

# The Country Universities Centre

**CUC Student Experience Survey  
Summary – Semester 1 2021**

**September 2021**



## Introduction

The CUC Student Experience Survey is a network-wide survey tool that is used to ensure the CUC remains agile and responsive to the ever-changing needs of students. The aim of the survey is to inform areas of improvement in service delivery, and to document the impact the CUC has on students. The survey asks for feedback from students in six areas of operations:

- General CUC
- Wrap around support
- Learning Skills Advisors (LSAs)
- Academic success
- Learning community
- Facilities and safety

In Sem I 2021, 375 students complete the survey, out of a possible 1,145 students who registered with the CUC network. This is a 33% response rate, providing a representative sample size for results. Where possible questions have been aligned with national data, such as the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT), to provide benchmarks for CUC performance. Other questions relate to key performance indicators, documenting early signals of progress in these areas. The results reported are “percent positive response” calculated using the first two answers of a Likert scale with five possible answers, or where appropriate, a Likert scale with four possible answers. Additionally, several qualitative questions were asked of students to capture their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings while studying with the CUC and to provide an avenue to suggest improvements.

## Highlights

- **94% of students believe the CUC has made it easier to stay, study or work in their community**
- **91% of CUC students felt that using the CUC helped to improve their academic results.**
- **99% of students found our staff to be very or extremely helpful**
- **92% are more likely to continue with their studies as a result of the help that they received from the CUC.**
- **99% of CUC students are likely to recommend the CUC to others.**



## General

### **94% of students believe the CUC has made it easier to stay, study or work in their community**

The CUC aims to provide opportunity, access and support for students to be able to study in their home community. It is hoped that this will enable regional communities to retain higher proportions of young people and skilled professional workers. More than half of CUC students said that 'Being able to stay in my community to study' was one of the best aspects of the CUC.

*"The community of students is great, everyone is friendly. Jacob is very supportive and knowledgeable about pathways and career options, he has helped me secure part time work which has made my decision to stay in Parkes easier"*

*CUC Parkes Student*

*"When I found out about CUC, I could not believe that it existed! A brand-new space that has everything a student needs, quiet study areas, fast internet access, technology with IT support... and only 10 minutes away from home. Having this facility so close to home has allowed me to focus more on my studies without having to factor in time lost through travel or money spent on accommodation."*

*CUC Bass Coast Student*

*"The facility and services being available have enabled me to upskill and still work in my current profession. The opening hours have allowed me to work after work hours..."*

*CUC Far West Student*

### **99% of students are likely to recommend the CUC to others**

This endorsement from students is both a positive reflection on the service and facilities of the CUC, and an important tool to promote the local higher education opportunities and support available. Word of mouth remains the most common way that new students hear about the CUC, which nurtures aspirations for higher education through positive local examples.

*"My grades went from average, due to studying at home in between work and kids, to HD grades, due to studying at the CUC and being totally focused on my assessments. I have thoroughly enjoyed using this service and have been recommending it to others who are studying."*

*CUC Macleay Valley Student*



## Wrap around support and academic success

Every CUC student faces individual challenges in their higher education journey. The CUC aims to meet students where they are and provide tailored wrap around support. This includes support with general academic skills, assistance with university administration, technology, wellbeing and creating a learning community to facilitate peer-support.

### **99% of students found our staff to be very or extremely helpful**

A positive relationship between students and CUC staff is the foundation of meeting students where they are and developing individualised student support. Comments from students below capture the breadth of support offered by CUC staff and the relationships that have been developed.

*“Andrea, the Centre Manager for CUC Bass Coast, has been a massive support to me from the first contact. With her passion for learning, a wealth of knowledge and the fantastic facilities she has created here for local students, I feel empowered to achieve more incredible academic results on my learning journey.”*

*CUC Bass Coast Student*

*“Bec provides outstanding support to students, is happy and positive and keeps the facilities beautiful and clean. Studying at CUC is amazing, and I am most grateful for the opportunity it has provided to me.”*

*CUC Maranoa Student*

*“Nadine and Viveka are a great, I have never found such a helpful, supportive team of people who have completely focused on the students' needs above everything else.”*

*CUC Snowy Monaro Student*

*The CUC Far West support their students education physically, emotionally and socially. This is done in a very safe inclusive and effective way. For me the wrap around support is awesome and is evolving with the growth and potential of Far West and the CUC as a whole.*

*CUC Far West Student*

*“Erin at Western Riverina CUC is an amazing staff member who always makes me feel welcomed and encourages me to keep motivated to study.”*

*CUC Western Riverina Student*



## **83% of students received support to settle into study if they needed it.**

Transitioning to university study can be a challenge for students, particularly for those who are new to study, have caring responsibilities, are working full time, or are returning from a long break. The CUC assists students to settle into study through sessions run by LSAs and the ongoing support of Centre Managers. While 83% of CUC students received support to settle into study, a similar question on the national QILT surveys (2016) found that only 61% of regional online students received support from their university to settle into study. By providing face-to-face personalised support, the CUC staff can meet the needs and specific circumstances of individual students as they commence their higher education study.

*"Because of CUC Goulburn and the support from staff, I was able to achieve high marks for my first semester and start my undergraduate degree with a distinction average."*

*CUC Goulburn*

*"I am doing better at CUC than what I was doing on campus. I feel a lot more settled."*

*CUC Snowy Monaro*

*"In my first year of studies I have managed a 6.5 GPA. I know I would have struggled to achieve this without CUC."*

*CUC Far West*

## **91% of CUC students felt that using the CUC helped to improve their academic results.**

This question is an important reflection of both academic achievements, as well as student confidence in their studies. Success is different for every student, with individual student stories illuminating some of these different achievements:

*"I took a chance this semester and picked an extra subject hoping the centre would help me to do well with a higher study load and I was right. Distinctions across the board, very happy."*

*CUC Parkes Student*

*"I had tried to study by distance previously but could not because I didn't have a dedicated space at home, nor a printer. I withdrew from my course. But now I have the CUC I am achieving HDs consistently in my Masters!! It's all down to the motivation I*



*get from the space and being surrounded by other students in the same situation I am.”*

*CUC Western Riverina*

*“Having the opportunity to study at CUC has provided me with the right environment to assist me successfully getting through Semester 1 studies. Bec provides an outstanding service and support to students.”*

*CUC Maranoa Student*

*“I never thought that I would be getting the marks that I have received. I know that without the help of all the staff @ Goulburn CUC I would never have been able to complete the degree I am currently doing. Thank-you”*

*CUC Goulburn Student*

*“My grades went from average, due to studying at home in between work and kids, to HD grades, due to studying at the CUC and being totally focused on my assessments. I have thoroughly enjoyed using this service and have been recommending it to others who are studying. Kinne has been a lovely presence and help.*

*CUC Macleay Valley Student*

*“Thanks to the environment at CUC, I've been able to maintain my 6.75/7 GPA this semester, while also working and managing family responsibilities with 4 young kids. I also received a Deans Award for my results in 2020, which is largely thanks to the supportive and focused environment at our CUC”.*

*CUC Far West Student*

***92% are more likely to continue with their studies as a result of the help that they received from the CUC.***

*“Before discovering the CUC I was on the cusp of giving up on studies and meeting the course deadlines. My home environment and poor internet access led to a lot of frustration. Before attending the centre, I felt like I was on my own...”*

*CUC Clarence Valley Student*



**96% of students who used the CUC stated that they were better able to focus on their studies due to the support and facilities of the CUC.**

*"Being able to use the space at CUC has allowed me to break away my work, home and study life. Being in a study environment also helps me concentrate. For the first time in my life I am not only ahead in my studies but smashing them"*

*CUC Far West Student*

*"Bec is an amazing staff member. She always checks in and makes sure I'm ok and that my studies are going well. She is a genuine person that takes an interest in everyone. I struggle to focus and she encourages me to get the job done"*

*CUC Maranoa Student*

*"It was a life saver for me when needing to get assessments done. Having the space available made making time to study after work and on weekends a lot easier because I knew I had somewhere to go where I could focus without distraction."*

*CUC North West Student*

*"I was able to strive for excellence because I had support AND accountability from staff at CUC and I was able to attain excellence because I wasn't constrained by poor internet speed, lack of resources and structure."*

*CUC Goulburn Student*

*"Having a designated study space as allowed me to prioritise tasks effectively. A home office is not always a reality for most households, so having a functional space for students to come to has really helped regional adults in accessing and achieving academic success."*

*CUC Bass Coast Student*



## Learning Skills Advisors

The Learning Skills Advisor (LSA) program continues to grow and provide additional individualised support for students studying at the CUC. In Semester 1, 2021, the LSA team completed 510 one-on-one consultations with 209 students and facilitated 40 workshops with 184 participants. 126 students who responded to the survey accessed an LSA this semester through workshops, one-on-one sessions, or online content. Within the CUC survey, two questions on Learning Skills Advisors were twinned to the national Quality Indicators in Learning and Teaching (QILT) survey to benchmark the level of CUC support against other regional students studying online.

***93% of students who used the LSA program found their Learning Skills Advisor to be available.***

***98% of students who used the LSA program found their Learning Skills Advisor to be helpful.***

Comparable results from the QILT survey (2016) indicated that of regional online students across Australia, 68% found their academic or learning advisors to be available, while 66% found their academic or learning advisors to be helpful. CUC students value the flexibility of the LSA program, which ensures that face-to-face support is available across evenings and weekends to accommodate students who work or have caring responsibilities. This is reflected in the student feedback.

*"Viveka [LSA] is invaluable, she is so approachable and was so helpful. She really tries to work around my work hours because I couldn't find a good time to get away from work to see her.*

*CUC Snowy Monaro*

Students who worked with an LSA felt more confident and more motivated to tackle their studies. Comments from the survey illustrate the value of face-to-face support that students receive at the CUC, which compliments the online learning and teaching support that their university provides. The importance of face-to-face support to build confidence, motivation, and connect students, has also been accentuated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

***96% of students who worked with their LSA felt more motivated to tackle any aspect of their studies or their studies in general***





**93% of students who worked with their LSA felt more confident with any aspect of your studies or their studies in general**

*I had a couple of one-on-one sessions with the LSA which were invaluable. It was helpful to talk over my assessment to help me clarify my ideas and whether I was going in the right direction. Bella also read my essays and offered constructive feedback on how to improve the clarity of my writing and academic writing skills and how to polish off my work”*

*CUC Goulburn*

*“I attended multiple one-on-one sessions with my LSA during Semester 1, 2021. She was incredibly helpful and she dramatically increased my confidence regarding specific aspects of my respective Units.”*

*CUC Western Riverina Student*

*“Viveka was a great help and very motivating. It's invaluable to have a group to share with and support each other through the trials of full-time work, family and study.”*

*CUC Snowy Monaro*

*“A huge thank-you to Lisa for her support with one of my very challenging assignments. Her expert knowledge and skills helped to unpack it as I had no idea where to start.”*

*CUC Far West*



## Learning Community

The CUC works to foster a local learning community for students where they can develop peer support networks and engage with other university students. This is particularly important for first in family students (49% of CUC students), who may not have access to additional support within their existing family networks. Additionally, the development of a local learning community helps normalise higher education within the community, and nurtures aspirations for others to consider a higher education pathway.

### **87% CUC students experienced a sense of belonging to the CUC**

This question is aligned with the national QILT survey (2016), where only 36% of regional online across Australia students felt a sense of belonging to their university.

*“Before the Parkes CUC, I was studying at home. I didn't have the university experience of socialising or collaboration with others in my studies.”*

*CUC Parkes Student*

*“I had tried to study by distance previously but could not because I didn't have a dedicated space at home, nor a printer. I withdrew from my course. But now I have the CUCWR I am achieving HDs consistently in my Masters!! It's all down to the motivation I get from the space and being surrounded by other students in the same situation I am.”*

*CUC Western Riverina Student*

The CUC strives to create a learning community within each centre where students can connect and interact with each other and allow a sense of belonging to develop. National QILT data (2016) shows that only 21% of regional online students had opportunities to interact with local students, while students at the CUC had far greater opportunities to connect and engage with other students.

### **60% CUC Students felt they had been given opportunities to interact with local students**

### **73% found opportunity to work in proximity to other students made it easier to feel motivated or supported in your studies**



The CUC is focused on providing face-to-face support to develop a thriving learning community. There was great variance in the survey responses from individual centres, with some having stronger learning communities than others, suggesting this may be an area for improvement for the CUC in the future. However, it should be noted that COVID-19 arrangements significantly limited the face-to-face interactions, student events and academic workshops that the CUC has been able to run across the Semester. This has been particularly felt in new Centres that have opened in 2021 and have not yet been able to establish consistent face-to-face activities because of the pandemic.

*"The student community is great, always friendly and Jacob encourages us to meet and talk whenever we are in the centre making sure we know the people we are studying with. It's a great way to meet other students and in such a small space it's important to know people and feel comfortable"*

*CUC Parkes*

*"Getting good support and being able to be part of a learning community is vital. Other students can help with SO much - and are willing to - after all, we all just want to succeed"*

*CUC Goulburn*

*"It [the CUC] definitely feels like a community, we all check in with each other and make sure we are all doing okay. It's a very positive place to be."*

*CUC Far West*

*"Networking with others in my community at CUC means I'm able to discuss my learning in a multidisciplinary setting- this has helped me have greater insight as I've been able to hear different perspectives and form better questions informed by others".*

*CUC Far West*

*"Cooma CUC provides a supportive environment and the group activities are helping to make it a fun place too. [I] have really noticed how the group activities have contributed to developing and fostering friendships amongst the students"*

*CUC Snowy Monaro*



## Facilities and safety

Students feel that the CUC facilities are exemplary, with at least a 98% positive result for each of the questions around facilities and safety.

***99% of students rated the quality of technology in the centre, including desktop computers, printing or video conferencing as Excellent or Good.***

***99% of students rated the quality of the internet connection in the Centre as Excellent or Good.***

Each CUC centre offers students access to desktop computers, printers, scanners and video conferencing facilities. The internet connection in each centre is often the fastest internet available in the community, with 100mpbs symmetrical connections available in each centre. A study by Stone and Davis (2020) found that poor internet connectivity, whether because of location or financial constraints, can be prohibitive to being able to participate in university study.

*"Before discovering the CUC I was on the cusp of giving up on studies and meeting the course deadlines. My home environment and poor internet access led to a lot of frustration. Before attending the centre, I felt like I was on my own and didn't know how to do certain tasks."*

*CUC Clarence Valley Student*

*"During exam times, having access to secure internet and a place that is set up to do exams relieved so much stress and apprehension. I've found myself actually enjoying studying."*

*CUC Maranoa*

*. My work does not have a space/internet connection for me study, so without the CUC I would be missing hours more of work each week because I would have to drive the hour back to the town I live in to attend class at home*

*CUC Snowy Monaro*

*"I have unreliable internet as I live 20km from town. Having access to CUC has helped so much. I am more motivated to continue with my studies because I love going there."*

*CUC Clarence Valley*



## **99% of students rated the cleanliness of the centres as Excellent or Good.**

Previous CUC student experience surveys have identified that students highly value the cleanliness of centres. This theme continued in 2021, with almost 60% of students stating that one of the best aspects of the CUC Centres was its cleanliness.

CUC staff have paid particular attention to the cleanliness of Centres during the COVID-19 circumstances, with increased hygiene measures in place at all centres.

*[The best thing about the CUC is that is it a] “very clean and quiet environment, with great opportunities to extend myself, engage with other students and improve grades.”*

*CUC Snowy Monaro Student*

*“The space at CUC made it easy for me to concentrate and manage my workload, with a clean, quiet space and a great internet connection to complete exams.”*

*CUC Far West Student*

## **98% of students rated the quality of the study areas, common areas and amenities at the CUC Centre as Excellent or Good**

Students were also asked about any improvements or changes to the facilities or available technology that could be made at the CUC. In the established centres, some students expressed a desire for more study spaces. This is a result of the increasing student numbers and frequency of students using these CUC Centres. Other unique recommendations were made for each centre, without any significant trends emerging between or within centres. Individual responses recommended items such as additional comfortable chairs, extended opening hours, or more individual study spaces.

## **100% of students felt safe in their CUC Centre**

Every student has a right to feel safe when studying at the CUC. During Sem I 2021, the CUC has continued its trend of providing a safe environment for students when they are studying, with 100% of students reporting that they felt safe or extremely safe in the CUC Centres.



## References

Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (2016). Student Experience Survey 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.qilt.edu.au/>, and by request from QILT team.

Stone, C., & Davis, M. (2020). New evidence: Stark inequity of online access for rural and remote students. *EduResearch Matters*. <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=>



# All Results

## Established Centres

	All Centres	CUCCV	CUCFW	CUCG	CUCSM	CUCWR	CUCNW
Number of responses	375	21	124	22	51	35	25
<b>Facilities</b>							
Please rate the cleanliness of the CUC Centre facilities and amenities in Sem 1 2020	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	97%	100%
Please rate the quality of the internet connection in the Centre	99%	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Please rate the quality of technology in the centre, including desktop computers, printing or video conferencing etc	99%	100%	100%	95%	100%	94%	100%
Please rate the quality of the study areas, common areas and amenities at the CUC Centre	98%	100%	99%	95%	98%	100%	100%
How safe do you feel in the CUC Centre?	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Wrap Around Support</b>							
How helpful did you find the CUC staff?	99%	100%	100%	95%	100%	100%	100%
If you needed it, to what extent did you receive support from CUC Staff to help you to settle into study	78%	90%	81%	81%	79%	71%	88%
<b>Did you access any of the Learning Skills Advisor services this semester? This might include workshops, one-on-one sessions or online content</b>	<b>126</b>	12 students	63 students	21 students	15 students	10 students	5 students
If Yes, During Sem 1 2020, to what extent have you found your Learning Skills Advisor to be available?	93%	92%	100%	100%	80%	90%	80%
If Yes, During Sem 1 2020, to what extent have you found your Learning Skills Advisor to be helpful?	98%	100%	98%	100%	100%	100%	80%

## Established Centres

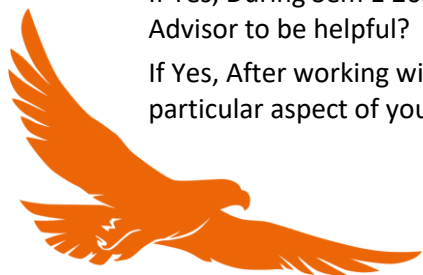
	All Centres	CUCCV	CUCFW	CUCG	CUCSM	CUCWR	CUCNW
If Yes, After working with your LSA, did you feel more motivated to tackle any particular aspect of your studies, or even your studies in general?	<b>96%</b>	83%	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%
If Yes, After working with your LSA, did you feel more confident with any particular aspect of your studies, or even your studies in general?	<b>93%</b>	75%	94%	100%	100%	100%	80%
<b>Academic Success</b>							
I felt that using the CUC helped to improve my academic results	<b>91%</b>	90%	89%	90%	96%	93%	92%
I am more likely to continue with my studies as a result of the help I have had from the CUC	<b>92%</b>	85%	95%	86%	91%	87%	96%
I feel that I have been able to better focus on my studies due to the support and facilities of the CUC	<b>96%</b>	85%	96%	95%	93%	90%	100%
<b>Learning Community</b>							
At the CUC Centre during Sem I 2020, to what extent have you experienced a sense of belonging to the CUC?	<b>87%</b>	85%	91%	86%	83%	80%	96%
At the CUC Centre during Sem I 2020, to what extent have you been given opportunities to interact with local students?	<b>73%</b>	70%	79%	67%	72%	48%	67%
Did having the opportunity to work in proximity to other students make it easier to feel motivated or supported in your studies?	<b>76%</b>	75%	82%	76%	70%	66%	88%
<b>General</b>							
Has the CUC made it easier for you to stay, study or work in your community?	<b>94%</b>	95%	95%	100%	87%	87%	100%
How likely are you to recommend the CUC to others?	<b>100%</b>	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%





## New Centres

	All Centres	CUCBC	CUCBN	CUCMN	CUCMV	CUCPK
Number of responses	375	15	1	37	21	23
<b>Facilities</b>						
Please rate the cleanliness of the CUC Centre facilities and amenities in Sem 1 2020	99%	100%	100%	100%	90%	100%
Please rate the quality of the internet connection in the Centre	99%	87%	100%	97%	100%	100%
Please rate the quality of technology in the centre, including desktop computers, printing or video conferencing etc	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Please rate the quality of the study areas, common areas and amenities at the CUC Centre	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%
How safe do you feel in the CUC Centre?	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Wrap Around Support</b>						
How helpful did you find the CUC staff?	99%	100%	100%	100%	85%	100%
If you needed it, to what extent did you receive support from CUC Staff to help you to settle into study	78%	60%	100%	71%	53%	78%
<b>Did you access any of the Learning Skills Advisor services this semester? This might include workshops, one-on-one sessions or online content</b>	126	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
If Yes, During Sem 1 2020, to what extent have you found your Learning Skills Advisor to be available?	93%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
If Yes, During Sem 1 2020, to what extent have you found your Learning Skills Advisor to be helpful?	98%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
If Yes, After working with your LSA, did you feel more motivated to tackle any particular aspect of your studies, or even your studies in general?	96%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA



## New Centres

	All Centres	CUCBC	CUCBN	CUCMN	CUCMV	CUCPK
If Yes, After working with your LSA, did you feel more confident with any particular aspect of your studies, or even your studies in general?	<b>93%</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Academic Success</b>						
I felt that using the CUC helped to improve my academic results	<b>91%</b>	80%	100%	83%	95%	96%
I am more likely to continue with my studies as a result of the help I have had from the CUC	<b>92%</b>	80%	100%	97%	90%	91%
I feel that I have been able to better focus on my studies due to the support and facilities of the CUC	<b>96%</b>	100%	100%	97%	100%	100%
<b>Learning Community</b>						
At the CUC Centre during Sem I 2020, to what extent have you experienced a sense of belonging to the CUC?	<b>87%</b>	93%	100%	89%	58%	91%
At the CUC Centre during Sem I 2020, to what extent have you been given opportunities to interact with local students?	<b>73%</b>	53%	0%	91%	63%	87%
Did having the opportunity to work in proximity to other students make it easier to feel motivated or supported in your studies?	<b>76%</b>	53%	0%	71%	68%	87%
<b>General</b>						
Has the CUC made it easier for you to stay, study or work in your community?	<b>94%</b>	87%	100%	100%	95%	100%
How likely are you to recommend the CUC to others?	<b>100%</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

