

# PACE Student Surveys 2019

## Briefing Note: Summary of findings from PACE Student Surveys in 2019

The PACE program is a university-wide, work-integrated learning program that gives students the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning with an industry, government or not-for-profit organisation as part of their undergraduate degree. Underpinned by principles of reciprocity and collaboration, PACE's vision is to connect all students, partner organisations and University staff in mutually beneficial learning opportunities that contribute to social impact and innovation. In 2019, more than 8,500 undergraduate students and 1,100 partner organisations participated in PACE. As part of the PACE evaluation project, feedback was sought from students at the beginning and end of their PACE unit using online surveys. This data provides valuable information about the program and some key findings are presented here.

An evaluation of PACE commenced in 2017 to assess the impact of the program for students, partners, the University, and the community more broadly, and support quality assurance. As part of this evaluation, students in participating PACE units were invited to provide feedback using online surveys completed before and after doing their PACE activity. The student survey measured student motivations, previous employment experience, perceptions of their PACE experience, and the impact of PACE across career readiness, active citizenship and networking outcomes. It also incorporated the Learning and Teaching Unit Evaluation requirement at Macquarie University.

In 2019, students completing PACE units were invited to fill in a PACE survey before and after completing their PACE activity. Although these surveys could not be included in the final evaluation report and analysis, they provide a valuable insight to the PACE program. In this briefing note, we summarise the key findings from student surveys in 2019.

### WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY IN 2019?

More students than ever before responded to the PACE surveys in 2019. The greatest proportion of students who completed surveys were undertaking a PACE unit in the Faculty of Arts (Table 1).

### BEFORE DOING THEIR PACE ACTIVITY

Prior to doing their PACE activity, the majority of students had some work experience (82%, n=1867), but less than one third (29%, n=1516) of students had done most or all of their work in an area of professional interest. This highlights the continued importance of the PACE program in terms of providing discipline-related work experience and opportunities. Students were also asked what they hoped to achieve when they graduated. The most frequently identified goals were:

- Make a difference in the community (81%, n=1595)
- Progress into a new job (full-time) (78%, n=1720)
- Progress into a new job (part-time) (44%, n=1525)
- Progress into further study (course work) (38%, n=1598)

**Table 1. Number of survey responses by Faculty**

Faculty	Pre-Survey n	% all Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey n	% of all Post- Survey Responses
Arts	621	33.2%	767	44%
Human Sciences	459	24.6%	356	21%
Medicine & Health Science	50	2.7%	26	1.5%
Business School	161	8.6%	142	8%
Science & Engineering	453	24.2%	363	21%
Other/Missing	125	6.7%	71	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1868</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1725</b>	<b>100%</b>

Students were also asked to rate the importance of skill areas related to career readiness and active citizenship. The most highly rated skill areas in 2019 were:

- Gaining professional experience, skills or knowledge (94%, n=1743)
- Developing my discipline specific knowledge, skills, or abilities (89%, n=1743)
- Sharpening my analytic & problem-solving skills (83%, n=1721)
- Exploring possible career options (82%, 1744)
- Expanding my professional networks (81%, 1741)

## WHAT DID STUDENTS DO DURING THEIR PACE ACTIVITY?

PACE activities involve a wide range of local, regional and international partners and vary in length, location, whether they are disciplinary or interdisciplinary, and the sourcing and sector distribution of partners. PACE activities are also offered in a variety of formats which include structured or semi-structured internships, formal practicums, remote or virtual projects, on-campus industry projects, peer-assisted learning or other forms of mentoring. Feedback was sought from students about their experience of the PACE activity:

- 83% agreed they applied skills, knowledge or theories they had learnt at university (n=1471)
- 79% agreed the activity was matched to their knowledge and skill set (n=1502)
- 79% agreed that the activity was achievable in the timeframe (n=1507)
- 73% agreed that the activity in an area of professional interest (n=1498)

The majority of students reported that the induction and/or training they received prepared them adequately or well for their activity (91%, n=441). Most students reported that they had adequate supervision and contributed worthwhile outcomes for the organisation (Figure 1).

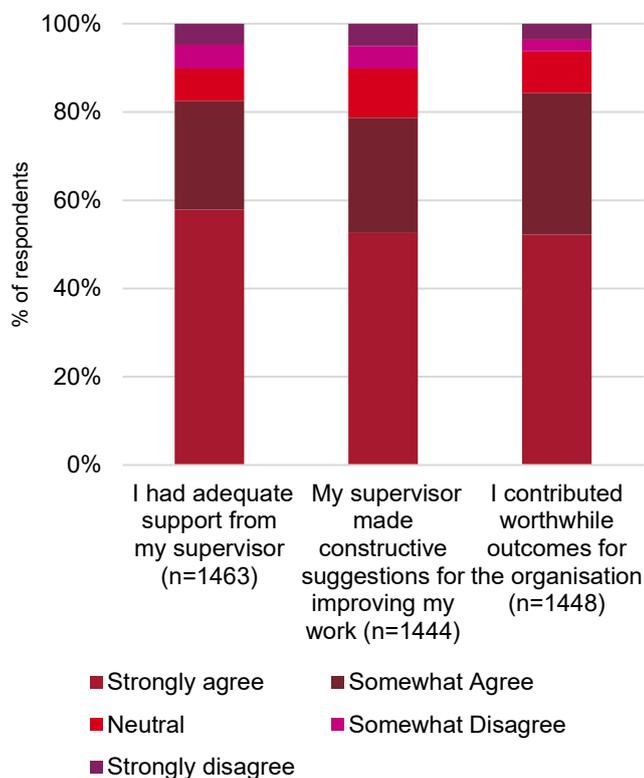


Figure 1. Student perception of supervision and contribution



Students were asked what they believed their main contribution to the PACE activity or project was. Here's what they had to say:

“Helping in teaching young minds and aiding secondary school teachers in understanding the topic in which they are to teach in, as well as update and improve the digital collection database for the Palaeontology department at the Australian Museum”.

“In my PACE activity I completed an ethics application for a future study, I contributed to the organisation by assisting in getting the study off the ground. Also while I did not come into contact with patients, if this study is successful I will be contributing indirectly to the possible improvement of outcomes for patients with aortic stenosis.”

“My main contribution would be helping in the measurement and collection of data regarding numerous plant growth variables, especially t-crit measurements. I feel happy with this work as these measurements can take a long time to perform/collect and so I eased the work-load of my team members and contributed to their research, and also, my supervisor commented on the "timely and accurate" nature of my work.”

“Being in the field of marketing I was able to help the organization expand their audience. I managed to improve their web-presence through the use of social media and marketing tools. I was also in charge of their advertising campaign which I conducted based on the requests of the company. What I was able to deliver was a visual improvement on their marketing efforts.”

“We were able to fill a gap in data analysis for the Australian Book Industry and provide solutions based on this, by providing necessary insight into the distribution of income in the Australian Book Industry.”

“My main contribution was assisting the deaf children at Garfield Barwick School during their audiological tests and everyday literacy/numeracy outcomes, as well as the creation of science communication materials. I contributed to the organisation by not only updating their resources, but also the wider community by creating contextualised information (for the different audiences of parents, patients and the general public).”

## STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH PACE

There is strong evidence that students are highly satisfied with the PACE program and their overall experience:

- 85% (n=1313) agreed it is valuable for students to do PACE as part of their degree
- 74% (n=1321) were satisfied overall with their PACE experience
- 74% (n=1313) agreed that PACE had enhanced their experience at Macquarie University

The PACE program aims to provide wrap-around support to students and partners to ensure there are mutually shared benefits and learning outcomes. When issues arose during the PACE activity/project, 66% (n=1547) of students agreed these were adequately addressed (20% were neutral). Of the 702 students who had contact with a PACE Faculty team, 77% agreed the team was helpful (14% were neutral).

## STUDENT OUTCOMES THROUGH PACE

At the commencement of their PACE unit, many students expressed a desire to increase their career readiness skills. On completion of the unit, 70% (n=908) of students agreed PACE had improved their employability. Indeed, more than 75% students agreed that participating in PACE had helped them to:

- Develop ability to work as a team member (83%, n=1263)
- Gain professional experience, skills or knowledge (82%, n=1277)
- Develop or apply discipline-specific knowledge, skills, or abilities (81%, n=1279)
- Develop awareness of ethical principles and issues (76%, n=1264)

In the post-survey, students were asked to reflect on their professional capabilities at the start and end of PACE. As shown in Figure 2, students reported gains in their confidence. Notably, students were consistently more confident in such capabilities as evaluating their strengths and weaknesses in a professional setting than in using professional networks or seeking work in their field.

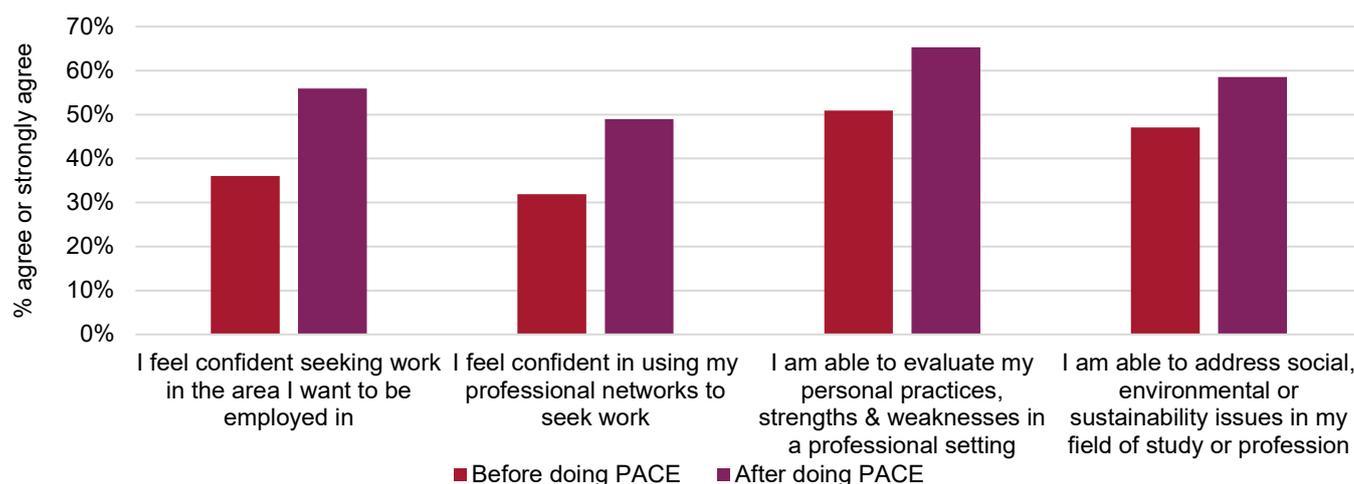


Figure 2. Student confidence before and after their PACE activity (n=1725)

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Student surveys in 2019 show that overall the PACE program has continued to achieve high student satisfaction scores and deliver career readiness outcomes for students. The feedback provided by students is valuable information and will be used to enhance the program. The PACE program will:

- Continue to provide all undergraduates with an opportunity to undertake a professional experience as part of their degree
- Look at ways to further increase students' career readiness and professional networks
- Seek to provide more opportunities for students to undertake a PACE activity in an area of professional interest and/or disciplinary area wherever possible
- Support the development of PACE activities with clear objectives, roles and responsibilities
- Work closely with partners to ensure that PACE activities provide mutually beneficial outcomes for partner organisations, students and the community more broadly

For more information about the PACE evaluation go to the [TEACH webpage](#) or contact [pace.research@mq.edu.au](mailto:pace.research@mq.edu.au)

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