



National Survey of Student Engagement

2017 results summary

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Overview

This report will:

- Review the University of Ontario Institute of Technology's (UOIT) results and compare them to the Ontario Consortium, and to previous years (where applicable).
- Identify key findings, highlight successes and areas for concern.
- Note where results align with the university's strategic plan.
- Provide a snapshot of what the university's students are saying.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was developed by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research in the late 1990s and has been used throughout the U.S. since 2000. Many Canadian institutions have adopted it since 2011, including all Ontario publicly funded universities. Ontario institutions participate in the survey every three years as a consortium to demonstrate their commitment to improve accountability and focus on the quality of the learning experience.

NSSE's emphasis on first-year and senior-year student behaviour offers educators a valuable tool to assess the quality of undergraduate education. This instrument allows institutions to measure their success with engaging students in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with:

- learning
- personal development
- satisfaction
- persistence
- graduation

NSSE results help to understand the characteristics of effective environments for teaching and learning, which can focus the institution's attention on improvement opportunities.

To meet the increasing demands for higher education assessment, the instrument was remodelled in 2013, with only 25% of the survey's questions remaining unchanged. As a result, the majority of 2017 results can only be compared to 2014 survey results, with the exception of a subset of questions.

Participation

Response rates

In winter 2017, all eligible first-year (n=1900) and senior-year (n=2331) undergraduate students were invited to participate in the NSSE via e-mail. Senior-year students consisted of students assumed to be in their final year of studies (year 4 or 5) at UOIT, based on total credit hours earned to date. Of those contacted to participate, 823 first-year students (43%) and 989 senior-year students (42%) completed the survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 42.8%.

NSSE response rates declined in 2011 and have slowly improved through the 2014 and 2017 survey administrations. Although response rates are still below those in 2008, both first- and senior-year response rates have increased since 2014 (Figure 1). Additionally, response rates are considerably better at UOIT than at other Ontario and Canadian institutions (Figure 2).

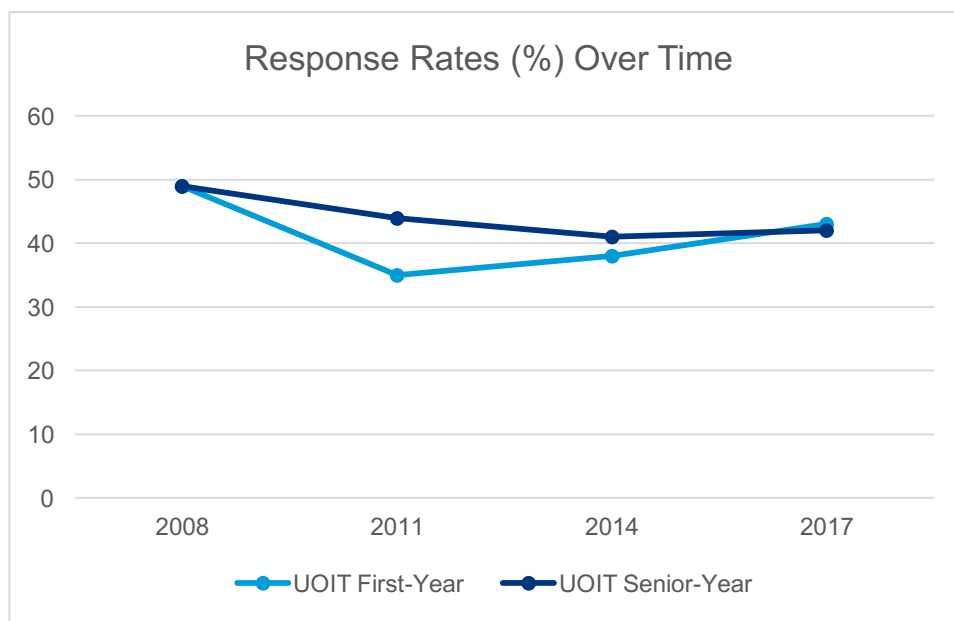


Figure 1: NSSE response rates 2008-2017

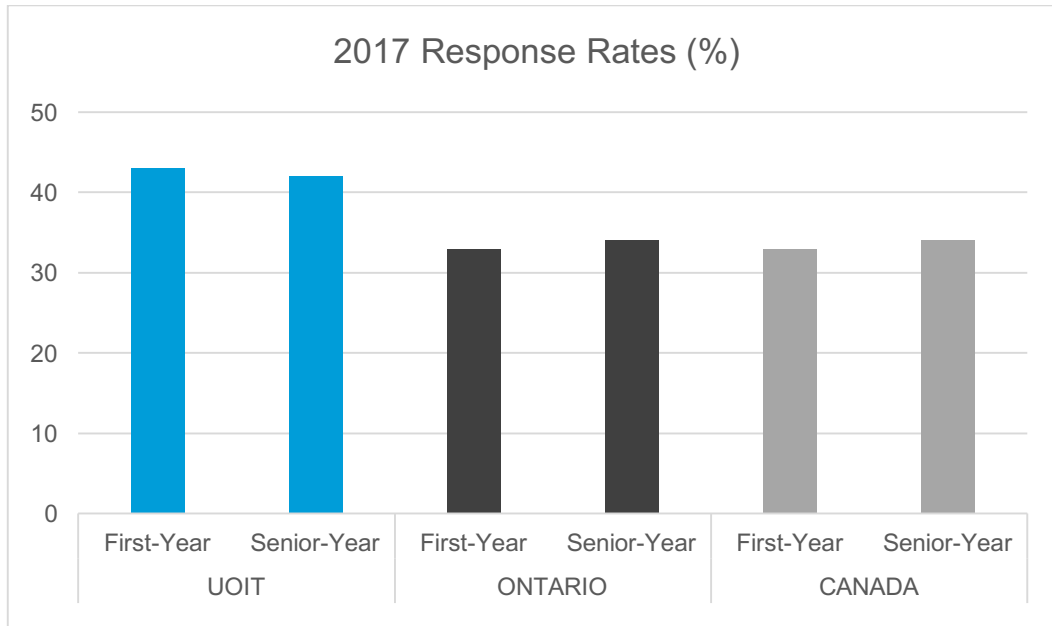


Figure 2: 2017 NSSE response rates for UOIT, Ontario, and Canada

Characteristics

The typical respondent, representative of both first- and senior-year students, was a full-time male, living farther than walking distance from campus.

The typical first-year student respondent was 19 years of age or younger and did not identify as a first-generation student, whereas the typical senior-year student respondent was between 20 and 23 years of age and did identify as a first-generation student. This is a shift from the 2014 survey administration, when both first- and senior-year students self-identified as first-generation students. It is important to note, however, that the percentage of first-year students self-identifying as first-generation students on the survey (48%) is not reflective of the actual university undergraduate population, of which 60% of first-year students self-identified as first-generation (see figure 3). It is also important to note that the percentage of first-generation students at UOIT remains higher than at other institutions in the comparator groups and this is true of both first- and senior-year students.

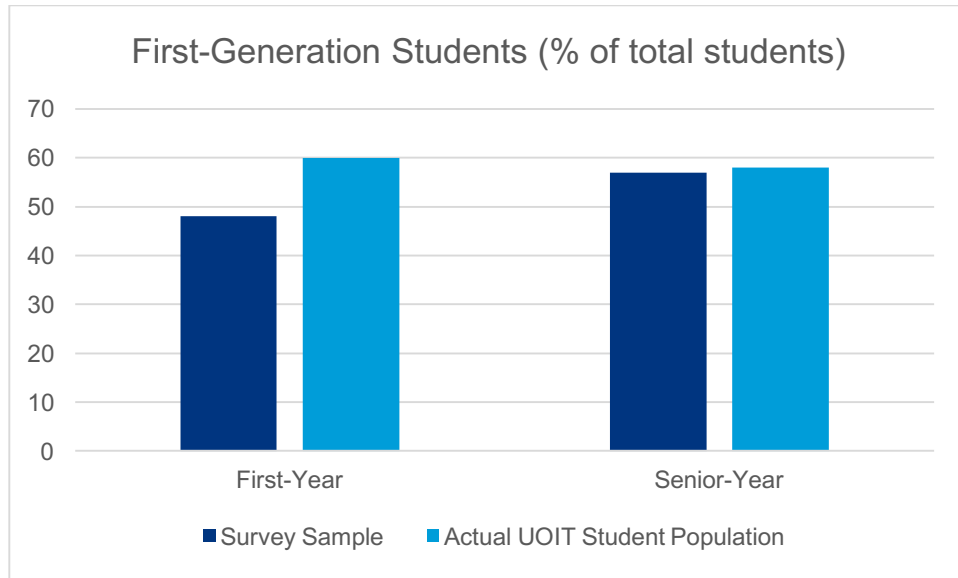


Figure 3: Percentage of survey respondents and UOIT students who self-identify as first-generation students

Consistent with 2014, the university continues to have a larger proportion of full-time students, first-generation students, and males than other institutions in the comparator groups. Also consistent with 2014, UOIT students are less likely to live on campus, more likely to commute to school and less likely to participate in co-curricular activities than students in their Ontario and Canadian peer groups.

The percentage of UOIT students caring for dependents has decreased since 2014, but is still higher than the Ontario average.

Representativeness	<u>First-year</u>		<u>Senior-year</u>		<u>Ontario</u>	
	Respondent percentage	Population percentage	Respondent percentage	Population percentage	First-year	Senior-year
Female	37	35	45	44	54	56
Full-time	98	99	84	89	94	79
International	5	8	4	5	10	6
Living On-campus	33	26	9	2	33	6
Age: Under 24	97	95	65	67	95	81
First-generation	48	60	57	58	39	42
Working for pay on campus	7	-	17	-	11	24
Working for pay off campus	41	-	61	-	35	49
Commuting (11+ hours/week)	22	-	17	-	21	21
Care for dependents	38	-	40	-	31	29
Participate in co-curricular activities	50	-	49	-	61	63

Table 1: Representativeness of NSSE sample

Comparator groups

In 2014, the university's NSSE results were compared against a group consisting of all publicly-funded Ontario universities, as well as their affiliates (n=22). For the 2017 administration, two additional comparator groups were added to further capture UOIT's performance against comparable institutions across Ontario and Canada. The 2017 NSSE core results were compared against the following three groups:

1. Ontario – a group consisting of all publicly funded Ontario universities and their affiliates (n=23; see Appendix A)
2. Canada – a group consisting of Canadian universities who participated in NSSE in 2016 or 2017, excluding the U15 Canadian research universities (n=32; see Appendix B)
3. Ontario Select – a select group of Ontario universities similar in size and make up to UOIT (n=7; see Appendix C)

UOIT also participated as a consortium alongside Ontario universities from Toronto and the surrounding area (n=6) for a subset of questions. Additional questions, such as a topical module, were compared against Canadian institutions that also chose to include these questions.

Engagement indicators

The NSSE Engagement Indicators (EIs) are designed to assess various aspects of student engagement. There are 10 EIs organized into 4 themes and each EI is comprised of a series of related survey questions.

Theme	Engagement Indicator
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning Reflective & Integrative Learning Learning Strategies Quantitative Reasoning
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning Discussions with Diverse Others
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction Effective Teaching Practices
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions Supportive Environment

Table 2: Engagement indicators and themes

Overall, UOIT consistently outperformed all 3 comparator groups on quantitative reasoning and collaborative learning for both first- and senior-year students, consistent with 2014. Both first- and senior-year students were more likely to indicate that they often reached conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.) and that they often worked with other students on course projects or assignments. Additionally, senior-year students reported that they used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue more often than senior-year students in all 3 comparator groups and first-year students reported that they asked another student to help them understand course material and explained course material to other students more often than first-year students from comparator institutions.

For senior-year students, UOIT also outperformed all three comparator groups on higher-order learning, discussions with diverse others, and quality of interactions. UOIT students felt their coursework emphasized applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations more than students in their peer groups and rated their quality of interactions with academic advisors, student services staff and other administrative staff and offices higher than students in the comparator groups.

A weak point for UOIT was reflective & integrative learning, which was significantly lower for first-year students than all 3 comparator groups and significantly lower for senior-year students than Ontario Select. A deeper look at the individual questions comprising reflective & integrative learning revealed that the overall EI score is negatively affected by low scores on “connected your learning to societal problems and issues” and “included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments”. As a primarily STEM-focused university

with fewer liberal arts programs than universities in the comparator groups, it is not surprising that UOIT courses focus less on material related to societal issues and political perspectives than courses at institutions in the comparator groups.

1st-Year Students		Your 1st-year students compared with Ontario	Your 1st-year students compared with Canada	Your 1st-year students compared with Ontario Select
Theme	Engagement Indicator			
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	--	--	--
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	▽	▽	▽
	Learning Strategies	--	--	--
Learning with Peers	Quantitative Reasoning	△	△	△
	Collaborative Learning	△	△	△
Experiences with Faculty	Discussions with Diverse Others	--	△	--
	Student-Faculty Interaction	--	△	--
Campus Environment	Effective Teaching Practices	--	--	--
	Quality of Interactions	△	△	--
	Supportive Environment	△	△	--

4th-Year Students		Your 4th-year students compared with Ontario	Your 4th-year students compared with Canada	Your 4th-year students compared with Ontario Select
Theme	Engagement Indicator			
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	△	△	△
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	--	--	▽
	Learning Strategies	--	--	--
Learning with Peers	Quantitative Reasoning	△	△	△
	Collaborative Learning	△	△	△
Experiences with Faculty	Discussions with Diverse Others	△	△	△
	Student-Faculty Interaction	△	△	--
Campus Environment	Effective Teaching Practices	△	--	--
	Quality of Interactions	△	△	△
	Supportive Environment	--	--	--

- ▲ UOITs students' average was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.
- △ UOITs students' average was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- No significant difference.
- ▽ UOITs students' average was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▼ UOITs students' average was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.

Figure 4: NSSE engagement indicator results

Quantitative reasoning scores were highest for students in engineering programs and lowest for students in social science and humanities programs. Scores on reflective and integrative learning were highest for students in social science and humanities programs. Additionally, senior-year students' evaluation of effective teaching practices was lowest for students in engineering programs.

High-impact practices

NSSE defines High Impact Practices (HIPs) as enriching educational opportunities for undergraduate students that have a demonstrated positive impact on student success and retention. HIPs are experiences that involve learning outside of the classroom, collaborating with diverse others, and sharing meaningful interactions with faculty and other students. These experiences typically require considerable time and effort from the student and in return, students are provided with ongoing, constructive feedback. As part of the NSSE, first- and senior-year students were asked about their previous and intended participation in each of 6 HIPs, outlined in table 3 below.

High Impact Practice (HIP)	Description
Service-Learning	Courses that included a community-based project
Learning Community	Formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together
Research with Faculty	Work with a faculty member on a research project
Internship or Field Experience	Internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
Study Abroad	
Culminating Senior Year Experience	Capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.

Table 3: Description of High Impact Practices (HIPs)

Forty-nine percent of first-year students had already participated in at least one HIP, comparable to students at other Ontario and Canadian institutions (see figure 5). However, fewer first-year students at UOIT had participated in 2 or more HIPs than students at comparator institutions and first-year participation in HIPs has declined at UOIT since 2014. This highlights a need to emphasize participation in HIPs for first-year students.

Eighty-four percent of senior-year students participated in at least 1 HIP, which is slightly higher than senior-year students at comparator institutions. Additionally, 56% of senior-year students participated in 2 or more HIPs, which is also higher than students at comparator institutions. Senior-year participation in HIPs has not changed from 2014.

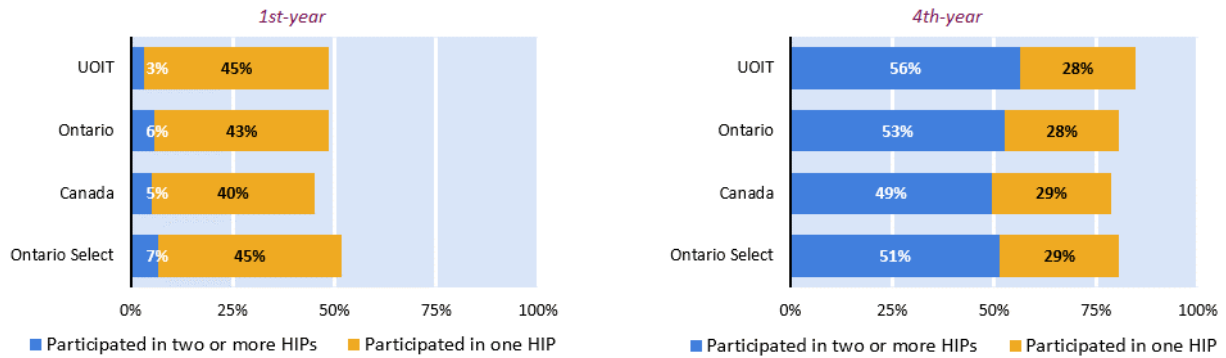


Figure 5: First- and senior-year student participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs)

Significantly more senior-year UOIT students participated in a culminating senior-year experience than students at comparator institutions. By contrast, significantly fewer senior-year UOIT students participated in a study abroad opportunity than students at comparator institutions (see figure 6).

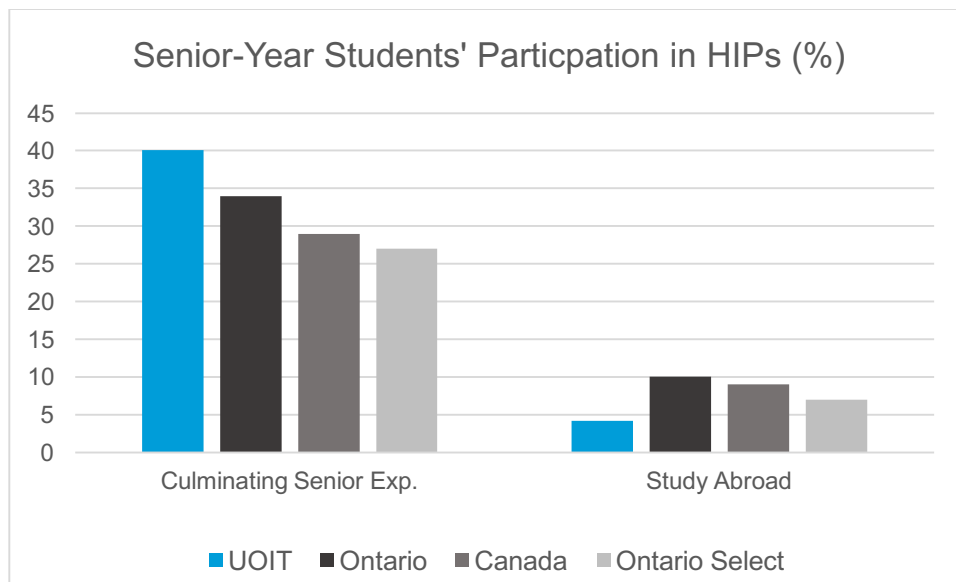


Figure 6: Senior-year student participation in culminating senior-year experience and study abroad

First-year student research with faculty was highest for students in social science and humanities, whereas senior-year students' research with faculty was highest for students in science programs. Internship participation was highest for students in engineering programs.

Topical module: First year experiences and senior transitions

As part of the NSSE, institutions are able to participate in a topical module, appending a series of additional targeted questions to the survey. For the 2017 deployment, UOIT chose to include questions about first-year experiences and senior-year transitions; first-year students were asked about their experiences so far at UOIT and senior-year students were asked about their post-graduation plans and preparedness. Results were compared to an aggregate score for all Canadian universities (excluding UOIT) that selected to include this module in their survey deployment (n=22).

First-year experiences

Sixty-six percent of first-year students said it was very important to them that they graduate from UOIT, whereas only 55% of first-year students from other institutions felt it was very important that they graduate from their institution (see figure 7). Given the importance students' felt about graduating from UOIT, first-year students at UOIT were also less likely to have seriously considered leaving the institution than their Canadian peers at other institutions. Those who did consider leaving did so primarily for personal reasons (29%) and to change their career options (38%). Interestingly, 25% of those who considered leaving did so because there were not enough opportunities to socialize and have fun.

First-year students at UOIT were more likely to be proactive in seeking help with coursework than their Canadian peers. Specifically, UOIT first-year students were more likely than students at other Canadian institutions to seek help from academic advisors, learning support services (tutoring, writing center, success coaching, etc.), friends or other students, and from other persons or offices (see figure 7).

When asked what they would not change about the institution, first-year students overwhelmingly mentioned the supports offered to students as something that should not change at UOIT. Other strong mentions were the relatively small class sizes and the friendly campus atmosphere. When asked for one thing they would like to see changed at the university, first-year students mentioned they would like to see more student and study space.

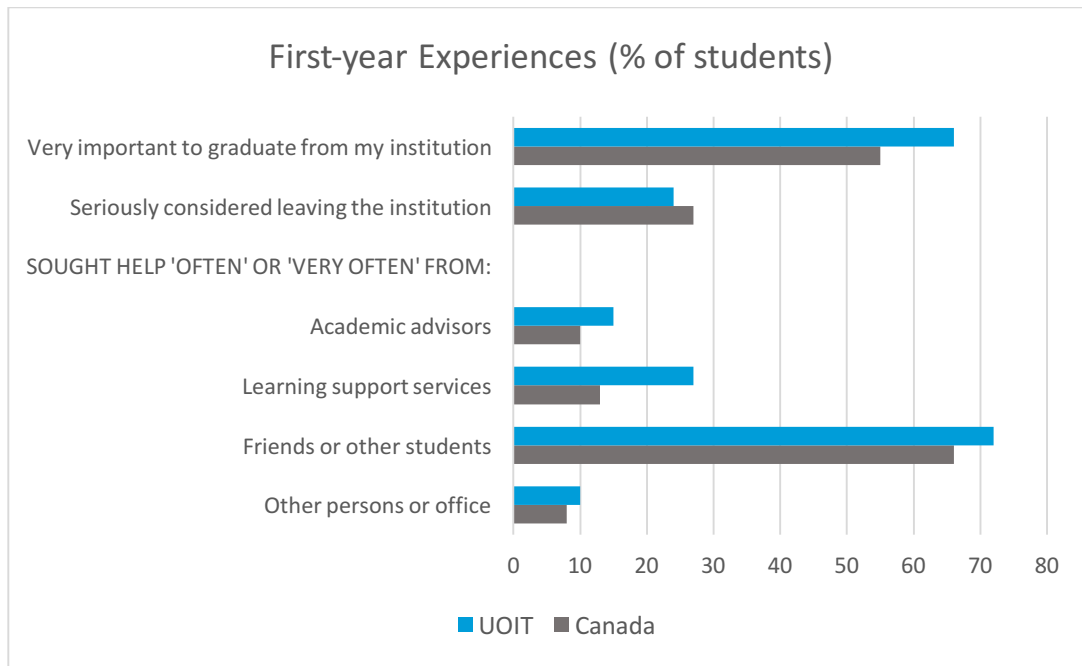


Figure 7: First-year experiences

Senior transitions

Senior-year students at UOIT were more likely to intend to work in a field related to their major (86%) than students at other Canadian institutions (79%). This is likely due to UOIT's unique and specific program offerings, many of which are geared toward specific career paths (such as nursing or engineering) rather than general fields of study.

In general, senior-year UOIT students reported more confidence in their abilities than their Canadian peers. Specifically, senior-year UOIT students were significantly more confident in their skills and abilities related to critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information, creative thinking and problem solving, research skills, technological skills, financial and business management skills, entrepreneurial skills, leadership skills, networking and relationship building (see figure 8).

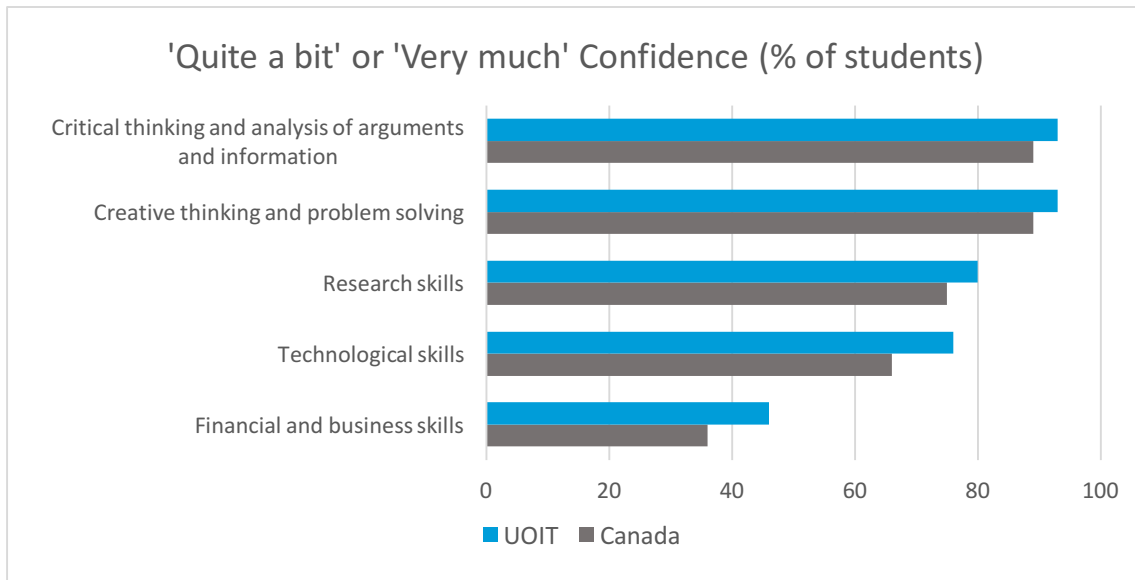


Figure 8: Senior-year students' confidence in abilities

Additional results

A snapshot of UOIT's highest and lowest performing areas relative to Ontario showed that UOIT consistently scored higher than other Ontario universities on quality of interactions with academic advisors and with other administrative staff and offices. However, UOIT consistently scored lower than other Ontario universities on "included diverse perspectives in course discussions" and items related to societal issues and social involvement (see figure 9).

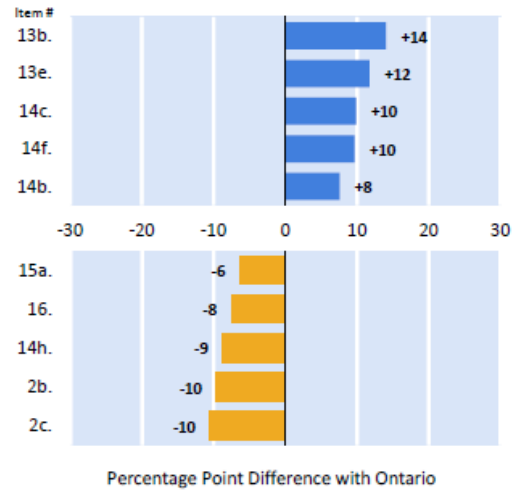
1st-year

Highest Performing Relative to Ontario

- Quality of interactions with academic advisors^d (QI)
- Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices (...) ^d (QI)
- Institution emphasis on using learning support services (...) ^c (SE)
- Institution emphasis on providing support for your overall well-being... ^c (SE)
- Institution emphasis on providing support to help students succeed academically^c (SE)

Lowest Performing Relative to Ontario

- Spent more than 15 hours per week preparing for class
- Spent more than 10 hours per week on assigned reading^f
- Institution emphasis on attending campus activities and events (...) ^c (SE)
- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues^b (RI)
- Included diverse perspectives (...) in course discussions or assignments^b (RI)



4th-year

Highest Performing Relative to Ontario

- Quality of interactions with academic advisors^d (QI)
- Worked with other students on course projects or assignments^b (CL)
- Quality of interactions with other administrative staff and offices (...) ^d (QI)
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member^b (SF)
- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments^b (RI)

Lowest Performing Relative to Ontario

- Participated in a study abroad program (HIP)
- Institution emphasis on attending events that address important social/econ./polit. issues^c (SE)
- Institution emphasis on attending campus activities and events (...) ^c (SE)
- Institution emphasis on providing opportunities to be involved socially^c (SE)
- Included diverse perspectives (...) in course discussions or assignments^b (RI)

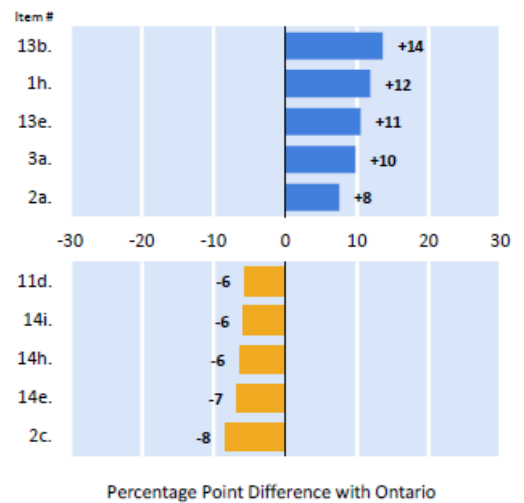


Figure 9: Highest and lowest performing areas for first- and senior-year students relative to Ontario consortium

UOIT's Strategic Plan

UOIT's strategic plan (2017-2022) focuses on three key goals:

1. **Challenge:** We will produce and inspire future leaders who have real-world skillsets.
2. **Innovate:** We will create new approaches, partnerships, and solutions to improve society.
3. **Connect:** We will build lasting relationships to make UOIT a remarkable place for work and study.

This year's NSSE results provide insight into how the university is doing at meeting these goals. In particular, senior-year qualitative responses offer insight into how UOIT can improve to better prepare students to become future leaders with real-world skillsets.

When asked what UOIT could have done better to prepare students for future careers or further academic pursuits, senior-year students offered valuable insight into their desire to integrate more career discussions and practical experience (such as co-ops, internships, field placements and hands-on demonstrations) into their studies. Although students feel academically ready for the workforce, they feel that integrating more practical experience into their programs will give them a competitive advantage when seeking jobs.

"I feel like most of the work was theory based. Meaning students only had to read the text and recite back what was in it."

"I think the university should have stressed co-ops and internships more than they do. Looking back I think I would have greatly benefited from one of those opportunities."

"Offer a school to work placement or something that will bridge the gap between graduating and being employed."

"While I feel very prepared with my lab techniques, research skills, and leadership skills, I feel as though I was never offered the opportunity to make connections with potential employers"

"More opportunities for self and career discovery. Though I have a fairly strong theoretical background I would have appreciated the opportunity to put it into practice"

"It'd be nice if university incorporated more hands-on tasks and assignments for every program, rather than just offering placement that may or may not lead to job opportunity/offers."

Overall satisfaction

When asked how they would evaluate their entire educational experience at UOIT, 82% of first-year students and 75% of senior-year students said it was either “good” or “excellent.” First-year students’ overall satisfaction has continued to improve since 2011, whereas senior-year students’ overall satisfaction declined in 2014 and although it has improved slightly, it is still below the satisfaction reported in 2011. Overall satisfaction is higher at UOIT than at other Ontario universities for first-year students, and slightly lower at UOIT for senior-year students. Senior-year students at UOIT felt their studies had a stronger emphasis on important academic factors (such as quantitative reasoning, higher-order learning, and collaborative learning) and felt more confident in their skills (such as critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving, and technical skills) than students at other Ontario and Canadian institutions. However, there are non-academic factors that contribute to the lower overall satisfaction for senior-year students. Specifically, when asked what change they would like to see implemented to improve their educational experience at UOIT, senior-year students mentioned a need for more student space on campus, a desire for more social events, and a need for more experiential, hands-on learning opportunities to help students become more employable after graduation.

How would you evaluate your entire education experience at this institution?

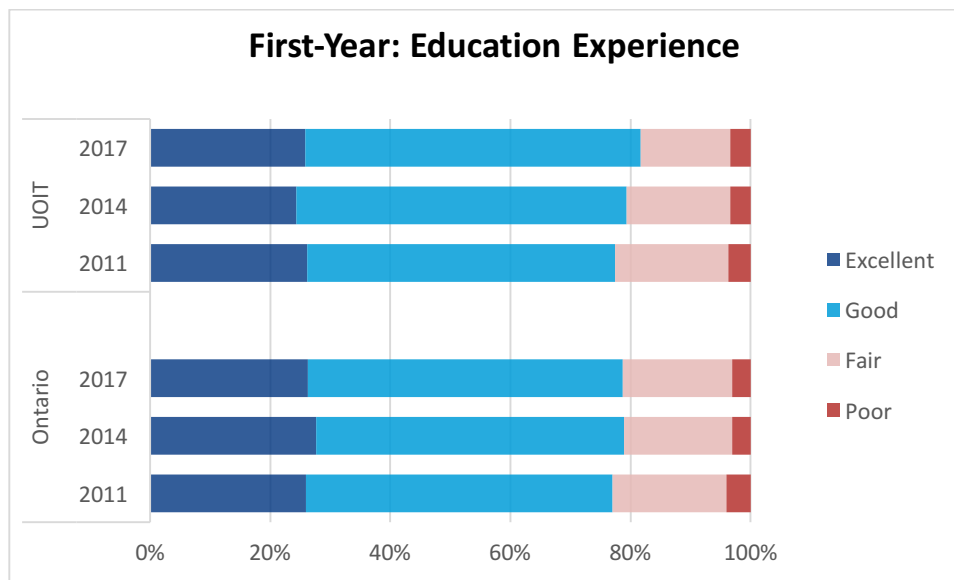


Figure 10: First-year students’ rating of educational experience at their institution

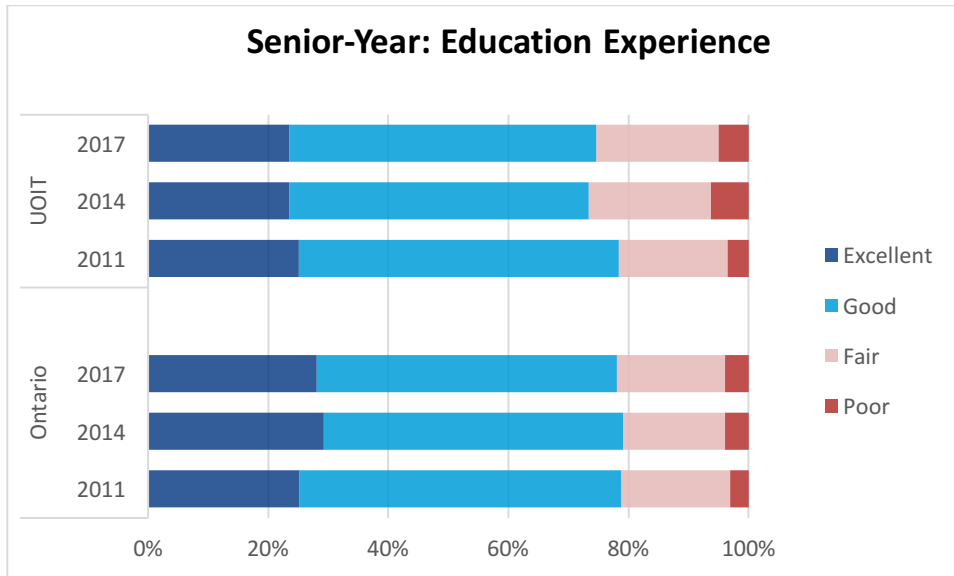


Figure 11: Senior-year students' rating of educational experience at their institution

Another important measure of student satisfaction is whether or not students would choose UOIT again if they could start over. Eighty-three percent of first-year students and 72% of senior-year students said they would either “probably” or “definitely” choose UOIT again if they were to start over. For first-year students, this number is comparable to 2014 and remains slightly below the Ontario average. For senior-year students, the percentage of students who would choose UOIT again decreased significantly in 2014 and although it has increased since then, it remains below the 2011 and the Ontario averages.

If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

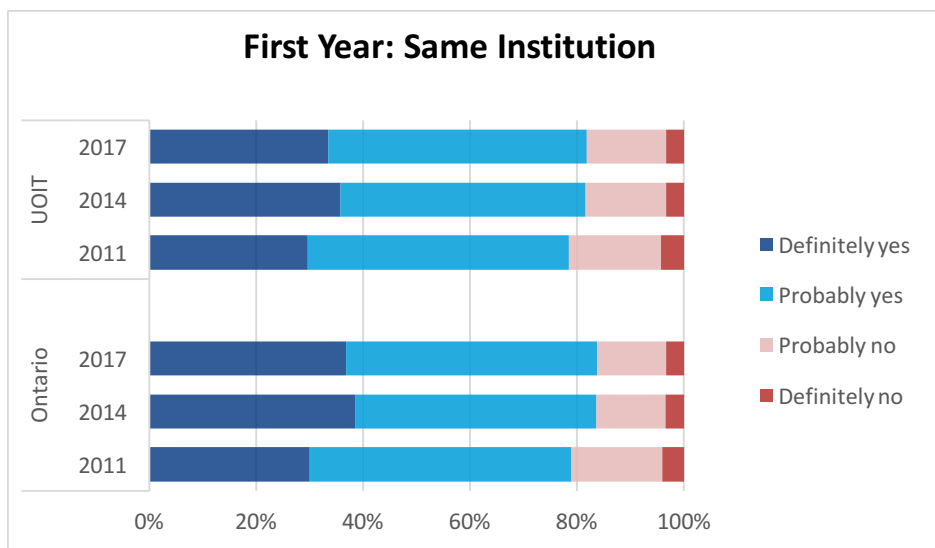


Figure 12: First-year students' perspective on attending the same institution again

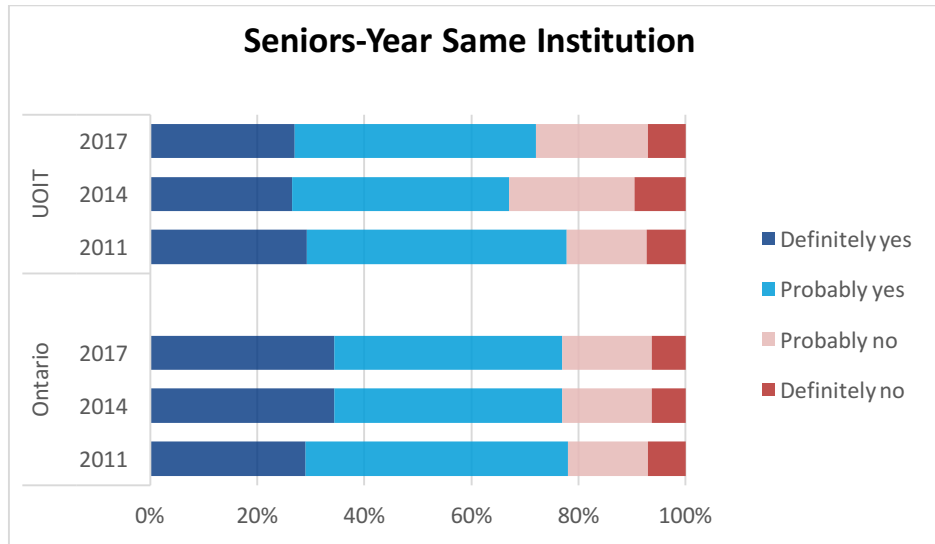


Figure 13: Senior-year students' perspective on attending the same institution again

NSSE notables

The following section highlights key findings from the NSSE results. The number in parentheses is the Ontario Consortium comparable score, unless otherwise noted.

First-year students

- 67% (47) of first-year students said **a lack of good academic advising** was not an obstacle to their academic progress
- First-year students said the **quality of information they received** was “good” or “very good” regarding:
 - how to access learning and study support services (57% UOIT vs 41% Ontario)
 - the content and focus of their academic program (58% UOIT vs 49% Ontario)
 - how they would be evaluated in courses (49% UOIT vs 40% Ontario)
 - the level of difficulty to expect in their courses (42% UOIT vs 34% Ontario)
 - how to access personal support services (48% UOIT vs 31% Ontario)
- 30 percent (34) of first-year students said **financial pressures or work obligations** were a major obstacle to their academic progress
 - This obstacle has decreased since 2014 when 45% of first-year students said financial pressures and work obligations were a major obstacle
- 33 percent (31) of first-year students lived in **residence**
 - This has increased from 2014, when only 24% of first-year students reported they lived in residence
- Of the 67% of students who did not live in residence, 29 per cent (12) commuted to school in a private automobile and 57 per cent (74) took public transit.

Senior-year students

- 46 percent (42) of senior-year students said **financial pressures or work obligations** were a major obstacle to academic progress
 - This has decreased since 2014 when 54% of senior-year students said financial pressures or work obligations were a major obstacle
- 28 percent (27) said personal or family problems were a major obstacle to academic progress, slightly higher than in 2014 (2014: 24%)
- 16 percent (15) of senior-year students did not experience a sense of community on campus
- 91 percent (92) of senior-year students did not live in residence
- Of that 91%, 46% commuted to school in a private automobile (15) and 32% took public transit (62)
- 45% (49%) of senior-year students said the quality of information they received regarding career opportunities after graduation was “poor” or “very poor”

Conclusion

This report summarized and highlighted the key findings of UOIT’s 2017 NSSE results. UOIT continues to outperform its Ontario comparator group on 4 of the 10 engagement indicators for first-year students and is now outperforming its Ontario comparator group on 7 of the 10 engagement indicators for senior-year students, an overall improvement from the 2014 survey administration.

UOIT students think highly of academic advisors and are likely to use academic support services more often than students from other Ontario and Canadian institutions. Additionally, UOIT students are more confident in their abilities than students at comparator institutions.

Low points for UOIT are the lack of emphasis on societal problems and inclusions of diverse perspectives in courses. Additionally, UOIT students are unhappy with the lack of campus activities, events, and student space, all of which students’ feel could contribute to fostering a stronger sense of community and belonging on campus.

The survey revealed important ways that UOIT can work toward better preparing its students for future careers and further academic pursuits; specifically, these opportunities for improvement include:

1. Creating more opportunities for hands-on, experiential learning, both in and out of the classroom
2. Assessing course content to ensure material being taught aligns with today’s job market
3. Improving support services for upper year students
4. Integrating career-path discussions into courses

NSSE continues to provide UOIT an important measure of students' engagement and satisfaction, allowing the university to better serve its students. UOIT looks forward to using these results to continue its growth and improvement.

Appendix A: Ontario Comparator Group

Ontario (N=23)

Algoma University (Sault Ste. Marie, ON)
Brescia University College (London, ON)
Brock University (St. Catharines, ON)
Carleton University (Ottawa, ON)
Huron University College (London, ON)
Lakehead University (Thunder Bay, ON)
Laurentian University/Université Laurentienne (Sudbury, ON)
McMaster University (Hamilton, ON)
Nipissing University (North Bay, ON)
OCAD University (Toronto, ON)
Queen's University (Kingston, ON)
Ryerson University (Toronto, ON)
Trent University (Peterborough, ON)
Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa (Ottawa, ON)
Université Saint-Paul / Saint Paul University (Ottawa, ON)
University of Guelph (Guelph, ON)
University of Guelph-Humber (Toronto, ON)
University of Toronto (Toronto, ON)
University of Waterloo (Waterloo, ON)
University of Windsor (Windsor, ON)
Western University (London, ON)
Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, ON)
York University (Toronto, ON)

Appendix B: Canada Comparator Group

Canada (N=32)

Acadia University (Wolfville, NS)
Bishop's University (Sherbrooke, QC)
Brandon University (Brandon, MB)
Brock University (St. Catharines, ON)
Cape Breton University (Sydney, NS)
Carleton University (Ottawa, ON)
Concordia University (Montreal, QC)
Lakehead University (Thunder Bay, ON)
Laurentian University/Université Laurentienne (Sudbury, ON)
Memorial University of Newfoundland (St. John's, NL)
Mount Allison University (Sackville, NB)
Mount St. Vincent University (Halifax, NS)
Nipissing University (North Bay, ON)
Ryerson University (Toronto, ON)
Saint Mary's University (Halifax, NS)
Simon Fraser University (Burnaby, BC)
St. Francis Xavier University (Antigonish, NS)
St. Thomas University (Fredericton, NB)
Trent University (Peterborough, ON)
Université de Moncton (Moncton, NB)
Université du Québec à Montréal (Montréal, QC)
University of Guelph (Guelph, ON)
University of Lethbridge (Lethbridge, AB)
University of New Brunswick (Fredericton, NB)
University of Northern British Columbia (Prince George, BC)*
University of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown, PE)
University of Victoria (Victoria, BC)
University of Waterloo (Waterloo, ON)
University of Windsor (Windsor, ON)
University of Winnipeg, The (Winnipeg, MB)
Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, ON)
York University (Toronto, ON)

Appendix C: Ontario Select Comparator Group

Ontario Select (N=7)

Brock University (St. Catharines, ON)

Lakehead University (Thunder Bay, ON)

Laurentian University/Université Laurentienne (Sudbury, ON)

Nipissing University (North Bay, ON)

Trent University (Peterborough, ON)

University of Windsor (Windsor, ON)

Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, ON)