

STUDENT PRIORITY AND SATISFACTION WITH UNIVERSITY SERVICES IN A DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Latifah Abdol Latif
Professor and Director, Centre for Student Affairs
Open University Malaysia

Raj Sharma
Associate Director and Senior Research Fellow
Swinburne University of Technology

Ramli Bahroom
Professor and General Manager, Corporate Planning Unit
Open University Malaysia

ABSTRACT

A priority-satisfaction survey administered during the 2005 academic year provides a crucial foundation for Open University Malaysia (OUM) in its assessment of its ability to meet learner needs as it moves forward. Careful attention to addressing learner concerns regarding facilities, support services and the total educational experience should pay enormous dividends in enhancing learner satisfaction. Using the importance and satisfaction ratings from the survey results, a performance gap was computed for each item and dimension by subtracting the satisfaction from the priority rating. The performance gap provides a measure as to how well OUM is meeting its learner expectations for a quality educational experience. The larger the performance gap for a particular item or dimension (i.e. high importance and low satisfaction), the greater the concern for improvement so as to increase learner satisfaction. The results of the survey showed that the performance gap score ranged from 0.35 to 1.12, which corresponds to an 11 to 14 percent gap between student priority for services and their satisfaction. Six major areas considered in the priority-satisfaction study are Student Records Management, Registration and Orientation, Learner Centredness, Student Affairs, Assessment and Teaching and Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly higher education is being viewed as a "business" with students considered as its customers. This has been accompanied by a general shift in the financing of higher education away from the public purse and increasingly towards the virtual privatization of even so-called "public" universities. Under such circumstances, student satisfaction surveys become an important part of University management with student opinion about service delivery and related issues being sought by higher education institutions worldwide (Douglas, Douglas & Barnes, 2006).

Rowley (2003) has identified four major justifications for seeking student feedback which are (i) to furnish evidence that students have the opportunity to comment on services and that such inputs are used to improve the services; (ii) to encourage their reflection on university learning; (iii) to permit universities to benchmark and develop indicators that will allow the identification of the university's reputation in the marketplace; and (iv) to permit students to provide their level of satisfaction with the academic experience.

There is a dearth of published institutional research in the area of student satisfaction with support and related services, particularly from the Southeast Asian region. Nevertheless, a literature search did locate some projects of this nature undertaken in more developed countries, particularly in North America and Europe. A study by Standing (2004) indicates an important limitation of such student satisfaction surveys, in particular, a significant proportion of students may not hold strong views about many of the student services since they may not often need to use them. This factor may assume greater relevance in terms of the present case study where distance education tends to separate the student physically from the campus then would be the case with the traditional on-campus programs. Clearly this constitutes an important constraint on the present study.

Athiyaman (1997) studied the links between student satisfaction and service quality within the context of an Australian institution that offers a number of its programs via the distance education mode. One of the recommendations made by this author for future studies was the need to consider varying viewpoints according to the different segments of the University student population. In particular, it was suggested that the various satisfaction items could usefully be cross-tabulated with demographic variables such as students' gender and the like to ascertain differences in perceptions. The present study will be taking up this point and will consider a number of demographic variables including gender, age, ethnic group (given Malaysia's multi-cultural nature), income and the like.

A University of Alabama (2002) study explored the relationship between demographic aspects of student satisfaction with particular areas of university services. For instance, it found that African-American students expressed greater satisfaction than White students regarding the career service and slightly lower satisfaction with student voice in university policies; the availability of student housing, religious activities and programs, opportunities for personal involvement in campus activities etc. Similarly the University of Alabama study did consider gender differences in satisfaction with the general finding that there were not many differences between the sexes regarding student life issues.

It is crucial for OUM, being a private organization, to conduct its yearly priority-satisfaction survey, the results of which will be useful in developing awareness to the institution and guiding it in its institutional planning. Other than that, the results will also contribute towards the process of setting OUM's retention strategies; marketing and recruitment; preparing for accreditation; quality management and in preparing short and long term budget decisions. Of direct importance is perhaps in providing feedback to the faculties, learning centres, departments, staff and learners. The results would also assist OUM in identifying specific expectations of different demographic groups of learners.

Satisfaction, however can be defined in so many ways, and in the context of this study, it is defined as “when expectations are met or exceeded by learners’ perception of the services”. Expectation serves as the point from which students make qualitative judgments of the services. If satisfaction were to be assessed outside of the context of student expectations, there is always the risk of working on areas that will not result in any retention payoff. In fact, the over arching objective of having the priority-satisfaction survey is in line with what Noel-Levitz (2003) has described: “Making the decision to regularly assess student expectations and levels of satisfaction can provide institutions with the insurance policy they need to maintain their edge in the academic marketplace. Students whose needs are actively addressed by their institution are more likely to be successful in achieving their educational goals and more likely to persist - and ultimately become the institutions’ best ambassadors and future benefactors.”

METHODOLOGY

The Instrument

A quantitative survey was designed at OUM to elicit student priority for services (using a seven point importance scale with 1= not important at all and 7= most important) and their perceived satisfaction with the services also on a seven point scale (1= not at all satisfied and 7= most satisfied). The questionnaire was structured to seek student opinion of six major dimensions which are Student Records Management, Registration and Orientation, Learner Centredness, Student Affairs Management, Assessment and Teaching and Learning.

The questionnaires were out by e-mail to 28 Learning Centres and were distributed to learners in the last Tutorial Session of the September 2005 Semester. The results presented below are based on 2,946 completed and usable surveys forms representing 12.5% of the total student population.

The Variables and Data Collection

Part I of the questionnaire attempts to collect the demographic data of the learners. These information include: Gender; Age; Ethnic group; Marital status; Programme of study; Active Semester; CGPA; Source of Finance; Name of Learning Centre; Distance between Home and Learning Centre; Job Sector and Monthly Income

Part II seeks to collect information on the priorities and perceived level of satisfaction of learners on each of the 68 items. The items were grouped into six dimensions of: Students Record Management; Registration and Orientation; Learner Centeredness; Student Affairs Management; Assessment Management and Teaching and Learning. The priority and satisfaction means for each dimension, and the performance gap, that is the difference between the priorities – satisfaction scores for each item and dimension were also determined.

Part III discusses the Priority-Satisfaction Matrix for all six dimensions of the support services provided by OUM.

Part IV describes the overall learners' response on the preference of OUM as a learning institution.

LIMITATIONS

The priority-satisfaction survey is a broad, comprehensive overview of students' experiences that provides gross indicators of how well OUM is doing in meeting students' needs. General questions about satisfaction do not provide us with data on how to improve our services and/or what aspect of an area students expressed either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Further efforts are needed to provide greater depth and meaning to the survey findings. In addition, some questions are written based on the needs of the institution. Finally, inherent to survey research are limitations of imprecision, such as bias associated with the wording and ordering of questions and with sampling error. Given the nature of sampling, certain groups may be slightly over- or under-represented in the sample when compared to the population.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Part I: Demographic and Related Variables

Analysis of the demographic variables reveals that a majority of respondents were female (61.6%), in keeping with the student profile of the general student population of 23,780 with 57% female and 43% male (as of Sept 2005). In terms of ethnic group, nearly 83% of the students were drawn from the Bumiputera, 8.9% Chinese and 8.3% Indians, again in keeping with the ethnic profile of the general student population comprising of 80% Bumiputera, 9.3% Chinese and 7.6% Indians. A large majority (78.8%) of respondents were married, leaving about 20% who were singles. It also reveals that more than 86% of the respondents were over 25 years of age, about 10% were below 25 years and 3% were over 46 years old.

Part IIA: Priority and Satisfaction Ratings by Items

A) Priority

The mean priority scores for all the 68 items range from the 4.61 to 6.19. Table 1 below indicates the ten highest and ten lowest priority items.

Table 1: Highest and Lowest Priority Items

Rank	Highest Priority	Lowest Priority
1	Online examination results	Involvement of senior learners in new learners orientation programme
2	MyLMS facilities	Co-curricular activities
3	Modules	Time allocation for new student orientation programme
4	Online course information	OUM student clubs at LCs

5	Online tutorial slots	New learners orientation programme
6	Time allocation for answering examination questions	Fee payment via credit card
7	Caring OUM tutors	Meetings with staff of CSA
8	myCourse information	Counseling workshops
9	Online registration	Disciplinary actions on plagiarism
10	Examination scheduling	English modules

B) Satisfaction

The means satisfaction scores for all the 68 items range from lowest 4.11 to 5.93. Table 2 below shows the ten most satisfied and ten least satisfied items.

Table 2: Most Satisfied and Least Satisfied Items

Rank	Most Satisfied	Least Satisfied
1	MyLMS facilities	OUM student clubs at LCs
2	Personal information in myProfile	Involvement of senior learners in new learners orientation programme
3	myCourse information	Co-curricular activities
4	Examination scheduling	Counseling workshops
5	Examination invigilation	Skills training (eg: computer, English, writing)
6	Caring OUM tutors	Time allocation for new student orientation programme
7	Conducive examination hall	New learners orientation programme
8	Online course information	Fee payment via credit card
9	Face-to-face discussion in tutorials	Meetings with staff of CSA
10	Online examination results	CD-ROM as supplementary learning material

Part IIB: Gap Analysis of Priority and Satisfaction

An important aspect of the survey was to identify the gaps between priority ascribed to the six dimensions in the survey and their perceived satisfaction by learners. A performance gap greater than 1.0, or 16.7% based on priority indicates that the university is not meeting learners' expectations, less than 1.0 (16.7%) is generally regarded as meeting learners' expectations and a negative performance gap indicates that the university is exceeding learners' expectations.

This issue is discussed for each of the dimensions in the ensuing paragraphs.

Student Records Management

Table 3 provides the gap analysis of the Student Record Management activities. It reveals an overall gap of just greater than 13% between mean importance and satisfaction with

each of the sub-groups covered sustaining a statistically significant difference. The largest gaps in respect to student record management activities relate to *online tutorial slots* (18%), *information regarding credit transfer* (15%) and *online examination results* (15%). However, the narrowest gap was in relation to *online information on my profile*.

Table 3: Student Records Management Gap Analysis

	Priority	Satisfaction	PG	% Gap	t
Information regarding credit transfer	5.66	4.79	0.87	15.4	21.4
Duration for credit transfer	5.52	4.75	0.77	13.9	19.7
Online Information on myProfile	5.97	5.44	0.53	8.9	15.7
Online registration	5.97	5.19	0.78	13.1	21.3
Online tutorial slots	6.01	4.94	1.07	17.8	28.1
Online examination results	6.17	5.26	0.91	14.7	26.3
Matric card	5.71	4.98	0.73	12.8	18.4
Online financial statement	5.84	5.20	0.64	11.0	17.7
Online course information	6.02	5.30	0.72	12.0	21.9
Overall	5.87	5.09	0.78	13.3	NA

An overall score concerning the Student Records Management satisfaction was computed for each student with a view to probing the effects of demographic variables on this dimension. Statistically significant results were noted in the following areas (note: only sub-populations with relatively large numbers were considered due to greater expected stochastic variations with smaller groups):

- Male students (5.17) were more satisfied than females regarding Student Records Management (5.09, $t=1.98$, $p<0.05$).
- There is a gradual increase in mean satisfaction with Student Records Management with student age with the 46 years and older students (5.29) sustaining a significantly greater mean satisfaction than their younger 19 to 25 age group counterpart (4.98, $t= 3.34$, $p<0.01$).
- Regarding ethnicity, the Malays (5.08) and Chinese (5.08, $t=0.07$, $p>0.05$) sustained similar satisfaction levels; however, Indians (5.32, $t=3.13$, $p<0.01$) were more satisfied than the largest group (Malays); similarly the other Bumiputera group (5.39, $t= 3.57$, $p<0.01$) were more satisfied than their Malay counterpart.
- The single students (4.97) were less satisfied overall with Student Records Management than was the case with their married counterparts (5.16, $t= 3.66$, $p<0.01$).
- Self funded students (4.99) expressed less satisfaction than the KPM Scholarship students (5.20, $t=3.46$, $p<0.01$).

Registration and Orientation

Table 4 specifies the mean differences between priority and satisfaction for student registration and orientation functions. It is noted that all the differences were statistically significant. Overall the gap between priority and satisfaction was one of the lowest in relation to the six dimensions (11%). Nevertheless, in one of the areas, namely, *problem solving by Learning Centre staff* is clearly an activity of some concern where student expectations are not being met (gap of 18%).

Table 4: Registration & Orientation Gap Analysis

	Priority	Satisfaction	PG	% Gap	t
Learners' handbook	5.69	5.13	0.56	9.8	15.8
Learning centres (LC)	5.8	5.04	0.76	13.1	21.5
Problem solving by LC staff	5.77	4.73	1.04	18.0	27.2
Orientation program for new learners	4.96	4.58	0.38	7.7	9.5
Duration of orientation for new students	4.92	4.57	0.35	7.1	8.2
Involvement of seniors in orientation	4.56	4.17	0.39	8.6	9.1
Staggered fee payment	5.71	5.08	0.63	11.0	15.4
Payment via credit card	5.08	4.59	0.49	9.6	11.4
Receipt of course modules	5.96	5.22	0.74	12.4	19.5
Overall	5.38	4.79	0.59	11.0	NA

As with the Student Records Management, an overall score concerning the Registration and Orientation satisfaction was computed for each student with view to probing the effects of demographic variables on this dimension. Statistically significant results were noted in the following areas (note: only sub-populations with relatively large numbers were considered due to greater expected stochastic variations with smaller groups):

- The two major ethnic groups (Malay and Chinese) did not sustain any significant difference in satisfaction regarding Registration and Orientation activities. However, Indian students (4.99) sustained greater satisfaction regarding this dimension than was the case with Malay students (4.77, $t = 2.83$, $p < 0.01$).
- Married respondents (4.82) were more satisfied with Registration and Orientation functions than single students (4.71, $t = 2.07$, $p < 0.05$).
- Students who were self-funded (4.74) tended to be less satisfied with these activities than that observed with KPM scholarship students (4.84, $t = 1.78$, $p < 0.05$).

Learner Centredness

Table 5 furnishes the data on the performance gap in the area of learner centredness with an overall gap of over 14%. Relatively large gaps are noted in respect to *tackling the problems* that student encounter in relation to their learning immediately (17%), *channelling of problems via the phone* (17%), *channelling of problems via emails* (16%) and *concern of University staff towards students* (16%). But the gap between

priority and satisfaction was relatively narrow regarding *concern of tutors towards their students* (11%). Again all the observed mean differences were statistically significant.

Table 5: Learner Centredness Gap Analysis

Items	Piority	Satisfaction	PG	% Gap	t
Problems are attended to immediately	5.69	4.70	0.99	17.4	25.6
Problem via phone	5.64	4.67	0.97	17.2	24.9
Problems via email	5.6	4.69	0.91	16.3	23.4
Announcement in website	5.89	5.21	0.68	11.5	19.8
Administrators are easily contactable	5.65	4.91	0.74	13.1	19.7
Meeting with learning centre staff	5.44	4.72	0.72	13.2	19.3
Problem solving by administrators	5.65	4.84	0.81	14.3	21.8
Concern of learning centre staff	5.66	4.82	0.84	14.8	22.4
Concern of staff towards student	5.67	4.77	0.90	15.9	23.9
OUM cares its learners as an individual	5.76	4.88	0.88	15.3	24.0
Concern of counselors	5.61	4.81	0.80	14.3	21.7
Concern of tutors	5.98	5.32	0.66	11.0	20.0
Overall	5.69	4.86	0.83	14.5	NA

An overall score concerning the Learner Centredness satisfaction was computed for each student with view to probing the effects of demographic variables on this dimension. Statistically significant results were noted in the following areas (note: only sub-populations with relatively large numbers were considered due to greater expected stochastic variations with smaller groups):

- Gender appears to be an important variable regarding the satisfaction with Learner Centredness overall mean score, in particular, male respondents (4.96) were more satisfied with this dimension than was the case with female students (4.84, $t=2.71$, $p<0.01$).
- Regarding ethnicity, the two major groups (Malays and Chinese) did not sustain statistically significant results on Learner Centredness. However, both Indians (5.05, $t=2.25$, $p<0.05$) and Other Bumiputera (5.03, $t=1.97$, $p<0.05$) were more satisfied than their Malay colleagues (4.86) in respect to this dimension.
- Student finance was an important variable regarding learner centredness in a few areas. More specifically students on KPM Scholarship (4.97) were more satisfied in this area than those financed through PTPTN (4.79, $t=3.13$, $p<0.01$) or self-funded students (4.81, $t=2.49$, $p<0.05$).
- Students on lower income, i.e. RM1000-RM2000 (4.91) were more satisfied with Learner centredness than students on higher income, i.e. RM 2001-RM3000 (5.00, $t=1.70$, $p<0.05$).

Student Affairs Management

Table 6 presents the importance/satisfaction gaps regarding the Student Affairs Management. It is noted that the overall gap (14%) was relatively large and that all the mean differences were statistically significant. However, the largest gaps were observed in respect of *learner skills training* (20%), *counseling workshops* (18%) and *learning centre facilities* (17%). But the narrowest gaps were observed regarding *penalty imposed on cases of plagiarism* (9%) and *penalty imposed on misconduct in an examination* (10%).

Table 6: Student Affairs Management Gap Analysis

Item	Priority	Satisfaction	PG	% Gap	t
Co-curricular activities	4.86	4.22	0.64	13.2	15.4
Student clubs	4.92	4.16	0.76	15.4	18.1
Penalty on plagiarism	5.37	4.89	0.48	8.9	12.8
Penalty on misconduct in examinations	5.65	5.08	0.57	10.1	15.4
Concern of student affairs for students	5.61	4.82	0.79	14.1	21.7
Skills training	5.62	4.50	1.12	19.9	27.3
Counseling workshop	5.33	4.36	0.97	18.2	23.9
Learning centre facilities	5.74	4.79	0.95	16.6	25.5
Learning skills workshop	5.66	4.85	0.81	14.3	23.2
Academic counseling by tutors	5.58	4.85	0.73	13.1	20.1
Meeting with student affairs staff	5.33	4.59	0.74	13.9	19.2
Overall	5.42	4.65	0.77	14.3	NA

As per other dimensions, an overall score concerning the Student Affairs Management was computed for each student with a view to probing the effects of demographic variables on this dimension. Statistically significant results were noted in the following areas (note: only sub-populations with relatively large numbers were considered due to greater expected stochastic variations with smaller groups):

- Ethnicity was not found to be an important variable with respect to the overall satisfaction with the Student Affairs Management, except for a particular case of Indian students (4.89) who were more satisfied than the other sub-groups, for example, Malay respondents (4.62, $t=3.36$, $p<0.01$).
- Similarly, MOE Scholarship students (4.71) expressed greater satisfaction with Student Affairs than was the case with self-funded respondents (4.56, $t=2.47$, $p<0.01$).
- The lower income students (those on RM1000 to RM2000, mean=4.68) were more satisfied with this dimension than the higher income group (RM2001 to RM3000, mean=4.56, $t=2.25$, $p<0.05$).

Assessment

Table 7 presents the gap analysis between importance and satisfaction for assessment activities. Again all the mean differences were statistically significant and the overall gap was just under 12%. The largest mean differences are noted for the item: *time given for completing assignment* (18%) and *the allocation of 5% marks for online participation* (15%). The gap was narrowest in respect to *examination invigilation* (9%).

Table 7: Assessment Gap Analysis

Item	Priority	Satisfaction	PG	% Gap	t
Time given for completing assignment	5.87	4.81	1.06	18.1	28.2
Location of examination hall	5.91	5.15	0.76	12.9	20.9
Examination invigilation	5.87	5.34	0.53	9.0	13.4
Examination scheduling	5.97	5.34	0.63	10.6	18.9
Previous examination questions	5.93	5.11	0.82	13.8	23.0
Allocation of 5% marks for Online Participation	5.73	4.88	0.85	14.8	19.9
Conduciveness of examination hall	5.93	5.31	0.62	10.5	18.0
Time allocated to answer examination questions	5.98	5.26	0.72	12.0	21.0
Tutor feedback in Tutor Mark Assignment form	5.82	5.07	0.75	12.9	21.8
Integration of assignment and module	5.89	5.09	0.8	13.6	23.2
Tests 1 and 2	5.87	5.19	0.68	11.6	19.9
Tutor feedback on Test 1 and Test 2 grades	5.88	5.19	0.69	11.7	20.5
Overall	5.89	5.15	0.74	12.6	NA

As before, an overall score concerning the Assessment satisfaction was computed for each student with view to probing the effects of demographic variables on this dimension. Statistically significant results were noted in the following areas (note: only sub-populations with relatively large numbers were considered due to greater expected stochastic variations with smaller groups):

- Gender is an important variable regarding satisfaction with Assessment, in particular, male students (5.26) were more satisfied with this dimension overall than was the case with female respondents (5.09, $t=4.05$, $p<0.01$).
- Age also appears to influence satisfaction with overall Assessment, with an increase in satisfaction with age (disregarding the groups with relatively small numbers). More specifically, students aged between 36-45 years (5.22) were more satisfied than their younger colleagues aged 19 to 25 years (5.06, $t=3.54$, $p<0.01$) and those aged between 26 to 35 years (5.13, $t=2.12$, $p<0.05$).
- Ethnicity does not appear to have much influence on overall satisfaction with the Assessment dimension with the exception of Indians (5.32), who are more satisfied than other sub-groups, for example, the Malay students (5.15, $t=2.35$, $p<0.01$).
- Married students (5.19) were more satisfied with Assessment activities than was the case with single students (5.03, $t=2.99$, $p<0.01$).

- The self-funded students (5.05) were less satisfied with Assessment than either the KPM Scholarship respondents (5.20, $t=2.51$, $p<0.01$) or PTPTN funded students (5.18, $t=1.81$, $p<0.05$).

Teaching and Learning

Table 8 specifies the gap analysis for teaching and learning with again all mean differences being statistically significant. The overall gap in terms of this dimension was relatively large (14%). The difference between importance and satisfaction was greatest in relation to the *digital library services* (18%), *CD-ROMS are useful* (17%), *internet linked computers* (16%) and *teaching equipment for tutorial sessions* (16%). However, the narrowest gap was noted for *online information in "myCourse"* (10%) and *"MyLMS" facilities* (10%).

Table 8: Teaching & Learning Gap Analysis

	Priority	Satisfaction	PG	% Gap	t
Internet linked computers	5.68	4.75	0.93	16.4	23.9
Digital library	5.68	4.68	1.00	17.6	25.4
MyLMS facilities	6.06	5.45	0.61	10.1	18.1
Online information in myCourse	5.98	5.39	0.59	9.9	17.8
Tutor responses in online forum	5.96	5.20	0.76	12.8	22.2
Modules	6.03	5.19	0.84	13.9	23.7
CD-ROMS are useful	5.59	4.65	0.94	16.8	23.5
Face to face discussions in tutorials	5.95	5.30	0.65	10.9	19.6
Personalized learning	5.51	4.82	0.69	12.5	18.0
Teaching equipment for tutorials	5.68	4.77	0.91	16.0	24.5
Modules in English	5.37	4.72	0.65	12.1	15.8
Additional tutorials	5.51	4.72	0.79	14.3	20.3
Face to face tutorials	5.85	5.18	0.67	11.5	19.1
Course duration	5.80	4.96	0.84	14.5	21.3
Faculty staff cares about my academic performance	5.65	4.80	0.85	15.0	22.2
Overall	5.75	4.97	0.78	13.6	NA

As per other dimensions, an overall score concerning the Teaching and Learning satisfaction was computed for each student with view to probing the effects of demographic variables on this dimension. Statistically significant results were noted in the following areas (note: only sub-populations with relatively large numbers were considered due to greater expected stochastic variations with smaller groups):

- Gender may be an important variable regarding the respondents' satisfaction concerning teaching and learning issues; in particular, male students (5.05) were more satisfied with this dimension than the female respondents (4.94, $t=2.51$, $p<0.01$).

- Similarly ethnicity was found to be statistically significant in a few sub-groups. More specifically Malay students (4.97) were more satisfied with Teaching and Learning than was the case with Chinese students (4.85, $t=1.77$, $p<0.05$). But Indian respondents (5.18) were more satisfied with this dimension than Malay students (4.97, $t=2.74$, $p<0.01$).
- Single students (4.91) were less satisfied with Teaching and Learning than married respondents (5.00, $t=1.85$, $p<0.05$).
- Student financial support was also found to be a factor that influences satisfaction with Teaching and Learning in a couple of cases. For instance, KPM Scholarship students (5.06) were more satisfied with this dimension than their PTPTN funded students (4.94, $t=2.44$, $p<0.01$). Further, the self-funded students (4.86) were less satisfied than their KPM scholarship colleagues with Teaching and Learning (5.06, $t=3.53$, $p<0.01$).

Summary of the Gap Analysis

The summary of the mean of priority and satisfaction as well as percentage of performance gap for the six dimensions is given in Table 9 and the lowest and the highest performance gap items are given in Table 10. The top three largest gaps are in the following dimensions: Learner Centredness (LC), Student Affairs Management (SAM) and Teaching and Learning (T&L). Not only are the performance gaps ratings highest, the corresponding satisfaction scores are also the lowest. Specifically, items such as *Problem solving by Learning Centre staff*, *Problems are attended to immediately*, *Problem via phone* (Learner Centredness); *Skills Training and Counseling Workshop* (Student Affairs Management) and finally, *Time given for completing assignment*, *Online tutorial slots*, *Digital library*, *CD-ROMS and Learning centre facilities* (Teaching and Learning) need to be looked into by OUM in order to better meet learners' needs.

In general, male learners, older learners, and married learners are more satisfied with the university services. The "Indians" and the "Other Bumiputera" (from Sabah and Sarawak) and learners who are on scholarships are also more satisfied than their counterparts.

Table 9: Mean Priority, Satisfaction and Percentage of Performance Gap by Dimension

Dimension	Priority	Satisfaction	% PG
Learner Centredness	5.71	4.89	14.5
Student Affairs Management	5.43	4.65	14.3
Teaching and Learning	5.76	4.99	13.6
Student Record Management	5.88	5.12	13.3
Assessment	5.89	5.15	12.6
Registration and Orientation	5.40	4.80	11.0
Overall	5.68	4.93	13.2

Table 10: Lowest and Highest Performance Gap Items

Items with lowest performance gap (%)	Items with highest performance gap (%)
Duration of orientation for new students	Skills training (computer, writing etc)
Orientation program for new learners	Counseling workshop
Involvement of seniors in orientation	Time given for completing assignment
Penalty on plagiarism	Problem solving by LC staff
Online Information on myProfile	Online tutorial slots
Examination invigilation	Digital library
Payment via credit card	Problems are attended to immediately
Learners' handbook	Problem via phone
Online information in myCourse	CD-ROMS are useful
MyLMS facilities	Learning centre facilities

Part III: Priority-Satisfaction Matrix

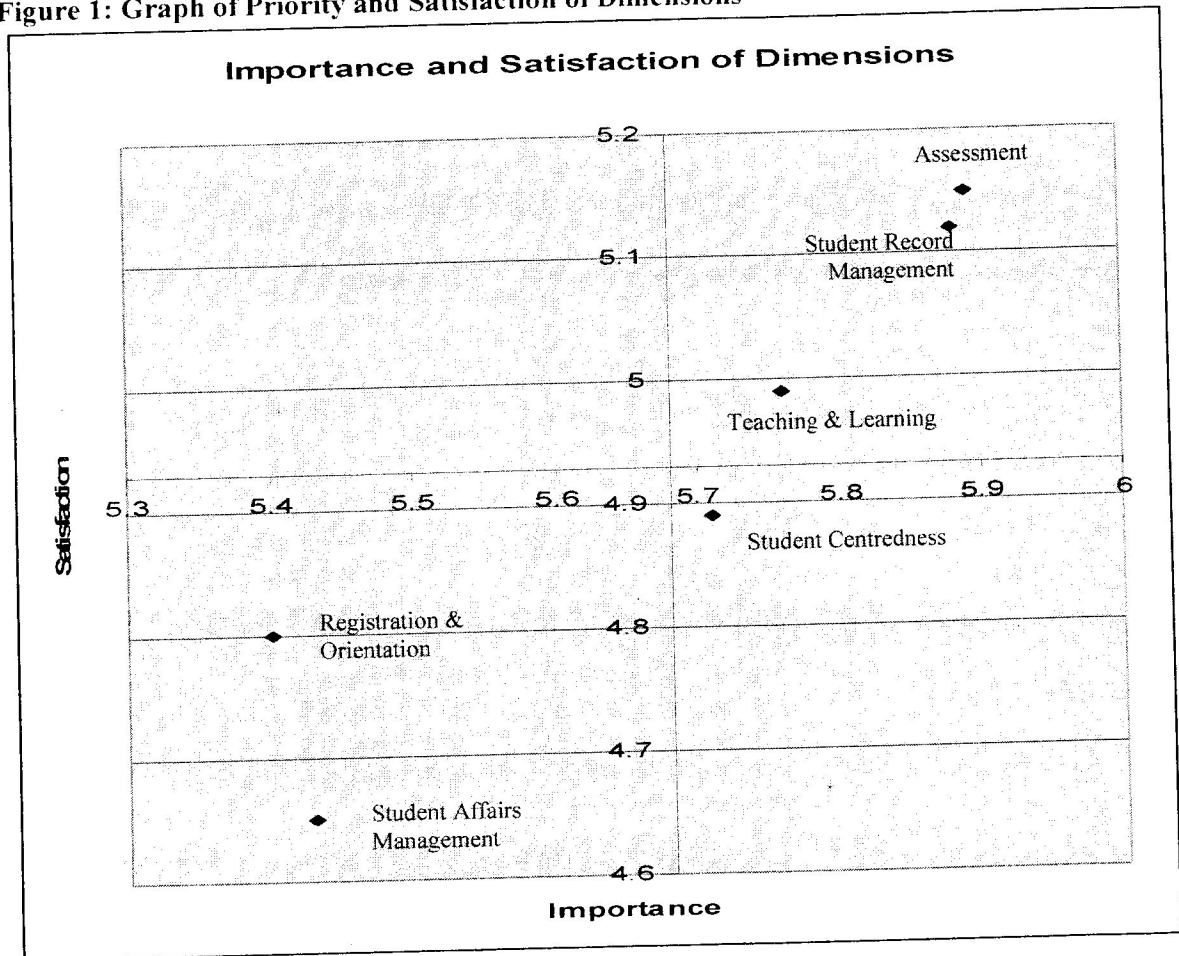
Overall Priority and Satisfaction

A summary of the mean priority and mean satisfaction of the six major dimensions are as shown in Table 9. A graph of satisfaction verses priority for all dimensions was plotted (Figure 1) with the X and Y axis intersecting at the mean values for priority and satisfaction respectively). The graph, which is also a matrix, reveals the following:

- Student Records Management, Assessment and Teaching and Learning are in the high priority high satisfaction quadrants suggesting a good match between priority and satisfaction for services in these three dimensions.
- However, Registration and Orientation and Student Affairs Management are in the low importance and low satisfaction quadrant - again suggesting that the priority is in congruence with services' satisfaction.
- Finally, Learner centredness is very close to the intersecting axis suggesting that both the priority for such services and their satisfaction level is very close to the medium mark. Again suggesting congruence between priority and satisfaction in terms of this dimension.

PG
5
3
6
3
6
0
2

Figure 1: Graph of Priority and Satisfaction of Dimensions



Part IV: Overall Satisfaction Level

Overall, a high 96.7% of the respondents feel proud of being an OUM learner; and 94.5% admitted that given a chance to go through the learning process again, they will choose OUM. Another high 95.6% admitted that they will encourage friends and family members to study in OUM, and 93.0% agreed that OUM is a University that is equivalent to other higher learning institutions in terms of quality (See Table 11).

Table 11: Learners' Response on Preference for OUM as a Learning Institution

Statement	% "Yes"
If I am given the chance to go through the learning process again, I will choose OUM	94.5
I will encourage others (eg. Family members, and friends) to study in OUM	95.6
OUM is a University that is equivalent to other higher learning institutions in terms of quality	93.0
I am proud as an OUM student	96.7

A Chi-squared test indicated that there was no significant difference in the percentage of learners answering “yes” (more satisfied) by gender. However, there were significant differences by ethnic group, marital status, CGPA and employment status. The “Other Bumiputera” group of learners, those who are “married”, those with “higher CGPA”, and those who are “employed” hold very positive views about OUM.

CONCLUSION

This paper reports on the results of a priority-satisfaction survey administered at OUM for the 2005 Academic Year. The results indicate that OUM learners are quite satisfied with the services provided. Male learners, older learners, and married learners are more satisfied with the university services. “Indians” and the “Other Bumiputera” (from Sabah and Sarawak) and learners who are on scholarships are also more satisfied than their counterparts. However, OUM needs to improve on learner-centredness, student affairs management and teaching & learning. Finally, the Priority Satisfaction Matrix indicates that OUM is effective in allocating its resources to services most needed by its learners.

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