

EXECUTIVE REPORT

This report provides an executive summary of University of Waterloo (Waterloo) findings in the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) 2024 Graduating Student Survey. A sample of 1,053 students from Waterloo participated in the survey.

This report highlights key findings and provides a comparison of Waterloo’s graduating students against students at all 38 participating universities (n = 12,668) and those attending eight comparable universities (n = 4,674). All percentages reported are based on those students who could provide a rating.

PROFILE OF GRADUATING STUDENTS

Demographic profile

Students graduating from Waterloo are more likely to be male, a visible minority, and younger than students at other universities.

The typical Waterloo graduating student is 22 years old, female, and a Canadian citizen. Waterloo students tend to be younger and less likely to be female.

Two thirds of Waterloo graduating students self-identify as a member of a visible minority group, which is higher than other universities.

One quarter of Waterloo graduating students indicate that they have a disability, with a *mental health condition* (16%) being the most commonly reported.

TABLE 1: Demographic profile

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Canadian citizen	87%	88%	80%
Female	68%	69%	54%
Visible minority	44%	47%	65%
Disability	35%	36%	25%
First-generation	13%	12%	9%
Has children	7%	5%	<1%
Indigenous	5%	4%	1%
Average age	24.5	23.6	22.0

Seven percent of Waterloo graduating students indicated that they live on campus, which is about two times the proportion nationally (4%) and at comparable universities (3%). Amongst Waterloo students not living on campus, 19% said they would like to if they had the opportunity.

Academic profile

Waterloo graduating students are more likely to be studying full-time and experienced fewer barriers completing their program.

All Waterloo graduating students were studying full-time, which is higher than other universities. Waterloo students were more likely to have practical experience as part of their program.

Waterloo students were also less likely to have had delays completing their program, have interrupted their studies for one or more terms, or transferred from another university. This likely accounts for why Waterloo students tend to be younger than their counterparts.

TABLE 2: Academic profile

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Full-time	81%	86%	100%
Practical program experience	55%	58%	84%
Grade A- or higher	49%	51%	58%
Delays completing	37%	30%	21%
Interrupted studies	21%	16%	13%
Transferred from another institution	20%	15%	5%

On average, Waterloo students spend about 35 hours on their academics. Although the time spent in class is similar to other universities, Waterloo students report spending more time on academics outside of class than students elsewhere.

TABLE 3: Study patterns

Average weekly hours...	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Spent in class	12.6 hours	13.2 hours	13.5 hours
Spent outside of class	17.7 hours	18.3 hours	21.8 hours

STUDENT STANDING: EDUCATION, FINANCING, AND EMPLOYMENT

Current employment

Waterloo students are less likely to be working and work fewer hours than their counterparts.

At Waterloo, one third of graduating students are employed in their final year, which is much lower than the proportion at other universities. In addition, Waterloo students report working fewer hours than students elsewhere.

Likely due to working fewer hours, the proportion who say their employment has a negative impact on their academic performance is lower amongst Waterloo students.

TABLE 4: Current employment

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Currently employed	63%	61%	35%
Average hours worked*	19.5 hours	18.7 hours	14.5 hours
Negative impact on academic performance*	41%	41%	28%

*Among those who are currently employed.

Student debt

Waterloo graduating students report higher debt loads than students at comparable universities.

About half of Waterloo graduating students report having some type of debt related to their education, which is on par with the proportion at other universities. However, the average debt for those with debt is higher for Waterloo students compared to students at comparable universities.

TABLE 5: Education-related debt

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Any debt	45%	46%	47%
Total debt (all students)	\$12,795	\$10,901	\$12,941
Total debt (those with debt)	\$28,615	\$23,864	\$27,585

Financing current year of studies

Waterloo students require more to finance their current year of studies.

On average, Waterloo graduating students require about \$22,000 to finance their current year of studies. This is higher than what is reported by students elsewhere for their current year.

TABLE 6: Financing current year

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Financing for current year	\$19,363	\$18,542	\$21,846

Waterloo graduating students are less likely to rely on *current employment* and more likely to rely on *co-op programs* to finance their current year.

TABLE 7: Most common types of financing

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Parents/family	51%	53%	57%
Current employment	45%	43%	26%
Government student loan	45%	49%	47%
Scholarship	38%	38%	31%
Co-op program	11%	10%	49%

At Waterloo, about one quarter say that their debt loads either discourage them or prevent them from taking further education, which is slightly lower than the one third who say the same at other universities.

TABLE 8: Impact of debt on future education

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Have no debt	38%	37%	39%
Does not affect decision	22%	23%	28%
Discourages from taking further education	23%	23%	20%
Prevents from taking further education	9%	9%	7%
Need more education to earn enough to repay it	8%	8%	6%

STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Use of services

In terms of differences in use of services in the past year (greater than 10% difference), Waterloo students used three of 26 services more often.

TABLE 9: Differences in use of services

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Food services	40%	41%	57%
Athletic facilities	31%	36%	56%
Other rec facilities	15%	17%	26%

Satisfaction with services

Amongst those services used by at least one quarter of Waterloo students in the past year, there are two differences in satisfaction greater than 10% between Waterloo students and students elsewhere. In both cases, Waterloo students are more satisfied.

TABLE 10: Satisfaction with services (*satisfied or very satisfied*)

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Food services	73%	70%	82%
Parking	39%	43%	54%

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Professors and teaching

Overall, 86% of Waterloo students agree that *they are satisfied with the quality of teaching they received*, which is on par with proportions nationally (85%) and at comparable universities (84%).

Waterloo students reported similar ratings (none greater than 10% difference) for 13 rated interactions with professors compared to students elsewhere.

Among these 13 interactions, Waterloo students said it was most important for professors to *communicate well in their teaching* (55% rated in top 3).

Ability to evaluate teaching

Overall, 78% of Waterloo graduating students say that they were able to evaluate teaching in all courses, which is higher than the proportions nationally (67%) and at comparable universities (63%).

Impact of Indigenous experiences

Waterloo students provide lower ratings of their experiences with Indigenous course content and activities.

TABLE 11: Enriched experiences (*agree or strongly agree*)

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Indigenous course content	51%	55%	29%
Participation in Indigenous activities	37%	39%	24%

Inclusivity

Among nine different areas, Waterloo students show similar ratings of comfort (none greater than 10% difference) in terms of being themselves. Waterloo students feel most comfortable being themselves when *interacting with friends on campus* (87% quite a bit or very much) and least comfortable *interacting with students on campus who they don't know well* (53% quite a bit or very much).

Meeting expectations

Students at Waterloo are just as likely as students at other universities to say that their university experiences exceeded expectations.

TABLE 12: Meeting expectations

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Exceeded	19%	20%	18%
Met	61%	60%	65%
Fell short	20%	20%	16%

STUDENT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT WHILE AT Waterloo UNIVERSITY

Waterloo students score their university lower (more than 10%) in the growth and development of two communication skills.

Communication skills

Among four communication skills tested, Waterloo students rate two skills differently (more than 10%) than students at other universities; in both cases, lower than other students.

TABLE 13: Key differences in communication skills (much or very much)

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Writing clearly and correctly	66%	66%	55%
Speaking to a class or audience	50%	52%	40%

Waterloo students score their university higher (more than 10%) on the growth and development of mathematical skills.

Analytical and learning skills

Waterloo students' rate one of eight analytical and learning skills higher than students nationally and at comparable universities - mathematical skills.

TABLE 14: Key differences in analytical and learning skills (much or very much)

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Mathematical skills	32%	32%	53%

Waterloo students score their university higher (more than 10%) on three work skills.

Work skills

On seven skills classified as work skills, Waterloo students rate their university's contribution higher (greater than 10%) on three skills.

TABLE 15: Key differences in work skills (much or very much)

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Skills and knowledge for employment	48%	49%	62%
Computer literacy skills	43%	42%	57%
Knowledge of career options	40%	42%	54%

Waterloo students score their university lower (more than 10%) on one life skill.

Life skills

Among 11 life skills tested, Waterloo students rated *understanding Indigenous worldviews, experiences, issues, and peoples of Canada* lower than students at other universities.

TABLE 16: Key differences in life skills (much or very much)

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Understanding Indigenous worldviews, experiences, issues, and peoples of Canada	46%	49%	29%

Waterloo students rate skills for knowledge and employment as the most important area for their growth and development.

Most important skills

When rating the importance of all these skills, Waterloo students rate *skills and knowledge for employment* as being most important.

TABLE 17: Top 5 most important areas for university to contribute

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Skills and knowledge for employment	29%	29%	31%
Thinking logically and analytically	24%	23%	27%
Time management skills	20%	20%	22%
Dealing successfully with obstacles to achieve an objective	18%	18%	18%
Effective study and learning skills	17%	18%	19%

STUDENT SATISFACTION: KEY OUTCOME MEASURES

University-related outcomes

Waterloo students rate outcomes similarly to those at other universities.

On four key outcomes, Waterloo students provide positive ratings that are similar to those from students at other universities.

TABLE 18: University outcomes

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Very satisfied with overall quality of education	19%	19%	21%
Strongly agree they belong at this university	16%	17%	16%
Strongly agree they receive good value for money	9%	9%	9%
Very satisfied with concern shown by university for student as individual	9%	9%	5%

Recommend university to others

Waterloo students have a higher Net Promoter Score compared to students elsewhere.

When asked to rate how likely they are to recommend their university on a scale from 0 to 10, Waterloo students receive a Net Promoter Score of +3 (27% minus 24%) which is higher than results nationally and at comparable universities.

TABLE 19: Recommend university to others

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Promoter	25%	25%	27%
Passive	42%	43%	49%
Detractor	32%	32%	24%
Net promoter score	-7	-7	+3

Plans for additional schooling

Waterloo students are just as likely as students at comparable universities to expect to continue their education after graduating.

TABLE 20: Post-graduation education plans next five years

	All universities (n = 12,668)	Comparable universities (n = 4,674)	Waterloo (n = 1,053)
Take further education in next five years	68%	70%	64%
Apply to grad school	52%	54%	54%
Apply to professional school	24%	24%	19%

POST-GRADUATION EMPLOYMENT

Waterloo students are less likely to have arranged employment post-graduation.

Overall, 26% of Waterloo graduating students say they have arranged for employment after graduation, which is lower than results nationally (37%) and at comparable universities (33%).

Among those with employment arranged, Waterloo students are less likely to be working in Canada, but report higher rates of satisfaction and higher median income relative to students at other universities.

TABLE 21: Post-graduation employment

	All universities	Comparable universities	Waterloo
Job in Canada	97%	98%	71%
Satisfied with employment	89%	89%	96%
Full-time	71%	68%	90%
Permanent	65%	62%	81%
Moderately or strongly related to skills	68%	67%	80%
New job	27%	25%	19%
Self-employed	4%	4%	<1%
Median monthly income	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$6,999

BASE: Those with employment arranged after graduation.