



Interim Project Report: Web @ UWA: Survey

Project Information:

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Purpose

This report summarises key responses from participants in a web based survey seeking feedback from key client groups regarding selected aspects of the University website.

The document provides a number of recommended actions arising from the outcomes of the web based survey.

Scope

The scope of the questions in the web-based survey was determined by the earlier documentation review and focus group stages of the Web at UWA Review. There was capacity within the survey instrument to capture responses outside of this scope through the provision of free text “comments” and “feedback” fields.

Evaluation Methodology

In evaluating responses to the Web at UWA Survey, a threshold for reporting dissatisfaction has been set at 30%. Recommended actions have been indicated where dissatisfaction exceeds 40%.

This level is similar to that employed in other evaluations undertaken by the University. The Institutional Research Unit, when reporting on reviews of schools and degree courses usually notes dissatisfaction in an executive summary when it reaches 20%. In the SURF survey, units are described as “unsatisfactory” if the dissatisfaction exceeds 30%.

Summary of Key Responses

Participants

- 1037 survey participants (71.2% students, 26.1% staff and 2.7% others)

Governance

- Responses indicate a good awareness of (89.5%), and a culture of compliance (75.2%) around, the current web policy and guidelines.
- Some sections (38.5% of respondents) do not undertake strategic planning for web development

Marketing

- Dissatisfaction (43.9%) with the appearance of the University website
- Dissatisfaction (44.4%) with overall University web experience

Content Management

- Dissatisfaction (57.9%) with navigating to information on the website
- Dissatisfaction (50.4%) with the logic and consistency of the structure of the University website.
- Some sections (47.6% of respondents) do not have quality assurance processes in place to manage web content throughout its life cycle
- Some sections (54.9% of respondents) do not monitor the performance of their website in major search engines
- Responses indicate that website development is largely an informal activity undertaken occasionally by staff, sometimes without specialist skills, training or experience
- Dissatisfaction (34.9%) reported by students regarding adequacy of information about units
- Dissatisfaction (37.8%) reported by students finding unit information
- Dissatisfaction (31.2%) reported by students regarding the ready availability of online learning materials

Recommended Actions

These recommendations should be read in the context of recommendations arising from the earlier Web at UWA Documentation Review¹.

Recommendation One: That the University should revise its Web Guidelines with reference to relevant legislative requirements, international and national standards, best practice amongst its peer institutions and, in particular, the evolving needs of the campus community.

Recommendation Two: That the University should prepare a new design for its home page and make available new design templates for all publicly available official web pages with particular emphasis on enhancing the branding and sub-branding elements for use within the web context.

Recommendation Three: That the University should develop a high level corporate website bringing consistency of structure, navigation and design while retaining the benefits inherent in devolved content management.

Recommendation Four: That the University should review its current web search strategy and implement appropriate solutions for search issues.

¹http://teams.admin.uwa.edu.au/sites/projectserver_114/Implementation/WebatUWA%20Interim%20Report%20-%20Doc%20Review.doc

1.0 WEB SURVEY MECHANISM

The Web at UWA Review web survey mechanism was designed using multiple choice and free answer questions arising from the earlier Documentation Review and Focus Group stages of the Web at UWA process.

The Web survey comprised a common section for all respondents and a number of follow up questions for four different categories of respondents. The four categories of respondents and the number of questions were as follows:

Category of respondent	No. of questions
Student	22 questions
Staff member NOT involved in managing, developing or maintaining web sites	18 questions
Staff member involved in managing, developing or maintaining web sites	43 questions
Other Visitor to the University website	18 questions

The survey mechanism was implemented in the University's MySource Content Management System with a single entrance page providing an explanation of the rationale for the Web at UWA Review, an outline of the review process and the opportunity for respondents to self select the relevant category.

Upon selecting a category, respondents were reminded of the category they had selected and invited to return to the entrance page and make another selection before commencing the survey. There were no other checks in place to confirm whether or not respondents had selected the correct category.

Participation in the survey was invited via email to All Staff and All Students and a notice on the Visitors web site. No incentives were offered for participation beyond the opportunity to "inform the development of recommendations for the enhancement of the University website"².

Survey responses were recorded in a database and after two weeks were extracted for analysis.

Survey questions 13, 14, 15 and 16 from the common section drew comments from a number of respondents concerned that the questions were "do not allow you to make negative comments". From comments, it appears that respondents correctly assumed that checking a box in these questions indicated satisfaction and not checking a box indicated dissatisfaction. Given that this was not explicit in the survey and the concern recorded in comments, the answers to these questions have been discounted in the survey.

2.0 PARTICIPANTS

There were 1,037 respondents to the web based survey during the two week survey period. 71.2% of respondents identified themselves as students, 26.1% as staff and 2.7% as other, including only two visitor responses.

Participants were further invited to identify themselves according to the categories in the following table:

Participants	Number	Percentage		Subtotals
Undergraduate	515	49.7%		
Postgraduate	142	13.7%		
International undergraduate	57	5.5%		
International postgraduate	24	2.3%	Students	71.2%
Academic	65	6.3%		

² <http://weboffice.uwa.edu.au/survey>

Research	43	4.1%		
Management	32	3.1%		
Administrative	108	10.4%		
Technical	23	2.2%	Staff	26.1%
Other	28	2.7%	Other	2.7%
TOTAL	1037	100.0%		100.0%

An examination of the “other” responses revealed comments and remarks from staff that felt that none of the five staff categories offered described their role at the University.

Respondents identifying themselves as Staff were invited to identify whether or not they had any involvement in the management, development or maintenance of any website or web content. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they were staff with no involvement in the management, development or maintenance of any website or web content.

Respondent category	Number	Percentage
Staff NOT involved in managing, developing or maintaining web sites	163	60%
Staff involved in managing, developing or maintaining web sites	108	40%

The very low response rate from “visitors” (only two responses) reflects the difficulty engaging visitors to the University website in survey processes without offering significant incentives. Results from the visitors group were discounted in the survey analysis.

3.0 SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

The Web at UWA Review Discussion Paper outlined three areas for review; Governance, Marketing and Content Management. The review process has been framed in such a way has to draw out and highlight issues in each of these areas.

Governance

Questions in the governance area were targeted specifically at staff involved in managing, developing or maintaining web sites. The survey sought particularly to identify the level of awareness regarding University web policy, the level of reported compliance and the degree to which respondents felt the current policy is burdensome or inadequate.

Question	Yes	No	Not applicable Don't know
My section is aware of the University web guidelines.	89.5%	0	10%
My section adheres to the requirements of the University's web guidelines	75.2%	5%	19.8%
The University web guidelines are too strict in their requirements	19.5%	47.2%	33.3%
The University web guidelines are too narrow in their scope	20.7%	40.5%	38.8%

Respondents indicated a high level of awareness of the University web guidelines and a relatively high level of compliance with the University web guidelines. The survey responses tally with records of web site management plans maintained by content custodians that, on 18 October 2005, indicated 83% percent compliance with the requirements of the University web guidelines³.

Approximately 20% of respondents felt that the University web guidelines were “too strict”. There was no particular correlation between respondents that indicated non-compliance and those that

³<http://weboffice.uwa.edu.au/office/authors/smp?section=displaygraph&day=18&month=10&year=2005&title=Total+Compliance&yes=2623&no=203&other=326>

felt the guidelines were too strict. A similar proportion of respondents felt that the current web guidelines were “too narrow in their scope” while 40.5% felt that the scope was adequate.

New legislative requirements, developments in best practice, evolving national and international standards and increasing client expectations are driving the need for a review of the University web guidelines⁴. While there is good awareness of the current web guidelines and a strong culture of compliance, any review and subsequent extension of the web guidelines will need to have a view to ensuring that implementation and compliance does not become an issue for the campus community.

In planning to ensure effective utilisation of the web, only 61% of respondents indicated that their section had “identified clear goals for their web site”. While a majority of respondents indicated some goal setting for their web sites, only 40% reported that their section had a “strategic plan addressing the on-line needs of the organisation”. A similar portion (39%) reported they had a “strategic plan addressing the on-line needs of their clients”. Undefined or inadequately articulated goals and a relatively low level of planning around achieving business aims and objectives is likely to be a contributing factor to performance issues with the University web site as a whole. A review of the University web guidelines should give consideration to policies that would support and guide the local development and implementation of goal setting and planning measures to improve web performance.

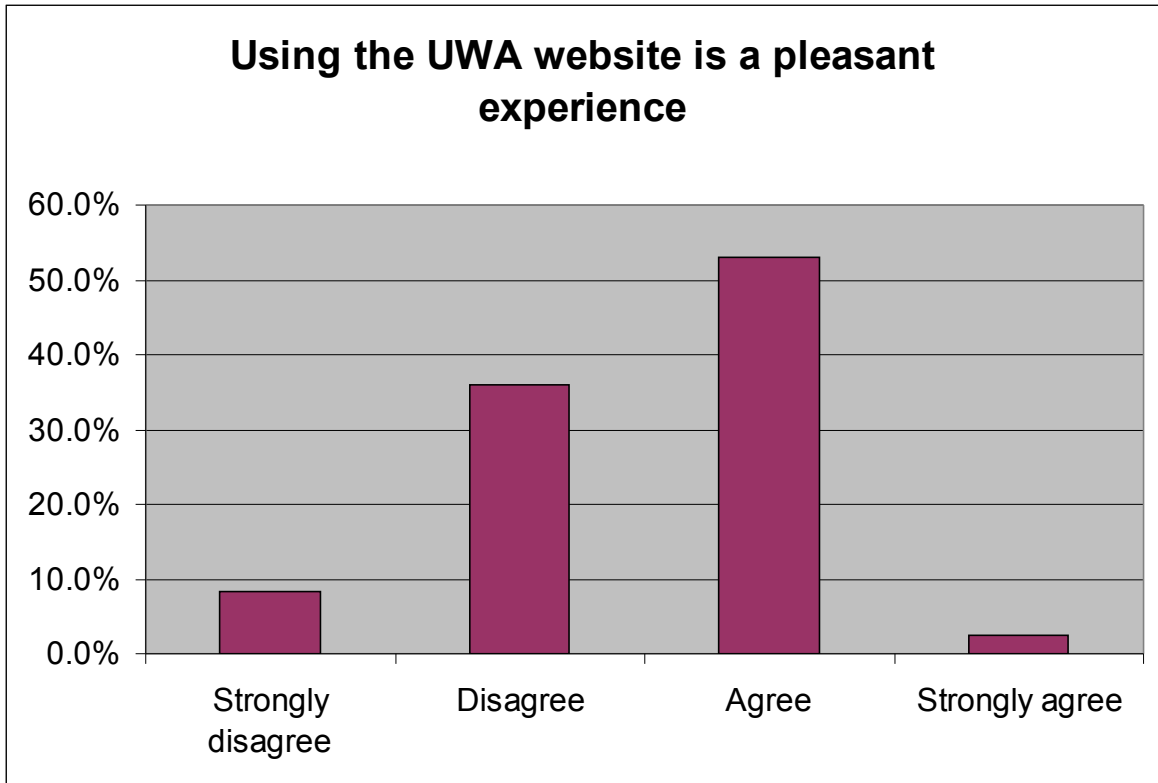
Recommendation One:

That the University should revise its Web Guidelines with reference to relevant legislative requirements, international and national standards, best practice amongst its peer institutions and, in particular, the evolving needs of the campus community.

Marketing

As a broad measure of satisfaction with the University website, respondents were asked to indicate whether using the “UWA website is a pleasant experience”. While slightly more than half the respondents agreed with this statement, almost as many disagreed or strongly disagreed. Given that the website is increasingly an integral part of the student and staff experience at the University, that more than forty percent of respondents find using this resource unpleasant is an indication of dissatisfaction from a significant number of respondents.

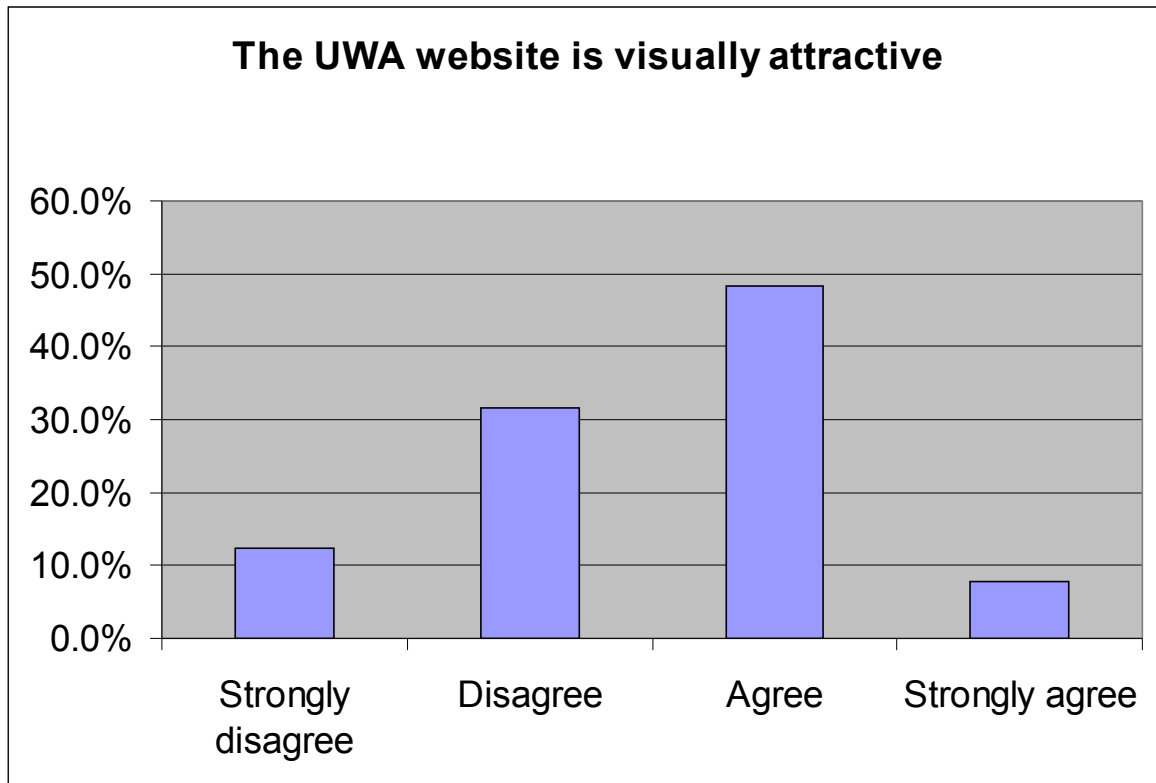
⁴http://teams.admin.uwa.edu.au/sites/projectserver_114/Implementation/WebatUWA%20Interim%20Report%20-%20Doc%20Review.doc



Across the staff and student respondent populations there was little to differentiate responses on this question with similar portions of staff and students agreeing and disagreeing with the statement.

Further questions sought to clarify particular issues affecting respondent satisfaction with the website and, as the following sections of this report will illustrate, the single biggest cause of dissatisfaction was navigation. However, respondents also indicated significant dissatisfaction with the appearance of the website.

Respondents were asked to respond to a statement asserting that the “UWA website is visually attractive”.



The following selection of comments from respondents, indicating their dissatisfaction with the appearance of the website, conveys the depth of feeling and concern on this issue:

“No single “feel” to it, unlike, UniMelb’s or UQ’s websites”

“Basically, the website is text-based and looks like a phone book. Hardly a good image for a university supposedly on the cutting edge of research in Australia.”

“The front page press releases are pretty dry. UWA already invests in UniView and UWA News - so it might like to consider putting some good articles online with pictures (like UNSW, MIT, etc.)”

“not that it’s the university’s fault, but the website is sort of ugly (although, if i remember correctly, it used to look worse)”

“The university branding is fantastic and I am a big advocate. However it needs further refinement for use on the websites.”

“the homepage is stuffy and boring and makes us look stuffy and boring”

“Overall, nearly all UWA websites look amateurish and clearly indicate that UWA has not professionally embraced the web as a means of communication.”

“The standard mysource template is visually unappealing”

“visually very unattractive and mysource makes the website look very ‘amateurish”

“It is dreadful, looks inconsistant running through many different visual styles and ways of navigation. It needs a very big stick taken to it. Guidelines must be etched in stone. Graphics should be centrally available and CONSISTANT”

“The university front page is going to be most potential students’ first contact with UWA. It MUST look professional. It MUST have a brief ‘About UWA’ section. It MUST sell the university. It does not.”

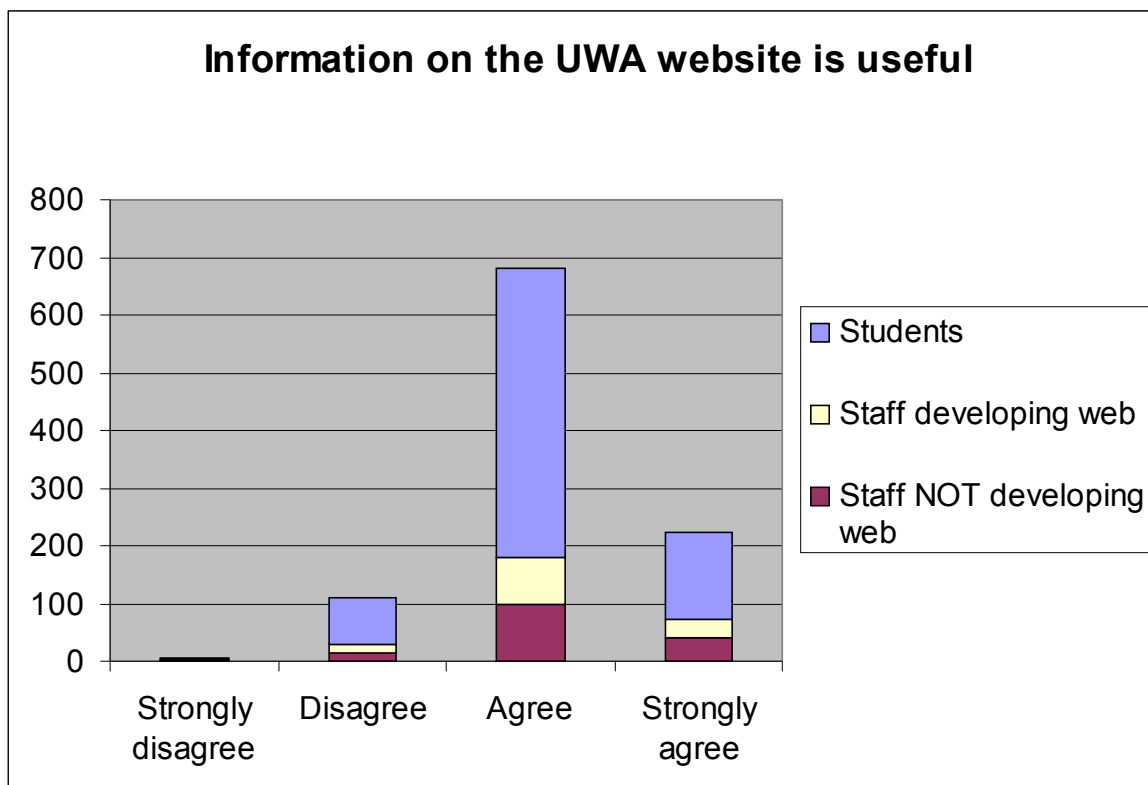
The design of the University home page was last reviewed in 2001. The design elements applied to most official sites using the MySource Content Management System (CMS) were developed at the same time. The sub-branding exercise did not produce versions of the branding specifically for the web and a version based on the letterhead has been rather unsatisfactorily applied.

Recommendation Two:

That the University should prepare a new design for its home page and make available new design templates for all publicly available official web pages with particular emphasis on enhancing the branding and sub-branding elements for use within the web context.

Content Management

Echoing recommendation 21 of the Australian Universities Quality Audit (April 2004)⁵, an overwhelming portion of respondents found the information available on the University website useful but the issue attracting greatest concern was difficulty navigating to information on the website.



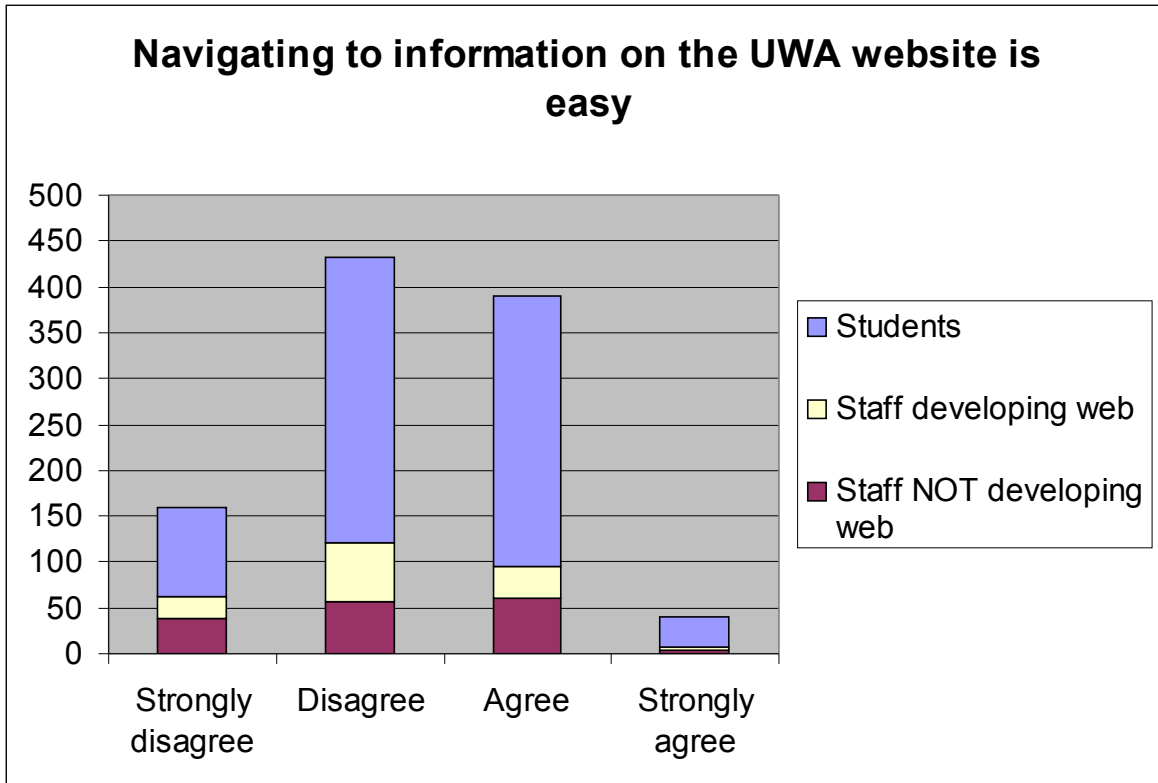
There was little to differentiate student and staff views on the question of the usefulness of information on the website.

Staff and students respondents also spoke with one voice on the issue of navigation.

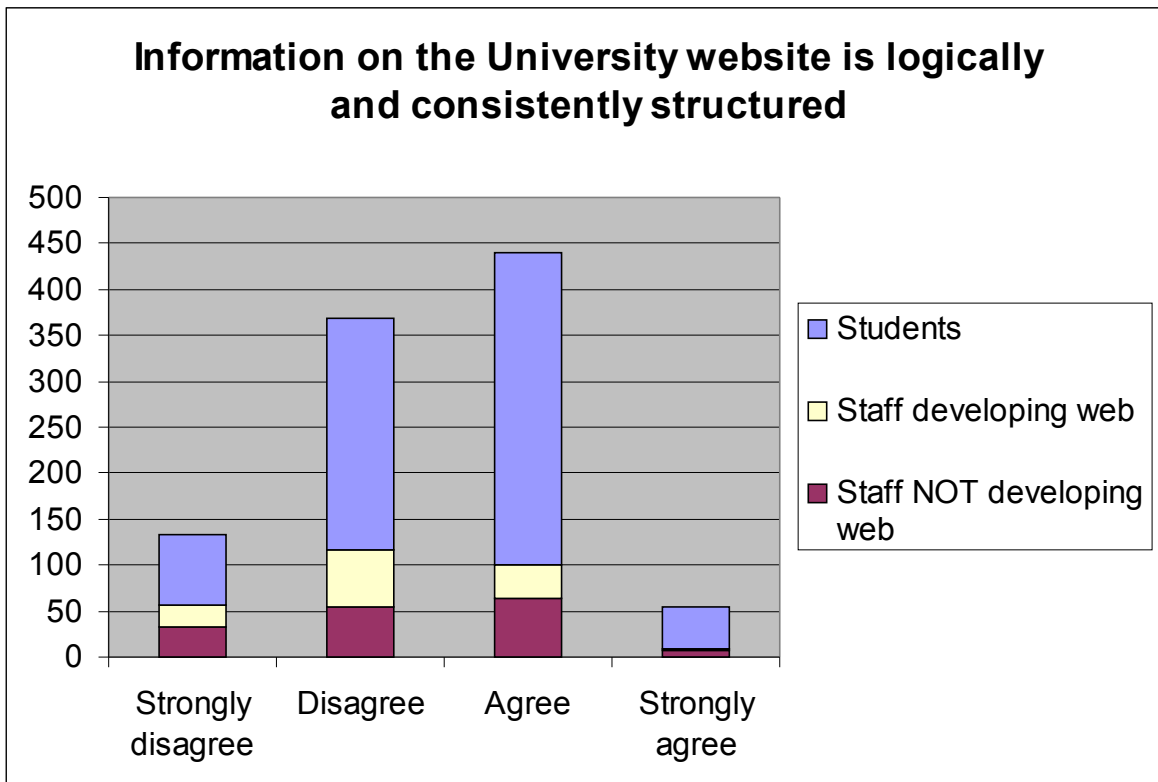
⁵ AUQA Report Recommendation 21

“That The University of Western Australia seek to increase the usefulness of its website, which contains an impressive amount of information, by making it easier to navigate and to search.”

http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai_reports/reports/auditreport_uwa_2004.doc



57.9% of respondents disagreed with the statement that “navigating to information on the UWA website is easy”. Related questions sought to clarify whether issues with navigation arose from difficulties with the available methods for navigating from page to page or whether they were a result of fundamental problems with the underlying website structure.



50.4% of respondents recorded dissatisfaction with the logic and consistency of the structure of the University website whereas only 34.4% reported dissatisfaction with “moving between pages”. The

latter question may have confused some respondents and received votes of dissatisfaction as part of the general navigation issue as none of the comments revealed difficulties actually identifying and using navigation in order to move from page to page.

Concerns regarding the navigation and underlying structure of the website were amongst the most frequent comments supplied by respondents to the survey. A sample of comments are provided below.

“Meant to know this universities naming conventions”

“It is really hard to find a specific link, I need to go around and click the link one by one before I find my interest”

“I found the website hard to navigate... Often related information does not seem to be linked in any logical way”

“You need to centralise the website”

“Make finding information on the website easier & more logical.”

“navigation is awful”

“It is incredibly difficult to find what you want”

“Structure sometimes means clicking through useless hierarchy of links to get to destination”

“There doesn't seem to be a nice flow-on system in the website”

“UWA's internet is really the bane of the university. It was not well structured initially, and thus updates have just been stacked on top of this bad model, culminating in a labyrinthine styled mess”

Navigating the highly devolved structure of the hundreds of individual websites that make up the University website remains the factor most responsible for dissatisfaction with the University website.

A top-level, corporate website situated immediately below the University home page would allow the development of a logically and consistently structured website designed to answer most questions of most visitors to the University website.

Recommendation Three:

That the University should develop a high level corporate website bringing consistency of structure, navigation and design while retaining the benefits inherent in devolved content management.

The other principle means by which clients navigate the University website is by utilising search technologies. Respondents were asked to respond to a statement asserting that the “University search tool works effectively”. 43% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

This rather open question doesn't clarify what specific issues the “University search tool” is presenting to staff and students. Comments from respondents raised a range of issues with searching for staff and students in the contact directory and problems accessing the default Google campus search engine.

One specific issue relating to students be blocked from the default Google campus search engine has already received attention. Students experiencing this problem will be referred to the locally intranet search tool.

Any improvement to search as a navigation option on the University website will necessarily entail an examination of the particular issues impacting on the effectiveness of the available search tool. The outcome of the review of the search tool should be the implementation of a comprehensive

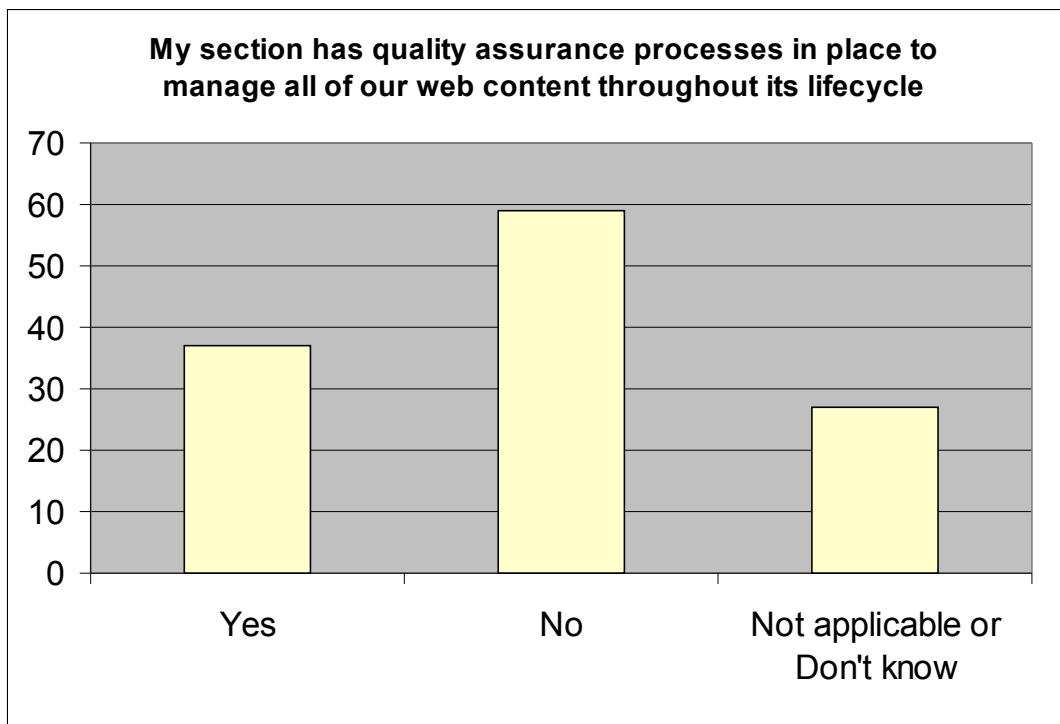
search strategy that addresses both the searching mechanisms made available to staff, students and members of the public and indexing policies that ensure that relevant and targeted search results are delivered to key audiences.

Recommendation Four:

That the University should review its current web search strategy and implement appropriate solutions for search issues.

A number of questions targeted at staff involved in managing, developing or maintaining web sites sought to discover issues associated with content management processes. The most obvious areas of concern were responses on the issues of quality assurance and monitoring search engine performance.

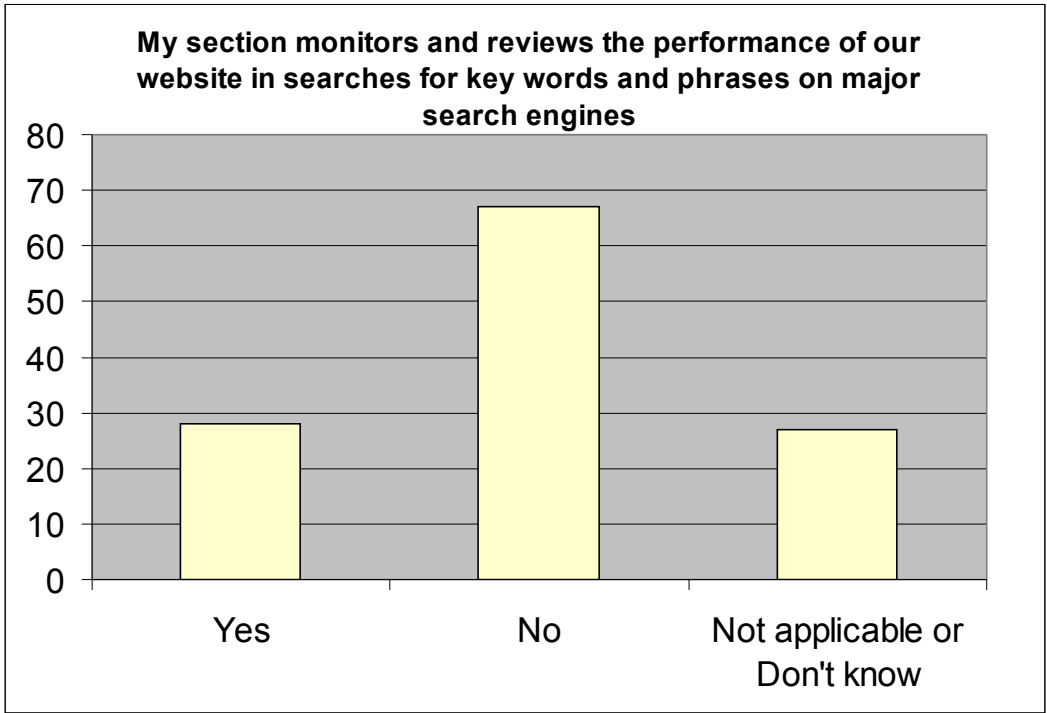
Most respondents either indicated that their section did not have “quality assurance processes in place to manage all of their web content throughout its lifecycle” or that the question was not applicable or they didn’t know.



Given the importance of the website as a point of contact for students, prospective students, business and industry, researchers, local and international communities, the University may want to consider what steps it might reasonably take to ensure that appropriate quality assurance measures are put in place by business units publishing on the web.

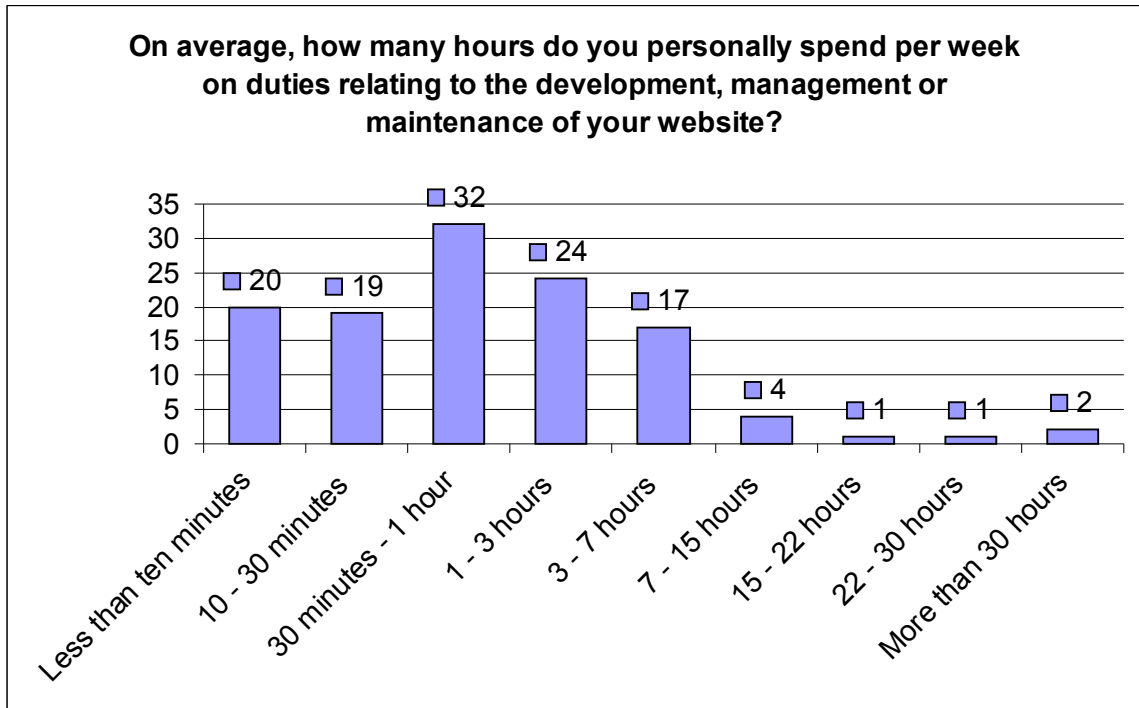
It may be appropriate, as part of a review of the University web guidelines (Recommendation One, p. 7), to consider implementing policy that guides the application of quality assurance processes to the management of web content throughout its life cycle.

Given the level of dissatisfaction with the University search tool and comments from respondents regarding the poor quality of search results obtained, it is perhaps surprising that 77% of respondents either don’t monitor and review the performance of their website in searches for key words and phrases on major search engines or didn’t know or considered the question not applicable.

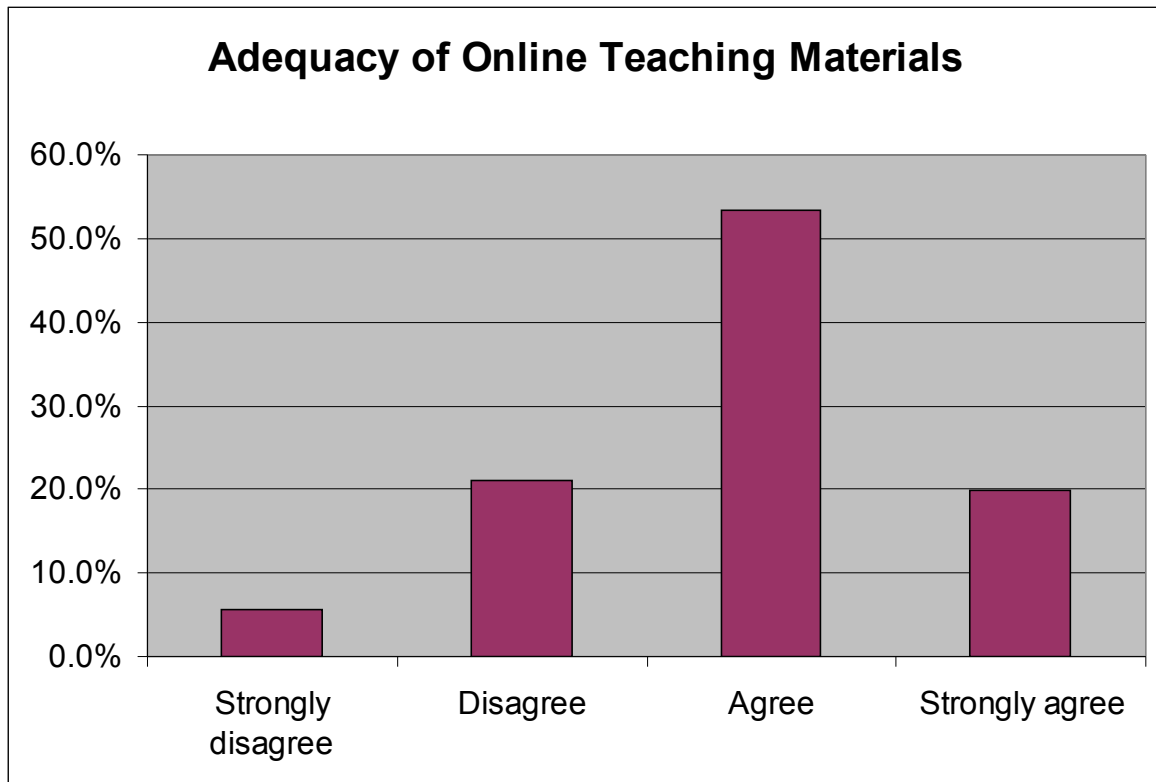


A review of the University web guidelines may consider whether guidance might not be provided to business units to ensure that they monitor and take effective action to improve the placement of key University web pages in major search engines.

Survey responses indicated that web development at the University continues to be an activity undertaken, by and large, by staff for whom this activity is not identified in their duty statement (51% of respondents) and where the necessary knowledge, skills and experience are not incorporated in selection criteria (42% of respondents). Survey responses from staff involved in managing, developing or maintaining web sites indicate that 60% of these staff spend less than one hour per week on web development.



Student responses to the survey indicated some satisfaction (73.3%) with the adequacy of online teaching materials whether available in WebCT or elsewhere.



Students did record some dissatisfaction with other student-specific aspects of the online experience. Reflecting broader concerns with navigation, 37.8% of students disagreed with the statement “information about your units is readily found”. Any response to Recommendation Three should address this concern and seek to improve the ease with which students can find and navigate to information about units.

34.9% of students expressed dissatisfaction regarding the adequacy of information about units generally and 31.2% of students disagreed with the statement “online learning material for your units (whether in WebCT or elsewhere) is readily available”. While the level of dissatisfaction expressed is marginal, given the strategic importance attached to improving the student experience it may be appropriate to establish a project to explore the specific issues that have given rise to these responses and implement appropriate solutions.

Questions common to all respondents.

The University Website

*These questions relate to your experience using the University Website as a whole.
There are 18 questions in this section*

(1) My role at the University

- Academic staff
- Research staff
- Administrative staff
- Technical staff
- Management
- Executive
-

(2) I use the University website...

- Rarely, if ever
- Annually
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

(3) Moving between pages in the UWA website is easy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Not applicable or Don't know

(4) Navigating to information on the UWA website is easy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Not applicable or Don't know

(5) Information on the UWA website is useful

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(6) Information on the UWA website is easy to understand

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(7) Information on the UWA website is current

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(8) The UWA website is visually attractive

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(9) I can distinguish between web pages that are part of the University and web pages that are not.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(10) Information on the University website is logically and consistently structured

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(11) The University search tool works effectively

- Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(12) My navigation preferences

- I prefer to click on links to find information
 I prefer to use the search tool to find information
 I use both search and clicking on links interchangeably

(13) Information on the website about faculties and schools is...

(You may tick more than one answer box)

- adequate
- well structured
- found easily
- Not applicable or Don't know

(14) Information on the website about UWA staff is

(You may tick more than one answer box)

- adequate
- well structured
- found easily
- Not applicable or Don't know

(15) Information on the website about facilities and services is

(You may tick more than one answer box)

- adequate
- well structured
- found easily
- Not applicable or Don't know

(16) The UWA website compares favorably with other university websites with respect to...

(You may tick more than one answer box)

- ease of use
- structure
- quality of content
- quantity of content
- appearance
- Not applicable or Don't know

(17) Using the UWA website is a pleasant experience

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(18) Comments

Any other comments or suggestions with respect to the University Website as a whole

Questions Specific to Students

There are 4 questions in this section

(1) Information about your units is adequate

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(2) Information about your units is readily found

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(3) Online learning material for your units (whether in WebCT or elsewhere) is adequate

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

(4) Online learning material for your units (whether in WebCT or elsewhere) is readily available

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree Not applicable or Don't know

Questions Specific to Staff Involved in Web Development

Staff managing, developing and maintaining websites

Please answer these questions with respect to your own website or websites.

There are 25 questions in this section

(1) Approximate number of web pages

If you have more than one website please select the total number of pages for all of your websites.

- 1-20 21-50 51-100 101-500 501-1000 More than 1000
 Don't know

(2) Our website best fits the following description

- Faculty
 School
 Discipline
 Research group
 University service or facility
 (Other, please specify)

(3) How much staff time is committed to developing and maintaining your web site?

Accounting cumulatively for all staff involved, select the approximate number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff hours involved. If you have more than website please select the total for all of your websites.

- None Less than 0.2 FTE 0.2 - 0.5 FTE
 0.5 - 1 FTE 1 - 2 FTE 2 - 3 FTE
 More than 3 FTE Not applicable or Don't know

(4) My section has a strategic plan addressing the on-line needs of the organisation

- Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(5) My section has a strategic plan addressing the on-line needs of our clients

- Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(6) My section has identified clear goals for our web site

- Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(7) My section has identified a senior staff member responsible for achieving our strategic goals online

- Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(8) My section has a corporate style guide for our web content

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(9) My section has quality assurance processes in place to manage all of our web content throughout its lifecycle

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(10) Responsibility for maintenance and development of web content in my section is clearly described in relevant staff duty statements

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(11) The knowledge, skills and experience required to manage, maintain and develop web content in my section are included in the selection criteria for relevant roles

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(12) My section has the resources necessary to ensure the quality and effectiveness of our website

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(13) If your section doesn't have the resources necessary to ensure the quality and effectiveness of our website, what additional resources do you believe are required?



(14) Development and maintenance of our web site is informed by usability testing with representative client groups.

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(15) My section regularly evaluates our own website against websites of peer institutions and organisations.

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(16) My section monitors and reviews the performance of our website in searches for key words and phrases on major search engines

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(17) My section has identified related organisations that might direct clients to our websites and arranged for an exchange of links

Yes No Not applicable or Don't know

(18) On average, how many hours do you personally spend per week on duties relating to the development, management or maintenance of your website?

- None
- Less than ten minutes
- 10 - 30 minutes
- 30 minutes - 1 hour
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 7 hours
- 7 - 15 hours
- 15 - 22 hours
- 22 - 30 hours
- More than 30 hours

(19) My section is aware of the University web guidelines.

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable or Don't know

(20) My section adheres to the requirements of the University's web guidelines

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable or Don't know

(21) The University web guidelines are too strict in their requirements

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable or Don't know

(22) The University web guidelines are too narrow in their scope

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable or Don't know

(23) Only official portions of the University web site need to present a consistent view to all visitors

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable or Don't know

(24) Adequate support is provided centrally for business units developing their own websites

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable or Don't know

(25) Comments

Any other comments or suggestions with respect to your own website

