



03 November 2008

In total, over 12,500 full-time undergraduates took part in this year's polling, which ran from October 2007 to May 2008. All respondents were members of Opinionpanel's Student Panel. Importantly, from a reliability perspective, respondents were not told the purpose of the polling.

This, we believe, reduced any temptation by respondents to artificially inflate scores in order to help their institution win. Respondents were unable to take the survey twice.

As in previous years, the student experience was broken down into 21 attributes and Panel members were asked to rate how their university performed on each, using a seven point scale. The attributes were derived by asking one thousand students to describe, unprompted and in their own words, how their university contributed to a positive and negative student experience.

The verbatim results from this exercise were coded and formed the 21 attributes. Each attribute was assigned a weight, dependant on its importance within the overall student experience.

As part of this year's study, the weighting methodology was reviewed to ensure its continued suitability. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to test how well each attribute correlated with the propensity to recommend students' universities. After the review two of the attributes – 'Good security' and 'Good accommodation' – were assigned a higher weight than in previous years to reflect their increased importance. The previous attribute-weighting exercise had taken place in 2006.

An assessment was also made of whether students from different types of institutions and students with different demographic backgrounds placed consistently different levels of importance to each attribute. Were this the case it would point to the need to apply a weighting to the sample based on institution and / or demographic profile. In fact, the results of the Kendall's tau rank correlation coefficient showed there to be insufficient evidence of any differences necessitating a change to this kind of weighting strategy.

This year, each university's score has, for the first time, been indexed to give a percentage of the maximum attainable score, allowing for more intuitive comparisons between universities.