

AUT Rainbow Student Survey Report



The survey and report would not have been possible without support
from Auckland University of Technology

Background to AUT Rainbow Student Survey

This report presents the findings of the first AUT Rainbow Survey conducted in semester 2 of 2019. It was the first time that an AUT survey asked specific questions to access information about the university experience of the Rainbow student community. The survey invited participation from AUT students who identified within the spectrum of Rainbow/LGBTIQ+ identities (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, takatāpui, queer and other gender and sexuality identities). The survey was designed to include students who were 'out' and those who were not.

The Study

The aims of this university experience survey were to gather information about Rainbow/LGBTIQ+ students in relation to the following:

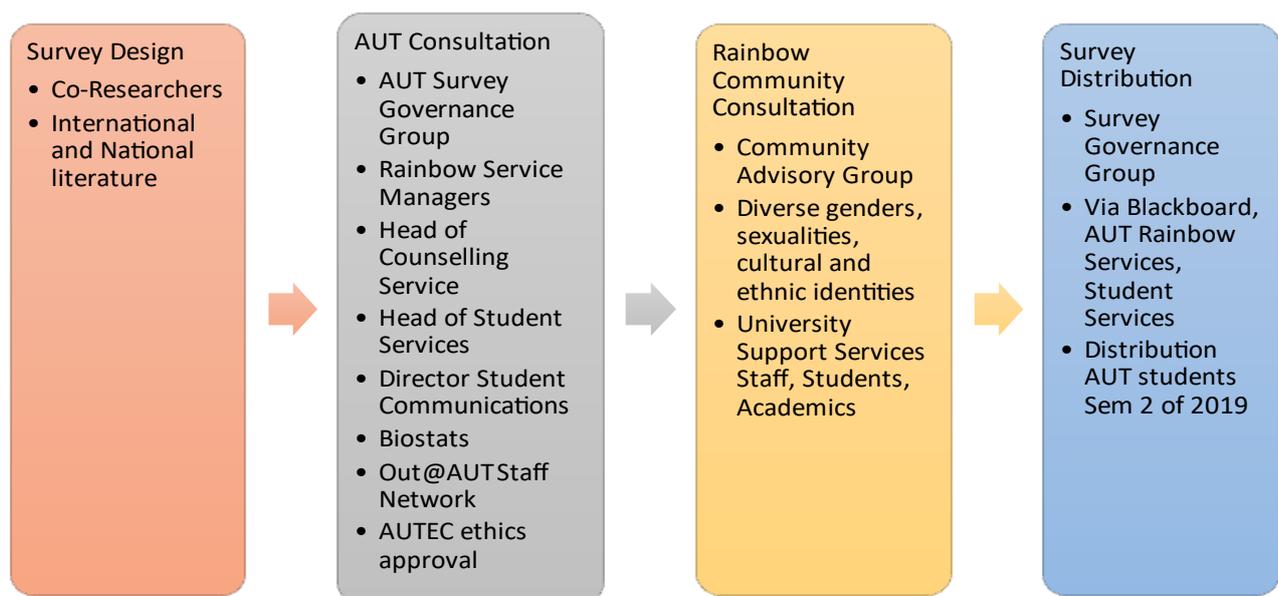
- demographic data
- subjective well-being
- on-campus experience
- perceptions of and accessibility to the institutional learning environment and support services
- impact of the latter on wellbeing and academic achievement

It is intended that the findings of this study will support enhancement and improvement of services to our Rainbow/Queer students at AUT and contribute to evidence in an under-researched area. The project was aligned with 'AUT directions to 2025' in relation to discovery and application of knowledge for wellbeing, and being an inclusive community, responding to issues of accessibility, and improving equity.

The survey was developed by the co-authors of this report, Dr Paula Collens and Dr Elizabeth du Preez, who are senior lecturers/researchers at AUT and who identify within the Rainbow community, in consultation with the AUT Survey Governance Group. The survey was designed with reference to national and international literature on Rainbow / LGBTIQ+ student wellbeing and experiences of tertiary / higher education

environments. Approval for conducting the survey was granted by AUTEK. Consultation on the survey design and implementation, including on language, terminologies and questions in the survey, was undertaken by the researchers within the institution and within the wider Rainbow community. Consultation within AUT was provided by AUT Survey Governance Group, Rainbow Service Manager, Head of Counselling Service, Head of Student Services, Director of Student Communications, OUT@AUT staff network and Biostats. A community advisory group was set up to provide external consultation and was representative of diverse genders, sexualities and cultural and ethnic identities, and constituted by university support service staff, students, and academics. The survey was made available to all AUT students via AUT blackboard, AUT Rainbow Services and Student Services. Data were gathered over a period of two months in Semester 2 of 2019. The researchers wish to thank the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences for a research development grant (2019) that supported this study.

Study Implementation



The Findings



Highlights of Key Findings AUT Rainbow Student Survey

Student support services: high level of student awareness of services, but lower use of services by comparison. Services rated mostly as helpful where students had accessed them.

Staff who are 'out' as LGBTQ+ and general staff awareness of Rainbow students rated highest for positive impact on student wellbeing

Staff who are 'out' as LGBTQ+ and general staff awareness of Rainbow students rated highest for positive impact on academic achievement

Importance of aspects of learning context— top of the list rated as 'very important' was LGBTQ+/Rainbow curricular content in programmes

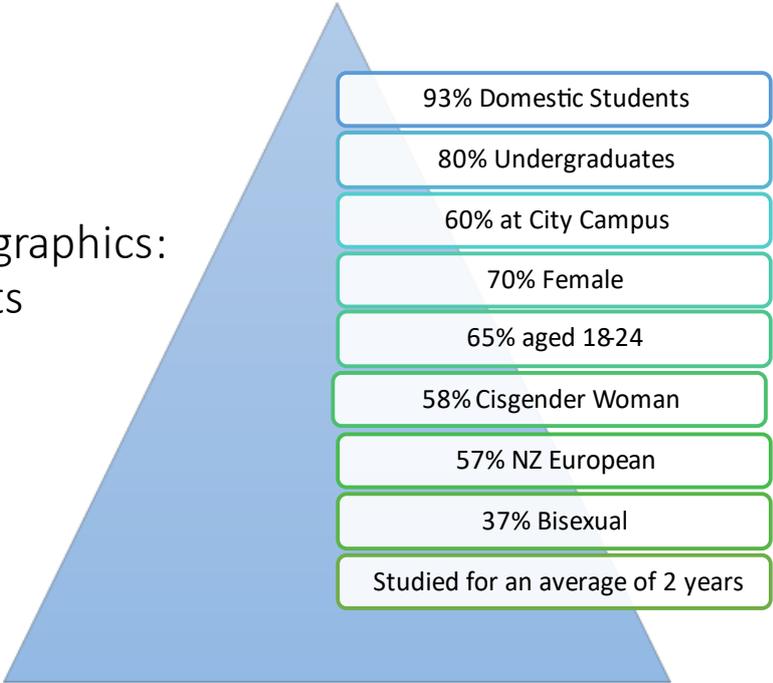
Most rainbow-identified students have not considered leaving AUT due to negative experiences in the university related to their rainbow/LGBTQ+ identities

Demographic Data

The study sample (N = 240) consisted of self-identified Rainbow students enrolled at AUT. In terms of ethnicity, respondents predominantly identified as NZ European (57%)¹. Participants' ages ranged from 15 to 64 years, with 65% of respondents falling within the 18 to 24 years age group. In terms of sex characteristics, students were mostly assigned female sex at birth (70%), and in terms of gender identity, respondents predominantly identified as woman (cisgender) (58%). In relation to sexuality identity, students mostly identified as bisexual (37%). Most students were domestic (93%), enrolled in an undergraduate degree (80%) and studied at the city campus (60%). Students had studied for an average of 2 years (SD = 1.5).

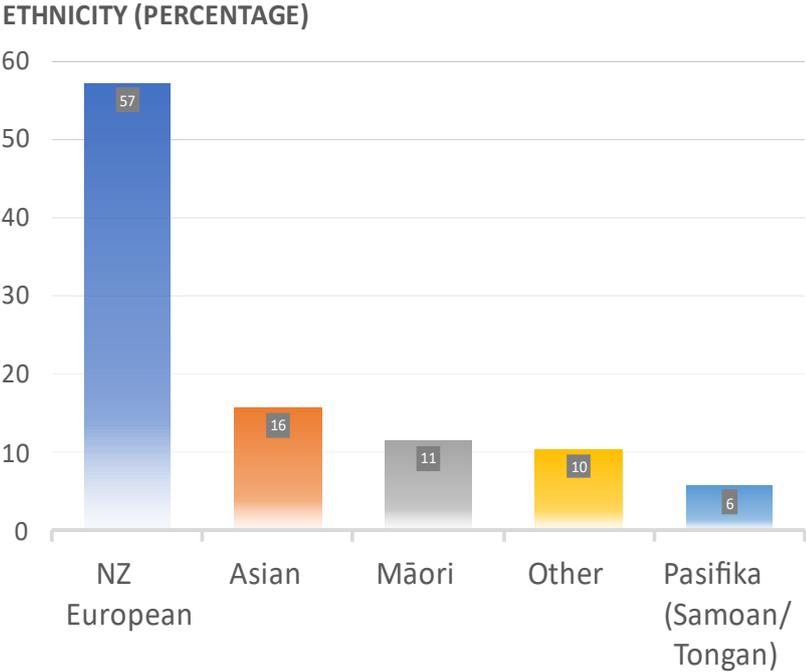
¹ Figures are rounded to the nearest significant digit in this report.

General Demographics:
240 participants

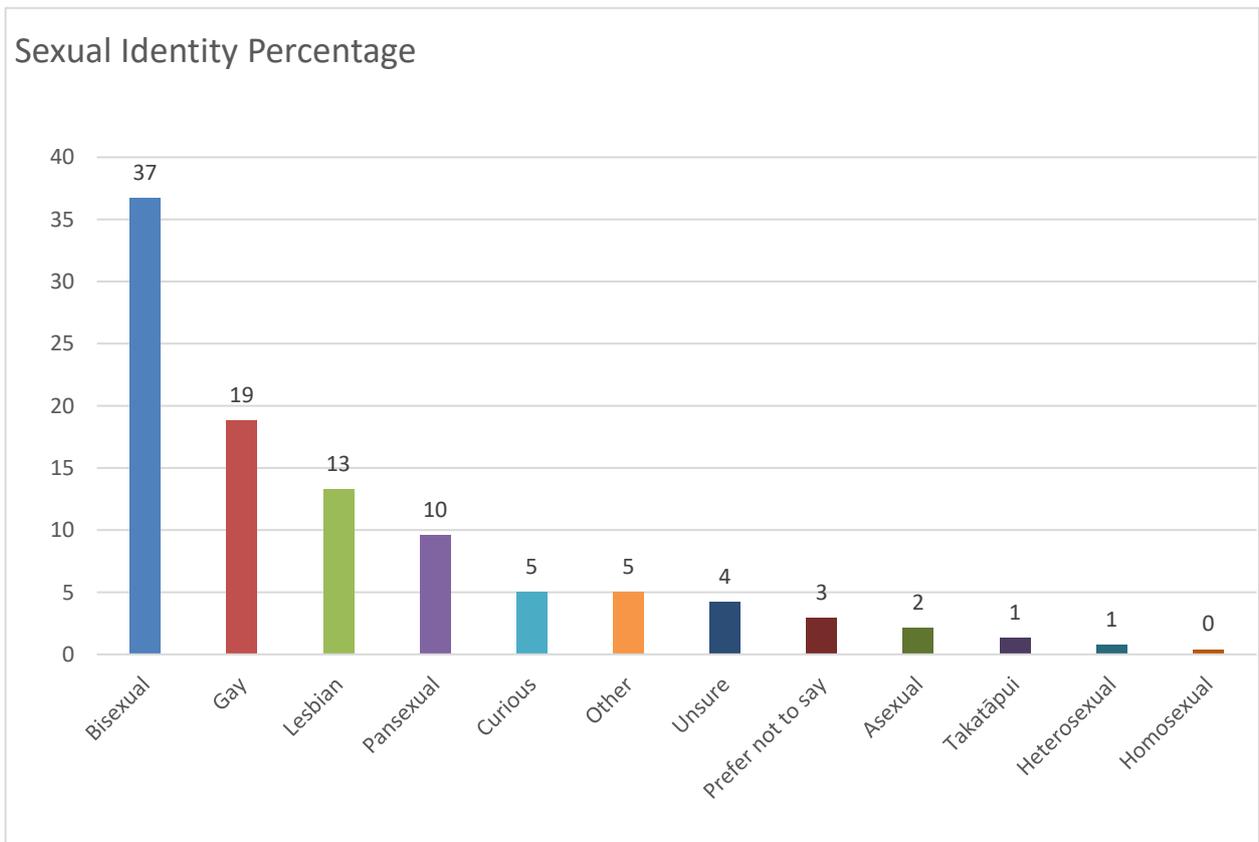


Demographics of the students in relation to ethnicity are below.

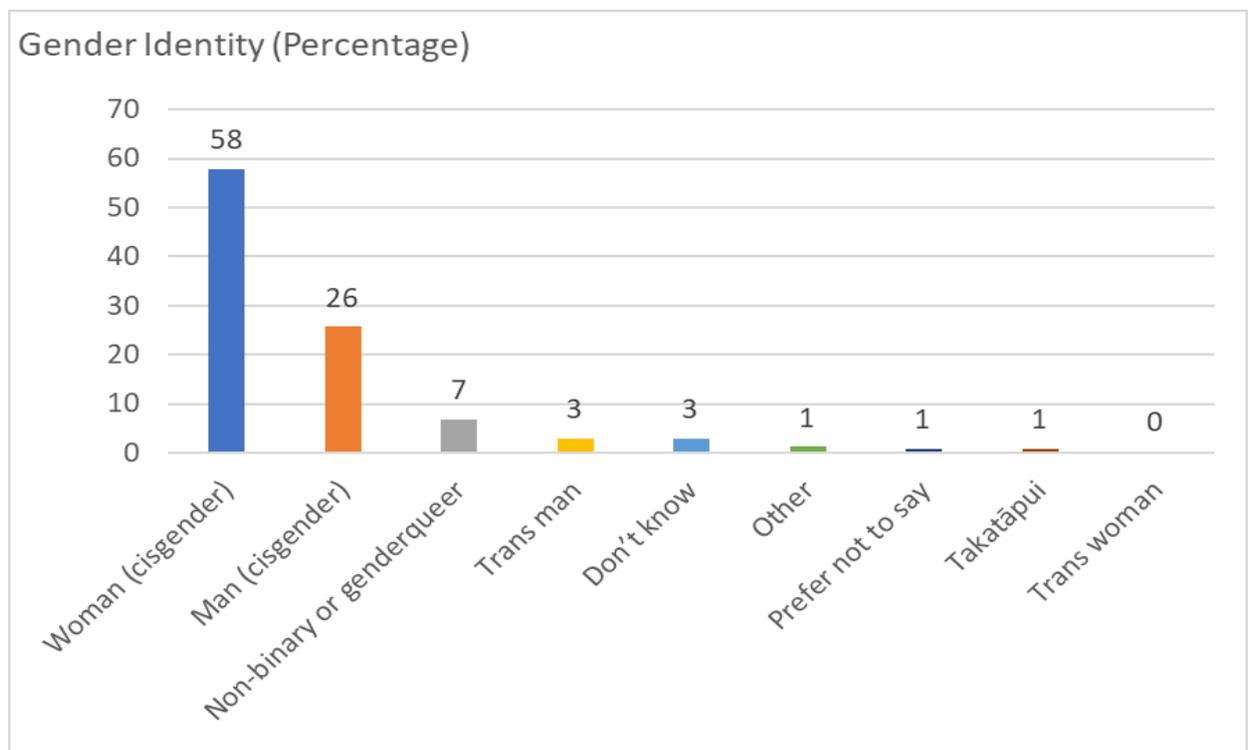
Demographics:
Ethnicity



Demographics of the students in relation to sexual identity are below.



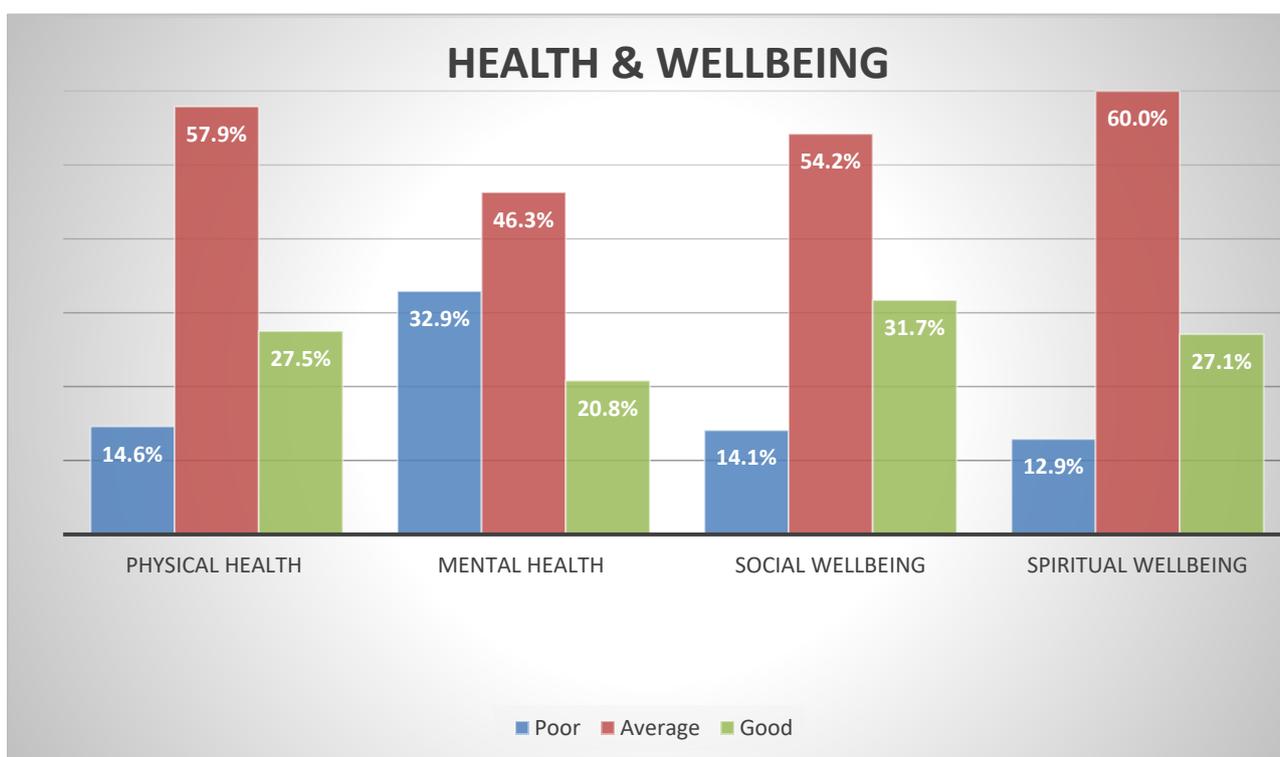
Demographics of the students in relation to gender identity are below.



Health and Wellbeing

The domain of health was assessed through the following question: “How would you describe your current health/wellbeing in each of the following areas?” Participants were given a 3-point scale of poor, average and good, in a matrix format against physical, mental, social (family health), and spiritual wellbeing. These four areas of wellbeing are identified in “Te Whare Tapa Wha,” a Māori mental health model, developed and used in Aotearoa New Zealand (Durie, 1984).

Students predominantly reported having an ‘average’ physical health ($n = 139$, 58%), mental health ($n = 111$, 46%), social wellbeing ($n = 130$, 54%) and spiritual wellbeing ($n = 144$, 60%). Note in the chart below figures are rounded to one decimal point.



Awareness and Experience of Support Services on Campus

Students were asked about their awareness, use and experience of AUT support services (5 services: AUTSA, Health and Wellbeing, Counselling, Student Hub and Rainbow Student Support/OUT@AUT).

Awareness and Use of Support Services: Most students were aware of AUT support services. However, the majority had not accessed 4 of the services: AUTSA support services ($n = 181$, 75%), Rainbow Student Out@AUT ($n = 161$, 67%), counselling ($n = 160$, 67%) or health and wellbeing services ($n = 145$, 60%).

Conversely, over half ($n = 148$, 62%) had used the Student Hub support services. For those who had used the Student Hub services, most students were based at city campus (60%), were domestic students (90%) enrolled in an undergraduate degree (84%) and aged between 18 to 24 years (62%).

Experience of Support Services: Students who had accessed support services mostly rated them to be helpful (percentages ranging from 59% for the counselling service to 80% for the Student Hub support service). Across all the support services, the counselling service had the most ratings of being 'unhelpful' ($n = 8$, 14%), however this represents a low number of participants

Summary Findings of Student Awareness and Experience of Support Services on Campus

Awareness	Access	Experience for students who had accessed services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were mostly familiar with AUT support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over half (62%) had used the Student Hub support services. The majority had not accessed these services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AUTSA support services (75%), Rainbow StudentOut@AUT (67%), counselling (67%) health and wellbeing services (60%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly rated them to be helpful with percentage of respondents ranging from 59% rating counselling service as helpful to 80% rating StudentHub support service as helpful.

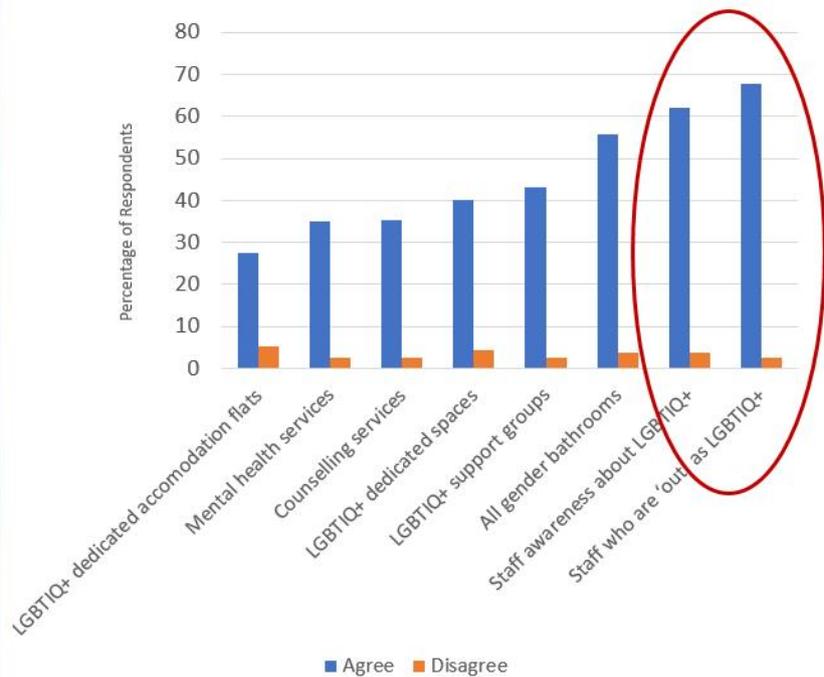
Impact of AUT Campus Learning Context and Support Services on Student Wellbeing

We asked students to what extent they agreed that the following aspects of the University learning context and educational environment positively impacted on their wellbeing as an as a Rainbow / LGBTIQ+ student. The response options for each question were 'Disagree', 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', 'Agree', or 'Not applicable'. Questions focused on 4 domains:

- Support Services: mental health services, counselling services, LGBTIQ+ support groups,
- Spaces: LGBTIQ+ dedicated spaces, all gender bathrooms, LGBTIQ+ dedicated flats in student accommodation,
- Staff awareness about LGBTIQ+
- Staff who are 'out' as LGBTIQ+

192 students responded to these questions. They reported that AUT support services had a positive impact on their wellbeing (mental health services $n = 67$, 35%; counselling service $n = 68$, 35%; LGBTIQ+ support groups $n = 83$, 43%). In terms of campus spaces, students reported the following as having a positive impact on their wellbeing: LGBTIQ+ dedicated spaces $n = 77$, 40% and all gender bathrooms $n = 107$, 56%. However, LGBTIQ+ dedicated flats in student accommodation were mostly reported as non-applicable ($n = 82$, 43%). Notably, the majority of students reported that having staff who are 'out' as LGBTIQ+ ($n = 130$, 68%) and overall staff awareness about LGBTIQ+ ($n = 119$, 62%) contributed positively to their wellbeing. This is an important finding as it indicates that AUT students value staff awareness and this is important for developing staff cultural competence (including knowledge and awareness) around Rainbow identities, lives and experiences, in relation to the learning environment. It also foregrounds the significance of role-models, representation and visibility for students to be able to see and identify staff who are able and willing to be 'out'. This appears to be most figural for the survey participants in fostering student wellbeing.

'At University this has a positive impact on my wellbeing as an LGBTIQ+ student'



Impact of AUT Campus Learning context and Support Services on Academic Success

Students were asked to what extent they agreed that the following aspects of the University learning context and educational environment positively impacted on their academic success as an as a Rainbow / LGBTIQ+ student. The response options were Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, or Not applicable. Questions focused on 4 domains:

- Support Services: mental health services, counselling services, LGBTIQ+ support groups,
- Spaces: LGBTIQ+ dedicated spaces, all gender bathrooms, LGBTIQ+ dedicated flats in student accommodation,
- Staff awareness about LGBTIQ+
- Staff who are 'out' as LGBTIQ+

187 students provided responses to these questions. Students reported most AUT support services (mental health services, $n = 69$, 37%; counselling services, $n = 68$, 36%; LGBTIQ+ support groups, $n = 66$, 35%) were not applicable to having a positive impact on academic success. Similarly in terms of AUT spaces, LGBTIQ+ dedicated flats $n = 89$, 48%; LGBTIQ+ dedicated spaces ($n = 60$, 32%) were also reported as not being applicable to having a positive impact on academic success. For all gender bathrooms ($n = 65$, 35%), most students reported neither agreeing or disagreeing with this in terms of positive impact on academic success. However, staff awareness about LGBTIQ+ ($n = 85$, 46%) and staff who are 'out' as LGBTIQ+ ($n = 76$, 41%) had the highest responses of having a positive impact on students' academic success.

'At University
this has a
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Positive Impact on Academic Success:

Highest responses for having a 'positive impact' on student academic success

- Staff awareness about LGBTIQ+ (46%)
- Staff who are 'out' as LGBTIQ+ (41%)

Neither agree or disagree:

All gender bathrooms (35%), most students reported 'neither agree or disagree'.

Not applicable to academic success:

Most AUT Support Services (mental health services 37%; counselling service, 36%; LGBTIQ+ support groups, 35%) reported as 'not applicable' to academic success.

AUT Spaces: LGBTIQ+ dedicated flats (48%) and LGBTIQ+ dedicated spaces (32%) reported as 'not applicable' to impact on academic success.

Importance of other Aspects of the Learning Environment

Students were asked ‘How important is it to you as an LGBTIQ+ student that the following are provided at AUT?’. Students could respond with one of three options: Not at all, Moderately or Very important.

- Accreditation of AUT as an LGBTIQ+ friendly environment e.g. Rainbow Tick,
- LGBTIQ+ staff that can mentor LGBTIQ+ students,
- LGBTIQ+ friendly marketing material,
- LGBTIQ+ dedicated room on your campus,
- LGBTIQ+ content in your curriculum.

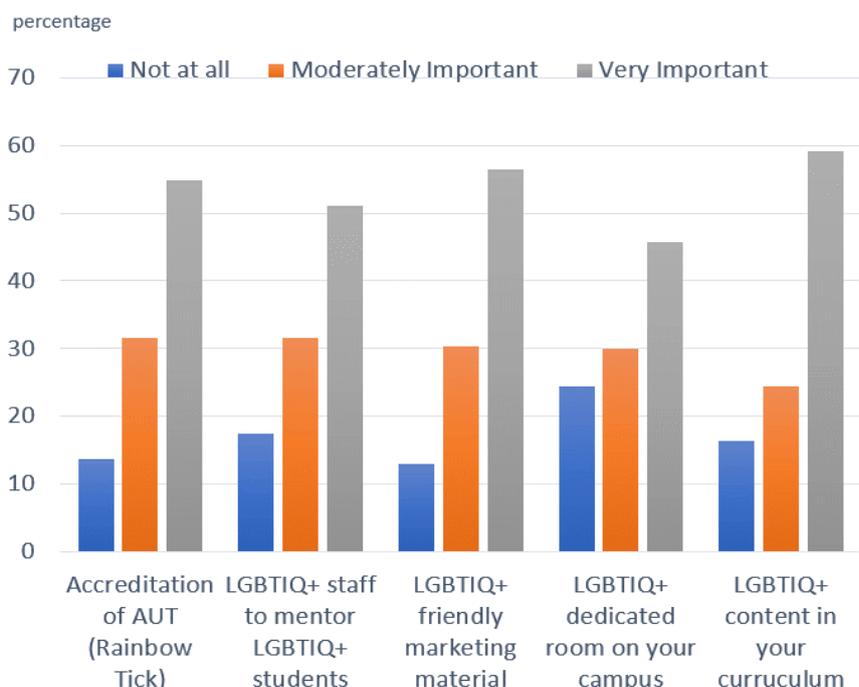
Responses to these questions were provided by 184 students. Students reported that all of the above aspects of AUT learning environment were ‘very important’: accreditation of AUT as an LGBTIQ+ friendly environment ($n = 101, 55\%$), LGBTIQ+ staff that can mentor LGBTIQ+ students ($n = 94, 51\%$), LGBTIQ+ friendly marketing material ($n = 104, 57\%$), LGBTIQ+ dedicated room on campus ($n = 84, 46\%$) and LGBTIQ+ content in the curriculum ($n = 109, 59\%$). Of these options, the provision of LGBTIQ+ content in the curriculum had the highest number of ‘very important’ responses, and the provision of a dedicated room on campus the least ($n = 109$ versus $n = 84$ respectively). More students also reported believing that a dedicated room on campus was not important at all ($n = 45, 25\%$), when compared with the other aspects of the learning environment.

How important is it to you, that the following are provided?

Highest number of participants reported that all of these aspects were ‘very important’. This was reported by a majority in all instances (except for dedicated room on campus).

Provision of LGBTIQ+ content in the curriculum had the greatest number of ‘very important’ responses, and the provision of a dedicated room on campus the least ($n = 109$ versus $n = 84$ respectively).

More students also reported believing that a dedicated room on campus was not important at all ($n = 45, 25\%$), when compared with the other aspects of the learning environment.



Have students considered leaving AUT as a result of negative experiences within the university relating to their Rainbow / LGBTIQ+ identity?

Students who identified as sexuality diverse, sexuality unsure, or preferred not to answer the sexuality question, and who were not heterosexual reported as follows: 198 students responded. The majority of students (96%) reported never having considered leaving AUT, and 1% (two students) reported often considering leaving AUT as a result of negative experiences at university relating to their LGBTIQ+ identity.

Students who identified as transgender and/or gender diverse (i.e. Trans man, Trans woman, Non-binary or genderqueer, Takatāpui), did not know how to gender identify, or used the option of other or prefer not to say, and who were not cisgender reported as follows: 25 students responded to this question. Most of these students (88%) had never considered leaving AUT due to negative experiences within the university relating to their LGBTIQ+ identity. However, 4% reported often considering leaving AUT. It should be noted that due to the small sample size here, 4% represents 1 respondent.

Have you ever considered leaving AUT as a result of negative experiences within the university relating to your LGBTIQ+ identity?

For students who were sexuality diverse, sexuality unsure, or preferred not to answer the sexuality question, **and** who were not heterosexual

96% reported never having considered this
1% (N=2) often considered leaving.

For students who were transgender and/or gender diverse (i.e. Trans man, Trans woman, Non-binary or genderqueer, Takatāpui) or did not know how to gender identify, or used the options of other or preferred not to say their gender identity, **and** who were not cisgender:

88% never considered this
4% (N=1) often considered leaving

Recommendations

This survey gathered data from AUT Student Rainbow Community, on their subjective well-being and of their on-campus experience of the AUT learning environment and support services. It also collected data on Rainbow student perceptions of the impact of aspects of the learning environment and of support services on their wellbeing and on academic achievement. Findings from the survey support the following recommendations:

- AUT to develop and provide resource for an advisory group of Rainbow-identified academic staff who can lead on developing rainbow/LGBTIQ+ inclusivity in programme curricular. Such an advisory group could provide advice, support and consultation to staff, programmes, departments, schools and faculty. The aim of such an advisory group would be to facilitate the inclusion of Rainbow/LGBTIQ+ content across the curricular in all Faculties, and in particular the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, where the development of culturally safe practice is a requirement in professional healthcare practitioner training.
- AUT would benefit from building resources, strategies and policy that support the development of staff cultural competence (including knowledge and awareness) around Rainbow/LGBTIQ+ identities, lives and experiences, in relation to the learning environment.
- AUT to provide resources to support the creation of visible networks of willing AUT Rainbow staff on each campus. As a university it would be beneficial to Rainbow students to have visible 'out' staff representation in faculties, departments and programmes. The results of the survey foreground the significance of role-models, representation and visibility in creating a learning context that fosters student wellbeing and academic success for Rainbow students.
- This is the first time that AUT collected data on its Rainbow Student population. It would be important to set up systems and resource for annual data collection, analysis and reporting in order to support service development and improvements.
- The data reported here were collected prior to the impact of COVID, and are therefore indicative of that time period. It would be valuable to gather data on the Rainbow Student Community to understand the impact of lockdown and COVID on Rainbow students, and to track changes and needs in relation to each new cohort.

Authors of the Report: Dr Paula Collens and Dr Elizabeth du Preez.

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