

BENCHMARKS FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

The benchmarks are based on 42 key questions from the SASSE survey and capture vital aspects of the student experience.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others to solve problems or master difficult materials prepares students to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after university.

Activities:

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)



SASSE
South African Survey of Student Engagement

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Level of Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and institutional quality. Universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

Activities and conditions:

- Time spent preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to your academic program)
- Worked harder than you thought you could to meet a lecturer's standards or expectations
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length course packages or subject readings
- Number of written pages or assignments of 20 pages or more
- Number of written pages or assignments between 5 and 19 pages
- Number of written pages or assignments fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasised: Analysing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- Coursework emphasised: Synthesising/integrating and organizing ideas, information, or experiences
- Coursework emphasised: Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasised: Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Institution emphasised: Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work

Enriching Educational Experiences

Complementary learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom augment the academic program. Experiencing diversity teaches students valuable things about themselves and other cultures. Used appropriately, technology facilitates learning and promotes collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships and community service provide students with opportunities to synthesise, integrate, and apply their knowledge. Such experiences make learning more meaningful and, ultimately, more useful because what students know becomes a part of who they are.

Activities and Conditions:

- Talking to students with different religious beliefs, political opinions, or values
- Talking to students of a different race or ethnicity
- An institutional climate that encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Using electronic technology to discuss or complete assignments
- Participating in:
 - Internships or field experiences
 - Community service or volunteer work
 - Foreign or additional language coursework
 - Study abroad
 - Study of a subject or course for non-degree purposes
 - The development of a community project using knowledge obtained at university
 - Co-curricular activities
 - Academic student societies (law, psychology, etc.)

Supportive Campus Environment

Students perform better and are more satisfied at universities that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

Conditions:

- Campus environment provides support needed to help you succeed academically
- Campus environment helps you cope with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environment provides the support needed to help you thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with lecturers and staff members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices

Student-Staff Interaction

Students see first-hand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with staff members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.

Activities:

- Discussed marks or assignments with a lecturer or tutor
- Talked about career plans with a lecturer or counsellor
- Discussed ideas from readings or classes with a lecturer outside of class
- Worked with staff members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)
- Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from lecturers on performance
- Worked with a staff member on a research project