

APAIE 2024



PERTH, AUSTRALIA 4-8 MARCH 2024

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Collaborating for sustainable impact: partnerships across the Asia Pacific

APAIE Perth 4 - 8 March 2024



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Session 4E: Tues 5th March, 15:00 – 15:45

First contact matters: Comparing institutions and agents on international enquiries

Chris Davis
Edified Education, Australia

Isabelle Lange
Edith Cowan University, Australia

Jake Foster
AECC Global, Australia

Chair
Chris Davis
Edified Education, Australia

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First contact matters: Comparing institutions and agents on international enquiries

Chris Davis, Edified

Isabelle Lange, Edith Cowan University

Jake Foster, AECC



Meet the speakers



Chris Davis

Senior Consultant



Isabelle Lange

International Account Manager



Jake Foster

COO





Enquiry Experience Tracker

You never get a second chance to make a
good first impression.



Enquiry Experience Tracker

Enquiry Experience Tracker

2023 Global Report

Published 4 October 2023



Outcomes help institutions and agencies:

- strengthen understanding of the external enquirer journey
- understand your performance compared with the broader sector
- pinpoint areas of strength and competitive advantage
- highlight opportunities to optimise the prospective student experience
- create a catalyst for change
- recognise great work!

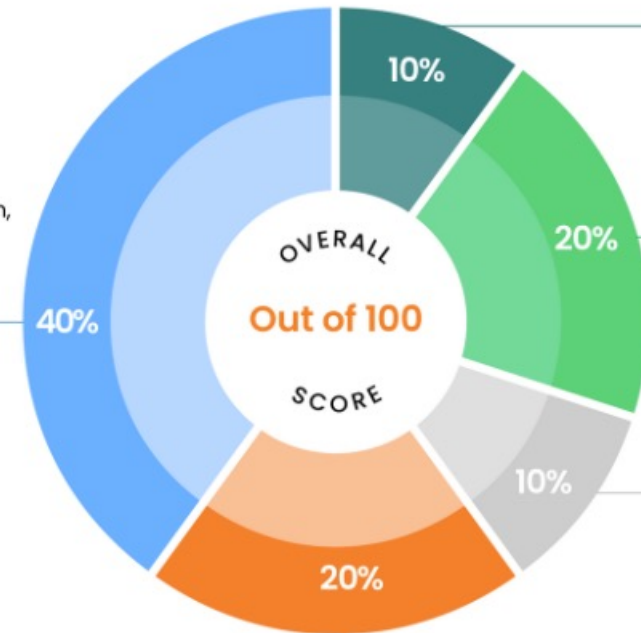
Research Methodology



Communication quality
Clarity, relevance, personalisation, persuasiveness and mobile friendliness of the response
Scored from 0 to 40



Impact
Student sentiment and likelihood to continue engagement
Scored from 0 to 20



Enquiry channels
Availability and findability of key enquiry channels
Scored from 0 to 10



Responsiveness
Time between initial enquiry and response
Scored from 0 to 20



Follow-up
Receipt of a timely follow-up message after the initial response
Scored from 0 to 10

Research methodology

Mystery shopping

Mystery shopping was conducted globally between April and June 2023. Enquiries were placed by students representing the below personas.



UNIVERSITY GRADUATE



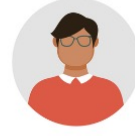
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE



PROFESSIONAL



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE



PROFESSIONAL



UNIVERSITY STUDENT



UNIVERSITY GRADUATE



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



NIGERIA



UK



UK



PHILIPPINES



VIETNAM



USA



CHINA



INDONESIA



INDIA



ENQUIRY FORM



LIVE CHAT



PARTNER WEBSITE



ENQUIRY FORM



LIVE CHAT



INSTAGRAM



EMAIL



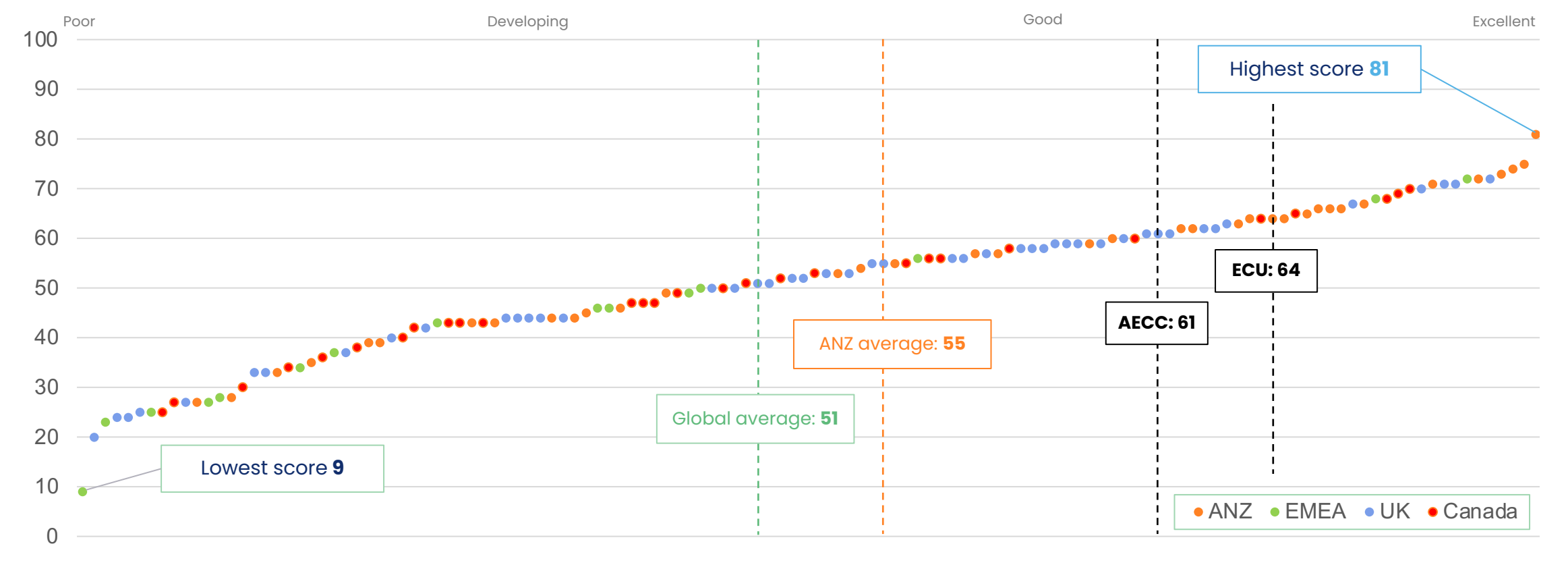
PARTNER WEBSITE



PEER TO PEER

Only for enquiries to Australian institutions

2023 Enquiry Experience Scores



There is a huge range in enquiry management quality across the 128 institutions evaluated globally



Most institutions were rated 'developing' or 'good'



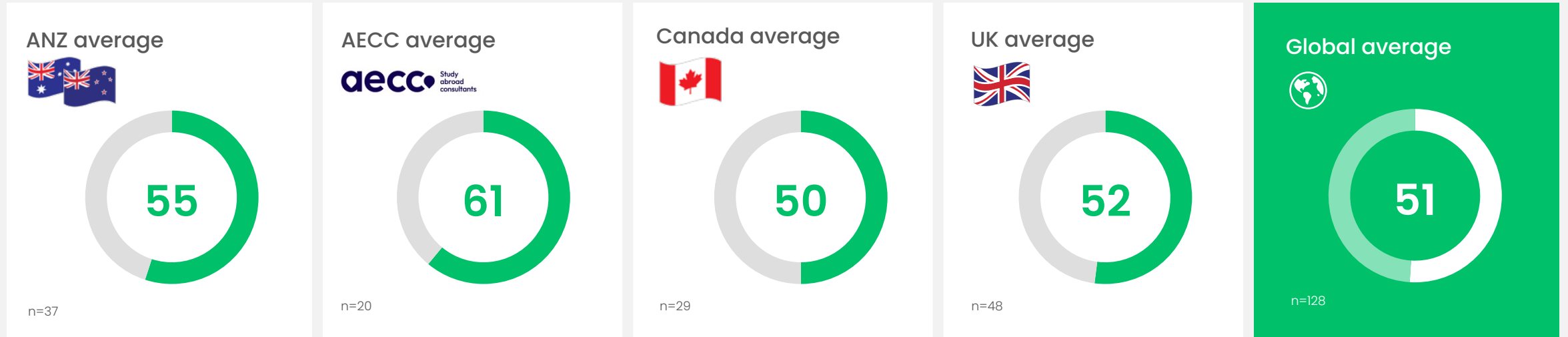
Six of the top 10 scoring institutions are in the ANZ region



Commitment yields positive progress

Summary of overall results

Below is the average 2023 Enquiry Experience Score across each region and the world.



All scores are out of 100.

Prospective students have access to a vast array of study options. The range of information sources – from social media to online reviews to institution websites – can be overwhelming. When students reach out with an enquiry, it’s a chance for institutions to form a **personal connection**.

Enquiries provide the opportunity for institutions to engage directly with their prospects and influence them with tailored and persuasive information. If managed well, **the enquiry experience can set students on a path to conversion**.

The global average Enquiry Experience Score is **51 out of 100**, the same as it was 12 months ago. The mid-range score suggests that institutions are meeting some but not all enquirer needs.

ANZ continues as the best performing region globally, despite dropping down one point compared with the average in 2022. The UK average remains steady year on year, while the Canadian average has improved by three points on the 2022 score.

Global results by criteria

The overall Enquiry Experience Score is out of 100. It is a total of the scores achieved for each of the criteria assessed: enquiry channels, responsiveness, communication quality, follow-up and impact.

The global average was at least half of the available points in every criterion except for follow-up. From the student perspective, higher education institutions are offering reasonable enquiry services that meet some needs.

Institutions can do more to deliver a great experience across the enquiry process.




Key findings

- Institutions generally scored well for **enquiry channels**, indicating they offer many of enquirer's preferred communication channels
- **Responsiveness** remains a challenge. The score indicates that a significant proportion of enquiries either go unanswered or receive slow responses.
- **Follow-up** was the lowest scoring area, showing that institutions struggle with data integration gaps or are yet to develop lead nurturing campaigns.
- **Communication quality** was mixed. Most replies were clear, polite and helpful but missed the opportunity to persuade students or convey a feeling of warmth and welcome.
- **Impact** scores reveal that the enquiry experience can influence student impressions about an institution. When students have a positive experience, they are likely to continue engaging.


Key findings from the 2023 global research

The 2023 research included 128 institutions in major global study destinations.


Scotland tops the world for student enquiry experience

#1 75% of Scottish institutions scored above world average. 

Students get the worst service on social media

Only **1 in 5** mystery shoppers had a positive experience enquiring through Instagram or Facebook. 

Peer-to-peer is incredibly satisfying


85% of mystery shoppers felt communications with peers were highly tailored and personal. 

Response rates continue to frustrate students

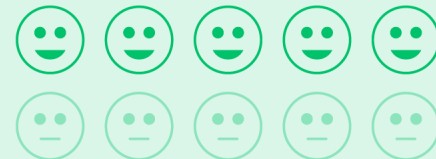


3 in 4 enquiries globally received a response, leaving **1 in 4** students hanging.

Institutions communicate factual information well, but struggle to persuade

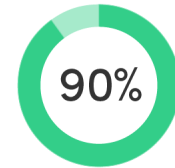
70% of enquiry responses did not include selling points or value-add content. 

Responses often neglect student needs

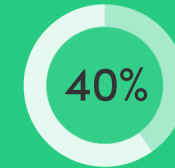


50% Only half of enquiry responses answered all the questions asked by mystery shoppers.

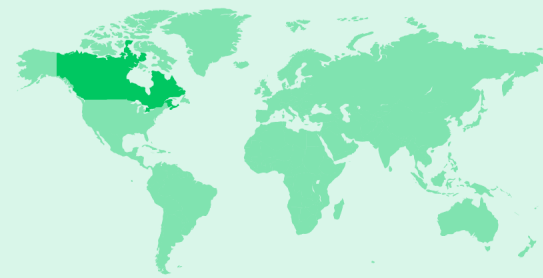
Responses are polite and trustworthy but not always friendly



Over 90% of students felt they could trust the information they received.



Only 40% of students felt replies were warm and engaging.



Half of institutions globally do not follow up on leads



Canadian institutions lag behind in lead nurturing. Two thirds of Canadian institutions did not follow up after any enquiries.


Poor enquiry experiences deter prospective students



93% When mystery shoppers had a negative experience, 93% went on to say they would not engage further with the institution.



1 in 4 institutions use some form of outsourcing

On average, institutions with **fully outsourced or centralised** models rated better than others. 

A third of institutions now take enquiries through mobile messaging



UK institutions lead the way, where almost half allow students to enquire through channels like WhatsApp.

AECC results by criteria

The overall Enquiry Experience Score is out of 100. It is a total of the scores achieved in each of the criteria assessed: enquiry channels, responsiveness, communication quality, follow-up and impact.

AECC scored well in most categories, with the exception of follow-up. From the student perspective, AECC's enquiry function appears to be operating effectively and delivers a good experience in most aspects of the enquiry process.

Scores are rounded to the nearest whole number.



Key findings

- AECC recorded a high score for **enquiry channels**. This shows that AECC offers most of the main communication channels favoured by current enquirers.
- AECC scored very well for **responsiveness** with nearly 90% of all enquiries receiving a response within the time limit.
- The lowest scoring area was **follow-up**. Less than one-third of the enquiries received a second communication from AECC to follow up after the initial reply.
- There is an opportunity to improve **communication quality**, particularly by increasing the persuasiveness of communication with prospective students and the relevance of the content to individual enquirers.

Key findings from the 2023 AECC research

The 2023 AECC research included 60 mystery shopping enquiries to 20 global offices.

AECC outperforms institutions across the world

#1 Mystery shoppers scored their overall experience with AECC higher than the UK, ANZ and global institution benchmarks.



Direct phone calls delivered the best communication experience

Mystery shoppers found these communications clearer, more relevant and more personal than all other channels.

AECC responds regularly and quickly



AECC responded to 88% of enquiries, compared to the global average of 77%.



6 out of 10 of AECC responses were delivered 'very promptly'

AECC has a well-established WhatsApp offering accessible across their global network of offices.

Only a third of global institutions take enquiries through mobile messaging services.



Responses often neglect student needs



28% Less than one-third of enquiry responses answered all the questions asked by mystery shoppers.

Malaysia tops the world for AECC student enquiry experience



The Malaysia team delivered excellence in every aspect of the enquiry experience.



AECC counsellors delivered some of the best enquiry experiences recorded across the whole EET research scope

There are pockets of real excellence within the AECC network, with four separate offices receiving a near perfect score for individual responses.

Less than a third of mystery shoppers received follow up after their enquiry

This is a challenge around the world - half of the institutions globally do not follow up at all with enquirers.



First impressions count



85% When mystery shoppers had a negative experience, 85% went on to say they would not engage further with the institution.

Students get the worst service on social media

Only 1 in 10 mystery shoppers had a positive experience enquiring through Instagram or Facebook.



Students like talking to counsellors, not bots



↑ 60% Prospective students who managed to speak to a counsellor rather than a bot were 60% more satisfied with their overall experience.

⊗ None of the shoppers who engaged exclusively with a bot recorded a positive enquiry experience.

Communications are clear and functional, but lack 'sizzle'

Mystery shoppers felt the communications were 'overly administrative' and were not engaging or persuasive enough.



Enquiry Experience Tracker

"The fact that I can easily reach them over WhatsApp is very convenient."

– Sri Lanka mystery shopper

"I was feeling neutral when I saw their website, but it amazed me how fast they replied. It made me feel like they do care about international students, and that improved my perceptions."

– USA mystery shopper

"It felt like they really cared. They answered all my questions and gave an international student calculator for all the costs you could incur. They also sent a link of groups to check out."

– The Philippines mystery shopper

"I feel like my enquiry wasn't really valued – I was just told to check out the website. I can do that anyway, it's not why I contacted you!"

– India mystery shopper

"I made several attempts, on different days and different times. There was never anyone available. If there is no one manning the live chat, I don't think they should have it at all."

– UK mystery shopper

"The tone seemed to have a chiding effect for not browsing the school's website properly. It made me feel that the school is being a little bit mean to international students."

– China mystery shopper

Let's hear from the panel



Isabelle Lange

International Account Manager



Jake Foster


COO




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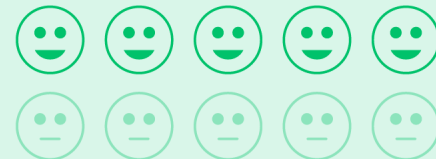


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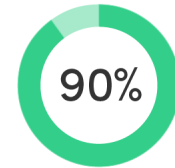
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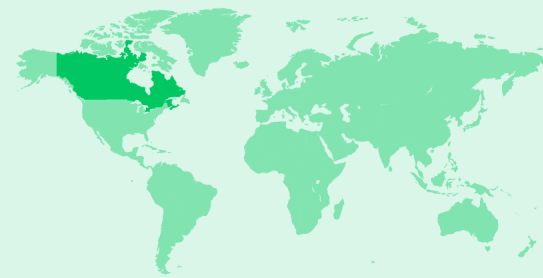
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Your questions

Now it's your turn!

Our panel will be very happy to take any questions from the audience.

 **Enquiry Experience Tracker**

Thank you

Enquiry Experience Tracker
Global results 2023



Chris Davis
Senior Consultant
chris@edified.com.au



Can you stand out?

You are also competing for your student's attention and time.



Eras tour vs Campus tour



How do you make your comms stand out?

Students are used to an immersive, engaging experience

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