

EXECUTIVE REPORT

This report provides an executive summary of the University of Waterloo's findings in the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) 2012 Graduating Student Survey of undergraduate students who will likely graduate in the spring or fall of 2012. A sample of 432 students from the University of Waterloo participated in the survey.

This report highlights key findings and provides a comparison of University of Waterloo students against students at all 37 participating universities (n=15,109) and those attending similar universities (n=5,784). Similar universities are defined by CUSC as Group 2 universities and include institutions that offer both undergraduate and graduate studies and that tend to be of medium size in terms of student population. In the current survey there are 11 participating Group 2 universities.

PROFILE OF GRADUATING STUDENTS

Demographic Profile

While a slim majority of University of Waterloo undergraduate students participating in the survey are female (54%), the University of Waterloo has a larger proportion of male students (46%) as compared to similar universities (37%) and all universities (33%). Students attending the University of Waterloo are less likely to live with family (23%) and more likely to live in off-campus rented housing (66%) than those attending similar universities (37% and 53% respectively) and all universities (40% and 49%, respectively).

Academic Profile

The typical graduating student at the University of Waterloo is studying full-time (88%), has not interrupted studies (84%), is in a program that takes four or more years to complete (93%), and is graduating with an average grade of B+ or higher (67%). In general, this academic profile is similar to that of students attending similar universities and all universities. Almost half the graduating students at the University of Waterloo (47%) are in either Engineering (27%) or Physical Sciences

(20%) programs, which is much different from similar universities (9% and 8% respectively) or all universities (6% in both cases.)

TABLE 1: Key academic differences

	University		
	All (n=15,109)	Similar (n=5,784)	Waterloo (n=432)
Did not have a delay	64%	66%	75%
Received academic scholarship from this university	51%	52%	73%
Enrolled in work experience	51%	54%	65%
Grade A- or higher	35%	33%	42%

As shown in Table 1, University of Waterloo students are more likely than students at other universities to have received an academic scholarship, enrolled in a work experience program, and have an average grade of A- or higher. They are also less likely to have delayed their studies than students at other institutions in Canada.

STUDENT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT WHILE AT UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Experiences at university

Among the 16 activities tested, several stand out as contributing most to student's growth and development. The top four activities at the University of Waterloo are *co-ops* (84%), *practicums* (82%), *work experience related to their program* (78%), and *internships* (75%). Of the 16

activities, *online instruction* (16%) and *recommended readings* (12%) are viewed by students as contributing least to students' growth and to development. These results are consistent with findings from other universities.

Personal interactions with faculty at University of Waterloo get lower ratings, but co-op and work experience get higher ratings in terms of contributing to their personal growth and development.

University of Waterloo students are less likely to say that certain interactions (*personal interactions with faculty in class* — 32% and *participation in classroom discussions* — 29%) contributed very much to their growth and development as compared to similar universities (44% and 43% respectively), as well as universities overall (also 44% and 43%). *Use of library* also gets a lower score among graduating students at University of Waterloo (28%) than at similar universities (38%) or universities overall (40%) for contributing to their growth and development. Students at University of Waterloo are more likely to say that their *co-op* (84%) and *work experience* (78%) contributed very much to their growth when compared to students at similar universities (76% and 68% respectively) or universities overall (73% and 69%).

Extracurricular activities

Of the extracurricular activities tested, students report that participating in international study or exchange has the greatest impact on their personal growth and development.

Among 17 extracurricular activities tested to show the impact they had on students' growth and development, *participating in international study or exchanges* (91%), *interacting with other students* (65%), *being a teaching assistant* (50%), *living on campus* (49%), and *participating in off-campus community service/volunteer activities* (48%) are the five most mentioned activities among University of Waterloo students. The activity University of Waterloo students think contributed the least is *attending home games of university athletic teams* (11%).

Interestingly, of the 17 extracurricular activities, University of Waterloo students are most likely to say that *participating in international study or exchanges* contributed very much to their growth and development, although only 13% of students had experience. At similar universities, about the same proportion of students had experience *participating in international study or exchanges* (12%) and they are less likely to say that say this activity contributed very much to their growth and development (75%).

Skill growth and development

Students rated their universities' contribution to their development in 33 specific skills. These skills were further segmented into academic, communication, analytical and learning, working and knowledge, and personal and relationship skills.

Waterloo scores higher in the development on some key academic skills

Among six **academic skills** tested, most of the students rate the University of Waterloo as contributing much or very much to their development in terms of a *broad knowledge of my major field of study* (75%). This result is consistent with similar universities and all universities. Of the five other academic skills, in four cases, a higher proportion of students at the University of Waterloo reported the university as contributing much or very much to their development as compared to similar universities and all universities. In fact, the University of Waterloo scored around 10% higher than other universities on these skills: *analyzing quantitative problems* (51%); *computer literacy skills* (47%); *understanding and applying scientific principle and methods* (46%); and *mathematical skills* (43%).

Among four **communication skills** tested, students at the University of Waterloo are most likely to say that the university contributed much or very much to their *written communication skills* (59%) and *oral communication skill* (59%), which is similar to other institutions.

Among seven **analytical and learning skills**, students at the University of Waterloo are most likely to rate their university as contributing much or very much to their ability to *think logically and analytically* (74%). Students are least likely to say that their university contributed much or very much to *commitment to lifelong learning* (59%). These results are consistent with findings from similar universities, as well as with all universities.

Among the seven skills classified as **working and knowledge skills**, students give the highest rating to the contribution to *working independently* (76%). Students are least likely to say their universities contributed much or very much to their *entrepreneurial skills* (17%). These results are consistent with findings from similar universities, as well as with all universities.

Of the nine areas classified as **personal and relationship skills**, *persistence with difficult tasks* (63%) and *time management skills* (59%) receive the highest ratings. Students are least likely to say their universities contributed much or very much to their *spiritual development* (16%). These results are consistent with findings from similar universities, as well as with all universities.

Students were asked to review twenty skills and identified those skills that they thought were most important to develop while at university. University of Waterloo students most often selected the following skills: *identifying and solving problems* (37%), *time management skills* (29%), *broad knowledge of my field of study* (28%), *self-confidence* (26%), and *general skills relevant to employment* (26%). These areas were also selected by students at similar universities.

STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The vast majority Waterloo students are satisfied with university's facilities and services

Among 19 different facilities and services at their universities, the vast majority of students at the University of Waterloo are satisfied, as between 75% and 100% are satisfied with each. Overall, students at similar universities and students at all universities report similar satisfaction levels. Among the 19 different facilities and

services that students were asked to rate, *services for First Nations students* (100%), *library facilities* (93%), *international student services* (93%), *computer support services* (92%), and *services for students with disabilities* (92%) received the highest level of satisfaction from University of Waterloo students. These facilities and services received top ratings from students at similar universities.

STUDENT STANDING: EDUCATION, FINANCING, EMPLOYMENT

Current standing: finance and employment

Among 11 sources University of Waterloo students may use to finance their education, the most commonly used sources of funding are parents or other family members (54%) and personal savings (46%). On average, University of Waterloo students required \$13,019 to finance their current year of studies. This amount is \$1,638 more than the amount required for students at similar universities.

61% of University of Waterloo students report leaving university with some debt, averaging almost \$15,000

Overall, about 6 in 10 University of Waterloo students (61%) report having some debt from financing their education, with the typical student reporting \$14,971 in debt with 56% of this being accounted for by government student loans. This debt profile is comparable to that of students at similar universities, as well as all universities.

At the University of Waterloo, 37% of students are employed, which is lower compared to similar (56%) and all universities (60%). The average number of hours a

week a student works is less at the University of Waterloo (15 hours) as compared to similar (18 hours) and all universities (18 hours). Partly, these differences results from the fact that students were to exclude work related to a co-op program, internship, and other practical experiences, in which University of Waterloo students are more likely to be engaged.

Among those working, about 1 in 4 University of Waterloo students report at least some negative impact on their academic performance, which is on par with results from other institutions.

Future standing: education and employment

In their first year after graduating, about half of University of Waterloo students plan on continuing their education (46%). Students' decisions about whether to take further education after graduating are somewhat influenced by debt they have incurred, as 54% say their debt load has an impact on their decision about whether or not to take further education. These finding are consistent with findings from similar universities, as well as all universities.

At the University of Waterloo, similar universities, and all universities, slightly fewer than 6 students in 10 believe that there are at least some jobs available in their field of study, while 4 students in 10 think there are few jobs in their field of study.

Waterloo students are more likely than students at other universities to have arranged a full-time position, with a higher annual salary

Just over 1 in 3 (36%) University of Waterloo students have a job arranged once they graduate. The following results are apparent among these students:

- 28% of students say it is a full-time position. The proportion is approximately **10 percentage points higher** than those at similar universities and at all universities.
- 81% of students report it is a permanent position, which is about **20 percentage points higher** than those at similar universities and at all universities.
- 70% of students say that their degree or diploma helped them get their job. This proportion is about **20 percentage points higher** than those at similar and all universities.
- The average annual income they will receive is estimated to be \$49,857. As a comparison, students at similar universities estimate to receive an average annual income of \$35,168.

STUDENT SATISFACTION: KEY OUTCOME MEASURES

Students give University of Waterloo high ratings on key satisfaction measures, although some interactions with faculty could be improved

University of Waterloo students are, in general, very positive about their interactions, with faculty with 66% to 97% of students being satisfied with the various aspects of interactions with faculty. However, it is notable that students at the University of Waterloo are less positive about their interactions with faculty, compared to students at similar and all universities. In fact, in three particular areas, about 10% fewer students were satisfied with the University of Waterloo as compared to other similar universities, as well as all universities: *most of my professors were knowledgeable of career opportunities in my field* (53%); *most of my professors provided useful feedback on my academic performance* (65%); and *most of my professors encouraged students to participate in class discussions* (67%). In spite of this, University of Waterloo students are as likely as students at comparable and all universities to agree that they are *satisfied with the quality of teaching they have received* (82%) and with the *overall quality of education* (84%).

As shown in Table 2, graduating students at the University of Waterloo are satisfied with their experience and would recommend this university to others. The vast majority of University of Waterloo students report that they are satisfied with the opportunities to become involved in campus life and to develop lasting friendships. Indeed, most report that they feel as if they

are part of this university. About half reported that they sometimes feel they get the run around at this university. While half are satisfied with the concern shown by the university for students as individuals, the other half are dissatisfied.

Almost 9 in 10 students would recommend the University of Waterloo to others and are satisfied with their decision to attend this university. About 8 in 10 report that their expectations were met (54%) and even exceeded (26%). This is in spite of the fact that only about 2 in 3 agree that the university is good value for the money.

TABLE 2: Outcome measures

	Waterloo (n=432)
Educational experience	
Satisfied with the overall quality of education	84%
Satisfied with quality of teaching	82%
Personal experience	
Opportunity to develop lasting friendships	84%
Feel as if I am part of this university	77%
Satisfied with opportunities to become involved in campus life	85%
Sometimes feel get the round around at this university	52%
Concern shown by university for students and individuals	50%
Overall outcomes	
Satisfied with decision to attend this university	90%
Recommend this university	87%
Met or exceeded expectations	80%
University is good value for money	68%