

# Summary

Student Mirror is the third survey of its kind of student perceptions of their studies. Similar surveys were conducted previously by UKÄ's (Swedish Higher Education Authority) predecessor, the National Agency for Higher Education, in 2002 and 2007.

The purpose of the survey is to identify student perceptions and attitudes towards a range of aspects related to the quality of education, both within and outside their immediate educational situation. As in previous years, the objectives for higher education of the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance have helped determine the selection of the questions in the survey. The government's intentions with higher education as defined in several government bills and the Discrimination Act's intent have also influenced the choice of questions.

This summary contains the main results of the survey, but many more are available in the individual chapters.

The results are a simple presentation of the survey responses. They do not provide analysis of the responses, but many of the results can be explored further as a way of improving and developing academic programmes.

The survey was sent to 11,031 students who had completed at least two semesters of study, starting from spring semester 2015. The students were to have conducted their studies at the same Higher Education Institution (HEI) and the students were to have completed at least 15 higher education credits. Of the students contacted, 3,769 responded, representing a response rate of 34 per cent. This is significantly lower than in the response rate of the previous surveys from 2002 (67 per cent) and 2007 (57 per cent).

UKÄ, with the help of Statistics Sweden, has conducted a nonresponse analysis and weighted the material to the extent possible to adjust for the over-and under-representation of specific groups that were noted in the material. Read more about this in Annex 2.

## Reasons for studies

The reasons for beginning higher education vary. Most students who responded to the survey (95 per cent) agreed with the statement that they study because they are interested in their chosen academic programme. Almost as many (84 per cent) agreed with the statement that they study to improve their opportunities on the labour market.

The students had eight predefined alternatives to choose from to explain their main reasons for choosing a particular HEI. The most common reason (42 per cent) was that they had found a programme at the HEI that they liked. The second most common reason (19 per cent) was that the HEI was located at the town where the student lives. A third reason was that the programme at the HEI was of high quality (12 per cent).

### Study environment

A good study environment is a prerequisite for successful studies. The survey included questions about how students perceive teaching staff and administrative staff. Most students responded that they largely think that the teaching staff are accommodating, supportive, knowledgeable and accessible. In terms of staff availability, however, 19 per cent felt the teaching staff are not accessible. Most students responded that they largely think that the teaching staff are accommodating, supportive, knowledgeable and accessible.

Six per cent stated that they have a disability. One-third of these stated that the disability is an obstacle in their studies, and a quarter responded that the HEI has not provided necessary support.

The survey shows that discrimination occurs to a limited extent; seven per cent of students reported that they have experienced discrimination. Of these, most respondents said they had been treated negatively by their fellow students or teaching staff and usually based on gender, age or 'other'.

The survey responses show that sexual harassment occurs on a relatively small scale (four per cent said it has occurred). Of those stating it occurs, they indicate that the harassment has mainly come from other students.

### Analytical thinking

Some of the objectives for higher education, as expressed in the Higher Education Act, are for students to develop skills in a structured way to solve problems and explore different subject areas. Just over 80 per cent of students felt that their education has helped them learn to analyse the basis of an idea, phenomenon or theory, to independently seek knowledge and analyse problems, and to think critically and analytically. More than 70 per cent of respondents believe that their studies have taught them to organise ideas, information or experiences into new relationships and more complex questions, to evaluate information, arguments or methods to consider, for example, the reasonableness of conclusions, and to apply theories or ideas to practical problems and/or new situations.

### Internationalisation and mobility

One purpose of higher education is to increase internationalisation and mobility within and outside the country to enhance student understanding of other cultures and promote international solidarity. Internationalisation of higher education is also linked to the globalisation of the economy and labour market, to increased international mobility of people, and to greater international aspects in many professions.

A majority (67 per cent) responded that they received information about the option of studying abroad as part of their education, and 58 per cent felt that their study environment is international.

Almost half of the students (49 per cent) said they have not or think they will not study at another university, and a slim majority (53 per cent) said their education has not given them a greater understanding of people from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

### Development and values

Theoretical or practical knowledge in a subject area is not the only objective of higher education. Personal development in terms of increased general knowledge, an ability to reflect on their own values and involvement in community issues are additional objectives of higher education.

Most (87 per cent) respondents report that their education has contributed to increased general knowledge, while just under half (48 per cent) say that the education contributed to becoming involved in community issues.

Of the respondents, 44 per cent say they now have a greater understanding of the cultural differences between men and women.

### Teacher support

Like the students' own interests and ambitions, the knowledge, interests and teaching skills of the teachers/supervisors are crucial for a well-functioning academic programme. A majority of students (64 per cent) felt that they received the support they needed from teachers/supervisors to complete their studies. A majority (71 per cent) also felt they had sufficient teacher-led instruction.

### Examination

A review of the results to and expected answers in an exam is a part of teaching and is important for the understanding of the material. Only 26 per cent of students report that their teachers have gone through the results of exams with them. Most (63 per cent), however, reported that they had received either oral or written feedback on the examination results within a reasonable period from their teachers/supervisors. Seventeen per cent reported exams that contained unexpected questions in relation to the read list and instruction, and 19 per cent responded that the questions and problems in exams were not stated clearly.

A majority (81 per cent) responded that they received information about the grading criteria for exams, and about 51 per cent say they find it easy to pass the courses while 49 per cent do not.

### Instructive discussions

Discussing and speaking with teachers and supervisors can provide perspective for the programme. Discussions or conversations with teachers and/or fellow students often give students the opportunity to have their knowledge and thoughts challenged by others. More than half of students (55 per cent) say they contribute to spontaneous discussions in teaching situations.

### Communication

Learning facts and skills to independently solve problems are key objectives of higher education. But the ability to communicate with the surrounding community, both in writing and orally, is also a prerequisite for a successful career. Just over half of students (55 per cent) felt that their teachers/supervisors have given them the necessary support to develop their communication skills. A majority (67 per cent) felt that their education has helped them write more clearly and understandably. Slightly more (68 per cent) believe that their ability to argue and debate has improved thanks to their education.

### **Student cooperation**

The ability to work with others is an important skill for both future careers and in other contexts. Group work can be helpful practice in working with others for future jobs. Sixty-four per cent of students responded that they have worked in groups with fellow students during class and an equal number say they have worked in groups outside class time.

### **Requirements and rate of study**

Almost a quarter of students (23 per cent) feel that their studies place high demands on them, while 17 per cent feel that the requirements are too low. Thirty per cent feel that the rate of study is too quick.

The students in the Student Mirror survey indicate that they spend an average of 36 hours a week on study-related activities, i.e., teacher-led instruction, self-study and group work. On average, students have 12 hours of classroom instruction per week, but the number varies between different subjects. Medicine, dentistry and pharmacy students report that they have an average of 25 hours of classroom instruction per week while the corresponding time for students in the humanities and theology is 8 hours.

### **Overall assessment**

Most students (91 per cent) rate their education overall as good or very good. Thirty-six per cent say that they definitely would choose the same HEI again if they had had the choice to make again, while 15 per cent said they probably would not have chosen their current HEI.