




# Orientation Benchmarking of Australian Universities

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**Benchmarking conducted: April/May 2011**  
**Analysis conducted: November 2011**




## 20 Participating Institutions

- Bond University
- Canberra Institute of Technology (Student Association)
- CQUniversity Australia
- Curtin University
- Deakin University
- Edith Cowan University
- James Cook University
- Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
- Swinburne University of Technology
- The University of Queensland
- University of Melbourne
- University of New England
- University of New South Wales
- University of Newcastle
- University of Southern Queensland
- University of Sydney
- University of Tasmania
- University of Technology, Sydney
- Victoria University

## Format of Questionnaire



- Question on Stated Outcome
- Importance of Outcome (5 point scale)
  - 1. Not all important
  - 2. Somewhat important
  - 3. Important
  - 4. Very important
  - 5. Extremely important
- Extent to which institution achieves outcome (5 point scale)
  - 1. Not at all
  - 2. A little
  - 3. Somewhat
  - 4. Moderately well
  - 5. Greatly
- Open ended answer to how institution achieves outcome

## 36 Measures: 10 sub-categories



1. Information about promotion and information about orientation program
2. Access to orientation sessions – to the University (transport), and within the University (way-finding)
3. Ability to customise and choose timetable of sessions
4. Socialisation and networking opportunities
5. Information sharing and content sessions
6. Official corporate ceremony & Faculty ceremony information
7. Information about critical dates and rules etc
8. Information about alternative formats of orientation
9. Information about delivery of information and food options
10. Participation of students in orientation and planning process

## 36 Measures




1. **Information about promotion and information about orientation:**
  1. Students find out about orientation before arrival
  2. Students can get answers to questions about orientation before orientation
  3. Students can get answers to questions about orientation during orientation
2. **Access to the orientation program**
  1. Students feel welcome if they arrive at the institution before orientation commences
  2. Students can easily access the campus by readily available public transport
  3. Students receive information about public transport
  4. Students can easily locate their first orientation session
  5. Students can find subsequent orientation sessions easily

## 36 Measures



3. **Ability to customise and choose timetable:**
  1. Students attend the sessions the institution regards as important
  2. Students can choose the elements of orientation that are important to them
  3. Students can develop and access their own orientation timetable
4. **Socialisation and networking opportunities:**
  1. Students have multiple opportunities to meet students in their individual course/program
  2. Students have multiple opportunities to meet students in their Faculty
  3. Students have structured opportunities to join student clubs
  4. Students develop a sense of belonging to the institution
  5. Students are able to meet and get help from non-first-year students

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## 36 Measures

5. **Information sharing and content**

1. Students get help to find their way around the campus
2. Students learn things that will improve their safety and security
3. Students are linked to services that address individual needs
4. Students are offered IT skill-building opportunities
5. Students get enough information about the subjects they are enrolling in
6. Students can access bridging courses if they do not have assumed knowledge
7. Students are offered opportunities to build their academic information-seeking skills
8. Students are offered opportunities to develop their presentation skills
9. Students are informed about academic integrity and plagiarism etc.

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## 36 Measures

6. **Official corporate ceremony & Faculty ceremony information**

1. Students attend an event that ceremonially welcomes them to the whole institution
2. Students are welcomed by an Indigenous Welcome to Country or similar
3. Students are able to attend a tailored event from their Faculty

7. **Information about critical dates and rules etc**

1. Students are informed about critical dates
2. International students are informed about crucial rules and regulations

## 36 Measures



### 8. Information about alternative formats of orientation

1. Students can participate in an online orientation if they are not able to attend on campus
2. Students can participate in a late orientation if they are not able to attend the regular program

### 9. Information about delivery of information and food options

1. Students attend catered events
2. Students are entertained by information sessions
3. Students are not expected to endure repetitive delivery of information

### 10. Students participate in the orientation planning process

1. Students are involved in the organisation and operation of orientation

## Highest ranked - importance



1. Students are linked to services that address individual needs
2. Students find out about orientation before arrival
3. Students can easily locate their first orientation session
4. International students are informed about crucial rules and regulations
5. Students attend the sessions the institution regards as important
6. Students can find subsequent orientation sessions easily
7. Students are able to attend a tailored event from their Faculty
8. Students have multiple opportunities to meet students in their individual course/program
9. Students can access bridging courses if they do not have assumed knowledge
10. Students are informed about critical dates

### Highest ranked – extent achieved



1. Students are able to attend a tailored event from their Faculty
2. International students are informed about crucial rules and regulations
3. Students can easily locate their first orientation session
4. Students are informed about critical dates
5. Students get help to find their way around the campus
6. Students are linked to services that address individual needs
7. Students are welcomed by an Indigenous Welcome to Country or similar
8. Students find out about orientation before arrival
9. Students can get answers to questions about orientation during orientation
10. Students can find subsequent orientation sessions easily

### Lowest ranked – importance



1. Students are offered opportunities to develop their presentation skills
2. Students can participate in a late orientation if they are not able to attend the regular program
3. Students attend catered events
4. Students are entertained by information sessions
5. Students can develop and access their own orientation timetable
6. Students receive information about public transport
7. Students are not expected to endure repetitive delivery of information
8. Students are involved in the organisation and operation of orientation
9. Students attend an event that ceremonially welcomes them to the whole institution
10. Students can choose the elements of orientation that are important to them

### Lowest ranked – extent achieved




1. Students are offered opportunities to develop their presentation skills
2. Students can participate in a late orientation if they are not able to attend the regular program
3. Students are not expected to endure repetitive delivery of information
4. Students can develop and access their own orientation timetable
5. Students feel welcome if they arrive at the institution before orientation commences
6. Students are entertained by information sessions
7. Students are involved in the organisation and operation of orientation
8. Students have multiple opportunities to meet students in their Faculty
9. Students receive information about public transport
10. Students are offered IT skill-building opportunities

### Items of greatest variation between importance and extent of outcome achieved (Suggested focus areas)



1. Students feel welcome if they arrive at the institution before orientation commences
2. Students can access bridging courses if they do not have assumed knowledge
3. Students have multiple opportunities to meet students in their individual course/program
4. Students attend the sessions the institution regards as important
5. Students find out about orientation before arrival
6. Students develop a sense of belonging to the institution
7. Students are linked to services that address individual needs
8. Students get enough information about the subjects they are enrolling in
9. Students can find subsequent orientation sessions easily
10. Students are not expected to endure repetitive delivery of information
11. Students are offered IT skill-building opportunities

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### Students find out about orientation before arrival


Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.70$   $\sigma=0.57$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=4.17$   $\sigma=0.79$

Most universities using the following:


- Direct mail out (through enrolment information in some cases)
- Website (through front page of Institution website)
- Some social media

Some one-off options:

- SMS
- Mobile app
- MMS Video clip



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### Students can get answers to questions about orientation before orientation


Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.05$   $\sigma=0.94$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=4.00$   $\sigma=0.82$

Most universities using the following:

- Dedicated email address or online form
- Phone number
- Website
- Student centre assists students
- Publications on and offline

Some universities using:

- Twitter
- Blog
- Facebook





## Students can get answers to questions about orientation during orientation



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.35$   $\sigma=0.81$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.45$   $\sigma=0.76$

Most universities using the following:

- Students roaming or staff roaming (easily identifiable) around campus
- Welcome areas where students and/or staff available
- Brochures and posters

Some one-off options:

- Ask questions during presentations



## Students feel welcome if they arrive at the institution before orientation commences



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.35$   $\sigma=0.67$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.45$   $\sigma=0.76$

Varying approaches to this including:

- Student Centre enquiries
- Enrolment welcoming
- Some international student specific welcomes
- Some universities offering a "Welcome Centre"
- Comments include:

*This item definitely needs attention*

*Students who arrive early can easily get the impression we are not quite "ready" for them*

*Domestic students... come in January ... to enrol..., and while every effort is made to welcome them, the event is very focussed on ... enrolment*



## Students can easily access the campus by readily available public transport



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.21$   $\sigma = 0.92$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.05$   $\sigma = 1.08$

Predictably:

- Most universities report reasonable public transport
- Universities that struggle are more regional institutions
- Universities that report best access are inner-city universities
- Some universities offer shuttle buses in addition to public transport

Notable: One university reports its main train station is not disability accessible.

One university reports most students who are on-campus mode live on campus.



## Students receive information about public transport



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.55$   $\sigma = 0.94$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.70$   $\sigma = 0.80$

Most universities use the following:

- Online and hand out timetables during enrolment and orientation
- Some public transport representatives attend orientation components
- Orientation website referral to transport site(s)

A one off suggestion:

- "Town" tour around campus

Two universities report that students still want to drive, despite public transport options.



## Students can easily locate their first orientation session



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.70$   $\sigma=0.57$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=4.32$   $\sigma=0.75$

Most universities use the following:

- Students and/or staff offering directions
- Notices
- Not scheduling other activities at the same time

Unique suggestions:

- Map “app”
- “UQnav” free iphone app

Comment: *In international student sessions, we have taken to spending the first 20 minutes delivering entertainment so lost students can find the room*



## Students can find their subsequent orientation sessions easily



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.53$   $\sigma=0.51$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=4.11$   $\sigma=0.81$

Less help available for subsequent sessions, but “once they have found the first point, students are quickly connected to sources of information”

Most universities use the following:

- Students and/or staff offering directions
- Notices
- Maps

Unique suggestions:

- Prize draw for a range of prizes based on attendance

Comment: *Timetabling rooms is a major puzzle each year*



## Students attend sessions the institution regards as important



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.65$   $\sigma=0.67$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=4.00$   $\sigma=0.84$

Most universities use the following:

- Timetabling key sessions with no clashes
- Promoting these as “essential”
- Try to limit the decision-making required and making the process cohesive so that students go from one session to another
- Use social media to encourage attendance at important sessions
- Differentiate between “essential” and “recommended” sessions

Unique suggestions:

- Important sessions appear in multiple places

Comment: *It really hurts our marketing message [saying] “You really should attend” rather than “It is compulsory to attend”*



## Students can choose the elements of orientation that are important to them



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=3.72$   $\sigma=1.02$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.89$   $\sigma=1.08$

Most universities provide:

- Choice to choose sessions important to them

Some provide online sign up for sessions

Comments:

- *Perspectives differ [on what's important]*
- *Starting uni quiz enables students to self identify areas for ... development*
- *Sometimes students don't realise what should be important to them at orientation until about week 3 of semester*



## Students can develop and access their own orientation timetable



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}$  = 3.47  $\sigma$  = 1.33

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}$  = 3.35  $\sigma$  = 1.27

- Several universities have an online program which students can customise
- One university has a timetable that integrates with student mobile
- Most universities allow students to develop a timetable of sorts, except where they want students to attend all sessions, and build the timetable on that basis

Comments:

*A work in progress.*

*We have an online tool for students to create their own personal itinerary*

*Students can do this by hand... it would be more ideal if we had an online function*



## Students have multiple opportunities to meet students in their individual course/program



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}$  = 4.50  $\sigma$  = 0.69

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}$  = 3.84  $\sigma$  = 0.90

- Most institutions offer some opportunities for students to meet in Faculty based events
- Some offer additional social opportunities other than Faculty events, such as lunches, peer mentoring activities, other social events
- Several universities stream students more systematically into course/program groups, with a senior mentor, and then keep in that small group for a variety of activities



## Students have multiple opportunities to meet students in their Faculty



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.05$   $\sigma=0.97$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.67$   $\sigma=0.84$

Similar responses to previous question

- Some universities try to encourage students who are in the same Faculty at university wide events to get together, by having name-tags/colour codes for Faculties



## Students get help to find their way around campus



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.05$   $\sigma=0.94$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=4.25$   $\sigma=0.79$

Most universities offer the following:

- Guided tours (usually by student orientation leaders)
- Maps
- Signage


Some unique comments:

- Map app
- Online campus tour
- *We try to strike a balance between helping students ... but also fostering independence and letting them learn their own way around campus by wandering around, learning to read the map, and proactively seeking assisted as needed"*



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**Students learn things that will improve their safety and security**


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Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.00$   $\sigma=0.86$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.95$   $\sigma=0.89$

- Most universities offer some form of security briefing
- International students specially briefed (ESOS requirement)


Some unique innovations:

- Online safety module available (trial – has had 9000 complete it)
- Session for international students called “Australian Health Care System”
- Fridge magnets
- Information about 24 hour access areas and security
- Student Safety Mailbox (for feedback or information)



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**Students are linked to services that address their individual needs**


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Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.75$   $\sigma=0.55$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=4.25$   $\sigma=0.85$

- Range of services from specific talks, orientation stalls, to more passive flyers and information available online and at services

Some unique innovations:

- Online early alert activities
- Student Services Carnival – fun and interactive
- 1800 hotline as single portal to all services
- Week 3 carnival showcases all support services



## Students attend an event that ceremonially welcomes them to the whole institution



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.68$   $\sigma = 1.11$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.00$   $\sigma = 1.28$

- Nearly all universities have an Official Welcome to new students
- Some universities had elected to no longer run this session due to poor numbers or size of cohort being too large
- Some broke up the official welcome into specific cohorts (international, mature age)

Some unique innovations:

- Video recording of VC at Faculty Welcome instead

*We used to have a VC's welcome... but numbers of students involved (approx 8000) makes it difficult to fit... and can be very impersonal. ... Instead focus on personal, small-group introduction in Host groups as first orientation event*



## Students are welcomed by an Indigenous Welcome to Country or similar



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.16$   $\sigma = 0.90$


Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.22$   $\sigma = 0.94$

- All universities either have an Official welcome and Indigenous welcome or acknowledge indigenous peoples and traditional owners at Faculty welcomes
- A few also have an indigenous dance troupe/welcome ceremony






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**Students are able to attend a tailored event from their Faculty** 

Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.53$   $\sigma = 0.77$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.53$   $\sigma = 0.84$

- All universities have a tailored event from their Faculty
- This includes Faculty specific information and often academic staff attend
- There is some difficulty getting Faculties to run an event if the precedent is not there




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**Students are able to meet and get help from non-first-year students** 

Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.20$   $\sigma = 0.83$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.05$   $\sigma = 0.89$

- Opportunities for students to meet non-first-year students via mentoring programs, PASS programs or via orientation leaders are common
- Other opportunities are non-first-year students employed to help with enrolment process or giving talks at orientation



## Students are offered IT skill building opportunities



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.17$   $\sigma=0.86$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.78$   $\sigma=1.11$

- Most universities offer something during orientation, however several offer no IT skill building opportunities during orientation
- Build on IT skills, not just for Word, Excel etc, but also for University systems and enrolment etc.

Unique:

- Some universities offer pre-orientation IT skills workshops
- One university uses mentors to help students
- Several use videos explaining how systems work



## Students get enough information about the subjects they are enrolling in



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.44$   $\sigma=0.62$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.94$   $\sigma=0.80$

- Main information is given out through subject guidelines, handbooks, enrolment sessions and via Faculty staff

Unique:

- One university has videos of key first year subjects with a student and academic interviewed



## Students can access bridging courses if they do not have assumed knowledge



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.47$   $\sigma = 0.99$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.79$   $\sigma = 1.05$

- Range of options offered including full year foundation programs, short courses, and courses provided prior to and including orientation.
- Some screening tests given



## Students are offered opportunities to build their academic information-seeking skills



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.16$   $\sigma = 0.86$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.06$   $\sigma = 1.94$


- Workshops are offered during and beyond orientation
- There are online modules available at some universities
- Library tours are offered also

Unique:

- Some universities build these skills specifically into beginning subject unit assessments (probably most universities but not mentioned by most)




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**Students are offered opportunities to develop their presentation skills**

Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 2.88$   $\sigma = 1.27$   
Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 2.56$   $\sigma = 1.50$

- Most universities do not offer these skill building during orientation period, but beyond
- Instead, they promote the sessions into semester
- Most build this capability into their unit assessments



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**Students are informed about academic integrity and plagiarism etc.**

Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.10$   $\sigma = 1.02$   
Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.89$   $\sigma = 0.57$

- Courses and workshops offered during and post-orientation
- Mostly this is considered more in the first subjects rather than during orientation
- Often multiple, consistent, prolonged information


Unique:

- Students must complete online anti-plagiarism tutorial prior to submitting assessments



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**Students are informed about critical dates**


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Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.45$   $\sigma = 0.89$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.26$   $\sigma = 0.99$

- Some informed at orientation, some are not (due to overload of information)
- Calendar of key dates given
- Student diaries


Unique:

- Using Facebook, Twitter etc to remind about the dates
- Roadmap of key dates and activities
- Promoted to parents and partners session
- SMS



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**International students are informed about crucial rules and regulations**


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Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.68$   $\sigma = 0.58$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 4.44$   $\sigma = 0.62$


- Sessions dedicated to international student information and cultural understanding
- Flyers and booklets

Comment:

- *“Often the need occurs in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year and it has all been forgotten”*



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**Students attend catered events** 

Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.35$   $\sigma = 0.99$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.95$   $\sigma = 0.89$


- Most universities offer opportunities
- Seen as important networking events where students can meet other students and staff and food is just a side benefit/incentive

Unique:

- Free breakfasts




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**Students are entertained by information sessions** 

Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.45$   $\sigma = 1.19$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.53$   $\sigma = 0.77$

- Methods include: videos, jokes, interactive participation, panels, opportunities to mingle, delivery style and careful selection of the presenter



## Students are not expected to endure repetitive delivery of information



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.55$   $\sigma = 0.94$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.16$   $\sigma = 1.01$

- Use of planning committees with Faculty and central staff so that everyone understands the different presentations offered
- Some repetition is necessary for key information but the challenge is not to make it boring

Unique:

- Have a list of top 10 tasks students need to complete before starting uni
- Produce a guide for Faculties: "Guide to Facilitating Faculty Orientation Welcome Sessions"



## Students have structured opportunities to join student clubs



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.83$   $\sigma = 1.04$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.94$   $\sigma = 1.06$

- Many universities have market day(s) to promote joining clubs
- Difficult in smaller, regional campuses


Unique:

- Some discipline specific clubs are promoted through Faculty sessions




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**Students develop a sense of belonging to the institution**

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Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.32$   $\sigma=0.82$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.79$   $\sigma=0.98$

- Opportunities to meet other students via orientation events is the main emphasis, including clubs, camps, meeting events and mentoring
- Meeting academics and support staff is seen as important
- Inclusion of students in decision making and feedback process
- Use of social media to engage with students (e.g. Twitter, Facebook and blogs)



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**Students can participate in an online orientation if they are not able to attend on campus**


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Importance of outcome  $\bar{x}=4.00$   $\sigma=1.00$   
 Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x}=3.88$   $\sigma=0.89$

- Different demographics and models of learning for the universities means that some universities, particularly those offering distance courses, make online orientation a priority
- Some universities prefer to encourage students to attend, particularly if their primary mode is face-to-face learning

Unique:

- Online Blackboard site which provides recordings of orientation sessions
- Once orientation is over, the website switches to a “Did you miss orientation” mode





## Students can participate in a late orientation if they are not able to attend the regular program



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.17$   $\sigma = 0.99$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.06$   $\sigma = 1.09$

- Some universities offer a shortened late orientation
- Others rely on online orientation instead
- Some offer workshops, information on websites etc throughout semester
- Some universities continue to offer orientation sessions into start of semester
- Some universities ask students to make an appointment to see a staff member



## Students are involved in the organisation and operation of orientation



Importance of outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.63$   $\sigma = 1.12$

Extent achieving outcome  $\bar{x} = 3.61$   $\sigma = 0.85$

- • Most universities offer some opportunities for students to be involved
- • These opportunities include being mentors or peer leaders, being involved in planning, or in the feedback and review process
- • The emphasis is on students being involved in the delivery, rather than the planning process for some universities

