

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005

Submission no: 163

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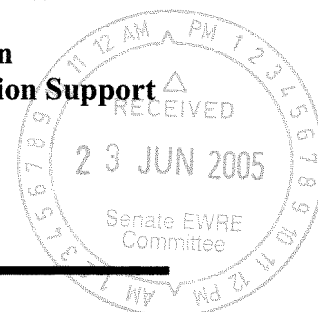
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Student Guild
Edith Cowan University

**Submission to Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, and Education
Legislation Committee inquiry into the provisions of the Higher Education Support
Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005**

Edith Cowan University Student Guild



The following is a submission from the Edith Cowan University (ECU) Student Guild (The Guild) on the provisions of the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005*. The submission addresses the following matters:

- ECU and The Guild's experience of voluntary student unionism (VSU)
- Likely effects of the proposed Commonwealth legislation on the provision of student services on ECU and The Guild.
- Need for a fair universal student membership system.

ECU and The Guild's experience of voluntary student unionism (VSU)

Out of all of the Australian University Student Organisations, the ECU Guild's experience stands out as a warning, in light of the stated inquiry of the read Senate Committee. It has quite a relatively young history, and was critically injured by the previous State VSU. The University itself is a young one with difficulties not necessarily faced by many other campuses.

In 1994 the State Government of Western Australia introduced VSU, which was then compensated by a Federal fund for Guilds affected by the legislation. This required the Guild to look increasingly at commercial avenues. In 1998 the Federal funding ceased with a change of government. The Guild's income dropped from \$1.8m in 1996 to \$122,000 in 1998.



Thereabouts, unfortunately, one particular investment not only failed (The Guild not being the only investor who lost out), but was dogged by such controversy which damaged the good reputation of The Guild. ECU, kindly & dutifully, tried to intervene to save the organisation from a fiscal crash.

ECU took upon itself the functions of many of the services The Guild had traditionally provided – Sport Facilities and co-ordination, medical services, catering, tavern services, bookshops, childcare etc. The Guild retrenched much of its staff, and in doing so further rendering itself unable neither to deliver the required remaining services nor to remain structurally viable. It was handed over to Administrators and the Guild temporarily ceased to be.

Mr Paul Benson, a student, and a small dedicated group began to reorganise and rebuild The Guild in 1999-2000 (DEC-NOV). In 2000-2001 the first substantial Senate and officers were elected, led by Br Steve T 'Ashar' Spain, a former Vice President (Education), and Equity and Diversity representative, under Mr Benson.

Many representative and some commercial services returned such as; grades appeals, University committee reporting/sitting for transparency and input/feedback, Guild Shops, the student newspaper, education awards, social functions, secondments from community groups, and employment for members of the community. This also had a knock on effect for local and state business, albeit at first a slow one. The funding was a constant issue, and the Guild was in constant fear of failing again.

Between the 4 Presidents of the public university guilds and the State Minister for Education, an end to VSU was negotiated. This was to be replaced by the current system of compulsory Amenities and Services (A&S) fee of which no less than 51% was to go to the Student Guild's.



Since then The Guild has steadily rebuilt and re-staffed. It has once again begun to acquire assets and has sought to be one of the most fiscally accountable bodies in Australia. Even though students are not required to join The Guild (at no extra cost), the vast majority do. It seems student support wanes when the organisation seems hopelessly opposed by greater bodies.

Likely effects of the proposed Commonwealth legislation on the provision of student services on ECU and The Guild.

[Welfare] is based on an extremely dangerous principle: that you should care whether the disabled widow across town has food to eat. [Welfare] "reformers" would rather have you concentrate on maximising your own consumption of goods and subordinating yourself to power. That's life. Caring for other people, and taking community responsibility for things like health and retirement — that's just deeply subversive.

(Chomsky, N., June 18 2005, *The Social Security Non-Crisis*, in <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=10&ItemID=8102>)

We tend to see ourselves as Australians that give each other a fair go, and provide for those who, for whatever reason, cannot provide for themselves. This set of principles is entrenched in our common institutions, of which Guilds are based upon. Indeed The fundamental objectives of the Edith Cowan University Student Guild are to:

- Provide services for the students of Edith Cowan University;
- Represent the student body of Edith Cowan University in matters affecting their interests and rights;
- Enrich the education, welfare, social life and culture of the student body of the University by organising social and educational activities and events that seek to enhance campus life;



- Enhance and promote 'a sense of community' among the students of Edith Cowan University by providing student clubs and societies with funding and resources to conduct events and activities for their members and the student body as a whole;
- Work with the University administration to ensure that all current and future University policy embraces the principles of equal opportunity whilst recognising the diverse needs of the student body.

The purported purpose of the Nelson legislation is twofold: a) to ensure no student is compelled to join a student organisation, union, or guild; and b) to ensure universities do not compel students to pay for non-academic services unless the student chooses to use that service.

Under the relevant State Act, no student is compelled to join the student guilds as a condition of enrolment. Upon enrolment all students become members of The Guild, unless they opt out. This is generally accessed by those who have a religious or philosophical objection to collective organising. Even so, the vast majority of students remain joined. Therefore membership requirements of the Nelson reforms have already been instituted, even before the State VSU. The membership could have the university manage their fee; however they choose to have The Guild do so, when the structure is supported legislatively.

The fee is negotiated between the University Council and The Guild Senate. The allocations of these fees are then also negotiated between the two bodies, and the later then reports quarterly to the former on its progress. While The Guild would rather a more neutral monitoring & allocation body so as to avoid varying interpretations ending in costly legal adjudication, the system is at the very least returning a campus culture of support and wellbeing to the ECU community, enabling its members to more fully focus upon their educative pursuits.



The Guild represents a large, diverse membership. It recognises groups of social disadvantage that Federal legislation does not (e.g. GLBT peoples), and is continually required to clarify issues with regard to certain groups where government and university policy is quite grey (e.g. the Mentally Ill). Its community is spread over three urban campuses and one major regional campus (Bunbury or the Faculty for Regional & Professional Studies). Its students come from literally every continent that is settled, some by ancestry some as international students. It ensures that relatively cheap options are available to its membership, and co-ordinates supplies of small items to departments within the university when possible.

The Guild currently employs two Education and Welfare Officers (1 full time, across all three metropolitan campuses and 1 part time on the Bunbury campus)¹. Both welfare officers work alongside Guild senators to facilitate and provide the following vital services to the student body of the university:

- *Academic appeals and grievances – assistance and advocacy for appeals against:*
 - Course status (i.e. excluded from course)
 - Examination/assignment results
 - Practicum results
 - Unit results

We help students with appeals by giving them information about how best to set out their appeal letter and what the valid and invalid grounds for appeal are. We explain how the process works, and can set up and attend informal meetings with the student and their lecturer/tutor/Head of School, and act as mediator/negotiator; the reviewer of the appeal during the consultation process, and also attend formal appeal hearings with them as their representative/advocate, if required. We liaise with Assessment

¹ See Appendix 1 & 2 respectively for details on service.



Support with regard to the progress of the appeal if necessary. We can also write supporting letters for appeals if appropriate.

- *Advice on late withdrawal/deferral applications and deferred exams*

We can provide advice to students about the cut off dates for withdrawal/deferral and how to go about applying. We can also write supporting letters if appropriate.

- *Assistance with any other academic issues or problems, ie enrolment or course transfer issues, parking fines etc*

We can liaise with the relevant Student Services departments of the university for students who have grievances or issues to do with any aspect of their studies, and advocate/negotiate/mediate for them. We also educate students on their rights at university and how to avoid any potential pitfalls.

- *First point of contact for students experiencing harassment and/or discrimination*

The Education & Welfare Officers are also trained University Contact Officers and can assist students who are experiencing any form of unlawful harassment or discrimination.

- *Centrelink application forms and information*

We provide advice and information to students regarding Centrelink benefits such as Austudy, Abstudy, and Youth Allowance. We have application forms and contacts at Centrelink offices who we can contact for student queries we are unable to help with. We are also trained in assisting students with Centrelink appeals and attend formal appeal hearings/tribunals with students as their representative. We have also arranged for Centrelink to visit campus regularly so that students can access the service directly.

- *Student Complaints information*



We provide assistance with the Student Complaints process of ECU and explain how it works and what to do.

- *Counselling/referral to community welfare agencies*

We are here to lend a sympathetic ear to anything students need to discuss. All contact with us is kept strictly confidential and if we need to discuss a student's situation with another professional, we will obtain the student's consent in writing. (However, for more formalised counselling sessions or for certain academic issues, we will refer students to the ECU Student Counselling service or to other community agencies providing specialised services, where appropriate).

- *Legal service referral*

We can refer students to the Guild's legal service, UniCover or other free community legal agencies. UniCover includes an initial free one-hour consultation, discounted rates for certain services, and a 24-hour hotline for criminal matters.

- *Crisis accommodation referral*

We have a directory of emergency accommodation contacts including women's refuges and can arrange for students to access this when required.

- *Migration agent referral*

The Guild has access to discounted migration advice from a registered Migration Agent, for international students.

- *Emergency Financial Assistance*

The Guild can assist students in financial hardship with a short-term loan in certain circumstances.

- *Emergency Computer Loan Scheme*

The Guild can assist students in financial hardship with a short-term computer loan in certain circumstances.



- *Brochures and fact sheets on a number of health and welfare issues*
We have a number of brochures and information about a wide range of issues in our offices, which students can peruse and help themselves to.
- *Effecting change in university policy for students*
We regularly attend meetings and working parties with university departments, and together with Guild senators, input into policy change for appeals rules, academic misconduct and other issues that directly affect students.

As is often with rural communities, our Bunbury (Faculty of Regional and Professional Studies) Ed & Welfare Officer, plays multiple roles, and has become quite a nexus of the campus culture. Her position is critical to increasing the services to our rural communities, and reducing any gap in service or funding provision.

The collective funding also currently enables the Guild to employ two full-time Activity Officers to organise and facilitate Guild activities and events on all four campuses of the University. The Guild activity officers also assist student, associations clubs, and societies within the University to organise social events. The two main autonomous groups the Guild funds are: the Edith Cowan University International Students Council (ECUISC) and the Edith Cowan University Postgraduate Association (ECU PGA). After this ECU Sports and Recreation, which co-ordinates our efforts in such events as the University Games, and facilitates gym facilities, while still under the control of the ECU administration. With an ever increasing attempt at balancing service delivery in our rural community, we initiated the Bunbury regional surf competitions by funding a local co-ordinator, who comes from within the ECU community.

All of these services will be seriously threatened if VSU comes in its current form if our previous experience is anything to by. The Guild has not enough resources, because of its recent resurrection, to engage in any substantial risk actualisation regarding a severe



reduction in funding. Therefore, while other university student organisations may have enough resources to see out this legislation and adjust accordingly, this option is not available to ECU Student Guild.

Need for a fair universal student membership system.

As has been seen around Australia, most guilds & student organisations, most of the time, do their job and represent their communities well. This has maintained the ability of students to choose the means for managing their fees regarding their university experience.

To argue that The Guild force people to participate in events that they support is a complete misnomer. The Guild offers a diverse range of activities, functions, and social groups, which represent the diversity of its student population. To forbid student groups from engaging in activities which are not forbidden to other citizens is unfathomable. The Guild releases an independent audit every year, and there has been no issue with the groups The Guild funds. For note of the committee, The Guild is forbidden to donate to organisations outside of the University community.

What has been compromised here in WA is the independence of The Guild, with the final say of funding being signed off by the University Council. While relations this year have been positive, the previous two were not so. ECU and The Guild both felt they had a relevant position on the allocation of fees, and required judicial intervention. The process was eventually resolved out of court; however the time and financial resources expended were detrimental to the community as a whole.

It is completely understandable that a body that accesses funds of such as is the position of The Guild is overseen by an independent body. It is not appropriate that the group



which The Guild most negotiates it's members academic and personal wellbeing with, be the body which can withhold funds from.

Our community cannot abide that the Federal government would interfere in its sovereign rights and obligations without some substantial reasoning, of which the Nelson reform seems to be lacking. Rural, sporting, and social members of our community will be unfairly disadvantaged by this legislation. We call on the Senate committee to recommend that VSU not be legislated, given our past experiences and current situation.

The nature o the services themselves are not necessarily open to a “user-pays” system, for either logistic or financial reasons; aside from the obvious philosophy of community responsibility (as is seen in the history of legal action to try and avoid paying membership or amenities fees). This would then emphasise the movement toward universal membership with opt-out clauses for exceptional circumstances. The government would not recognise Australians who were against the invasion of Iraq, demanding a refund on their tax contributions. In this microcosm, equally critical services can not be run without the participation of the community which it services.



Appendix One

From Education & Welfare Officer – Urban Campuses

Ms Rosemarie Harris

Whilst there is some crossover with services provided by the university with the above services (ie, emergency loan scheme/student counselling services), there is currently **no** other department at ECU other than the Guild that specifically provides “hands-on” advocacy and representation for academic appeals and grievances, and Centrelink issues and appeals. International Student Advisers provide some level of advocacy and representation at appeal hearings, but this does not benefit domestic students. Also, Student Counsellors and Equity & Diversity staff do not, due to the limitations of their roles, directly advocate for students, and can only provide minimal levels of direct support for appeal/grievance situations.

Without the Amenities & Services Fee, it is my understanding that most, if not all of the services provided by my department will be cut completely. Notwithstanding any potential subsidy by the university to run these services, nearly all representation for students will be lost. While the Guild may not see as many students overall as perhaps the Student Counselling service, many hours of work go into each student case, some of which can go on for months or years, and the importance of the Guild’s intervention cannot be underestimated.

It is no exaggeration to say that students who have the assistance of the Guild for academic appeals and grievances are highly advantaged during the process over those who do not. Many appeals can be resolved informally by myself or the Guild, with no need to go to a formal appeal, due to knowing the right staff person to contact, being able to negotiate outcomes, set up meetings and so forth. Students, being on the lower end of the power differential with academic staff, do not normally have this knowledge or access to staff to advocate successfully for themselves and their chances of a successful outcome are much lower. Sometimes appeals get ‘lost’ in the system or students are treated unfairly, and my intervention can resolve such issues successfully. It may seem trite to an outside person for a student to be so concerned about appealing say, an assignment or exam result, but these are major issues to students and can affect their academic standing and therefore future employment chances, which will impact their life in many ways.

Course exclusion appeals are also clearly very important. I have successfully represented many students at appeals who have been allowed, following appeal, to continue in their course. Without this assistance, they may not have had this opportunity and would perhaps lose their chance to complete a higher education degree altogether. The potential negative impact of this lost opportunity on their future life is obvious.



Similarly, I have successfully represented several students at Centrelink appeals, including the Administrative Appeals Tribunal preliminary conferences. In some instances, student's remaining overpayment debts to Centrelink have been waived. This results in a real financial gain for students who are struggling to study and work, to be relieved of the burden of many years of paying off a Centrelink debt.

I receive many referrals from the Student Counselling Service of the university for students needing help with fleeing domestic violence, or accessing emergency accommodation for other reasons. I am seen as the only person at the university who can provide this assistance and I have helped several students escape violence in the home and to flee to a safe women's refuge. Without the A & S Fee, such assistance will not be as readily available to students and they may remain in a violent situation due to not knowing the other options available. Also, sometimes there is a waiting list for students to see an ECU Counsellor, or they may present to the Guild in the first instance, with severe depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts. If the Guild did not have qualified staff on hand to provide crisis care in these situations, students' welfare would be at grave risk.

Without the Guild's representation, students will have no 'voice' on campus. Who will represent their interests at university meetings, such as the recent changes to the Appeals procedure? I and other student representatives had major input into the proposed changes to the appeals process to ensure that students' rights were protected. We are also planning to run "Survival Sessions" for students next semester, where we speak to students about their rights at university and what they can do if they experience any problems. I have also arranged for regular Centrelink visits to campus so that students can make enquiries about their benefits or apply for benefits etc. This will be of great benefit as students often are juggling study, work and family commitments, and finding time to get into a Centrelink office is often difficult.

In terms of emergency financial assistance, we have assisted many students in dire need with food vouchers and emergency loans to prevent essential household services being cut off. We also provide emergency computer loans to students who are in financial hardship and as a result many students have been able to improve their grades and participation in academic life due to this opportunity.

I have included below some actual comments made to me via email from grateful students that I have assisted since I have been in this role (July 2003 to present time – for confidentiality purposes, student names have been deleted):

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxx

Sent: Wednesday, 22 October 2003 3:34 PM

To: Rosemarie Harris

Subject: RE: Overcoming difficulties



Student Guild
Edith Cowan University

Dear Rosemarie,
Thank you so much for talking to my lecturers for me.
It is hugely appreciated, and such a relief. I am quite overwhelmed.
Thanks again,
Xxxxxx

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxxx
Sent: Tuesday, 9 November 2004 4:48 PM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject: Thank you!!!

Hi Rosemarie

Thank you for the excellent work you did in putting together the most recent letter to xxxx.

You do seem to understand very well the just message I have been trying to convey so ardently for the last thirteen months.

Infinite thanks for your help in the past and the present.

Your sincerely
xxxxx

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxx
Sent: Friday, 5 November 2004 4:54 PM
To: guild.edwelfare.ml@iinet.net.au
Subject: RE: FW: xxxx - S/N:-----

Hi Rosemarie,

I would like to thank you for the assistance that you have done for me and hopefully that I will get something in writing to confirm my status. I am very grateful for all that you have done and appreciate the effort that you have taken and once again a heart felt thank you.

Warmest regards,
xxxxx

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxx@student.ecu.edu.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 2 November 2004 2:45 PM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject:

Rosemarie

I just wanted to tell you, in a formal way, that I am very grateful for the good will and support you gave me today



Student Guild
Edith Cowan University

during the entire meeting with xxxx at Joondalup - Thank you, Rosemarie!!!

Yours sincerely
xxxx

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxx@student.ecu.edu.au]
Sent: Friday, 22 October 2004 3:39 PM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject: Acknowledgement!!!

Hi Rosemarie

Thank you for your unrelenting and unyielding advocacy expressed in your last e-mail sent to xxxx dated 20/10/04.

I guess, we will now have to wait for his reply.

Have a happy weekend

Yours sincerely
xxxx

-----Original Message-----

> From: xxxx [mailto:xxxxx@westnet.com.au]
> Sent: Tuesday, 5 October 2004 9:53 PM
> To: Rosemarie Harris
> Subject: Re: xxxxxx

>
> Thanks Rosemarie,
>
> Thanks for arranging the meeting.
>
> Thanks heaps for your time, I really appreciate the support.

>
> Regards,
> xxxxxxxx.

>
From: Fiona BARTLETT [mailto:f.bartlett@ecu.edu.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 22 September 2004 12:11 PM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject: RE: Student #2035256

Hi Rosemarie,

Thank you for your help with xxxx and thank you also for the update. I am pleased he was able to get to see you and that you were able to assist him.

I will see him again on Tuesday next week and can check with him what assistance he may require with his studies. He has fallen behind and it is possible that he may need to defer.



Thanks again for all your help. I am very grateful that you were able to assist him.

Cheers
Fiona

Fiona Bartlett
Student Counsellor
Joondalup Campus
Ph: 6304 5560

-----Original Message-----

>From: xxxx [mailto:xxxx@student.ecu.edu.au]
>Sent: Wednesday, 18 August 2004 1:02 PM
>To: Rosemarie Harris
>Subject: Re: FW: xxxxx and Music Studies (WAAPA
Broadcasting)
>
>Thanx again Rosemarie, you're great !

From: xxx [mailto:xxxx@arach.net.au]
Sent: Friday, 20 August 2004 3:56 PM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject: Re: Infringement number 161274

Thank you Rosemarie,
I will let you know what the outcome is, and yes I do believe there is a real problem, and like most students, all they want to do is get on with their lectures and such.

I do appreciate your efforts, ECU has been a terrific place to be so far and I spent 2 years at Murdoch, so one small glitch won't bother me!

Kind Regards, xxxxxx

From: xxxxx [mailto:xxxxx@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 7 January 2004 4:05 PM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject: Re: Help!

Hi Rosemarie

Thanks for such a quick and informative reply – it was great! And yes, I did have a nice Christmas, thanks. Hope you did too.

I will let you know if I hear.



Thanks again.

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxxx [mailto:xxxxxx@yahoo.se]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2005 8:03 PM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject: Re: FW: Refund issue

Thank you!
It means a lot to me that you are able to help me!

Regards
Xxxx

From: xxxxxxx [mailto:xxx@argonaut.net.au]
Sent: Friday, 13 May 2005 12:01 PM
To: 'Rosemarie Harris'
Subject: RE: Private Tutor

Hi Rosemarie,

Thank you for your response. I contacted the guy from the ad you provided and he has worked out just great.

Thanks again,
Xxxx

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxxx@student.ecu.edu.au
Sent: Thursday, 19 May 2005 7:40 PM
To: guild.edwelfare.ml@inet.net.au
Subject: Fwd: Committee of Review
Importance: High

Hi Ms.Rosemarie
Let me thank you first for coming with me on Friday for the review committee meeting and helping me through out .I should say I owe you a great thing.

Please find the forwarded copy of the e-mail from assessment along with this e-mail.

Thanks once again
Regards
xxxx

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxxx [mailto:xxxxx@yahoo.com]



Student Guild
Edith Cowan University

Sent: Saturday, 14 May 2005 9:47 AM
To: Rosemarie Harris
Subject: RE: HELP- EXAM ISSUES

-Thankyou rosemarie for your help.
at the moment i have decided to wait for mondays class and see wht is
said in class, as it is evident that several stuentns ahve compalined.

i wold preefer not lodging a formal appeal, plus we dont get results for
several weeks and many students will be going back home (overseas).

either way for now ill wait until monday and then ill take appropriate
action.

thankyou for trying to help the little people of the big university
life, it is much appreciated.

From: xxxxxxxx [mailto:xxxxxx@iinet.net.au]
Sent: Thursday, 9 June 2005 8:31 PM
To: 'Rosemarie Harris'
Subject: RE: EDS3100

Thanks so much for your help Rosemarie, it looks as though the lecture has been changed to
8am Friday morning which is great.
Kind thoughts
Xxxxxxxx

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxx@student.ecu.edu.au
Sent: Friday, 10 June 2005 12:01 PM
To: guild.edwelfare.ml@iinet.net.au
Subject: Computer loan

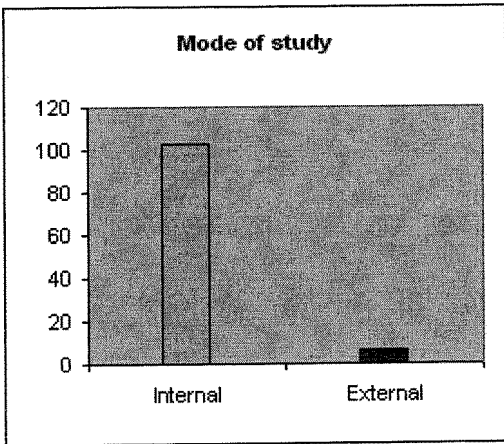
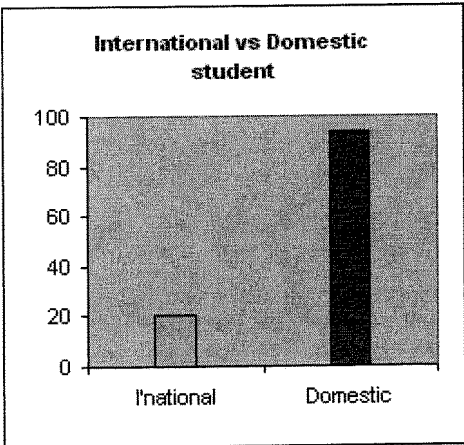
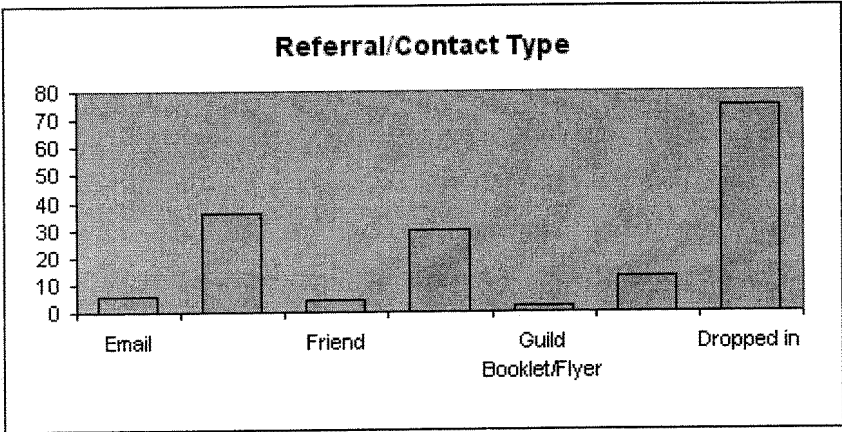
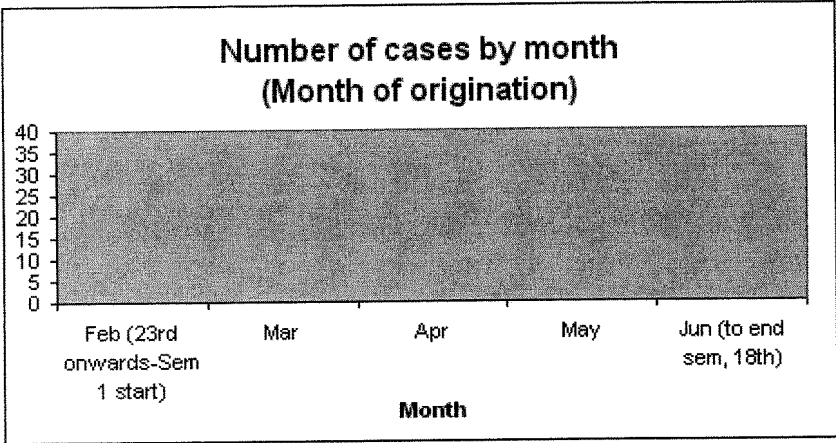
Dear Ms Harris,

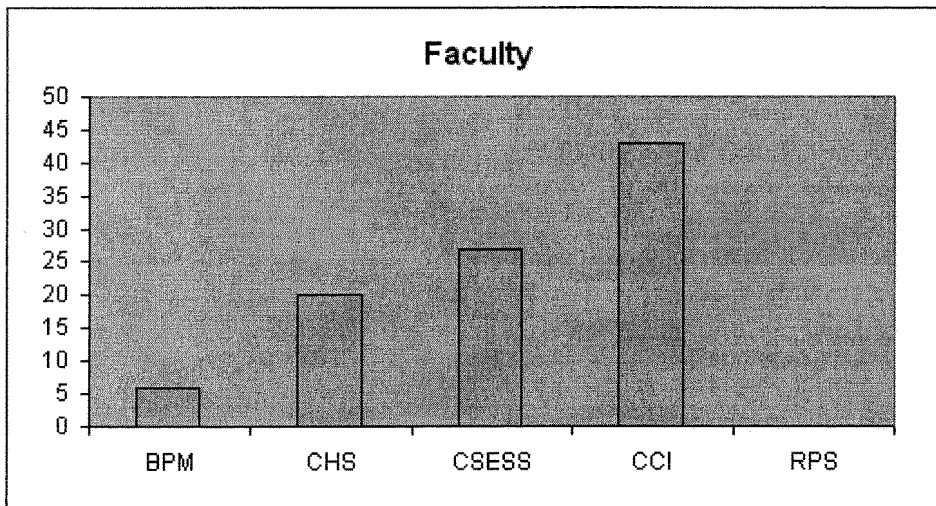
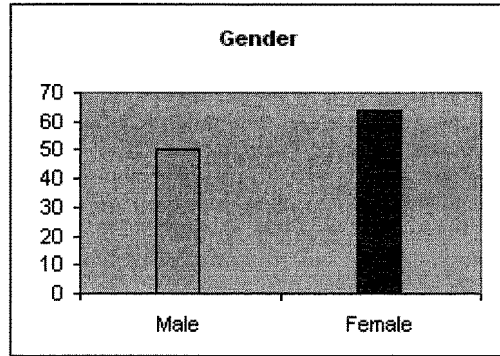
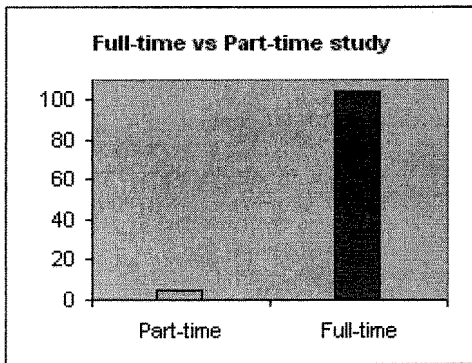
I have in my possession a computer from ECU. I would like to
thank you for lending it to me, it has been most helpful and
I believe I owe part of my high scores to it... It has been
great to be able to work when ever I've felt like it,
without having to worry about library opening times, bus
schedules to campus and so on.

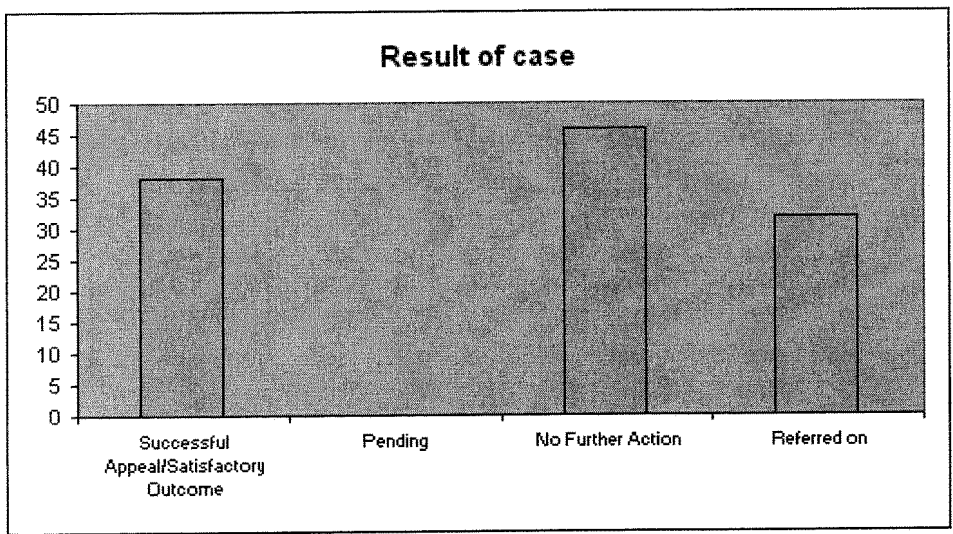
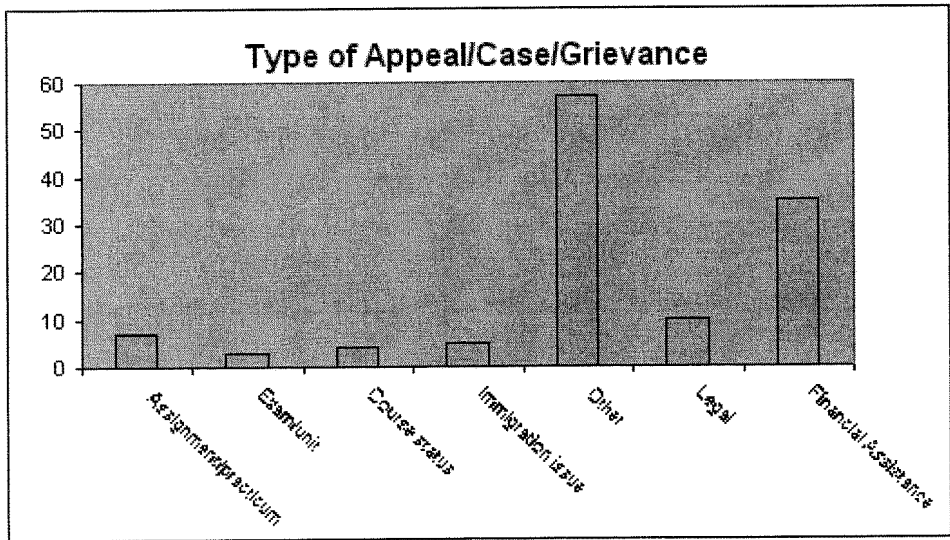
Kind regards,
xxxxxx.



EDUCATION & WELFARE STATS - Semester 1, 2004







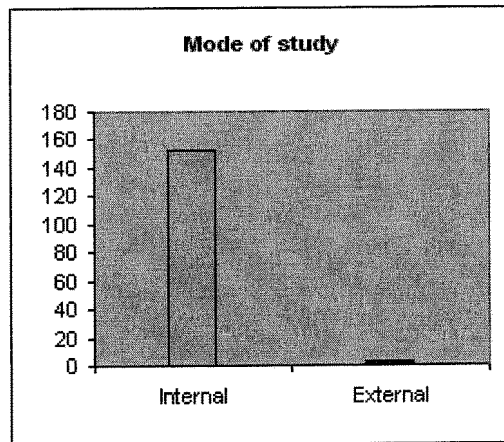
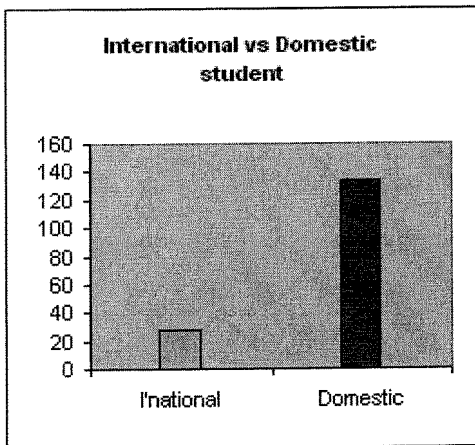
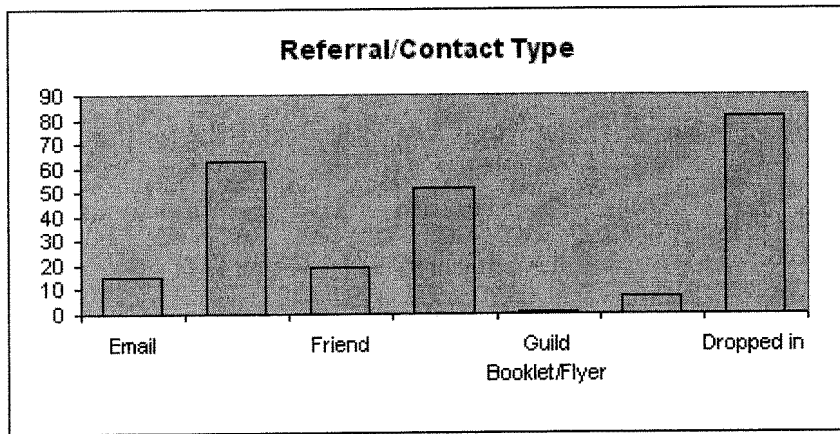
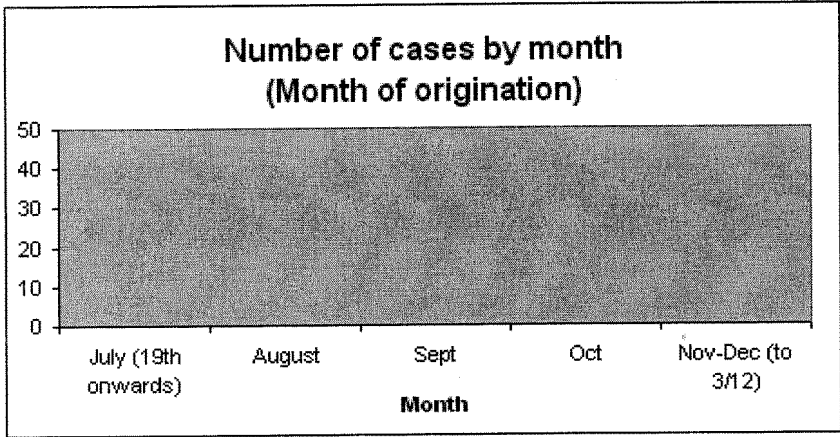
No of cases by month (month when case originated):

Feb (23rd onwards-Sem 1 start)	10
Mar	37
Apr	20
May	31
Jun (to end sem, 18th)	16

Total cases originating in Sem 1, 2004: 114

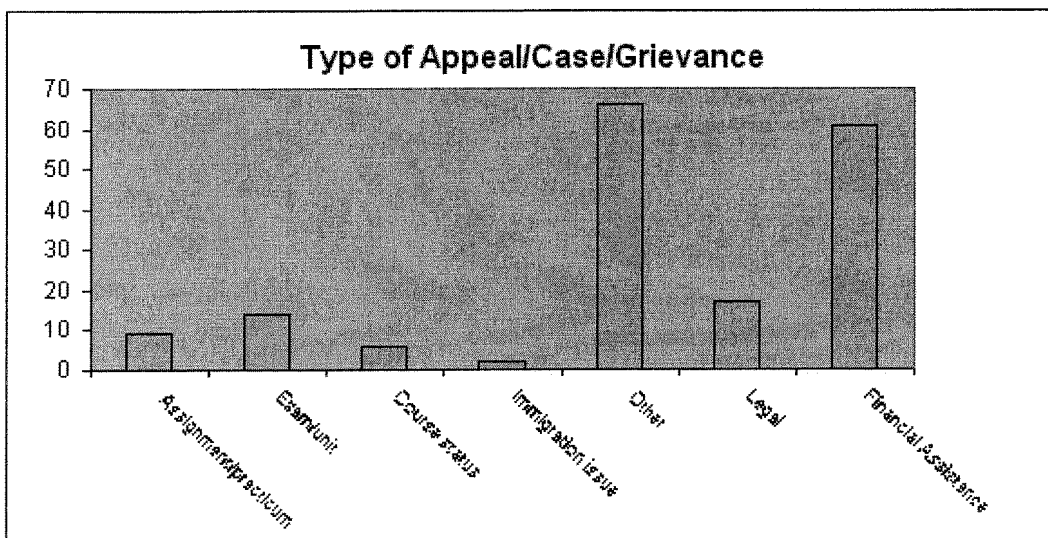
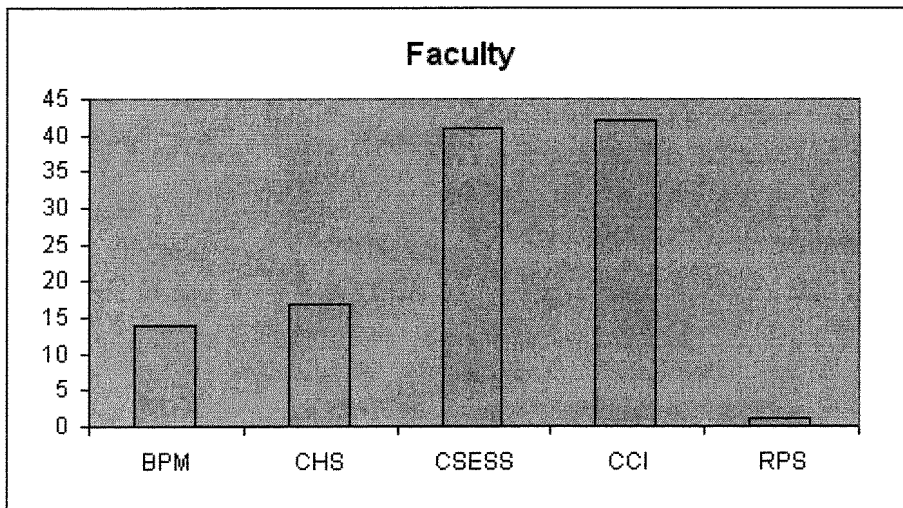
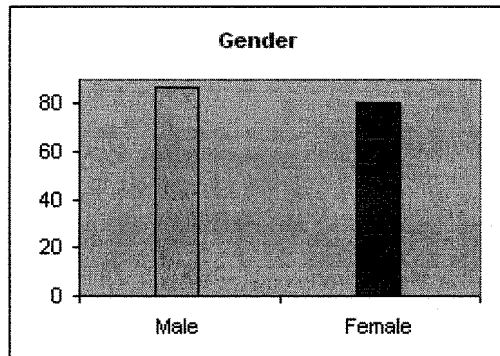
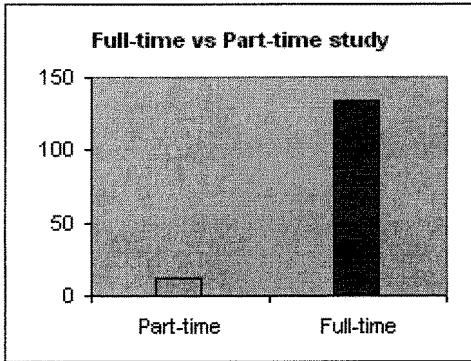


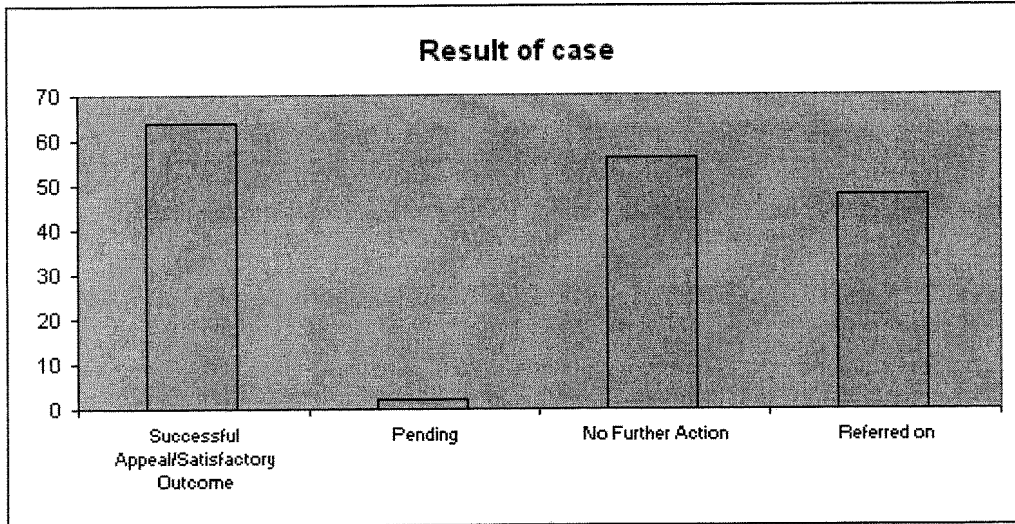
EDUCATION & WELFARE STATISTICS - SEMESTER 2, 2004





Student Guild
Edith Cowan University





No of cases by month (month when case originated):

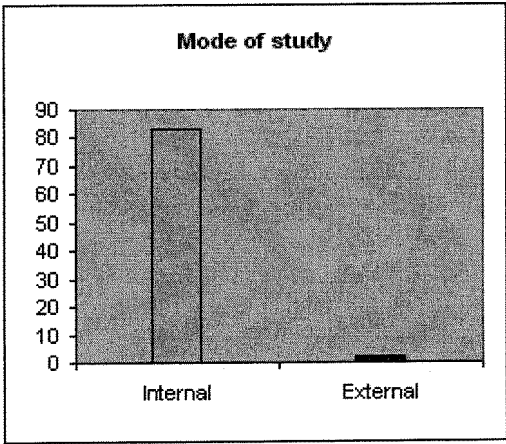
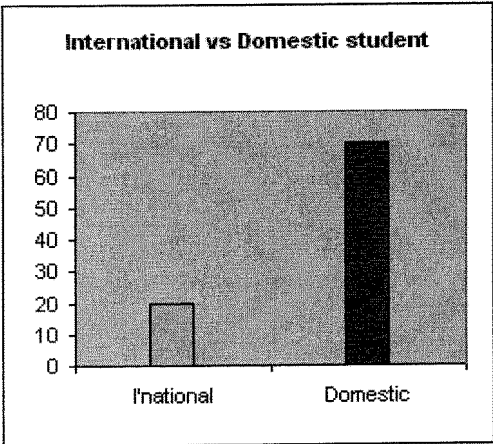
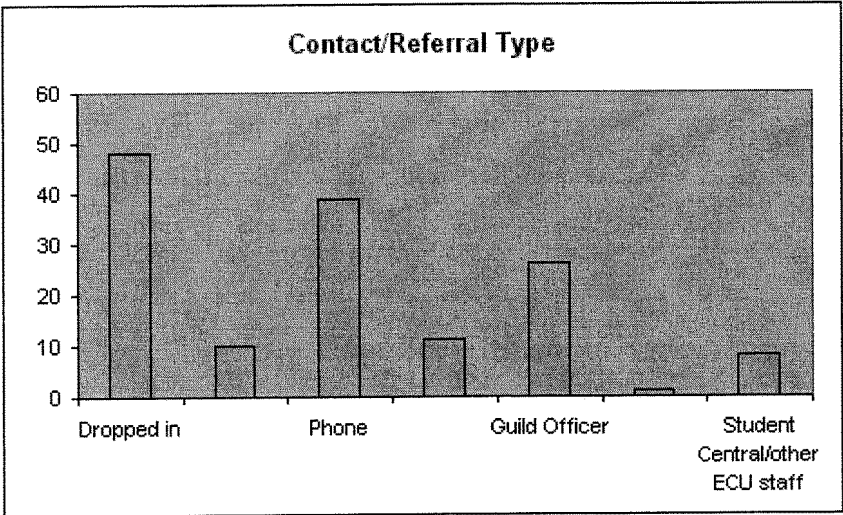
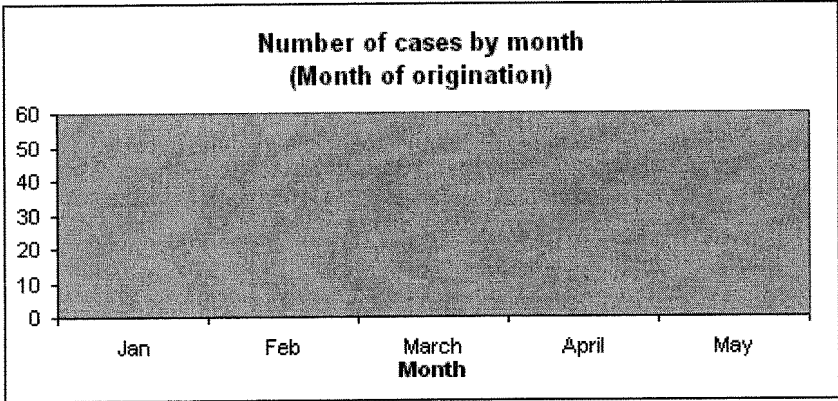
July (19th onwards)	29
August	33
Sept	40
Oct	38
Nov-Dec (to 3/12)	29

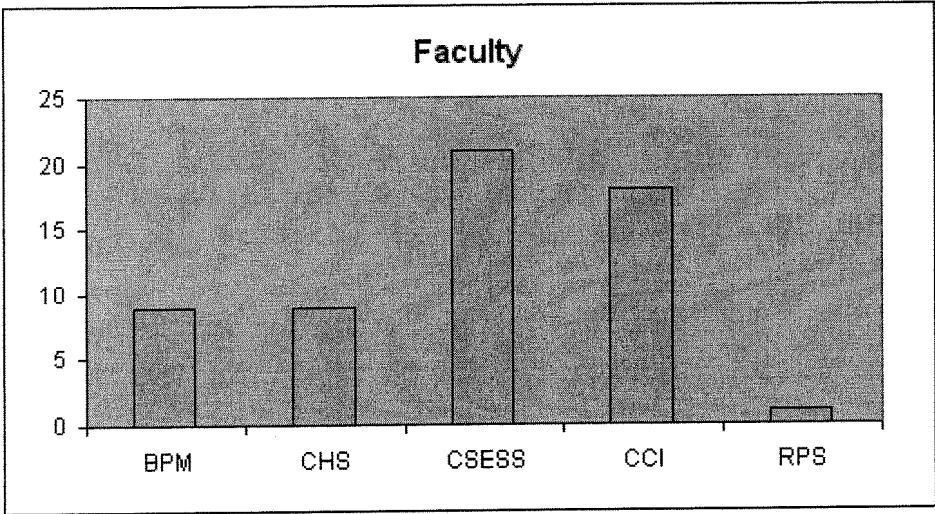
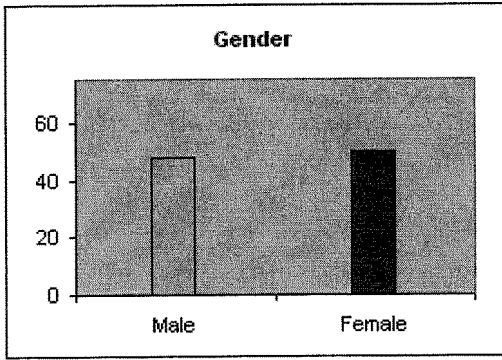
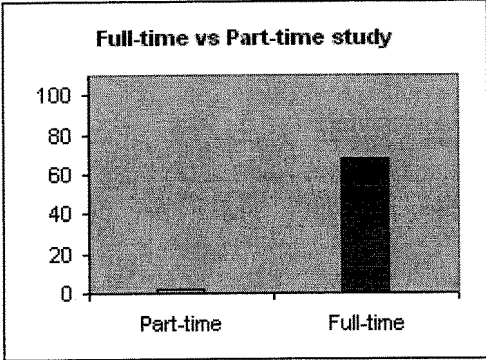
Total cases originating in Sem 2, 2004:

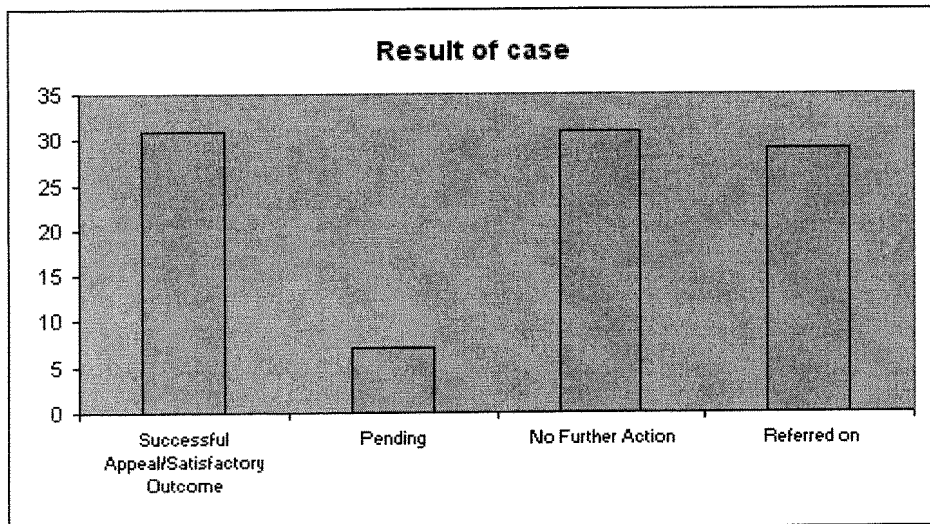
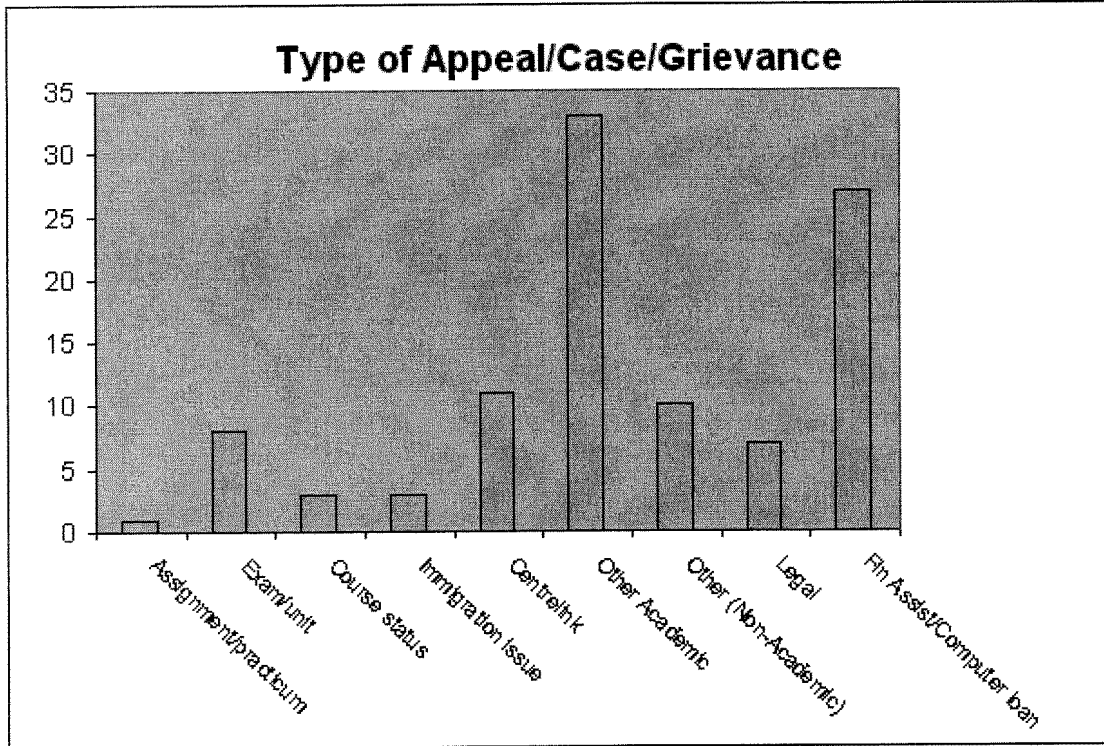
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EDUCATION & WELFARE STATISTICS - SEMESTER 1, 2005 (TO END MARCH ONLY)









Student Guild
Edith Cowan University

No of cases by month (month when case originated):

Jan	16
Feb	34
March	49
April	
May	
June	
TOTAL:	99

Total cases originating in Sem 1, 2005: (to end March only)



From Education and Welfare Officer, Bunbury

Mrs Dianne Webster

I am the Student Guild Education and Welfare Officer at Edith Cowan University, Faculty of Regional & Professional Studies. As such, my role is to act on behalf of the students and provide an essential link between, the students and the academic and administrative bodies of the University. It is clear from my association and role as a Student Guild officer that both sides have a lack of understanding in the needs and wants of others.

The Student Guild provides to the student body a very large support structure. The social aspects provided by the Student Guild such as clubs, social activities are obvious. However the bigger, more important function of the Student Guild is to represent individual students on academic concerns and the whole student community on the provision of Tertiary Education. It is the potential loss of this latter function that is of greatest concern.

In the delivery of any service, it is essential that there exist robust and healthy accountability and input provisions for all the major stakeholders. The area of Tertiary Education is no exception. The major stockholders in this area are the Federal and State Governments, Industry and the students. Given the immense resources of the first three stakeholders these provisions for accountability and input are well established. For the students, who are generally under-resourced the only provision to enable them to have representation and provide accountability is through the Student Guild. Without adequate financial resources the Student Guild would not exist and the only true independent voice of the students would disappear.

There are arguments put forward on why there should not be student guilds. One of these is that of free choice, that is students should not be forced to join a student guild. The guild supports this and is happy with the current provision where students can choose to be or not to be a member of the guild. A further argument that has been suggested is that Universities be given the ability to collect and hold, what is now called, the services and amenities fee. This argument however is made without a clear understanding of the role of student guilds. As stated, the guild does provide a social atmosphere for the students but a far more important role is to represent individual students on academic concerns and the whole student community on the provision of Tertiary Education. In essence only the student guild can provide a true, independent and representative voice of the student body.

The proposed abolition of the student guild resource base that is the Service and Amenities Fee will have a devastating flow-on effect for one of the larger stockholders in the delivery of tertiary education, that of the primary uses of the service, the student.



Student Guild
Edith Cowan University

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