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Performance and perceptions

Ontario’s 24 colleges provide high quality education and training to their students.

Multiple accountability measures are in place to demonstrate the colleges’ responsibilities to their communities, the government and the public.

Independent research firms consistently report high levels of satisfaction experienced by college graduates and their employers.

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Performance and Perceptions

1.0 Introduction

Performance measurement is an important concern for colleges, especially as the need increases for graduates equipped with the skills and abilities to build a creative, adaptable and competitive Ontario workforce.

This section outlines the accountability measures and processes that ensure responsible investment of public funds. Information is also provided on the results achieved by the colleges, as measured by the annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Finally, data are presented on the opinions and perceptions of applicants, students, graduates and employers.

1.1 Accountability framework

Ontario colleges are responsive to students and employers. Numerous processes and measures have been built into the college structure to demonstrate accountability to the community, the government and the public. Examples of college accountability processes include:

- Development of strategic plans, business plans and annual reports (including financial statements) that are submitted to government following approval by their respective boards of governors, and are available on the college websites
- Fiscal, enrolment and other annual audits
- College reports to communities through the colleges' boards of governors, whose members include business and community leaders
- Program advisory committees that include community employers
- Compliance with more than 100 program standards developed in co-operation with employers, labour, professional and regulatory bodies and educators, as well as compliance with the province's credentials framework, which also sets out program level outcomes, curriculum standards, and essential employability skills requirements

- Regular review of programs to ensure ongoing quality, relevancy and currency
- Public reporting on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

2.0 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

2.1 KPI overview

Ontario college data include five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): student satisfaction rate, graduation rate, graduate employment rate, graduate satisfaction rate, and employer satisfaction rate (see appendix). Graduation rates are reported by the colleges, while surveys are used to collect all other information. Independent research firms collect the survey data on behalf of the colleges and MTCU: CCI Research Inc. (Student Satisfaction Survey) and Forum Research Inc. (Graduate and Employer Satisfaction Surveys).

Data collection on satisfaction rates and graduate employment outcomes began in the fall of 1998. As of 2000-01, three of these KPIs (employment rate, graduate satisfaction rate and employer satisfaction rate) have been included in government funding decisions for a portion of the allocations to colleges. The amount of performance funding has remained constant in recent years at \$16.4 million and is distributed to each college according to a formula that reflects the institution's size and its KPI scores.

2.2 Trends in Key Performance Indicators

Student satisfaction rate: Student satisfaction data are gathered from the Student Satisfaction Survey, an in-class survey administered to all students in funded postsecondary programs, beyond their first semester (e.g., for 2008-09, more than 100,000 students completed the survey). The KPI satisfaction rate is calculated from the average of four capstone questions (percentages rating very satisfied/satisfied): the students' program is giving them the knowledge and skills that will be useful in their future career; overall quality of the learning experience; overall quality of facilities/resources; and the overall quality of services. The KPI student satisfaction rate has been quite consistent over time, and

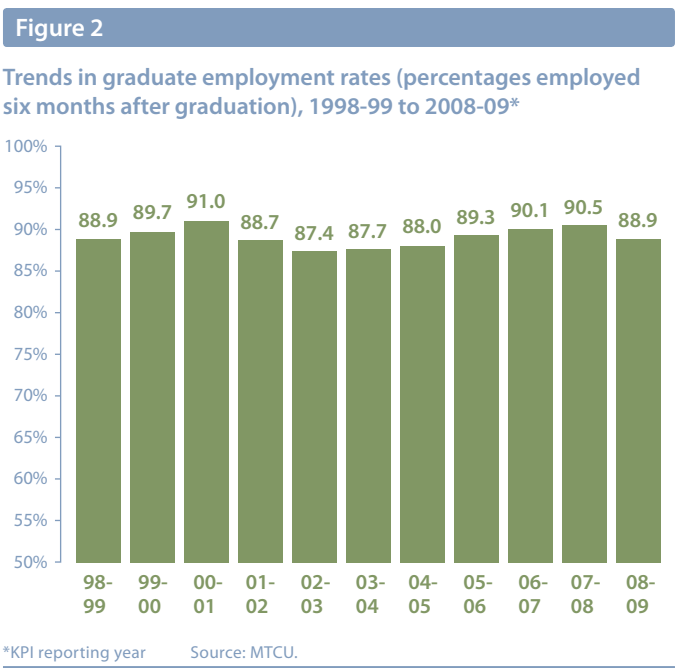
for students in the 2008-09 academic year, the rate was 78.4 per cent (Figure 1).



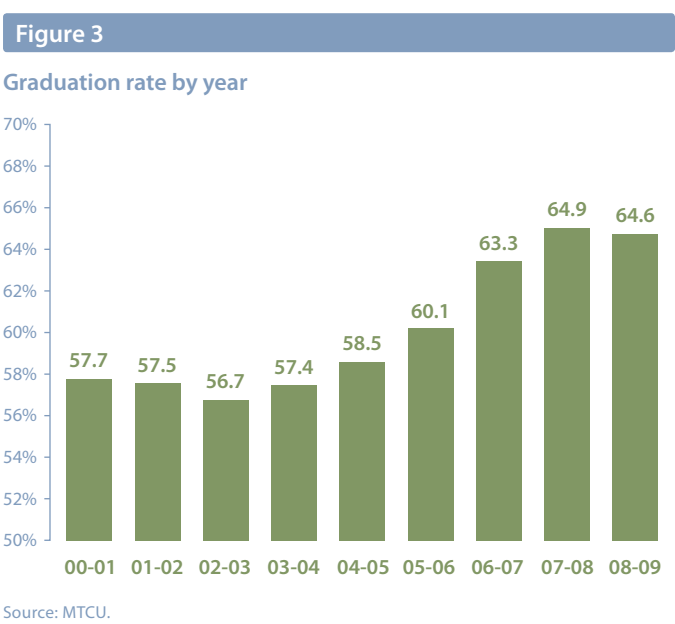
Graduate satisfaction rate: Graduate satisfaction data are gathered from the Graduate Satisfaction Survey, a phone survey administered to graduates six months after graduation. The response rate for this survey is very high, at approximately 75 per cent of graduates per year. The graduate satisfaction rate is determined from the percentage of graduates who report being very satisfied/satisfied with “the usefulness of their college education in achieving their goals after graduation.” For the 2007-08 graduates, the graduate satisfaction rate was 82.7 per cent (Figure 1).

Employer satisfaction rate: In the Graduate Satisfaction Survey, respondents are also asked to provide their employers’ contact information. The employers are then administered a similar satisfaction survey. The employer satisfaction rate is determined from the employers’ overall satisfaction with their employees’ “college preparation for the type of work he/she is doing.” This rate has remained consistently high over time, and the 2008-09 rate was the highest since the initiation of the survey, at 93.3 per cent (Figure 1).

Graduate Employment rate: The KPI employment rate is the percentage of graduates who are working full or part time within six months of graduation. It excludes those who are in school full time, or are not actively looking for work. Over time, this rate has ranged from 87 per cent to 91 per cent, and was 88.9 per cent for 2008-09 (Figure 2).



Graduation rate: The KPI graduation rate is based on the proportion of students who completed their programs within a clearly defined period of time. For example, the 2008-09 KPI graduation rate is based on students who started one-year programs in 2006-07, two-year programs in 2004-05, and three-year programs in 2002-03, and who had graduated by 2007-08. Similar to last year, the 2008-09 graduation rate was 64.6 per cent (Figure 3).



3.0 Perceptions of college applicants

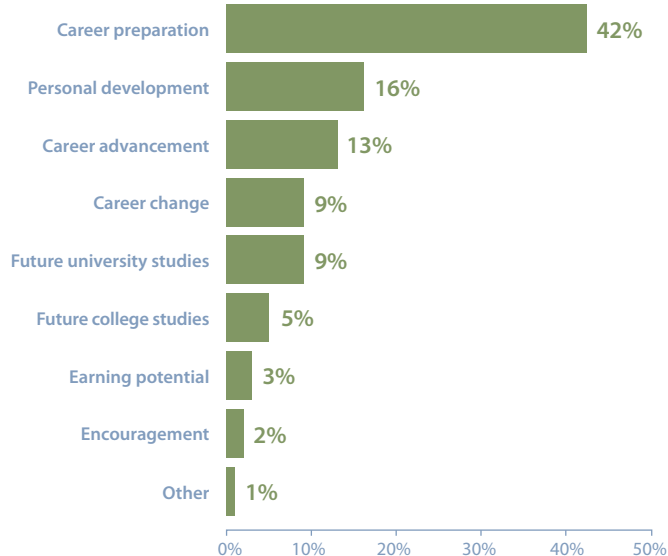
The colleges provide funding towards an annual independent applicant survey. The survey is conducted by Academica Group Inc. and administered to a random sample of applicants through the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS). The survey includes questions on demographics, educational background, finances, as well as the opinions and perceptions of college applicants. Highlights of the current findings are included below.

3.1 Reason for applying

In 2008, applicants were asked to indicate their single most important reason for applying to college; career-related reasons were indicated by the largest proportion of respondents (Figure 4). Fourteen per cent of applicants indicated preparation for future study as their main reason, including nine per cent with a focus on future university studies.

Figure 4

Main reason for applying to college



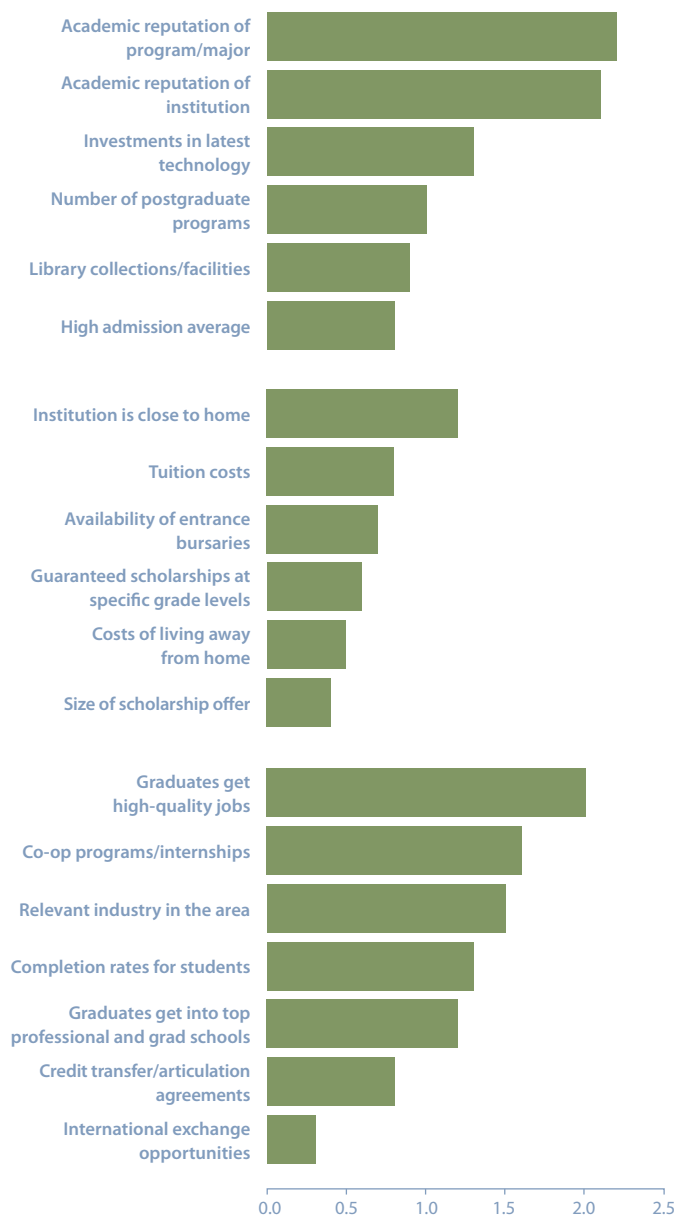
Source: 2008 UCAS, Academica Group Inc.

The survey provides a large number of potential influences on the applicants' selection of their first-choice program. Respondents are asked to rate the influence of these factors on a scale from -3 (strong negative impact) to +3 (strong positive impact).

The average scores for the potential influences that were categorized as academic, financial or outcome related, are shown in Figure 5. The mean rating was positive for all factors, with academic reputation, proximity, and graduates getting high-quality jobs, rated most highly in each category.

Figure 5

Mean ratings* for academic, financial and outcome factors on selection of first-choice program



*Rating scale from -3 (strong negative impact) to +3 (strong positive impact).

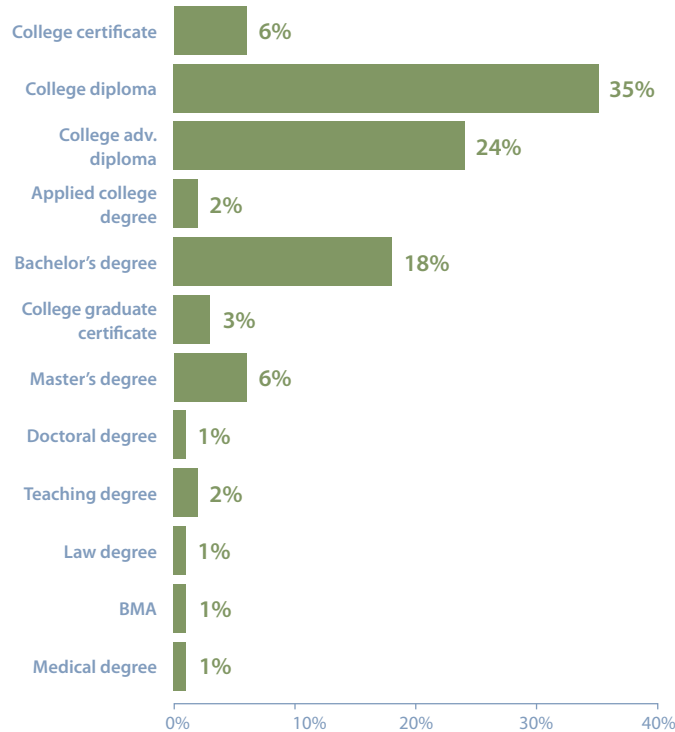
Source: Academica Group Inc.

3.2 Ultimate postsecondary education credential

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the ultimate credential that they intend to attain. As shown in Figure 6, approximately 70 per cent of applicants were focused on college credentials while 30 per cent intended to pursue a university credential (18 per cent bachelor's degree and 12 per cent graduate or professional degrees).

Figure 6

Ultimate intended credential



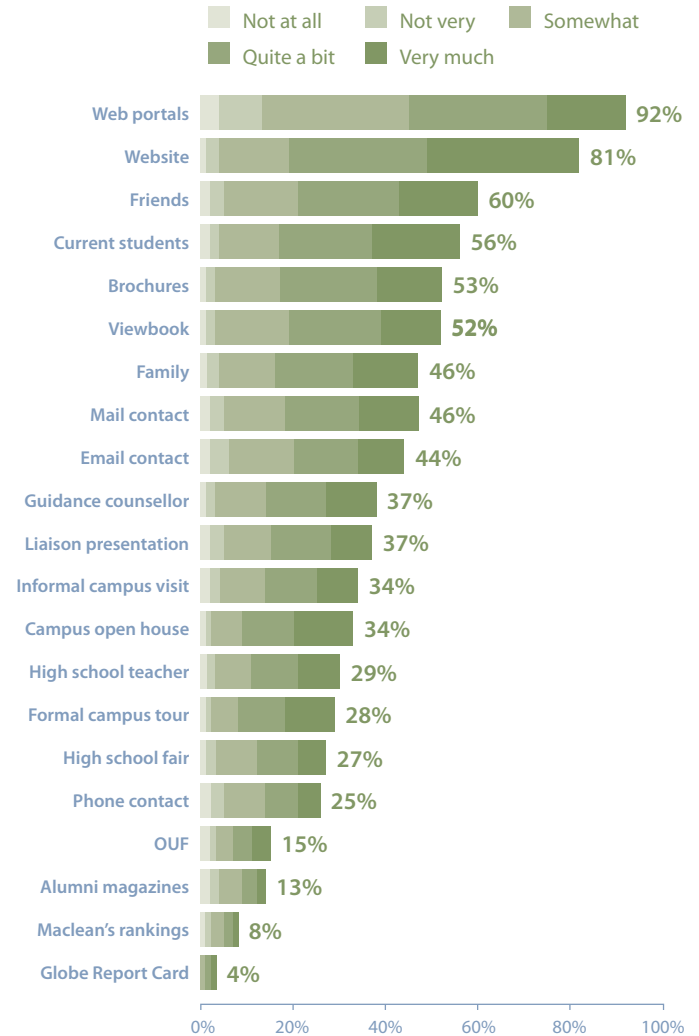
Source: Academica Group Inc.

3.3 Information sources for choice of college/program

Applicants were asked to indicate the information sources that they had used in researching postsecondary education (PSE) options, as well as how influential they considered those sources to be on their decisions. The vast majority of respondents used Internet-based sources in their research. For example, websites were used by 81 per cent of respondents and had the strongest reported influence (Figure 7). After web portals and websites, friends, family and college-related information materials were used by the most respondents.

Figure 7

Use and influence* of information sources in researching PSE options



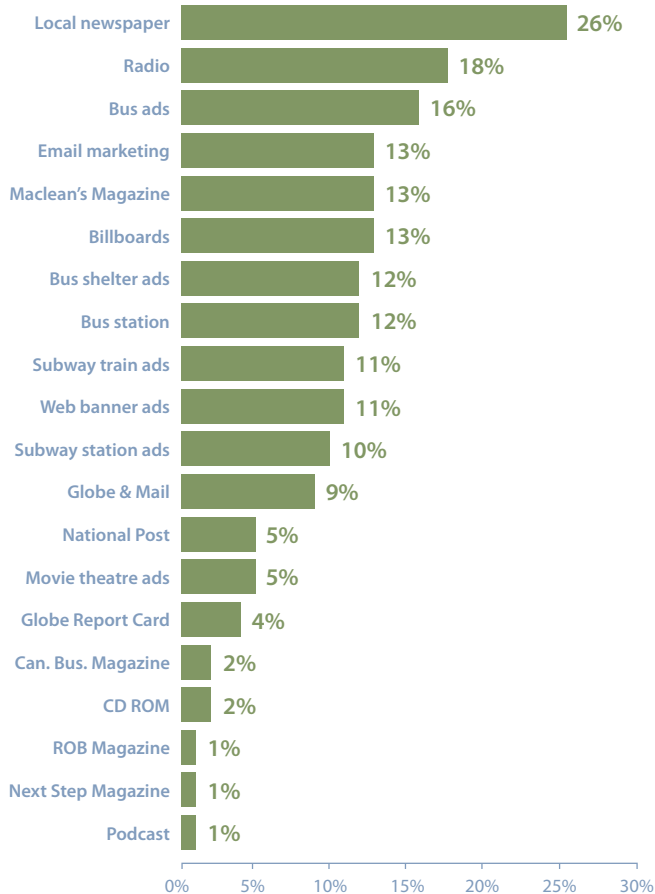
*Per cent of applicants who used each source is presented in parentheses, along with ratings of the relative influence of each source (from 'not at all' to 'very much').

Source: Academica Group Inc.

Applicants were also presented with a list of media sources of college-related information and were asked to indicate if they had read, seen or heard any of these sources during the course of their research. Responses were distributed across a broad range of marketing and advertising sources; the most frequently indicated item was local newspapers, with 26 per cent of respondents reporting this source (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Applicants' use of media sources



Source: Academica Group Inc.

4.0 Perceptions of College Students

As described above, the Student Satisfaction Survey is composed of questions that primarily assess student satisfaction with four key areas:

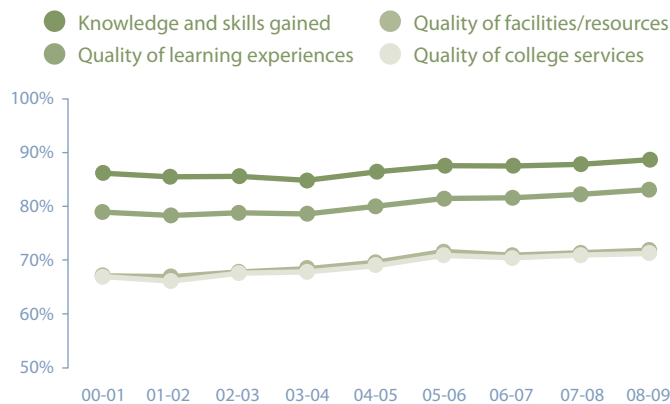
- Overall, that the program is providing the knowledge and skills that will be useful in their future career
- Overall quality of the learning experience
- Quality of the facilities/resources in the colleges
- Quality of services in the colleges.

Responses to the four capstone questions that comprise the student satisfaction rate are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Trends in student satisfaction KPI results

(percentages very satisfied/satisfied) 2000-01 to 2008-09*



*KPI reporting year Source: MTCU.

Over time, students have consistently rated the teaching and learning aspects of their college experience higher than the facilities and services available at the colleges. Student satisfaction with academic components specific to teaching and learning experiences tend to be rated very highly. Examples of some of these detailed responses from last year's survey include:

- Eighty-eight per cent were very satisfied/satisfied that their programs were providing them with skills and abilities specific to their chosen careers
- Eighty-six per cent were very satisfied/satisfied that their programs included topics relevant to their future success
- Eighty-six per cent were very satisfied/satisfied with their teachers' knowledge of subjects
- Eighty-five per cent were very satisfied/satisfied that their teachers were up-to-date/current in their fields
- Eighty-three per cent were very satisfied/satisfied that their programs developed their ability to work with others.

The quality of other key areas of facilities/resources and services that impact students' experiences, however, have not been rated as highly. Examples of the detailed responses from those students who made use of these services include:

- Fifty-seven per cent were very satisfied/satisfied with their colleges' special skills services

- Fifty-eight per cent were very satisfied/satisfied with their colleges' employment/placement/career services
- Fifty-four per cent were very satisfied/satisfied with their colleges' bookstores
- Forty-nine per cent were very satisfied/satisfied with their colleges' cafeteria/food services.

5.0 Perceptions of graduates and employers

5.1 College graduates

In addition to the KPI rate, many other details regarding graduate experiences are available from the Graduate Satisfaction Survey. Some of the highlights from last year's survey include:

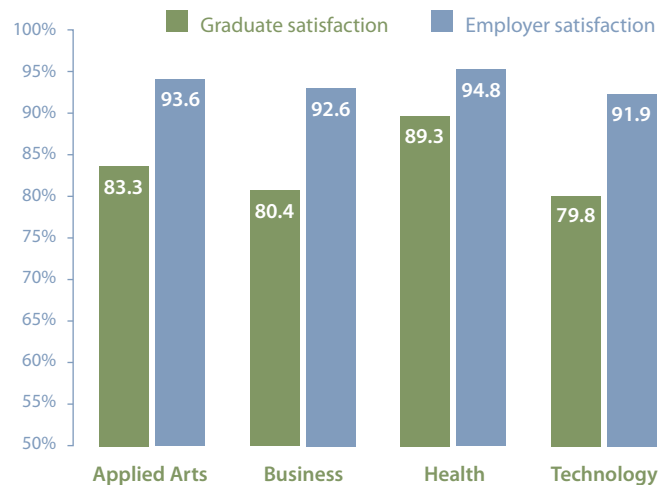
- Ninety-one per cent were very satisfied/satisfied that the course material in their programs was up to date
- Eighty-nine per cent were very satisfied/satisfied with the course content and 89 per cent with the overall quality of instruction
- Eighty-seven per cent were very satisfied/satisfied that the equipment was up to date
- Eighty-nine per cent of college graduates would recommend their programs to someone else, and 96 per cent would recommend their colleges.

5.2 Comparison of ratings by graduates and employers

Over time, the overall employer satisfaction rate has been consistently higher than the graduate satisfaction rate. This is also true when the data are examined by major program category (Figure 10). Across program types, the highest satisfaction ratings from both graduates and employers have been observed for graduates of health-related programs. This category also displays the smallest differential between the ratings of graduates and employers.

Figure 10

Graduate and employer satisfaction by division (2006-07 graduates, six months after graduation; percentages very satisfied/satisfied)



Source: 2008 Employment Profile, MTCU.

As part of both the graduate and employer satisfaction surveys, respondents are asked to rate the same set of factors comprising the graduates' various skills and abilities. Ratings are provided for both the importance of these factors in the work the graduate is doing, and the satisfaction with the educational preparation for each component. Table 1 shows the comparison of college graduates' self-evaluations and employer evaluations of the importance of the various skills and abilities for the graduates' current positions.

Graduates and employers display very high agreement in their ratings of the relative importance of each of these components to the work the graduates are doing. As shown in Table 2, although satisfaction scores are also quite high, there tends to be a somewhat greater difference between the ratings of graduates and employers.

Table 1

Graduate and employer beliefs about the importance of the following skills and abilities for the graduates current position (Percentage extremely important/important)

	Graduate Importance	Employer Importance
A. Specific job-related knowledge	92	93
B. Specific job-related skills	92	95
C. Oral communication	96	98
D. Written communications	83	88
E. Comprehension	96	99
F. Math skills	59	65
G. Computer skills	73	76
H. Critical thinking	92	95
I. Problem solving	95	97
J. Research and analysis	65	61
K. Teamwork	95	99
L. Organization and planning	94	95
M. Time management	95	97
N. Quality of work	98	100
O. Productivity	95	98
P. Creative and innovative	75	81
Q. Adaptable	94	97
R. Responsible	99	100

Source: MTCU.

Table 2

Graduate and employer satisfaction with graduates' educational preparation for various skills and abilities (Percentage very satisfied/satisfied)

	Graduate satisfaction	Employer satisfaction
A. Specific job-related knowledge	85	87
B. Specific job-related skills	86	89
C. Oral communication	90	92
D. Written communications	89	88
E. Comprehension	92	94
F. Math skills	73	81
G. Computer skills	83	89
H. Critical thinking	90	88
I. Problem solving	91	87
J. Research and analysis	82	75
K. Teamwork	92	95
L. Organization and planning	89	89
M. Time management	89	88
N. Quality of work	91	94
O. Productivity	89	91
P. Creative and innovative	82	81
Q. Adaptable	89	93
R. Responsible	93	95

Source: MTCU.

Appendix 1

Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology – Key Performance Indicators 2001-02 to 2008-09*

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Graduate employment rate (%)	88.7	87.4	87.7	88.0	89.3	90.1	90.5	88.9
Graduation rate (%)	57.5	56.7	57.4	58.5	60.1	63.3	64.9	64.6
Graduate satisfaction rate (%)								
Very satisfied/satisfied	81.4	79.8	79.7	80.5	81.6	82.0	82.8	82.7
Neither	9.7	11.0	10.5	10.3	9.9	10.0	10.0	9.6
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	8.9	9.1	9.8	9.2	8.5	8.0	7.2	7.7
Employer satisfaction rate (%)								
Very satisfied/satisfied	91.7	92.0	92.0	92.7	92.1	92.6	93.1	93.3
Neither	6.0	6.0	5.4	4.6	5.1	4.8	4.2	4.2
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	2.4	2.0	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.7	2.5
Student satisfaction rate (%)								
Very satisfied/satisfied	74.4	75.1	75.1	76.3	77.8	77.4	77.9	78.4
Neither	18.6	17.9	17.8	17.1	16.2	16.4	16.2	15.8
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.6	6.1	6.1	5.9	5.8
Knowledge and skills gained (Question 14)								
Very satisfied/satisfied	85.6	85.8	85.1	86.3	87.3	87.2	87.5	88.1
Neither	10.3	9.8	10.4	9.7	8.8	9.0	8.8	8.4
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	4.1	4.3	4.5	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.4
Quality of learning experience (Question 26)								
Very satisfied/satisfied	78.6	79.0	78.9	80.1	81.2	81.1	81.8	82.4
Neither	15.7	15.2	15.3	14.5	13.7	13.7	13.4	13.0
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	5.8	5.8	5.9	5.4	5.1	5.2	4.8	4.7
Quality of facilities/resources (Question 44)								
Very satisfied/satisfied	67.1	68.1	68.8	70.0	71.7	71.0	71.3	71.8
Neither	23.5	22.5	22.2	21.4	20.5	20.9	20.8	20.4
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	9.4	9.3	9.0	8.6	7.8	8.0	7.8	7.8
Quality of college services (Question 45)								
Very satisfied/satisfied	66.2	67.5	67.7	68.9	70.8	70.3	70.9	71.3
Neither	25.0	23.9	23.5	22.9	21.7	22.2	21.8	21.5
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	8.8	8.6	8.7	8.2	7.5	7.5	7.3	7.2

*Reporting year (graduate data refer to graduates of the previous academic year).

Source: MTCU.

