the questions which were asked.

Figure 5 - Comparison of 'Disagree' Responses

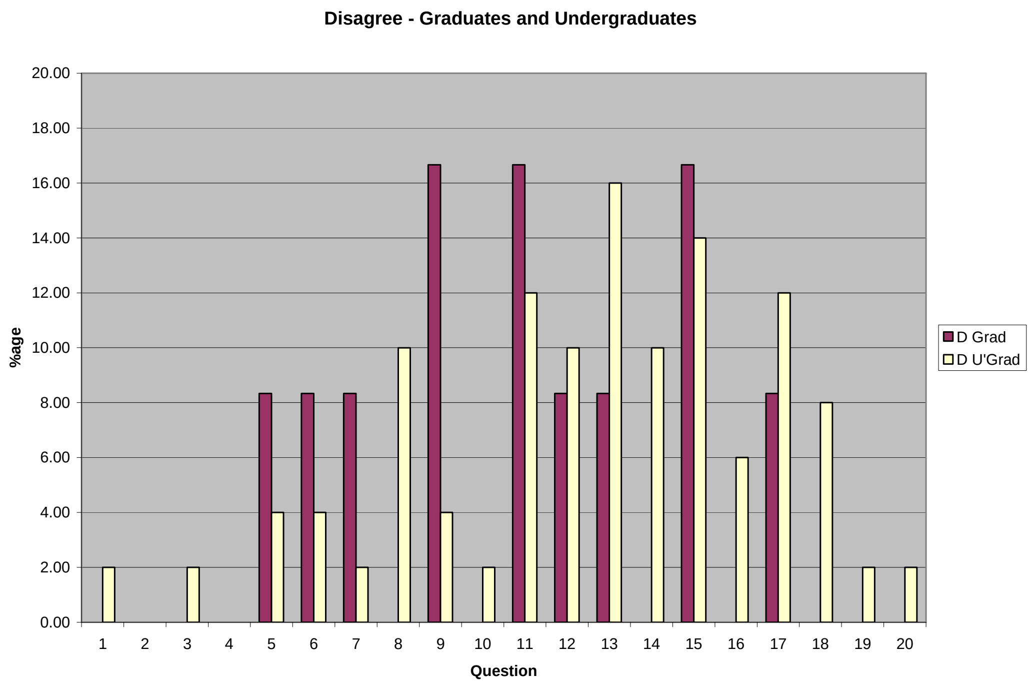


Figure 5 shows that only undergraduate students disagreed with questions 1, 3, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 19 and 20.

Figure 6 - Comparison of 'Strongly Disagree' Responses

.

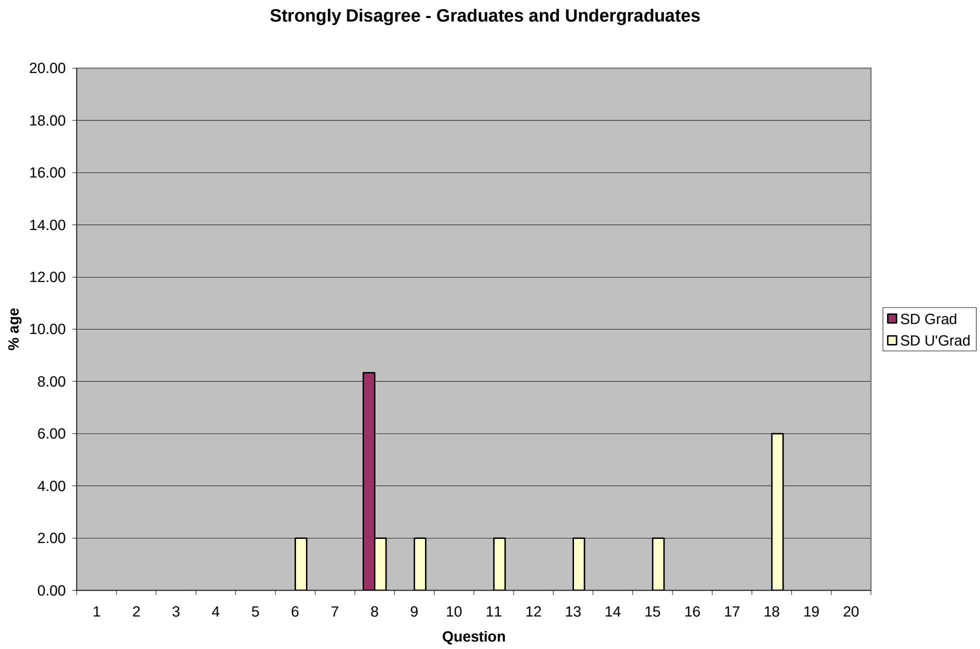


Figure 6 above shows that Undergraduate students were the only students to strongly disagree with Q6, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 18.

The graphic illustrations above clearly demonstrate the general movement of Undergraduate students towards "disagree" and "strongly disagree".

Conclusions

Specific concerns in terms of the management and delivery of the MBA programme will be summarised and discussed in Chapter 5. Recommendations will be made regarding the management and delivery of the MBA programme.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the management and delivery of the MBA programme will be discussed using a systems approach to the business process. Identified weaknesses within the existing operating system will be discussed. A new model proposing an integrated performance management system for the MBA programme will be presented which recommends areas for improvement. Limitations within the research will be reflected upon and suggestions made for future research.

The Systems Approach

In the shift away from productivity to management as a process at the beginning of the 20th Century, psychological aspects of work began to be taken into consideration when it was found that repetition of work was not as demoralising to factory workers as a lack of interest in them as human beings. The emergence of classical operational management evolved after the industrial revolution. Womak, Jones and Roos (1990) refer to Henry Fayol (1841-1925), a visionary who saw the enterprise as a living system. Boje (2006) in an overview of systems theory, refers to the creation of General Systems Theory and the establishment of the Society for General Systems Research by von Bertalanffy, Rapoport and Boulding in 1956. Katz and Kahn (1966) developed the open systems model, in which resources from the environment are transformed into output through systems as cycles of events. The concept of the organisation as a process through which strategic decisions are made and performance is linked to the effective management of people was developed by authors such as Beer et al (1985) and Porter (1981). The growth of Management theory during the 1980's and 1990's led to the concept of Total Quality Management.

Wright (1999) suggests that total quality management is achieved through applying a service operating system where inputs are organised and used in order to obtain outputs. He states that “organisations generally aim to attain standards of quality which are laid down through business policy" (1999:5). The decision about the level of service which is to be provided will be an economic one, and will be driven by what the competition is doing. To achieve optimum service levels it is essential that customer satisfaction, efficient operation and resource utilisation are simultaneously, consistently and sustainably achieved. Wright's matrix of resource utilisation and customer service will be used as the basis on which recommendations can be made to improve the overall performance of the management and delivery of the MBA programme at AUT.

Wright (1999) suggests that in order for any organisation to succeed, there needs to be a strong focus on what the customer needs. Operations management is the function within the service organisation which relates to the customer and delivers the service. The operations manager is therefore the person who makes the vision happen. In order for the operational management of the MBA programme to achieve optimum efficiency and quality, customer service and resource utilisation should be equally balanced in terms of achieving outcomes. Wright (1999) states that it is generally found that the total list of resources and elements determining customer service can be reduced to show the three most important resources to satisfy the essential requirements of specification, time and cost in order to provide optimum customer service.

Table 25 illustrates the three most important resources which would be utilised in order to achieve optimum customer service and highlights areas for concern. Information is necessary to inform the development of programs. Information must also be disseminated to potential purchasers of the AUT "brand" through marketing and advertising initiatives. Technology is an essential resource to the university to assist academic and administrative staff in administering and delivering course material. The library is an important source of information which is disseminated through the use of technology. Industry is an essential resource because the whole concept of developing MBA courses is to develop students who will directly meet the needs of industry upon graduation. Therefore direct industry involvement in the development and delivery of an MBA Curriculum is essential. Without Human Resources, nothing will happen. The quality of human resources employed in the management, administration, delivery and assessment of the MBA is therefore also an essential element.

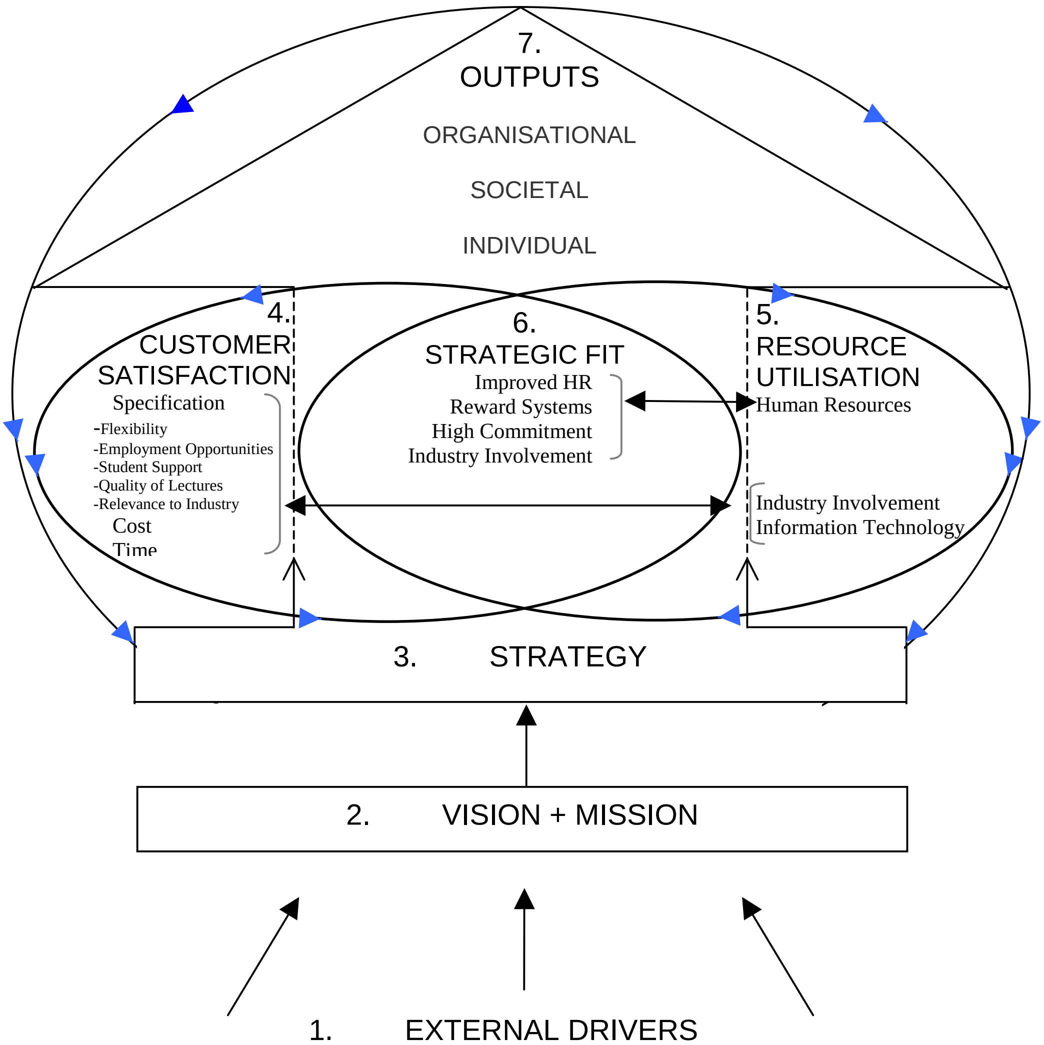
The customer sets specifications. In this case there are several customers, the student being the primary customer. Students require that courses be developed and delivered which meet their specification of quality. The elements determining perceptions of quality were developed from marketing literature issued to students. Questions were put to students and grouped into themes of flexibility; relevance and links to industry; quality of lecturers; employment opportunities and student support. Areas for concern in the areas of information technology, industry, human resources and specification are shown. The course is competitively priced and is being delivered in a short space of time in a suitably flexible manner in order to meet customer specification.

Resource Utilisation			**Customer Satisfaction**		
INFORMATION/ TECHNOLOGY	**INDUSTRY**	**HUMAN RESOURCES**	**SPECIFICATION**	**COST**	**TIME**
Marketing/advertising	Internationalisation	Current business experience	Course/module availability	Competitively priced	Effective Flexible course delivery
Information flow	Advisory Board	Performance management	Assessment strategy		
Programme co-ordination	Graduate Performance evaluation	Conflicting views	Course review		

Table 25 - Matrix of Resource Utilisation and Customer Satisfaction
Adapted from Wright, 1999:26

Performance Management Model

Figure 7 - Integrated Performance Management Model, AUT MBA Programme



Basu and Wright (2005) claim that the term "world class" has developed into the concept that world class companies are leaders in reputation for products and services, are renowned as employers of choice by existing staff as well as employment seekers, and who are continuously improving and leading the market in their field. The departments of a world class organisation interact and mesh to support achieving the common goal.

The model developed in Fig. 7 illustrates how achieving a balance between Resource Utilisation and Customer Satisfaction results in a strategic fit enabling the organisation to achieve satisfactory outputs in terms of organisational, societal and individual goals. There are seven points of reference within the figure, as follows:

1) External drivers determining the requirement for the introduction of the MBA programme.

2) The vision and mission of the MBA programme to achieve world class status.

3) Effective strategies for the effective launching, management and delivery of the MBA programme.

4) Achieving customer satisfaction through meeting the customer specifications of flexibility, relevance and links to industry, quality of lecturers, employment opportunities and student support.

5) Essential Human resources including lecturers, administrative, student support and .dedicated marketing staff, as well as industry involvement and the use of efficient information technology are the resources which are required to enable operations management to effectively manage and deliver the MBA programme to meet customer specifications.

5) The elements of customer satisfaction and resource utilisation are balanced through improved HR practices, high staff commitment and industry involvement.

7) Effectively balancing customer satisfaction and resource utilisation enables the organisation to achieve world class organisational, societal and individual outcomes.

These points are now discussed and recommendations made. Points 4 and 5, Specification and Resource Allocation, are discussed under one heading because they are so closely linked. Weaknesses within each area are identified and recommendations made for improvement.

External Drivers

The knowledge industry in New Zealand is a highly competitive arena in which several major universities compete in order to attract students and several of AUT's main competitors offer MBA courses. The most important of these is the University of Auckland. In reaction to recent trends in universities and to react to the growing competition, AUT has recently re-engineered the organisation in many ways, one of which was the introduction of the MBA programme.

Vision and Mission

The pioneer and previous Director of the MBA programme had a vision to introduce a product which would enable AUT to develop a product which would enable the university to establish itself as a major player in business education within New Zealand.

Strategy

In this thesis a systems approach has been taken in order to analyse and discuss the research findings. Early authors of strategic management generally referred to the organisation as an open system which responds to the external environment. (Beer et al, 1985, Porter, 1981, Thompson, 1967, Lawrence & Dyer, 1983). The task of managers has traditionally been regarded as that of gaining and maintaining congruence between environmental factors and internal organisational requirements. Smircich and Stubbart (1985:725) maintain that the words "organisation" and "environment" create a dichotomy that shapes strategic management thinking. They maintain that there is some disagreement about the kind of relationship between organisations and their environments. They cite Child (1972) in emphasising the importance of strategic choice. On the other hand, Smircich and Stubbart cite Aldrich (1979) who maintains that most organisations flounder and have a helpless struggle when confronting environmental forces. Smircich and Stubbart claim that neither the environmentalists, nor the strategists question the "pivotal (1979:725) notion of the environment as independent, external and tangible entities". Cockburn, Henderson and Stern (2000) claim that the origins of competitive advantage lie in the ability of the organisation to identify and respond to environmental cues well in advance of observing actual performance. Oliver (1997:697) maintains that according to the resource based view of strategy, it is the application of resources which are "valuable, rare, difficult to copy, and non-substitutable" which lead to organisational success. Oliver criticises the resource based view because it does not take into consideration the social context such as traditions, network ties and regulatory pressures when decisions on resource allocation are made. Makadok, R (2001) underpins the notion of taking into consideration the social context in which strategic decisions are made when he refers to a firm's dynamic capacity to use resources using organisational processes to produce a suitable outcome. He suggests that these resources may be information based, tangible or intangible processes which relate to a specific firm. He states that a firm should be strategically flexible in its attitude in protecting its products or services. Thus it is implied that making strategic decisions which are purely budget and resource based would weaken the organisation as this does not take into consideration the a complex process in which both external and internal influences and patterns of social interaction affect both the manner in which strategic decisions are implemented through performance management. If these external and internal influences are not taken into consideration it will therefore affect the quality of the organisation's performance.

Wood and Bandura (1989:361) analysed the function of organisations from a social perspective. They propose that behaviour, cognition, personal factors and environmental events operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bi-directionally. Daft and Weick (1984) saw the organisation as an interpretation system in which people interpret strategy and are influenced by management beliefs about the environment as well as organisational interventions. A small group of people at the head of an organisation will make strategic decisions and a large number of people may span the boundary with the external environment. This information is fed back into the system. Interpretation is not random and upper management interpret the information and make further decisions. Makadok (2001:387) refers to "two distinct causal mechanisms" in strategic management which enable the firm to increase longevity. These are resource picking and capability building. Managers gather information to distinguish themselves from the opposition and choose appropriate resources. The firm's capabilities, on the other hand, are the deployment of resources in *combination* with organisational processes. Oliver (1997) argues that resource selection and organisational processes are profoundly influenced by the organisational culture of the organisation.

Porter (1985), in his value chain approach maintains that a company adds value to its services by regarding its activities as being embedded into a larger value system which include the network of organisations and activities linked to the company. Thus "gaining and sustaining competitive advantage depends on understanding not only a firm's value chain but how the firm fits in the overall value system". (1985:34). Thus Porter's value chain synthesises resource based, institutional and social cognitive and interpretation systems in which resource selection and organisational processes are part of the wider value chain of a company. From the above literature it could therefore be concluded that success of a firm depends not only on allocating resources within specific budget constraints, but also on adopting a value chain approach necessitating close co-operation and communication between all stakeholders within the entire value chain. The successful implementation of the MBA programme at AUT would therefore require that both internal and external stakeholders work together and communicate as a closely knit team in order to ensure the development and implementation of a highly successful educational product which would differentiate itself in the New Zealand market. This was indeed the vision of the Director who conceived and managed the initial implementation of the MBA programme. However the implementation and effective performance management of the programme has been hampered in terms of several strategic decisions which affected operational effectiveness, reducing the extent of market impact which had originally been envisaged by the Director.

AUT operates on a strictly centralised basis and all business functions of the university are centrally controlled under a rigid bureaucratic hierarchy. The MBA programme was thus not allowed to operate under its own auspices and manage its own finances and marketing. As a result any initiative whatsoever required the approval of various disparate departmental bodies which considerably hindered and continues to hinder communication within the organisation. In terms of marketing, the MBA Director gained little or no assistance from a centralised, unsupportive marketing department.

The AUT marketing function generally came under scathing attack from several people interviewed for the purposes of writing this thesis. The Director had suggested that a dedicated marketing initiative be launched which included radio and other forms of media exposure, aimed at gaining a high media profile for the MBA programme and thus AUT itself. All marketing ideas were firmly suppressed upon suggestion, leading to much frustration. One lecturer commented that "I doubt whether they could give peanuts to a hungry monkey let alone sell it to them". Thus one of the most valuable support mechanisms in order to launch the MBA programme was vastly under-utilised. The AUT International Department was highly supportive of the MBA programme and was largely responsible for the successful marketing of the launch through its contacts with outside agencies. It is ironic to note that the original suggestion by the MBA Director, that extensive radio coverage be utilised, has finally been adopted two years later for marketing of AUT programmes.

In terms of industry input, no dedicated MBA advisory board was appointed. Initially, the Director visited members of the corporate business world and researched what their requirements would be. However for any university to approach being world class, there should be on-going links to industry with *direct* input into programme delivery. AUT's major opposition in New Zealand, Auckland University and Otago University both vigorously support the notion of inviting outside industry leaders currently involved in management to lecture on their programmes. Several lecturers suggested that Industry itself should nominate programmes and become involved in team planning of programme delivery so that industry itself takes ownership of the process. Accomplishing any such initiative would necessitate the either the decentralisation of the MBA programme and an allocation of a dedicated budget, making the MBA Director responsible for the marketing, planning of course content and delivery of the programme, or an improvement in the manner in which internal value chain linkages are managed. Porter (1985) emphasises that organisations should identify the key support functions and establish integrating mechanisms to ensure effective co-ordination. Effective communication between operations and marketing is undoubtedly one of the key factors in ensuring that the right calibre of student is attracted to the university.

There also needs to be close co-ordination between operational staff, for example lecturers, either individually or through their supervisors and managers, and marketing, prior to any marketing initiative, to ensure that the promises made through the marketing function are indeed realistic and realisable. At present any marketing initiative needs the *approval* of the central marketing committee, implying covertly that the central marketing committee are somehow superior to operational staff and will "decree" what gains or does not gain approval. Marketing is there as a *support* function to the main activity of the university, providing quality tertiary education, and should therefore add value. According to Porter (1985), there are often many linkages within the value chain of an organisation, but that organisational structures often fail to optimise on co-ordinating the activities.

Porter (1985:61) goes on to say that managers, for example marketing managers and human resource managers, and in this particular example, the marketing manager, often do not have a clear picture of how they relate to the company's overall competitive position. This is something which the value chain concept highlights as being important. For the MBA programme to continue to grow and gain a greater share of the market it is therefore crucial that the marketing department show a higher level of support and willingness to take on board the ideas of the people who must make their marketing promises work - programme leaders, supervisors and lecturers. Such a change in culture and attitude would need to be fully supported at executive level.

A positive strategic initiative was to design the course to be as flexible as possible with six entry points per year providing students with the opportunity to enter and exit at different points. This differentiates the AUT MBA from other providers of MBA programmes who require on-going concurrent attendance for course completion. This makes the AUT MBA very attractive to part-time students and provides the opportunity for AUT to gain direct feedback from students on current trends in business. In addition, it provides AUT with the opportunity to form essential industry links, through students.

The limited budget allocation provided major challenges for the founding Director in terms of providing facilities which could compete with other business schools. Because of a generally apathetic senior managerial attitude in terms of support for the programme, the Director was allocated a stringent budget with limited human resource and administrative back-up. The Director overcame these challenges by almost single-handedly tackling the myriad of activities and tasks needed to launch a new programme including the design and furnishing of recreational facilities, meeting rooms and offices in which to house MBA support staff and provide a focal point where students could have a cup of coffee and exchange ideas. This was by no means ideal, as the lecture rooms were situated in other buildings at the time. However, given the constraints in terms of time and budget allocation and the fact that that person still had to manage and deliver their own lectures, this was a great strategic initiative.

Specification and Resource Utilisation

It has been established that the main elements determining customer satisfaction are specification, cost and time. In terms of cost, the MBA programme is competitively priced. AUT has a strong advantage over other providers of MBA programmes in by offering six entry points per year as well as flexibility in terms of allowing students to enter or exit at any stage they wish.

Customer specification has been categorised into five main areas, based on marketing promises made to students, namely Flexibility; Employment opportunities; Student support; Quality of Lecturers and Relevance and Links to Industry. Recommendations will now be made on how the programme can improve as a result of these analyses. Cost and time are also important factors in determining customer satisfaction. The aim of the organisation is to deliver a product within the correct time and cost through making optimum use of important Resources (Wright, 1999). In terms of Resource Utilisation, Human Resources, Industry Involvement and information technology have been identified as principle resources. According to Porter (1985), marketing is a primary activity of the organisation. The quality of the way in which marketing is planned and managed will depend on the quality of human resources and the way in which the human resource function acts as a support function to ensure that the MBA programme is effectively marketed. Delivering and managing tertiary education requires optimum human resource skills as most of education is delivered and managed through human contact. Therefore reference points 4 and 5 have been integrated for discussion.

Flexibility

One of the marketing promises was to offer to deliver subjects at flexible hours. Care should therefore be taken to ensure that all core and elective papers are available and that they are offered during the morning and the evening as promised.

Opposing views on behalf of lecturers has been identified as one of the hindering factors in enabling that promise to be delivered. The fact that there are more tenured than part-time lecturers employed on the programme exposed two weaknesses in the system. Firstly, some tenured staff are sourced from the newly created research stream, others are sourced from the Diploma and Certificate staff. Some part-time lecturers are also employed. However the MBA Director has no direct authority over tenured staff and thus any performance management issues have to be addressed through their immediate superiors. This could lead to gaps between desired and actual performance. Secondly, tenured staff are not all highly motivated as they quite often have to deliver MBA lectures outside of normal working hours in addition to conducting research as a performance requirement.

It is suggested that the solution to this dilemma is to develop a cultural climate of flexible learning including content, delivery and assessment through employing a close-knit, motivated, dedicated and well co-ordinated team committed to aligning itself to Departmental goals. Becoming a close-knit and motivated team would require appointing a consortium of people from all the disciplines who work together and create strong linkages so that students readily see the connection between subjects. To accomplish this would require that the MBA Director have the authority to require that people delivering the course work more closely and interact effectively. At present each person delivers a subject in isolation.

It is therefore recommended that the MBA programme be established as a separate business unit, for example the "AUT MBA Business School" incorporating short courses, under the Chairmanship of the MBA Director. This business school would be responsible for its own planning, marketing, budget, staffing, course development and assessment. This would address the need to deliver a practical course and equip students more effectively with a set of tools which will enable them to "hit the ground running" upon completion of the course. This does not pre-empt the inclusion of a research element.

Indeed, the inclusion of a research element could provide leverage for the MBA Director to lobby the senior management team because of the alignment of the MBA programme to the research pathways which are a critical part of the current management strategy. Pritchard and Willmot (1997:293-294) claim that there are recurrent struggles between 'power-blocs' (senior management) and 'the people' (departmental managers and their teams), and that allegiances shift depending upon their positioning within diverse sets of social relations. In this system 'the people' are distinguished by their deprivation of economic and political resources. If the 'power-bloc' wants the 'people' to adhere to a new strategic initiative, it will place a low priority in terms of resource allocation to a department which it regards as unimportant in terms of supporting the strategic intent. As the MBA course is not a research based course, the addition of a research element could provide the leverage with which the Director can persuade senior management to provide funding for the establishment of a separate business unit for the MBA programme. The concept of flexibility would be further expanded by developing a forum for discussion and informal student feedback and information through the development of a dedicated MBA website with links to all university facilities and services. Pictures and video clips of high powered lecturers in action including invited guest lecturers of note could be included on the website, creating an aura of excitement and anticipation. This cross-leveraging showing operation in action as a marketing tool is a good example of vertical integration of values and ideas within the value chain (Porter, 1985)

Giving students a greater choice in delivery methods to suit their individual learning styles will add a further element to increased flexibility. At the beginning of the course delivery period, students could be given a learning preference sheet to complete. It would be unrealistic to inform students that all preferences will be met, however the willingness to accommodate student wishes and adapt some of the classroom delivery methods to suit student needs would add more credence to claims of flexibility made in marketing promises (Gremler & McCollough, 2002). . The information from the learning preference sheets would, in addition, provide valuable feedback about student learning preferences.

Because of the importance of developing excellent customer-focused relationships with students and the need to maintain flexibility in both content and delivery, it is recommended that the student feedback process be applied more rigorously for the MBA programme because of the short delivery period. In addition, the fact that some students may decide to exit and re-enter much later in the programme could cause valuable feedback to be lost. AUT is quoted in a paper by Watson (2003) as a university which provides feedback to students in the form of four pages of text on non-glossy paper. However the feedback to students takes place annually and is a general indication of levels of satisfaction for the whole of AUT and not for individual programmes. It is recommended that the MBA programme develop its own set of evaluation questionnaires and to ensure that the student feedback mechanism be a standard delivery requirement, conducted by each lecturer at the end of each delivery period.

Some universities, for example the Middle Eastern University at which the author teaches business studies to adult ESL students, makes use of two separate student feedback forms completed by each student for each subject in each semester. One is for the subject being delivered and its content, level of difficulty, quality of texts and revision notes, and level of English. The second is used to specifically evaluate the lecturer. Questions include an evaluation of the lecturer's ability to develop effective rapport with students, the level of caring and enthusiasm the lecturer displayed, clarity of instructions and assessment requirements, student readiness for assessment, being informed well in advance, of assessment requirements, quality of classroom feedback, the excitement factor - whether different learning methods were applied to make the classroom environment exciting for the student and whether the student had time to practice and receive feedback about these practice assessments. The results of the feedback from students is calculated on a percentage basis, per question, per class. These results are transcribed in a report and used in a formal performance review which is conducted with the lecturer and their Manager at the end of each semester. Lecturers are required to provide more feedback about student responses (both positive and negative) in the form of written comments in the space provided on the report form. These points are used by the Manager to develop a general report which is fed back to lecturers during an end of semester meeting. This process enables new ideas and also problem areas with classroom delivery and assessment to be made known to the rest of the teaching team as well as the Academic Board as part of a rigorous continuous improvement programme. Each lecturer is required to ensure that no less than 75% of the students are present when the forms are completed. Management believed that the university has increased its student intake by over 100% over the past twelve months and is continuing its rapid growth, due to the rigour of teaching and close inter-action with the marketing division.

In order to improve the flexibility of the classroom learning experience Race (1996) summarises a number of teaching techniques for use in open learning which are especially applicable when applied to ESL teaching. These are equally useful when used as general teaching tips, because they include aspects of teaching students how to learn, which is important to MBA international students because of the rote learning tradition so often encountered. Race advocates the use of more interactive classroom material or self assessment instruments (for example quizzes and small case studies). The faster the students receive feedback on these, the more likely they are to remember what they learned, particularly if there is a feedback session to the whiteboard so that all students in the class benefit from the exercise. It is not sufficient to assume that students have understood the feedback, however, and care should be taken to check carefully whether students have understood concepts which they have been shown. The checking can be done using various strategies so that a concept is presented in different forms. This will assist students with difficulty in understanding instruction, particularly at the beginning stages of the course where for example Asian students are not yet accustomed to Western classroom delivery styles and who are accustomed to teacher-focused instruction. Thus the student gradually learns to think across boundaries and in different ways, without losing confidence.

Conducting student-led, in-class mini workshops is another way in which the class can benefit from the knowledge and experience of more advanced students. Powerpoint presentations should be worded in clear, simple tones delivered as closely as possible to the way in which you would talk to students so that they understand what is being said. Use of shorter rather than longer words gets the meaning across quickly. Often the lecturers assume that students know local colloquialisms. However, students, particularly those from rote-learning top-down autocratic learning environments, feel humiliated and ashamed for not understanding, which leads to fear and anxiety. This is one of the major aspects preventing students from gaining feelings of confidence and self-efficacy, as pointed out by one of the lecturers. Handouts should be simple and contain plenty of sub-headings to help learners see at a glance what each page is saying. Another lecturer uses visual impact through the use of diagrams to assist memory retention for students. One lecturer remarked that people sometimes forget that students have to translate the English into their own language, calculate the meaning and then re-code the language back into English to speak to the lecturer. Giving students sufficient time to answer questions is therefore a crucial aspect to ensure effective teaching. Of equal importance is not to name a student before addressing a question to them. If they do not know the answer to a question they will be highly embarrassed and lose their sense of self-efficacy. Keeping a balance in class and not allowing dominant students to eclipse the more reticent students is equally important. Another lecturer used the methods of rotating different groups and providing reticent students with opportunities to lead small exercises coupled with plenty of praise for students who become more confident in class could assist in developing feelings of self-efficacy in students.

One of the biggest problems facing teachers of adult ESL students is the question of getting to know student names as soon as possible. The aim of every lecturer should be to know student names, backgrounds and learning styles by the time students attend the second lesson. This can be achieved by compiling a class list of photographs of the students (after seeking student permission during orientation for cultural purposes, for example some Middle Eastern cultures do not approve of photographs of their daughters being available for general use). Knowing the student's name in a short period gives the student a sense of self-worth and enables high trust levels to be quickly established. This is especially important when delivering the MBA programme because of time constraints. (Race, 1996).

Feedback on assessments should be just as soon as possible after students have completed their assessments. When returning assessments, it is important to take notes of the student's problems and add extra individual in-class guidance on the basis of these problems. This can be done without drawing attention to the particular student by having half an hour at the end of a lecture session to discuss individual progress with students. At AUT there are many seminars available to full-time students on study methods and learning difficulties - however as many of the MBA students are part-time students under heavy time constraints, it may be more productive to conduct in-class mini sessions on learning and memory retention methods.

Relevance and links to industry.

It is recommended that an MBA specific Academic Advisory Board be formed with local and international representation. Members of the MBA Board should be suitably qualified, preferably with MBA qualifications and extensive industry experience at executive level. Having international representation, preferably with representatives from businesses will ensure the strengthening of relationships with Asian businesses and provide an excellent forum for on-going monitoring and research of actual student performance in industry. In addition, it will overcome the doubts expressed by students in terms of certainty regarding the international nature of the course and AUT's commitment to internationalisation.

Total Quality Assurance

Measuring the quality of management education has become an important factor when choosing an MBA course (Mitchell, 2006; Grayson, 2006; Karathanos, 1999; Rapert, Smith, Velliquette, Garretson, 2004).

Gilbert et al (1993:76) cite Zeithaml et al (1990) who determined that there are ten dimensions of service quality necessary for excellence in service delivery. These are: "reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, courtesy, competence, communication, access, credibility, security and understanding the customer." These generic dimensions of quality have been translated by Gilbert into dimensions of excellence for improving the education process, the aim being to strive to differentiate student teaching experiences from all others, as shown in Table .26 below. Dimensions determining the quality of Lecturers as shown below are now discussed in the context of the MBA course delivery.

Dimension of Quality	Effective Teaching Elements
Reliability	Preparation of effective course content and assessment instruments. Applying rigor in developing new levels of excellence.
Responsiveness	Willingness to assist students and provide prompt service and feedback.
Tangibles	Ensuring the availability of effective information technology, equipment, personal appearance and communication.
Courtesy	Being polite and considerate when dealing with students, showing students respect. Being approachable and friendly at all times.
Competence	Employing qualified instructors with depth of knowledge and practical understanding, committed to the process of ongoing learning. Willing to modify classroom behaviour based on constructive student criticism.
Communication	Passionate about the learning process, interesting, animated, use of effective verbal and non-verbal communication such as body language, eye contact, active listening skills. Leading without dominating. Understanding where the student fits into the academic material and how the topic connects to cultural values within the student's environment.
Access	Being readily and easily accessible to the student both in and out of the classroom.
Credibility	Developing high trust levels through building early rapport with students. Use of real world experience and examples.
Security	Developing effective teaching and classroom delivery building student feelings of self-efficacy, reducing the sense of danger, risk or doubt which the student may have. Use of varied and flexible course delivery and assessment instruments.
Understanding the customer	Making the effort to get to know the customer and their individual needs. Showing empathy with student problems.

Table 26 - Dimension of Quality and Effective Teaching Elements

Adapted from Gilbert, J.P., Keck, K.L. and Simpson, R.D. (1993)

Reliability Course content and assessment instruments were developed when the course was initially introduced. Since then the programme has not been formally reviewed or updated. The original aim was to develop a toolbox of learning and assessment techniques to enable individual students to apply within their own organisations. For consistency, it should be ensured that lecturers do not come in and change the syllabus or content individually. Course material needs to be constantly looked at with direct input from industry and constantly upgraded through effective and extensive administrative support to ensure continued quality. It is now suggested that a Quality Circle be established as a forum for continuous improvement. This group would meet once per delivery period. Issues of course linkages and student feedback can be discussed and improvements recommended for approval by the MBA Academic Board. The forum would also provide the opportunity for lecturers to discuss delivery issues in the appropriate forum and prevent lecturers from discussing these issues with students. If any lecturer discusses problems with a student it increases the likelihood that the student will discuss the issue between themselves and soon it will become generally known. Because the MBA programme is still in the process of being established, any negative comments from students could impact on the university's reputation.

Responsiveness. Lecturers should be willing to respond to students at all times. Care should be taken that students are given both formal and informal feedback during delivery. This feedback would in turn be related through the continuous improvement forum. In this way the information will lead to positive changes.

Tangibles. Lecturers should be fully au fait with all the technical requirements such as developing effective powerpoint presentations and use of networking facilities such as the intranet. Part-time lecturers, in particular, do not have dedicated office space and deliver in isolation from tenured lecturers. Providing all lecturers with the opportunity for professional development and training in the latest trends in information technology would ensure that all lecturers are in line with industry developments. All lecturers should have access to the intranet and being able to email group messages to students.

Courtesy. Developing a culture of care for students should be of paramount importance. Developing a generic set of values in terms of caring for students as outlined in Table 26 will assist in ensuring that all lecturers will respond to students in the same way. This set of values should be jointly developed and agreed by lecturers through the continuous improvement forum.

*Competence***.** Only lecturers with suitable qualifications and relevant industry experience, committed to the process of ongoing learning and willing to respond and modify their behaviour as a direct response to student feedback experience should be employed on the programme. Training in teaching methods and problems associated with teaching ESL students should be a firm requirement in terms of performance criteria for lecturers.

Communication. Effective communication is what distinguishes a good lecturer from a mediocre lecturer. Highly motivated lecturers who are passionate about the learning process will be more likely to deliver effective lessons. Develop a dedicated lecturing team committed to continuous improvement who apply good communication skills in the classroom and stressing good communication skills as part of the performance criteria in managing performance will ensure that communication is effective.

Access. There is a danger that tenured lecturers who are under pressure to do their own research as well as deliver other subjects will have limited time in which to respond to students. Employing dedicated lecturers who are highly motivated and interested in developing a world-class MBA programme and making it a performance criteria that they be readily accessible to the student will assist in ensuring high accessibility for students.

Credibility. Building rapport with students through making use of real-world experiences to relate to students will improve the credibility of lecturers. In developing more flexible learning methodologies and applying the suggestions for improving flexible learning, the lecturers, and therefore the MBA course will continue to grow in credibility and reputation

Security. Students need to feel safe in the classroom and about their courses. Lecturers need to be student focused and delivered in a cultuarally sensitive manner. Through the continuous improvement forum, lecturers should present and receive ideas for reducing stress and fear levels in students, particularly international students.

One controversial suggestion made by Gremler and McColollough (2002) is the issuing of student satisfaction guarantees. A study was conducted on 262 students at a public university in the northwest United States where students were issued with a service guarantee. The results indicated that, contrary to the fears of some critics, lecturers did not "go easy" on students in order to receive a favourable report, and the presence of a customer service guarantee did not reduce the rigour of assessment.

The feedback form included a self evaluation of the student who evaluated themselves as being a good customer. Whether or not a guarantee of this nature will be beneficial to enhancing the perception of excellence of the MBA programme could be debated - the particular university had one student who invoked the guarantee and it was found that the particular student had received an "A" grade in the course, and the student had therefore not invoked the guarantee as a result of poor grading. Their study has not been replicated elsewhere and it is suggested that a pilot study be conducted with a small group of students to determine whether or not this would be beneficial for the programme.

Understanding the Customer. In addition to making use of classroom delivery techniques to reduce the effect of cultural differences, lecturers should be given cross-cultural training as part of their ongoing professional development and as a non-negotiable criteria for their own performance management. Pro-actively seeking suggestions from students in terms of preferred learning and assessment methods and willingly modifying classroom behaviour to accommodate these changes will improve communication and therefore understanding of the customer.

Employment Opportunities

Recruitment firms value applicants with an MBA qualification because it increases their ability to successfully place applicants. At the same time business schools are often criticised for their lack of focus on the job in terms of imparting practical skills to their students. Studies show that MBA graduates with practical skills are more employable (Grayson, 2005; Thandi and Sharma, 2004). Moreover, integrating experience into the business curricula enables the student to make decisions which are real rather than resolving a case study. (McCarthy and McCarthy (2006). Literature on resume development suggests that resumes should include educational qualifications, work experience, educational qualifications as well as the abilities, qualities and skills relevant to the job which they are seeking. Findings by McNeilly & Barr (1997) suggest that recruiters look least favourably on resumes that elaborate on educational activities and most favourably on resumes that elaborate on work experience which in turn affects student employability. Recent changes in business trends have led to more classes in which active learning approaches such as field projects and experiences and skills development exercises are utilised (Barr and McNeilly, 2002). Grayson, (2005) states that business schools are being criticised for failing to impart useful skills. It is therefore essential to examine whether the process of learning for MBA students at AUT includes practical application of theory learned. Through developing closer relationships with industry and recruiters which more closely determine the criteria required to ensure post-graduate practical performance, MBA providers can embark on an awareness campaign to educate students and recruiters in terms of classroom experiences providing evidence of knowledge and skills which recruiters and industry seek.

Through providing direct recruitment links to industry, for example an on-campus based employment advisor who would assist and mentor students in the development of effective CVs would add credence to the marketing claim that employment opportunities are being provided to students. Barr and McNeilly (2002) conducted studies on the value which recruiters place on classroom learning when placing graduate students and found that 40% of recruiters considered that critical skills, for example leadership and teamwork, are unavailable in the classroom.

Thus it is suggested that the university liaise with industry through their students and include practical research-based projects which students can develop as part of the course. Such a strategic move would counter strategic changes adopted by the University of Auckland Business School which has recently remodelled its MBA offering to give it more of an international flavour. Larger practical and international content has been developed through consulting projects. (Statement by the MBA Program Director of the University of Auckland Business School quoted in Grayson 2006.)

Providing such opportunities for students would, in addition, provide a forum of opportunity for students to network with industry representatives. Employment opportunities could be advertised directly on the MBA specific website previously suggested.

Obtaining feedback and publishing details of companies likely to employ MBA graduates because of previous AUT MBA successes would provide further marketing and advertising opportunities.

Student Orientation

It is suggested that the orientation programme link directly with the MBA specific brochure and dedicated website, focusing on the most important aspects of the course from content through to delivery and assessment, thus making expectations very clear right from the outset. In addition, student services which are available to MBA students should be made explicit in the brochure. At present, there are so many brochures and so many independent sources of information about services available to students that it takes time to go through all of them. This would particularly assist part-time students who are under particular pressure with limited time in which to complete the course. Through developing an integrated orientation programme student perception of the quality of orientation would improve. It is also suggested that in order to facilitate planning of an improved orientation, that students be given an orientation related questionnaire to complete in terms of individual requirements of orientation. This can then be discussed at the continuous improvement forum and students can be given direct feedback within a short period, through the dedicated website.

The literature has shown that long orientation programmes do not add to the overall sense of value which students attach to courses. It is therefore suggested that a short, one-day orientation programme be maintained and the recommendations in the above paragraph be included.

CHAPTER 6 - REFLECTION

Because of time constraints and the fact that some students had issued a formal complaint by students against another researcher who attempted to have them complete lengthy questionnaires during class time, it was decided to present students with quantitative questionnaires to be completed on a voluntary basis outside the classroom, instead of the lengthy qualitative questionnaires which were originally proposed.

The positive effect which this action produced resulted in a 62.6.% student participation rate. Whilst the spaces provided for qualitative statements by students produced some insight into deeper student perceptions, conducting depth interviews with, for example 12% of the total respondents would in the author's view have added an extra dimension to this study.

Writing this thesis was a challenge as the author works overseas. This resulted in the research being conducted in short leave periods in New Zealand and made writing up of material challenging as keeping verbal contact with all the people involved is difficult to achieve effectively.

The interviews were conducted over a short one week period which, as fate would have it, coincided with AUT's move into the new premises. As a result, the author felt it prudent not to attempt to allow the interviews to be too lengthy with MBA tenured staff because the interviewees concerned were all packing to move into the new offices. As a result, those interviews conducted at the university could have been compromised in terms of detail. In one particular case the interviewee's previous office space had already been allocated to someone else so a make-shift space was created which, although private, was conducted behind a screen. The interview was kept to the minimum time to avoid placing the interviewee under stress. Notwithstanding these difficulties, sufficient qualitative data were gathered in order to facilitate a fair discussion of the topic. Ideally, allowances for more time would have been made to enable interviews to be conducted at a more leisurely pace to ensure that interviewees were as relaxed as possible.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSION

In order for the MBA programme to move closer toward attaining world class status, several changes have been suggested, the most important of which is to redevelop the MBA programme as a separate business unit with its own independent budget. The MBA Director would be responsible for running the programme in its entirety. This would require the development of a revised business plan and marketing strategy.

The creation of an MBA specific Academic Advisory Board including prominent businessmen who are suitably qualified and have current direct exposure to industry will strengthen industry bonds and provide a valuable forum for feedback.

Improving human resources by the formation of a dedicated MBA lecturing team serving jointly on the continuous improvement forum meeting regularly will ensure the continuous review and upgrading of the course content and assessment as well as provide opportunities to strengthen the MBA lecturing team.

The view of one lecturer was that AUT was in a situation with the MBA programme where they would have to stop it for anyone to have the time to change it "like trying to wash and wax a moving car."

The challenge, therefore, is to implement changes to improve course delivery and assessment whilst it is in the process of being delivered. This would be a difficult but achievable task if planned effectively with staff commitment and senior AUT budgetary and moral support. Through improving the value chain linkages which bind marketing and operation both within and outside the organisation, thus developing a whole systems approach, will result in improved customer service to students and the assurance of career success.

REFERENCES

Aaker, D.A., and Meyers, J.G. 1987. **Advertising Management** (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J. U.S.A:Prentice-Hall.

Academy of Management Review. 2006. Viewed on 23/10/2006. http://www.aom.pace.edu/amr/style.html.

Allinder, R.M. 1994. The relationships between efficacy and the instructional practices of special education teachers and consultants. ***Teacher Education and Special Education.*** Vol 17:86-95.

AUT. 2005. **Master of Business Administration Course Information Booklet.** New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology: Wellesley Street, Auckland. Information now on-line - see Appendix D. (http://www.aut.ac.nz).

AUT. 2005. **Faculty of Business Profile.** New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology: Wellesley Street, Auckland. Information now on-line - see Appendix D. (http://www.aut.ac.nz)

AUT 2005. **International Student Prospectus.** New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology: Wellesley Street, Auckland. Information now on-line - see Appendix D. (http://www.aut.ac.nz)

Bagozzi, R.P., Gürhan-Canli, Z & Priester, J.R. 2002. **The social psychology of consumer behaviour.** Philadelphia, U.S.A:Open University Press.

Balmer, John M.T. 2001. Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate marketing - seeing through the fog. ***European Journal of Marketing,*** 35(3/4):248.

Barr, T.F. and McNeilly, K.M. 2002. The value of students' classroom experiences from the eyes of the recruiter: Information, implications, and recommendations for marketing educators. ***Journal of Marketing Education,*** Vol.24(2):168-173.

Basu, R and Wright, J.N. 2005 **Total operations solutions.** Oxford:Elsevier.

Beattie, K and James, R. 1997 Flexible coursework delivery to Australian postgraduates: How effective is the teaching and learning. ***Journal of Higher Education,*** 33: 177-194.

Beer, W., Spector, B., Lawrence, R., Mills, L and Walton, R. 1985. **Human resource management.** New York: The Free Press.

Bickerton, D. 2000. Corporate reputation versus corporate branding: the realist debate. ***An International Journal,*** Vol. 5(1):42-48.

Bloland, P.A. 1992. Qualitative Research in Student Affairs. ***Eric Clearinghouse on Counseling and personnel Services ED347487,*** Viewed on 18/01.07. http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-3/qualitative.htm.

Boje D. 2004. ***Overview of Systems Theory.*** Viewed on 29/12/06. http://business.nmsu.edu/dboje/655/655_overview.htm.

Boxall, P. (Ed.) 1997. **The challenge of human resource management.** Auckland, New Zealand: Longman Paul.

Brandt, E. 2002. Strategies by Norwegian universities to meet diversified market demands for continuing education. ***Higher Education,*** 44:393-411.

Buisson, D.B. 2006. ***A Global Guide to Management Education***. Viewed on 12th January 2007. http://www.gfme.org/global_guide/pdf.

Campbell, J. 2000 Using internet technology to support flexible learning in business education. ***Information Technology and Management,*** (1):351-362.

Casey, D. 1993. **Managing learning in organisations.** Buckingham, Philadelphia. Open University Press.

Coladarci, T. 1992. Teachers' sense of efficacy and commitment to teaching. ***Journal of Experimental Education,*** 60:323-337.

Cronbach L.J. 1975. Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. ***American Psychologist,*** 30(2):116-127.

Coleman, D 1998. 'What makes a leader?' ***Harvard Business Review,*** November.

Dommeyer, C.J., Baum, P. and Hanna, Robert W. 2002. College students' attitudes toward methods of collecting teaching evaluations: In-Class versus on-Line. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** Sept/Oct.

Downey, R.G., King, C. 1998 Missing data in Likert ratings: A comparison of replacement methods. ***The Journal of General Psychology,*** 125(22):175-91.

Dwayne, D.G., McCollough, M.A. 2002. Student satisfaction guarantees: An empirical examination of attitudes, antecedents, and consequences. ***Journal of Marketing Education,*** 24(2)August: 150-160.

Dwyer, J. 2003. **The business communication handbook.** Australia: Pearson Education.

Fazio, R., Powell, M., and Williams, C. 1989. The role of attitude accessibility in the attitude-to-behaviour process. ***Journal of Consumer Research,*** (16):280-288.

Foreman, S.K. and Money, A.H. 1995. Internal marketing concepts, measurement and application. ***Journal of Marketing Management,*** **(**11):755-68.

Fournier, S. 1998. Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research. ***Journal of Consumer Research,*** **(**24):343-373.

Franz, R.S. 1998. Whatever you do, *don't* treat your students like customers! ***Journal of Management Education,*** 22(1):63-69.

Frondizi, R. 1971. **What is value?** (2nd Ed.) Illinois: Open Court Publishing company.

Gatignon, H and Robertson, T.S. 1991 **Handbook of Consumer Behaviour.** U.S.A: Prentice Hall.

Gibson, S. and Dembo M. 1984 Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. ***Journal of Educational Psychology,***(76):569-582.

Giese, J.L. and Cote, J.A. 2000 Defining consumer satisfaction. ***Academy of Marketing Science Review,*** 2000:1-24.

Gilbert, James P., Keck, K.L., and Simpson, R.D. 1993 Improving the process of education: Total quality management for the college classroom. ***Innovative Higher Education,*** 18(1).

Gore, C., Steven, V. and Bailey, M 1998. Analysis of the effect of external change on the management of business schools within the higher education sector. ***Total Quality Management,* (**9, 2/3)249.

Grayson, I. 2005. Fast pace of business drives EMBA. ***World Business.*** viewed on 12/01/07:http://edition.cnn.com/2005/BUSINESS/08/15/execed.defined/index.html.

Grayson, I. 2006. Remote location proving no bar: New Zealand courses capture world attention. ***World Business.*** Viewed on 14th January 2007: http://www.cnn.com/2006/BUSINESS/02/13/execed.newzealand/index.html.

Gremler, D.D. and McCollough, M.A. 2002. Student satisfaction guarantees: An empirical examination of attitudes, antecedents, and consequences. ***Journal of Marketing Education,*** 24(2)150-160.

Grubb, E.L. and Grathwohl, H.L. 1967. Consumer self concept, symbolism, and market behaviour. ***Journal of Marketing,* (**31):22-7.

Gunn, C. and Recker; Mimi M. 2001. New Zealand higher education in the age of the global virtual university. ***Educational Technology, Research and Development,*** **(**49):107-116.

Guolla, M. 1999. Assessing the teaching quality to student satisfaction relationship:Applied customer satisfaction research in the classroom. ***Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice,*** Summer,7(3).

Guskey, T.R. 1988. Teacher efficacy, self-concept, and attitudes toward the implementation of instructional innovation. ***Teacher and Teacher Education*** (4):63-69.

Guthrie, G. 1998. The Academic in the 21st Century. ***Address to the AIT Commerce Faculty, 31st July, 1998.***

Haase J.E. and Myers S.T. 1988. Reconciling paradigm assumptions of qualitative and quantitative research. ***Western Journal of Nursing Research.*** 10(2):128-137.

Hair, F. Rolph, E.A. Tatham, R.L. and Black, W.C. (1998) **Multivariate data analysis. (**5th Ed). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Ham, L. and Hayduk, S. 2003. Gaining competitive advantages in higher education: Analysing the gap between expectations and perceptions of service quality. ***International Journal of Value Based Management.*** 16:223-242.

Handy, C. 2002. Elephants and Fleas: Is your Organisation Prepared for Change? ***Leader to Leader,*** Spring.(24):29-33.

Hoepfl, M.C. 1997. Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education researchers. ***Journal of Technology Education,*** .9(1).

Hussey, J & Hussey R 1997. **Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate Students.** U.K:Macmillan.

Inkson, K. and Kolb, D. 2002. **Management: Perspectives for New Zealand.** Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education.

Joseph, M. and Joseph, B. 1997. Service quality in education: a student perspective. ***Quality Assurance in Education,*** 5(1):15-21.

Juttner, U and Wehrli, H.P.1994 Relationship marketing from a value system perspective. ***International Journal of Service Industry Management,*** (05-5):1-17.

Katz, D., Kahn, R.L. 1978. **The social psychology of organisations** (2nd ed.) New York:Wiley.

Kemp, S., Madden, G. and Simpson, M., 1998. Emerging Australian education markets: A discrete choice model of Taiwanese and Indonesian student intended study destination. ***Education Economics,*** 6(2):159-169.

Kim, D.H. 1993. The link between individual and organisational learning. ***Sloan Management Review,*** **(**Fall 1993):37-49.

Kolb, D. 1985. **The Learning Style Inventory: Technical Manual.** Boston: McBer.

Kotler, P. 1997. **Marketing Management.** New Jersey:Prentice Hall

Kvale, S. 1996. **Interviews – an introduction to qualitative research Interviewing.** Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc.

Larkin, Judy 2003. **Strategic Reputation Risk Management.** Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire,U.K.:Palgrave MacMillan.

Lawrence,P. Dyer E. 1983. **Renewing American Industry.** New York: Free Press.

Leedy, P. (1993) **Practical Research - Planning and Design. (**5th Ed.) New York. Macmillan.

Long, R.G., White, M.C., Friedman, W.H. and Brazeal, D.V. 2000. The 'Qualitative' Versus 'Quantitative' Research Debate:A Question of Metaphorical Assumptions. ***International Journal of Value-Based Management,*** **(**13:189-197).

Loo, R. 2002. A meta-analytic examination of Kolb's learning style preferences among business Majors. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 77(5):252-256.

Lovelock, C. 1983. Classifying services to gain strategic marketing insights. ***Journal of Marketing,*** **(**47):9-20.

Mahajan, V. Muller, E and Bass, Frank M. 1990. New product diffusion models in Marketing: A review and directions for research. ***Journal of Marketing,(***54):1-26.

Makadok, R. 2001. Towards a synthesis of the resource-based and dynamic-capability views of rent creation. ***Strategic Management Journal,*** Vol. 22:387-401.

Manning, C.K., Bearden, W.O. and Madden, T.J. 1995. Consumer innovativeness and the adoption process. ***Journal of Consumer Psychology,*** 4(4):329 - 345.

Mason, J. 2nd Edition, 2002. **Qualitative Researching.** London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Mazzarol, T. 1998 Critical success factors for international education marketing. ***International Journal of Educational Management,*** 12(4):163-175.

McCarthy, P.R. and McCarthy, M. 2006. When case studies are not enough: integrating experiential learning into business curricula. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 81(4):201-204.

McCracken, G. 1986. Culture & consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. ***Journal of Consumer Research,(***13):71-81.

McKenzie, J & Swords, D. 2000. Maintaining relevance in business education. ***International Journal of Value-Based Management,*** **(**13):273-295.

McKinley, N.J., Pattison, H.M. and Gross, H. 1996. An exploratory investigation of the effects of a cultural orientation programme on the psychological well-being of international university students. ***Higher Education,*** (31):379-395.

McNeilly, K.M. and Barr, T.F. 1997. Convincing the recruiter: A comparison of resume formats. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 72(6):359-363.

Mintzberg, J., Quinn, J.B. and Goshal, S. 1995. **The strategy process**. Hemel Hempstead, U.K: Prentice Hall.

Misra, S and McMahon, G. 2006. Diversity in higher education: The three R's. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 82(1)40-44.

Mitchell, R. 2006. **The Guide to New Zealand MBA Programmes.** Viewed on 14/01/2006. http:www.thembaagency.com.

Mollenkopf, D & Moore, V. 1998. Congruity theory. In Earl, P.E. & Kemp, S. (Eds.) ***The Elgar Companion to Consumer Research and Economic Psychology.*** Cheltenham:Edward Elgar Publishing.

Montgomery, M and Powell, I. 2006. The effect of tuition and opportunity cost on the pursuit and completion of a graduate management degree. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 81(4):190-201.

New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee Survey of Graduates. 2003. Viewed in June, 2004. http://www.scoop.co.nz.

Oliver, C. 1997. Sustainable competitive advantage combining institutional and resource-based views. ***Strategic Management Journal,*** **(**18/9):697-713.

Patton, M.Q., 2nd Edition 1990. **Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods.** California: Sage Publications Inc.

Paxton, P. and Wright, C. 2002. Reflections, reports, reviews: The peer review process of the approval of new programmes in New Zealand universities: the experiences of one university. ***Journal of Higher Education and Management,*** 24(1).

Petrova, K. and Sinclair, R. 2005. Business graduates learning online: A one semester snapshot. ***International Journal of Education and Development,*** 1(4).

Petty, R.E., Unnava, H.R., and Strathman, A.J. 1991 Theories of attitude change. In Robertson and Kassarjian (Eds.). ***Handbook of Consumer Behaviour***. Prentice Hall.

Porter, M.E. 1985. **Competitive advantage: creating and sustaining superior performance.** New York:Free Press.

Porter, M.E. 1981. The contributions of industrial organisation to strategic management. ***Academy of Management Review,*** 6(4):609-20.

Pritchard, C., Willmot, H. 1997. Just how managed is the McUniversity. ***Organisation Studies,*** 18(2):287-316.

Race, P. 1996. ***Practical Pointers to Flexible Learning.*** Viewed on 17/04/2006. http://www.city.londonmet.ac.uk.

Rapert, M.I., Smith, S., Velliquette, A., and Garretson, J.A. 2004. The meaning of quality:Expectations of students in pursuit of an MBA. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 80(1):17-24.

Ramaswamy, K. and & Li, M. 1977. Strategic change among US business schools: A strategic group analysis. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 72(6):343-347.

Ramburuth, P. 2002. ***Cross cultural adaptation: Insights into the learning and socio-cultural experiences of cross-border students.*** Paper presented at the Ninth International Literacy and Education Research Network Conference on Learning, Beijing, China: July 16-21, 2002.

Roedder, D.L. 1999. Consumer socialisation of children: A retrospective look at twenty-five years of research. ***Journal of Consumer Research,*** (26)**:**183-213.

Rogers, E.M. 1983. **Diffusions of innovations.** 3rd Ed. New York. The Free Press.

Rokeach, M. 1973. **The nature of human value.** New York: The Free Press.

Rapert, M.I., Smith, S., Velliquette, A., Garretson, J.A. 2004. The meaning of quality: expectations of students in pursuit of an MBA. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 80(1):17-24.

Richards-Wilson, S. 2002. Changing the way MBA programs do business: Lead of languish. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** 77(5):290-296.

Scoop.Co.Nz. 2004 ***International Graduate Numbers Increase*** Viewed 22/5/2004. http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/ED0403/SOO115.htm.

Scrabec, Q. Jr. 2000. A Quality Education Is Not Customer Driven. ***Journal of Education for Business.*** 75(5):298-300.

Silverman, D. 2000. **Doing qualitative research.** London, California, New Delhi: Sage.

Smircich, L. and Stubbart, C. 1985. Strategic management in an enacted world. ***Academy of Management Review,*** 10(4):724-736.

Stein, M.K. and Wang, M.C. 1988. Teacher development and school improvement: The process of teacher change. ***Teaching and Teacher Education.*** (4**)**:171-187.

Taylor, S.J. and Bogdan, R. 1998. **Introduction to qualitative research methods.** N.Y:John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Thandi, H. and Sharma, R. 2004. MBA Students preparedness for enterpreneural Efforts. ***Tertiary Education and Management,*** **(**10):209-226.

Theunissen, C.A.1998. **State power and intelligence in an age of knowledge**. Doctoral Thesis:Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Theunissen, C.A. and Theunissen, P.S. Working Paper. Auckland Institute of Studies and Auckland University of Technology:Auckland NZ

Thompson, J.D. 1967. **Organisation in action.** New York:McGraw-Hill.

Tischler, L., Biberman, J., and Alkhafaji, A. 1998. A new strategic planning model for universities undergoing transformation. ***International Journal of Commerce & Management,*** 8(3/4):85-101.

Viens, J. Kallenbach, S. 2005. Review. Kramer, J.A. -Multiple intelligences and adult literacy: A sourcebook for practitioners. ***Adult Basic Education,*** 15(2):123-124.

Ward, M.C. 1999 Managing student culture and culture shock: A case from European Tirol. ***Anthropology and Education Quarterly,*** 30(2):228-233.

Watson, S. 2003. Closing the Feedback Loop: Ensuring effective action from student feedback. ***Tertiary Education and Management,*** **(**9):145-157.

Winsted, K.F. 1999. Evaluating service encounters: A cross-cultural and cross-industry exploration. ***Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice,*** 7(2):106-123.

Wood, R. and Bandura, A. 1989. Social cognitive theory of organizational management. ***Academy of Management Review,***14(3):361-384.

Woodall, T. 2003. Conceptualising value for the Customer: An attributional, structural and dispositional Analysis. ***Academy of Marketing Science Review,*** (12).

Wolstenholme, E.F. 1999. Qualitative vs quantitative modelling: the evolving balance. ***Journal of the Operational Research Society,*** **(**50):422-428.

Womack, J.P., Jones, D.T., Roos, D. 1990. **The machine that changed the world.** New York:Rawson Associates.

Wright, J. Nevan. 1999. **The management of service operations.** London, U.K., Continuum.

Wright, J. Nevan., and Race, 2004. **The management of service operations.** 2nd Ed. London:Thompson Learning

Yang, B. and Lu D.R. 2001. Predicting academic performance in management education: An empirical Investigation of MBA success. ***Journal of Education for Business,*** **77**(1)5-8.

Yu, J. and Cooper, H. 1983. A Quantitative Review of Research Design Effects on Response Rates to Questionnaires. ***Journal of Marketing Research,*** 20(1):36-44.

APPENDIX A

Interview Format, Lecturing Staff

BALANCING THE DESIRABLE WITH THE FEASIBLE: A STUDY OF HOW MARKETING AND OPERATIONS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT BRANDING PROMISES CAN BE DELIVERED IN PRACTICE

INTERVIEW FORMAT
MBA LECTURING STAFF

1) Introduction. Brief introduction of myself and the research study	
2) **Information on relationships with industry** Describe the way in which you use feedback mechanisms to ensure that changing industry demands are fed into your own course delivery for the MBA programme.	
3) **Perceived Quality of the MBA Programme** What is your perception of the quality of the content and delivery standards of the MBA programme	
4) **Financial Success** Describe the extent to which the MBA course has been a success in terms of student learning outcomes	
5) **Resource Allocation** Where is the emphasis in terms of resource allocation (e.g. number of lecturing staff, technology, administrative staff) in the delivery of the MBA programme. To what extent do available resources assist (or not) your own course delivery.	

6) **Student Relationships** Describe the extent to which you are capable of effectively managing the student performance within available resource parameters	
7) **Launch Strategy** What is your perception of the operational effectiveness of the MBA programme	
8) **Student enrolments** Describe the pattern of MBA student enrolments for the period of time in which the MBA programme has been operational	
9) What aspects of the MBA course could be improved upon in terms of: Course Delivery Administration Managerial support Available resources	
10) Describe the extent to which you are motivated to achieve total quality course delivery	
Any other comments	

APPENDIX B

Interview Format, Management Staff

BALANCING THE DESIRABLE WITH THE FEASIBLE: A STUDY OF HOW MARKETING AND OPERATIONS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT BRANDING PROMISES CAN BE DELIVERED IN PRACTICE

INTERVIEW FORMAT
MBA MANAGEMENT STAFF

1) Introduction. Brief introduction of myself and the research study	
2) **Information on response to external competition** How does the university draw on the knowledge of students and other external agencies to ensure that the knowledge is embedded into the system in order to remain competitive? In what ways does the MBA programme seek to differentiate itself in the market from other providers of MBA programmes	
3) **Information on relationships with industry** What feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure that changing industry demands are fed into the MBA programme.	
5) **Perceived Quality of the MBA Programme** What is management's perception of the quality of the content and delivery standards of the MBA programme	
6) **Financial Success** Describe the extent to which the MBA course has been a financial success. How have the parameters of success been measured in financial terms.	

7) **Resource Allocation** Where is the emphasis in terms of resource allocation (e.g. number of lecturing staff, technology, administrative staff) in the delivery of the MBA programme.	
8) **Management Perception of Brand effectiveness.** How effective is the AUT "Brand" of MBA in terms of meeting Customer demands.	
9) **Launch Strategy** Explain the strategic management process which was developed for the launching and implementing the MBA programme. To what extent has the operational effectiveness met the vision and mission for the MBA programme.	
10) **Student enrolments** Describe the pattern of MBA student enrolments for the period of time in which the MBA programme has been operational	
11) What aspects of the MBA course could be improved upon in terms of. Marketing Student performance evaluation Course Delivery Administration	

12) To what extent have MBA students currently enrolled been provided with opportunities for employment	
13) **Employment** AUT claims that 92% of its students gain employment upon graduation. How is this figure derived? How is this figure measured after students leave? What provisions are in place for employment of current MBA students?	
14) **Industry trends for International Students** Describe how the Business Advisory Committee ensures that the curriculum is industry relevant: Locally Internationally (Including Asia)	
15) **Values and ethics** In what ways does AUT ensure that its espoused values and ethics are supported by the marketing and management process	
16) **Resource utilisation vs student learning outcomes** How does AUT measure the cost effectiveness of the course delivery?	
Any other comments	

APPENDIX C

Student Response Sheet

Additional Information Sheet

Title of Project: **Balancing the desirable with the feasible: A study of how marketing and operations need to work together to ensure that branding promises can be delivered in practice.**

Project Supervisor: **Dr. Nevan Wright**

Researcher(s): **C. Robertson**

Attached are a few statements made in various marketing documents which provide information to prospective MBA Students. This list has been compiled to assist you to recall what your expectations were when you enrolled on the course. You may have, in addition, formed your own personal list of perceptions and expectations of what you were offered either from personal discussions, exploring the website, or additional information you obtained either inside or outside of AUT. Please rate each statement by circling the appropriate box. There is space both below the boxes and at the end of the questionnaire in which you can comment further.

2005 Course Information Booklet:-

1) "You will find our MBA provides flexibility to fit around your work and personal life"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

2) "You can fast-track your career, or open doors to an entirely new career"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

3) "Industry relevant"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

4) "Part-time or full-time study - your choice"				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

___

5) "Flexibility to begin and finish when you choose"				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

___

6) "Lecturers with relevant experience"				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

___

7) "Classes are small and interactive"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

8) "Overseas recognition"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

Faculty of Business Profile:-

9) "Relevant Curriculum"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

10) "A Broad understanding of business"

Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

Comments

11) "Online learning"

Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

Comments

12) "Networking through the breakfast club"

Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

Comments

13) "AUT Business has 92% graduate employment - the highest of any university in New Zealand" (Do AUT staff actively help you to find employment?)"				
Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

Comments

---

14) "AUT Business is sought out by industry seeking strategic partnerships"				
	Agree	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

Comments

---

15) "AUT Business attracts top teaching staff"				
Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

Comments

International Student Prospectus

16) "Close links with industry and the professions mean a high graduate employment rate"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

17) "Committed to internationalisation"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

18) "All students new to AUT must participate in Orientation. Orientation is scheduled two weeks before class starts. It includes sessions covering computer log-ins, time management, assignment preparation, course outlines, campus tours, city tours, understanding the use of email, an introduction to services and facilities available, and the meeting of staff and student mentors as well as the opportunity of socialising with fellow students"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

19) "Assistance with student visas, permits, homesickness and culture shock. Social events are organised throughout the year to make your time at AUT rewarding and enjoyable"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

____

20) "International Student Centre located on campus with a team of friendly people to help you with applications and enrolment"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments

____

FURTHER/ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

____

____

____

____

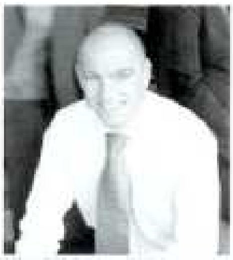
____

APPENDIX D

AUT On-Line Marketing Information

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Programme Code: AK3717



Nick Webster: MBA student

Download the 2007 MBA brochure [5.48mb]

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a postgraduate programme which provides a tool box of models and techniques for all the core functions of management. The academic year comprises six, eight week terms with classes during the day or evening. AUT's MBA course has the usual part and full-time options but the scheuling is up to you. You can start (and recommence) studying when you need to and plan your study time according to your work commitments. In 2007 the start dates are January 8, March 5, May 7, July 2, August 27 and October 23.

The MBA is designed for practising managers and for professionals aspiring to future managerial careers. The programme focuses on a general grounding in all functional business and management areas in order to develop knowledge, confidence and skills for emerging and middle level managers. Graduates will be able to operate at a senior organisational level, providing overall leadership.

Students will bring perspectives from a broad range of disciplines, including engineering, health, business and education. Classroom learning is supplemented by guest lecturers (industry leaders and visiting overseas academics), on-line learning, collaborative team work and action learning in the work place.

To receive an enrolment pack phone 0800 AUT UNI or email courseinfo@aut.ac.nz or if you would like to discuss your career path or eligibility for the MBA programme contact Jan Anderson, phone 09 921 9999 ext 9234 or email jan.anderson@aut.ac.nz. Jan can also advise you of upcoming MBA Taster sessions.

AUT also offers a Master of Business for those wanting to develop specialist skills in an area of business.

For more information regarding the Master of Business Administration, see Frequently Asked Questions.

WHY CHOOSE AUT

Key reasons why you should choose to study at AUT:

- AUT has a vibrant campus with students from all walks of life. About 24,000 students study at AUT, taught by 1,010 teaching staff.
- You'll meet students from all over the world. Students from more than 50 countries study at AUT.
- You'll receive a quality University education that will prepare you for a successful career in your chosen field.
- You'll receive an internationally-recognised qualification from a successful and respected university.
- We have close links with industry and the professions, which means we teach you the skills that a really needed.
- AUT has a high graduate employment rate.
- We have small, personal classes where you get to interact with your teachers. Your lecturer will know you by name.
- We are committed to internationalism and value our international students.
- We offer courses at all levels – from pre-degree to PhD level.
- We have excellent facilities to support you in your studies. From medical care to world-class libraries.
- AUT is developing a strong research culture. That means students have the opportunity to work and learn alongside some of New Zealand's most innovative and creative researchers.
- We offer a huge variety of subjects across the faculties of Applied Humanities, Health and Environmental Science, Design and Creative Technologies, Business, and Te Ara Poutama (Maori studies).
- We are a government-approved university which means you are assured of receiving quality-education.
- You'll be based in the beautiful, multicultural city of Auckland – the gateway to clean, green New Zealand.

WHAT IS AUT*ONLINE*?

AUT*Online* is our platform for offering web-based learning. This world-class learning management system enables our lecturers to teach either a whole programme or part of a programme online. The system has a variety of features and provides two-way communication between staff and students as well as access to web-resources such as those provided by the major publisher Pearson, via the BlackBoard interface.

AUT*Online* is part of our flexible learning approach emphasising providing education that suits students needs. We believe that being flexible in the way we teach means we can provide for differing learning styles, which is of benefit to individual students and the entire learning community.

Dr Andrew Higgins
Director
Flexible Learning

AUT UNIVERSITY | STUDENT SERVICES

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT

The International Student Support Service team provides support for all AUT international students. We are able to provide you with specialised knowledge and advice on immigration matters, insurance and community networking. We can liaise on your behalf with faculty, assist you with opening a bank account, advise you on the Code of Practice that governs your time of study here in New Zealand and much more.

[illegible]

All of our advisory services are free and confidential.

Feeling 'stressed out' ? Feeling lonely? Feeling homesick? Can't find your way around campus? Want to make friends? Want to feel connected to your University? Need liaison and support? Not coping with your academic study? Have a visa query? Need advice on free activities? What's the social scene like? Help, it's an emergency, what do I do? Financial problems? Where can I get Halal food? Need a bank account? Can I work part time while studying?

[illegible]

For all your international student support needs contact us first! We are here to assist you.

Watch the video

[illegible]

[illegible]

Calendar of Events 2007

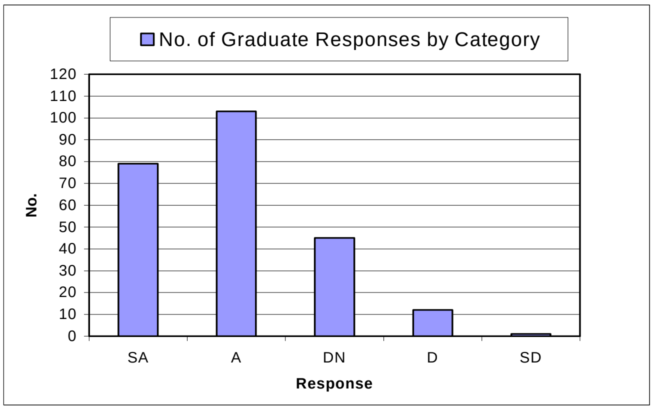
January
February
March

APPENDIX E

Excel Analysis Spreadsheets

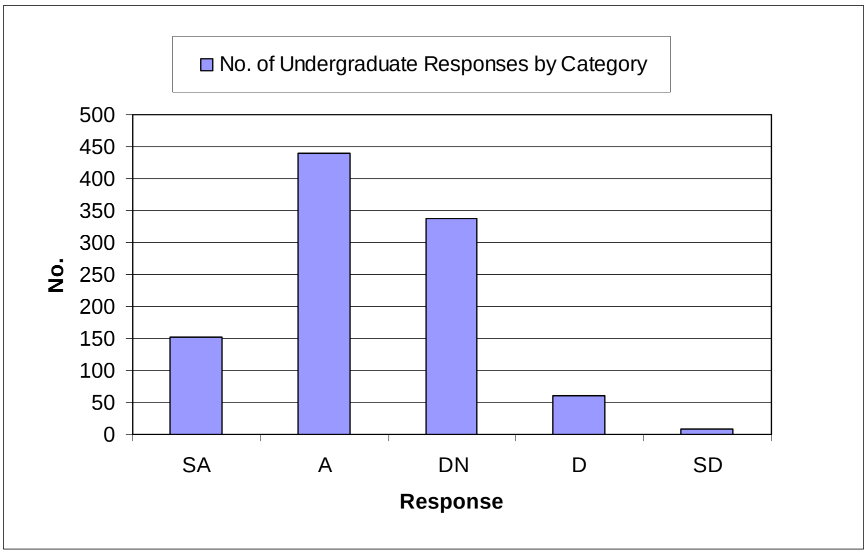
RESPONDENT	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04	Q05	Q06	Q07	Q08	Q09	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	AVE	SA	A	DN	D	SD
Graduate 1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4.75	15	5	0	0	0
Graduate 2	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	3	2	4	2	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	3	3	3.85	4	11	3	2	0
Graduate 3	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	3	3	5	5	3	5	4	5	4.5	13	4	3	0	0
Graduate 4	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	3	5	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	5	4	5	3.95	7	6	6	1	0
Graduate 5	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	2	5	3	4	3	3	4	5	4	4	3.7	2	12	4	2	0
Graduate 6	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4.2	5	14	1	0	0
Graduate 7	4	3	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	3	3	2	5	5	5	3.9	5	9	5	1	0
Graduate 8	5	5	5	5	5	2	4	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	4.05	7	9	2	2	0
Graduate 9	4	3	4	5	5	3	3	3	4	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.3	11	4	5	0	0
Graduate 10	5	3	3	5	2	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	3.8	4	9	6	1	0
Graduate 11	5	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	3.95	5	10	4	1	0
Graduate 12	5	3	4	4	4	3	4	1	2	4	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	3.4	1	10	6	2	1
																						SA	A	DN	D	SD
																						79	##	45	12	1
Mean	4.67	4.00	4.08	4.58	4.42	3.83	4.00	3.83	3.75	4.33	3.92	3.58	3.58	3.50	3.58	3.92	3.75	4.67	4.17	4.42		%				
SA	8	4	3	7	7	4	3	3	2	4	5	1	2	0	2	3	3	8	4	6	79	32.92				
A	4	4	7	5	4	3	7	6	7	8	3	6	4	6	5	5	4	4	6	5	103	42.92				
NS	0	4	2	0	0	4	1	2	1	0	2	4	5	6	3	4	4	0	2	1	45	18.75				
D	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	12	5.00				
SD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.42				
Sdev	0.492	0.853	0.669	0.515	0.9	1.03	0.853	1.115	0.965	0.492	1.165	0.793	0.9	0.522	0.996	0.793	0.965	0.492	0.718	0.669	240					
Variance	0.242	0.727	0.447	0.265	0.811	1.061	0.727	1.242	0.932	0.242	1.356	0.629	0.811	0.273	0.992	0.629	0.932	0.242	0.515	0.447						

Percentages	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04	Q05	Q06	Q07	Q08	Q09	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
SA	66.67	33.33	25.00	58.33	58.33	33.33	25.00	25.00	16.67	33.33	41.67	8.33	16.67	0.00	16.67	25.00	25.00	66.67	33.33	50.00
A	33.33	33.33	58.33	41.67	33.33	25.00	58.33	50.00	58.33	66.67	25.00	50.00	33.33	50.00	41.67	41.67	33.33	33.33	50.00	41.67
DN	0.00	33.33	16.67	0.00	0.00	33.33	8.33	16.67	8.33	0.00	16.67	33.33	41.67	50.00	25.00	33.33	33.33	0.00	16.67	8.33
D	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.33	8.33	8.33	0.00	16.67	0.00	16.67	8.33	8.33	0.00	16.67	0.00	8.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
SD	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



RESPONDENT	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04	Q05	Q06	Q07	Q08	Q09	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	AVE	SA	A	DN	D	SD
Undergrad 1	4	3	3	3	3	4	5	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3.45	1	7	12	0	0
Undergrad 2	4	3	2	5	5	2	4	3	3	4	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	4	3	2	3	2	4	6	8	0
Undergrad 3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.55	0	11	9	0	0
Undergrad 4	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	3	4	5	2	4	3	3	4	3	4	2	3	3	3.75	5	7	6	2	0
Undergrad 7	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	3	3	3	4	5	4	5	5	4	4.1	6	10	4	0	0
Undergrad 8	4	4	4	5	5	5	3	3	4	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3.95	4	11	5	0	0
Undergrad 9	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.75	15	5	0	0	0
Undergrad 10	4	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.4	1	7	11	1	0
Undergrad 11	5	3	4	5	4	5	5	3	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3.65	4	6	9	1	0
Undergrad 12	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3.5	1	9	9	1	0
Undergrad 13	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	4	4	3	3	3.65	0	15	3	2	0
Undergrad 14	5	5	5	5	4	3	5	1	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3.6	5	5	8	1	1
Undergrad 15	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	4	3	2	4	3	3	3.25	0	8	9	3	0
Undergrad 16	4	5	3	5	4	2	4	3	5	5	3	4	2	3	4	4	5	4	3	4	3.8	5	8	5	2	0
Undergrad 18	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4.05	7	7	6	0	0
Undergrad 19	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	4	5	3	3	4.05	8	5	7	0	0
Undergrad 21	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3.45	0	9	11	0	0
Undergrad 22	4	3	3	4	4	3	2	2	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	3	3	2.8	0	3	12	3	2
Undergrad 23	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	2	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3.55	5	4	8	3	0
Undergrad 24	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.5	0	10	10	0	0
Undergrad 25	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3.45	0	11	7	2	0
Undergrad 26	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3.9	1	16	3	0	0
Undergrad 27	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3.6	0	12	8	0	0
Undergrad 28	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3.5	0	12	6	2	0
Undergrad 31	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3.45	2	7	9	2	0
Undergrad 32	4	5	3	5	5	1	5	3	3	4	4	3	1	3	1	2	2	1	3	3	3.05	4	3	7	2	4
Undergrad 33	5	3	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	5	4	4	4	4	3.9	4	12	2	2	0
Undergrad 34	4	3	3	5	5	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3.7	3	8	9	0	0
Undergrad 35	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	5	4	3	14	3	0	0
Undergrad 36	5	3	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	3	2	4	4	3	4	5	4	3	4.1	8	7	4	1	0
Undergrad 37	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	4	3	3	3.15	1	7	6	6	0
Undergrad 38	4	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4.45	10	9	1	0	0
Undergrad 40	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4.05	2	17	1	0	0
Undergrad 41	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4.05	4	13	3	0	0
Undergrad 42	5	5	3	5	5	3	5	3	4	5	3	3	3	3	2	5	4	5	4	5	4	9	3	7	1	0
Undergrad 43	4	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	5	5	3.9	4	10	6	0	0
Undergrad 45	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	5	4	3	4.1	7	9	3	1	0
Undergrad 46	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3.7	0	14	6	0	0
Undergrad 47	2	3	3	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	5	5	3	3.45	4	4	9	3	0
Undergrad 48	5	5	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	2	3	3	3.55	3	7	8	2	0
Undergrad 49	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3.6	0	12	8	0	0
Undergrad 50	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3.55	0	11	9	0	0
Undergrad 51	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	4	4	3.45	0	10	9	1	0
Undergrad 52	5	3	4	5	4	4	4	2	2	3	4	4	3	2	4	3	2	3	2	3	3.3	2	7	6	5	0
Undergrad 53	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	0	14	6	0	0
Undergrad 54	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	3	3.45	1	8	10	1	0
Undergrad 55	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.15	0	6	12	1	1
Undergrad 57	4	4	4	5	2	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	5	4	4	3.6	2	9	8	1	0
Undergrad 59	5	5	4	5	5	3	5	3	4	5	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3.75	7	3	9	0	1
Undergrad 60	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.85	2	14	3	1	0
																						SA	A	DN	D	SD
Grads Mean	4.67	4	4.08	4.58	4.42	3.83	4	3.83	3.75	4.33	3.92	3.58	3.58	3.5	3.58	3.92	3.75	4.67	4.17	4.42		152	440	338	61	9
Undergrads mea	4.32	3.86	3.72	4.5	4.28	3.94	4.18	3.22	3.82	4	3.3	3.22	2.94	3.12	3.28	3.4	3.5	3.74	3.5	3.46		%				
SA	19	9	5	26	21	10	13	3	6	8	1	1	1	1	2	4	3	9	5	5	152	15.2	33			
A	29	25	27	23	24	31	34	12	33	35	21	14	5	9	19	15	25	29	16	14	440	44	43			
NS	1	16	17	1	3	6	2	29	8	6	21	30	35	35	21	28	16	5	28	30	338	33.8	19			
D	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	5	2	1	6	5	8	5	7	3	6	4	1	1	61	6.1	5			
SD	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	9	0.9	0.4			
Stdev	0.62	0.70	0.67	0.54	0.76	0.82	0.60	0.79	0.77	0.61	0.79	0.65	0.65	0.59	0.83	0.73	0.79	1.05	0.71	0.71	1000					
Variance	0.39	0.49	0.45	0.30	0.57	0.67	0.35	0.62	0.60	0.37	0.62	0.42	0.42	0.35	0.70	0.53	0.62	1.09	0.50	0.50						

Percentages	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04	Q05	Q06	Q07	Q08	Q09	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
SA	38	18	10	52	42	20	26	6	12	16	2	2	2	2	4	8	6	18	10	10
A	58	50	54	46	48	62	68	24	66	70	42	28	10	18	38	30	50	58	32	28
DN	2	32	34	2	6	12	4	58	16	12	42	60	70	70	42	56	32	10	56	60
D	2	0	2	0	4	4	2	10	4	2	12	10	16	10	14	6	12	8	2	2
SD	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	6	0	0



Undergrads

RESPONDENT	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04	Q05	Q06	Q07	Q08	Q09	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
Percentages																				
SA	43.55	20.97	12.90	53.23	45.16	22.58	25.81	9.68	12.90	19.35	9.68	3.23	4.84	1.61	6.45	11.29	9.68	27.42	14.52	17.74
A	53.23	46.77	54.84	45.16	45.16	54.84	66.13	29.03	64.52	69.35	38.71	32.26	14.52	24.19	38.71	32.26	46.77	53.23	35.48	30.65
DN	1.61	32.26	30.65	1.61	4.84	16.13	4.84	50.00	14.52	9.68	37.10	54.84	64.52	66.13	38.71	51.61	32.26	8.06	48.39	50.00
D	1.61	0.00	1.61	0.00	4.84	4.84	3.23	8.06	6.45	1.61	12.90	9.68	14.52	8.06	14.52	4.84	11.29	6.45	1.61	1.61
SD	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.61	0.00	3.23	1.61	0.00	1.61	0.00	1.61	0.00	1.61	0.00	0.00	4.84	0.00	0.00

Combined

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	1
	Number	%	Number	%	%	5
Strongly Agree	8	66.67	19	38.00	-28.67	
Agree	4	33.33	29	58.00	24.67	
Not Sure	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 5 - Summary of Responses to Question 1

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	2
	Number	%	Number	%	%	18
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	9	18.00	-15.33	
Agree	4	33.33	25	50.00	16.67	
Not Sure	4	33.33	16	32.00	-1.33	
Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 18 - Summary of Responses to Question 2

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	3
	Number	%	Number	%	%	10
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	5	10.00	-15.00	
Agree	7	58.33	27	54.00	-4.33	
Not Sure	2	16.67	17	34.00	17.33	
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 10 - Summary of Responses to Question 3

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	4
	Number	%	Number	%	%	6
Strongly Agree	7	58.33	26	52.00	-6.33	
Agree	5	41.67	23	46.00	4.33	
Not Sure	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 6 - Summary of Responses to Question 4

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	5
	Number	%	Number	%	%	7
Strongly Agree	7	58.33	21	42.00	-16.33	
Agree	4	33.33	24	48.00	14.67	
Not Sure	0	0.00	3	6.00	6.00	
Disagree	1	8.33	2	4.00	-4.33	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 7 - Summary of Responses to Question 5

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	6
	Number	%	Number	%	%	16
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	10	20.00	-13.33	
Agree	3	25.00	31	62.00	37.00	
Not Sure	4	33.33	6	12.00	-21.33	
Disagree	1	8.33	2	4.00	-4.33	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	

Table 16 - Summary of Responses to Question 6

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	7
	Number	%	Number	%	%	8
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	13	26.00	1.00	
Agree	7	58.33	34	68.00	9.67	
Not Sure	1	8.33	2	4.00	-4.33	
Disagree	1	8.33	1	2.00	-6.33	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 8 - Summary of Responses to Question 7

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	8
	Number	%	Number	%	%	21
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	3	6.00	-19.00	
Agree	6	50.00	12	24.00	-26.00	
Not Sure	2	16.67	29	58.00	41.33	
Disagree	0	0.00	5	10.00	10.00	
Strongly Disagree	1	8.33	1	2.00	-6.33	

Table 21 - Summary of Responses to Question 8

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	9
	Number	%	Number	%	%	20
Strongly Agree	2	16.67	6	12.00	-4.67	
Agree	7	58.33	33	66.00	7.67	
Not Sure	1	8.33	8	16.00	7.67	
Disagree	2	16.67	2	4.00	-12.67	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	

Table 20 - Summary of Responses to Question 9

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	10
	Number	%	Number	%	%	12
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	8	16.00	-17.33	
Agree	8	66.67	35	70.00	3.33	
Not Sure	0	0.00	6	12.00	12.00	
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 12 - Summary of Responses to Question 10

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	11
	Number	%	Number	%	%	9
Strongly Agree	5	41.67	1	2.00	-39.67	
Agree	3	25.00	21	42.00	17.00	
Not Sure	2	16.67	21	42.00	25.33	
Disagree	2	16.67	6	12.00	-4.67	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	

Table 9 - Summary of Responses to Question 11

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	12
	Number	%	Number	%	%	13
Strongly Agree	1	8.33	1	2.00	-6.33	
Agree	6	50.00	14	28.00	-22.00	
Not Sure	4	33.33	30	60.00	26.67	
Disagree	1	8.33	5	10.00	1.67	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 13 - Summary of Responses to Question 12

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	13
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%	19
Strongly Agree	2	16.67	1	2.00	-14.67	
Agree	4	33.33	5	10.00	-23.33	
Not Sure	5	41.67	35	70.00	28.33	
Disagree	1	8.33	8	16.00	7.67	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	

Table 19 - Summary of Responses to Question 13

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	14
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%	14
Strongly Agree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Agree	6	50.00	9	18.00	-32.00	
Not Sure	6	50.00	35	70.00	20.00	
Disagree	0	0.00	5	10.00	10.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 14 - Summary of Responses to Question 14

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	15
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%	17
Strongly Agree	2	16.67	2	4.00	-12.67	
Agree	5	41.67	19	38.00	-3.67	
Not Sure	3	25.00	21	42.00	17.00	
Disagree	2	16.67	7	14.00	-2.67	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	

Table 17 - Summary of Responses to Question 15

	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	16
Response	Number	%	Number	%	%	20
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	4	8.00	-17.00	
Agree	5	41.67	15	30.00	-11.67	
Not Sure	4	33.33	28	56.00	22.67	
Disagree	0	0.00	3	6.00	6.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 20 - Summary of Responses to Question 16

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	17
	Number	%	Number	%	%	15
Strongly Agree	3	25.00	3	6.00	-19.00	
Agree	4	33.33	25	50.00	16.67	
Not Sure	4	33.33	16	32.00	-1.33	
Disagree	1	8.33	6	12.00	3.67	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 15 - Summary of Responses to Question 17

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	18
	Number	%	Number	%	%	22
Strongly Agree	8	66.67	9	18.00	-48.67	
Agree	4	33.33	29	58.00	24.67	
Not Sure	0	0.00	5	10.00	10.00	
Disagree	0	0.00	4	8.00	8.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	3	6.00	6.00	

Table 22 - Summary of Responses to Question 18

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	19
	Number	%	Number	%	%	23
Strongly Agree	4	33.33	5	10.00	-23.33	
Agree	6	50.00	16	32.00	-18.00	
Not Sure	2	16.67	28	56.00	39.33	
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 23 - Summary of Responses to Question 19

Response	Graduates (12)		Undergraduates (50)		Response Difference	20
	Number	%	Number	%	%	24
Strongly Agree	6	50.00	5	10.00	-40.00	
Agree	5	41.67	14	28.00	-13.67	
Not Sure	1	8.33	30	60.00	51.67	
Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.00	2.00	
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	

Table 24 - Summary of Responses to Question 20

Skewness of distributions (% of total)

	Undergrads	Grads	
Strongly Agree	15.20	32.92	halved
Agree	44.00	42.92	Same
Not sure	33.80	18.75	Doubled
Disagree	6.10	5.00	Same
Strongly Disagree	0.90	0.42	Doubled

		n=12	m=50							
	ttest (excel)	Av grads	Av Undergrads							
Question	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04	Q05	Q06	Q07	Q08	Q09	Q1
Av. 12 Grads	4.667	4.000	4.083	4.583	4.417	3.833	4.000	3.833	3.750	4
Av. 50 Undergrads	4.320	3.860	3.720	4.500	4.280	3.940	4.180	3.220	3.820	4
TTEST	0.051	0.606	0.110	0.625	0.634	0.743	0.501	0.094	0.818	0

Question	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q2
Av. 12 Grads	3.917	3.583	3.583	3.500	3.583	3.917	3.750	4.667	4.167	4
Av. 50 Undergrads	3.300	3.220	2.940	3.120	3.280	3.400	3.500	3.740	3.500	3
TTEST	0.104	0.162	0.035	0.041	0.345	0.056	0.418	0.000	0.010	0

Question	Mean 12 Grads	Mean 50 Ugrads	TTEST	Evidence of significance
Q01	4.667	4.320	0.051	Some
Q02	4.000	3.860	0.606	None
Q03	4.083	3.720	0.110	None*
Q04	4.583	4.500	0.625	None
Q05	4.417	4.280	0.634	None
Q06	3.833	3.940	0.743	None
Q07	4.000	4.180	0.501	None
Q08	3.833	3.220	0.094	Some
Q09	3.750	3.820	0.818	None
Q10	4.333	4.000	0.058	Some
Q11	3.917	3.300	0.104	None*
Q12	3.583	3.220	0.162	None
Q13	3.583	2.940	0.035	Strong
Q14	3.500	3.120	0.041	Strong
Q15	3.583	3.280	0.345	None
Q16	3.917	3.400	0.056	Some
Q17	3.750	3.500	0.418	None
Q18	4.667	3.740	0.000	Convincing
Q19	4.167	3.500	0.010	Strong**
Q20	4.417	3.460	0.000	Convincing