

Graduate Student Workspace Survey – Findings

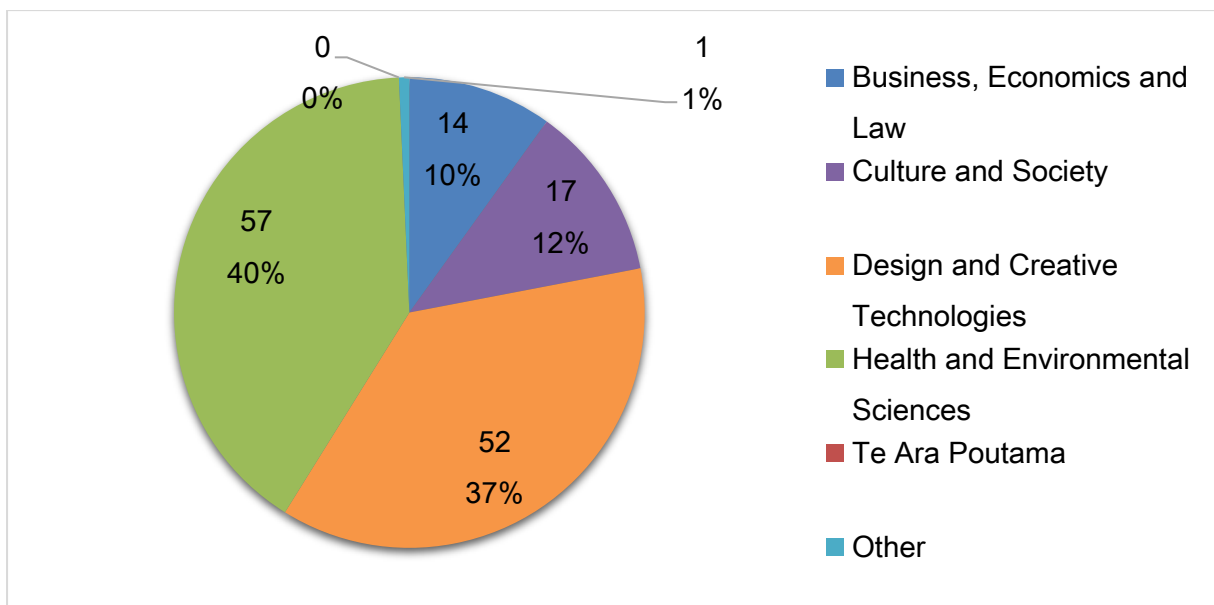
General

- Sent email to 889 students (as per list from Annalise) on 28th May
- Over 100 responses within the first 24 hours
- Total 143 unique responses to date (16.1% response rate)

Results by question

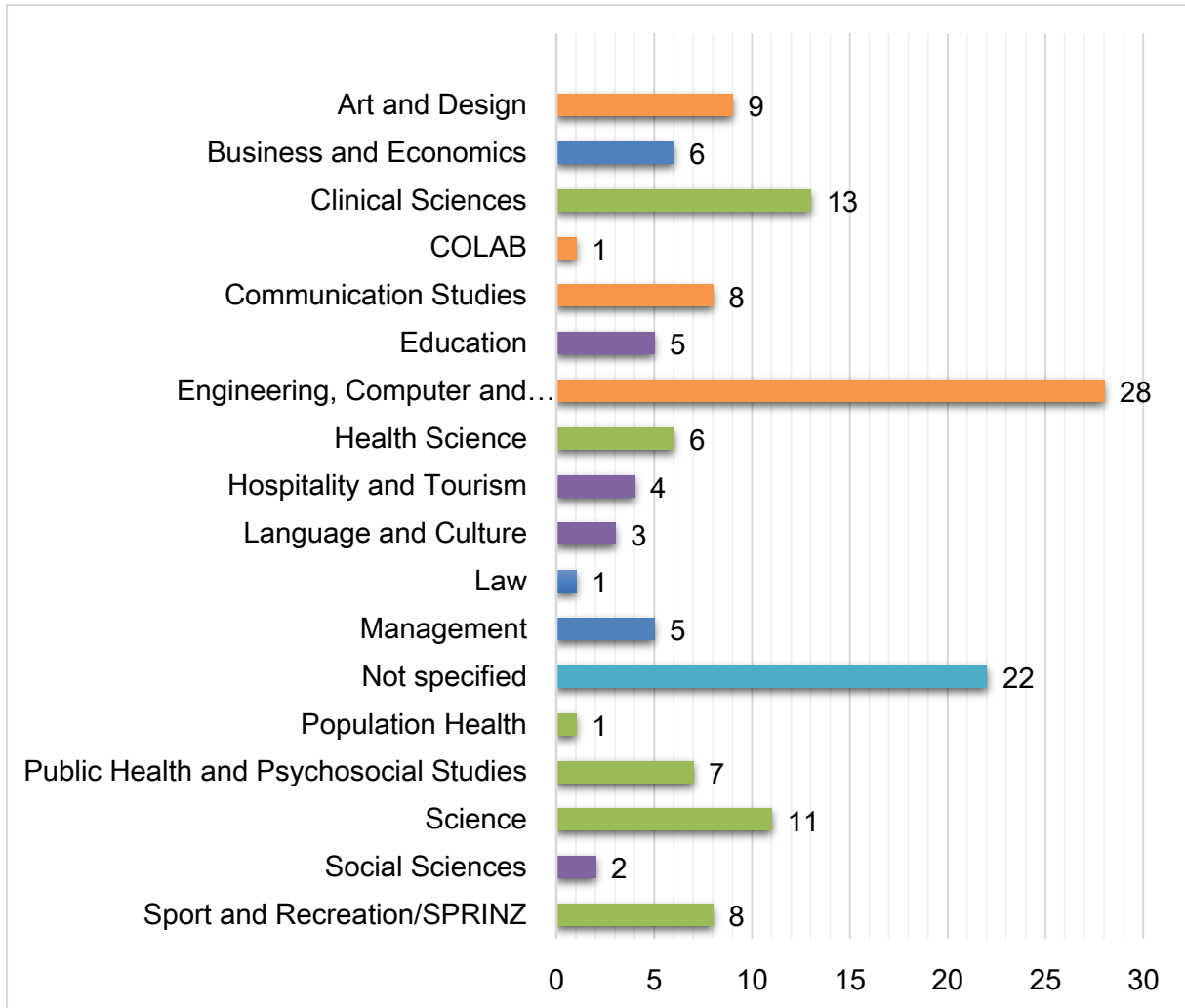
1. Which faculty are you in?

- Mandatory question
- Select from six options
- Does not seem to match the actual student distribution across faculties



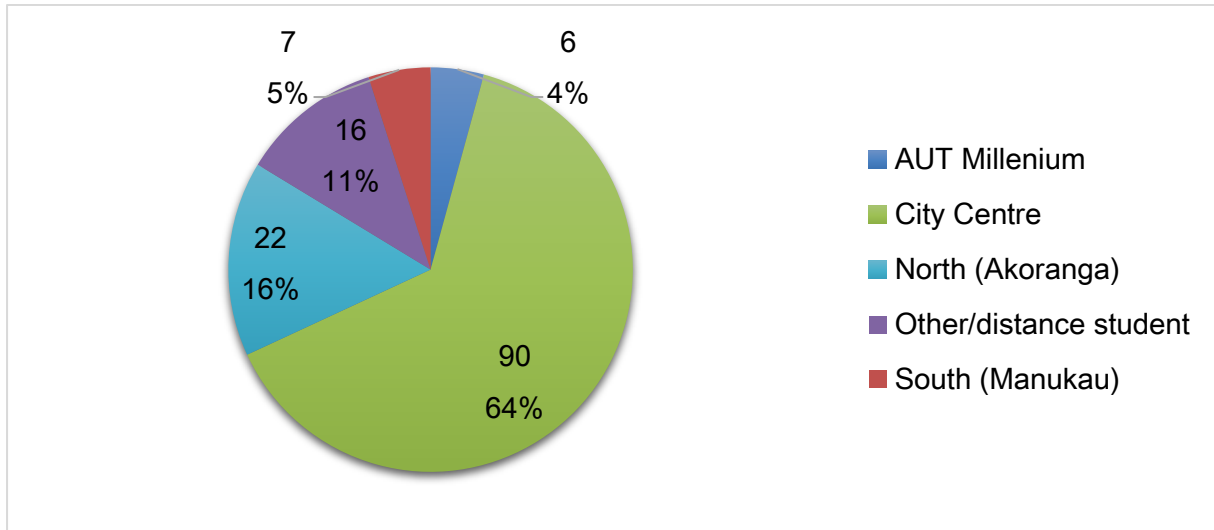
2. What is the name of your department/school?

- Not mandatory
- Free-text question



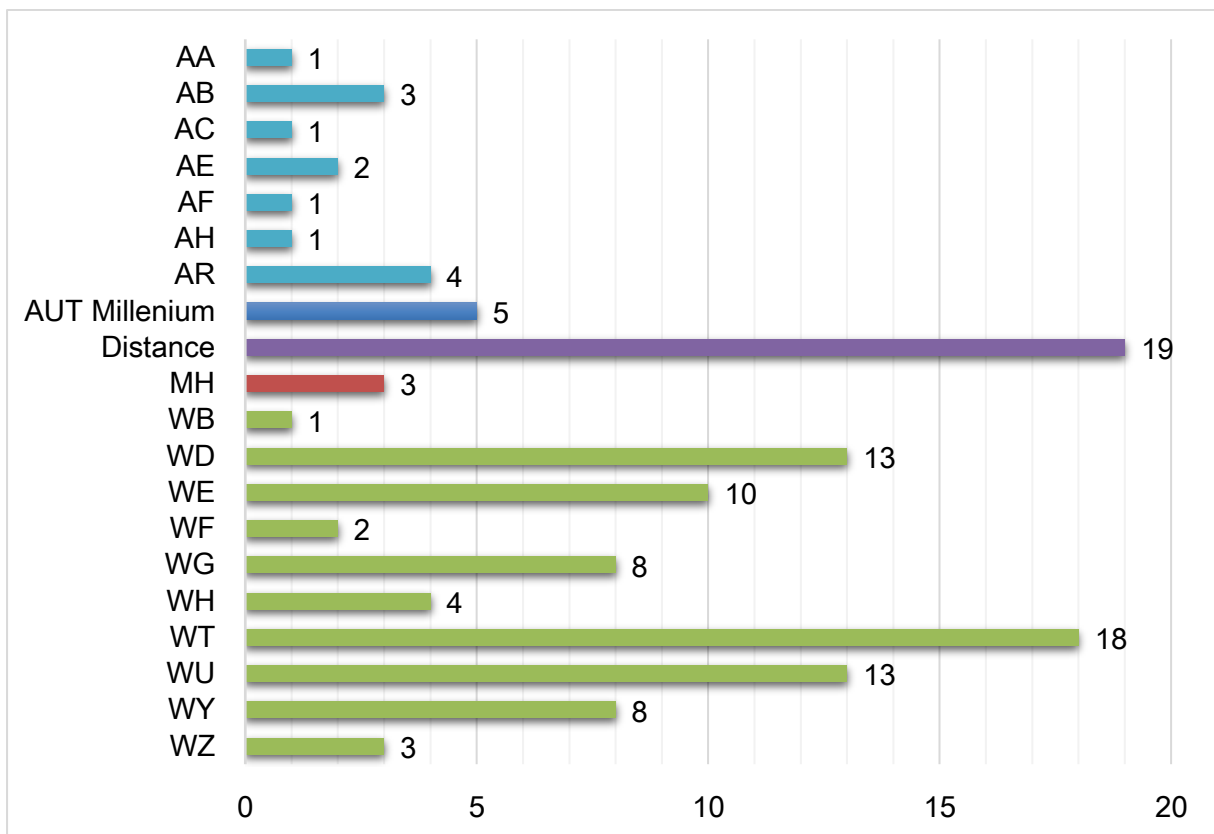
3. On which campus are you located?

- Mandatory question
- Select from five options



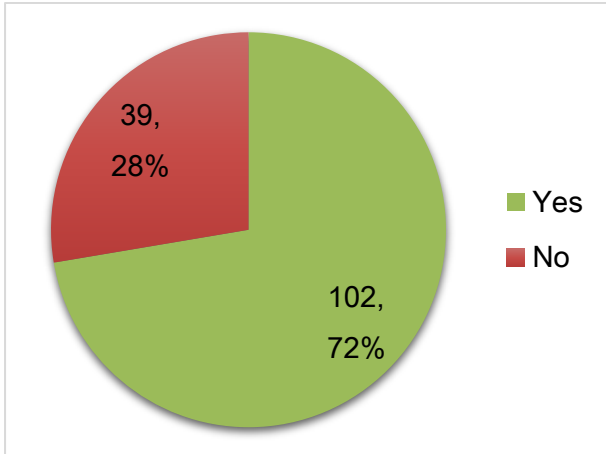
4. In which building are you located?

- Not mandatory
- Free-text



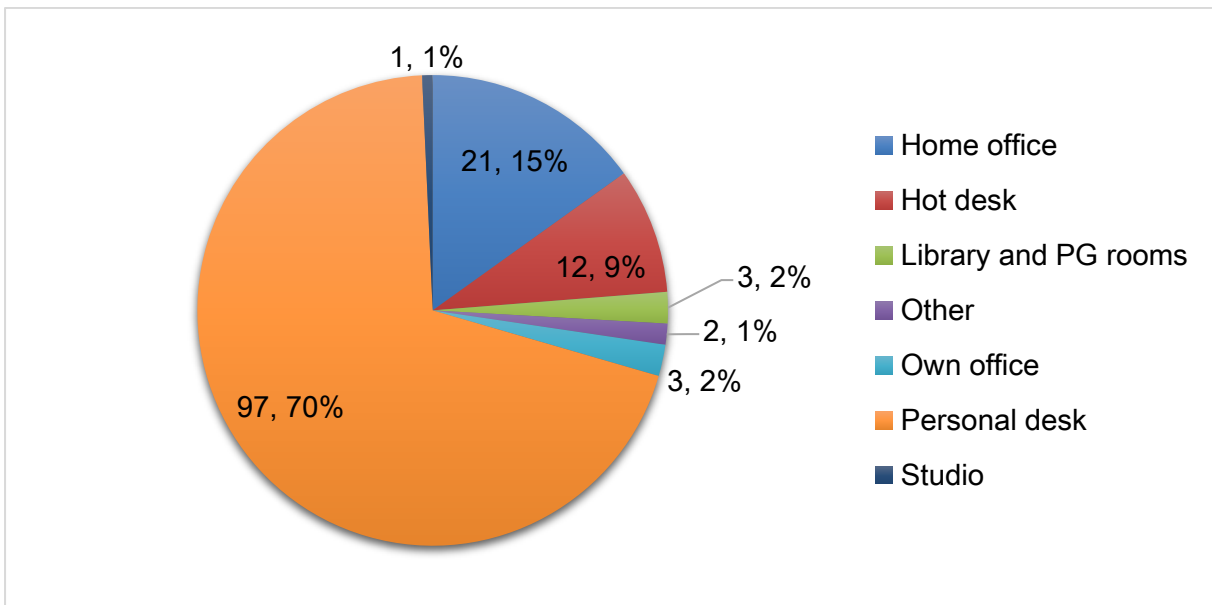
5. Do you have an allocated/personal workspace at AUT?

- Mandatory question
- Select Yes or No



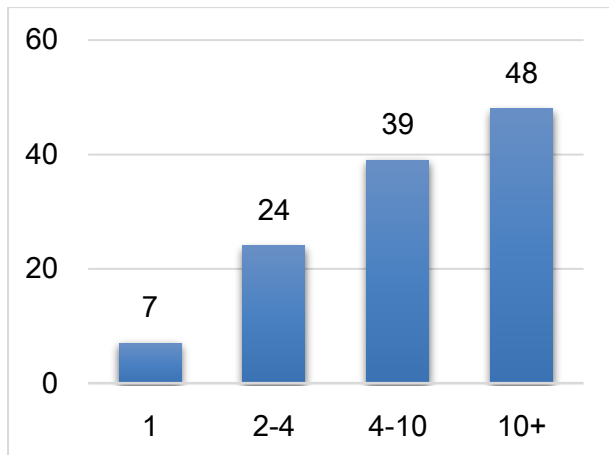
6. What type of workspace do you have?

- Not mandatory
- Select pre-defined option (personal desk, hot desk) or add free-text



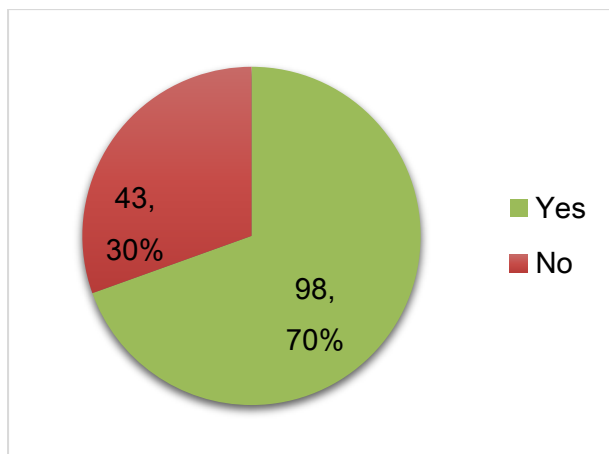
7. How many people work in your office?

- Not mandatory
- Select from four options
- Excludes distance students



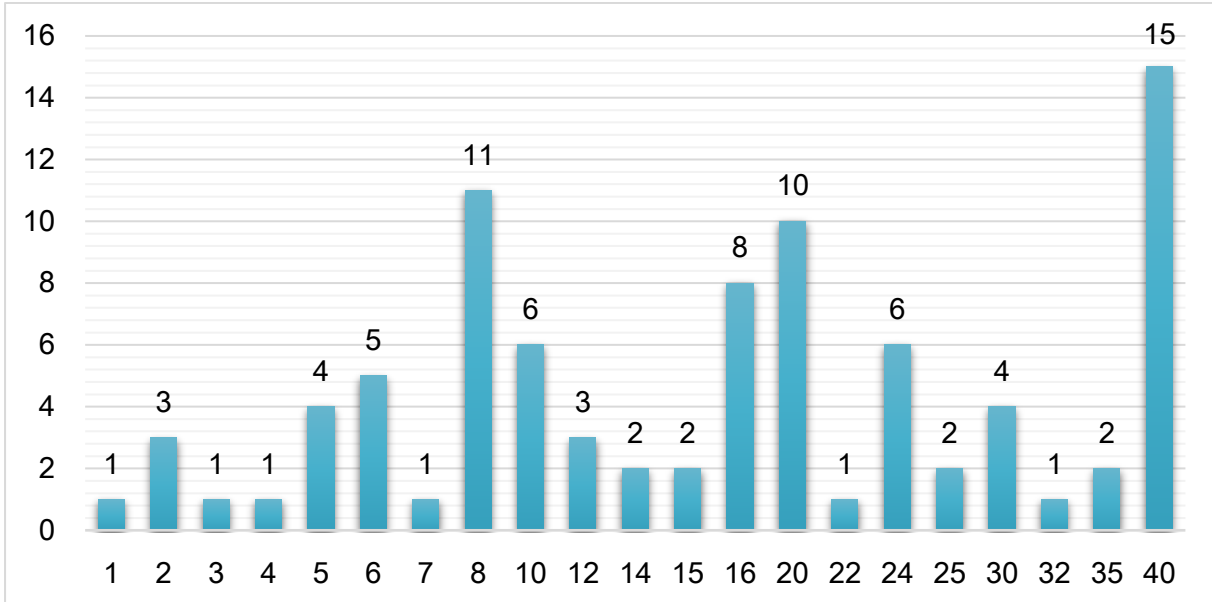
8. Do you sometimes work from home?

- Mandatory question
- Select Yes or No



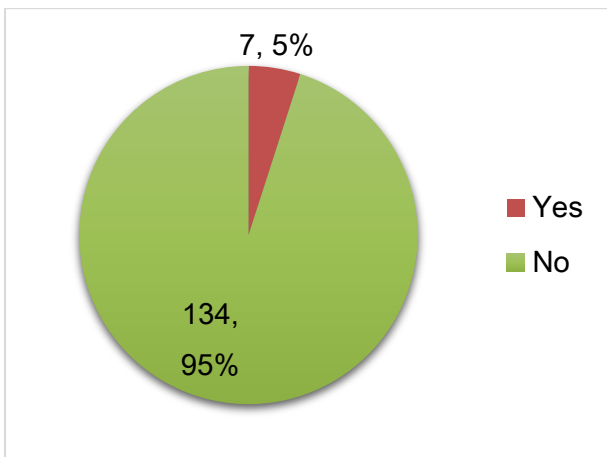
9. If yes, how many days/hours per week on average?

- Not mandatory
- Free-text field



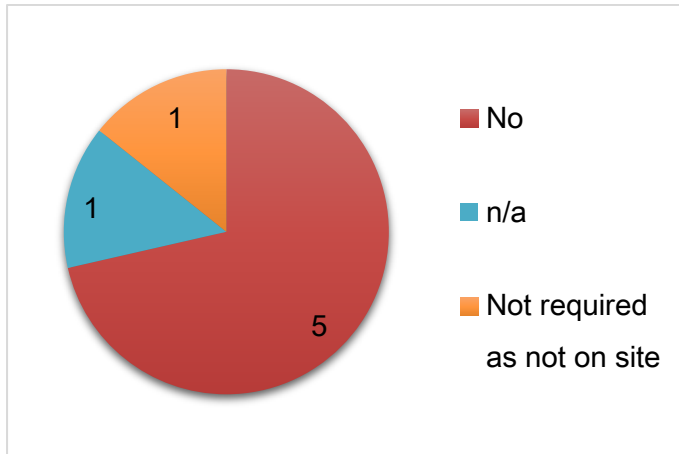
10. Would you consider yourself to have a disability that requires special workplace arrangements?

- Mandatory question
- Select Yes or No



11. If you do, are these met?

- Not mandatory
- Select Yes, No, or add-free text



12. What do you like about your current AUT workspace?

- Not mandatory
- Free-text
- 90 responses

Theme	#
personal/dedicated desk; privacy; can be personalised	32
calm, quiet	19
comfortable/pleasant/modern space/has carpet/air conditioning	17
nice colleagues; good collaboration	16
spacious	13
access to supervisors and other support/colleagues	12
space to leave belongings and equipment (drawers/cupboard/lockers)	12
fast computers/well equipped for study/access to software/internet/two monitors	10
convenient location/access to library/resources/testing lab	8
good common space/kitchen/tea and coffee facilities	8
small room/cubicle instead of open space/not crowded	8
“that I have one”	5
dedicated place to focus on PhD away from home	5
has window/natural light	5
safety	5

24-hour access	4
room for PG/PhD students only; separate from library	4
cleanliness	3
everything/I like it/satisfied	3
nice view	2
open-plan office	1

13. What would you like to see improved about your workspace at AUT?

- Not mandatory
- Free-text
- 90 responses

Theme	#
reduce noise	31
fix air conditioning (room is too hot or too cold)	18
reduce number of people in room/area	13
provide (more) privacy, not open-plan rooms	12
provide adequate/larger break room, upgrade kitchen facilities and bathrooms, top up coffee/tea/sugar/milk regularly	12
provide adequate location with necessary equipment; printers; whiteboards; two monitors; studios for practice-based PhDs	10
provide personal desk/workspace	9
improve room/workspace layout with the help of interior designers and student input	7
reduce smell from the kitchen	7
enforce rules for workplace usage/conduct/respect	6
provide (more) storage space (drawers, shelves, lockers)	6
provide ergonomic/more comfortable chairs and height-adjustable tables	6
clean rooms/common areas more often and more thoroughly	5
add windows/increase natural light	4
allow 24-hour access to labs	4
building too old [all WD building]	4
nothing is good	3
place peers from similar research topics in the same area	3
provide consistency of location; don't move PhD students around	3
provide free carparks	3

restrict access for people to certain areas to increase safety	3
Fix issues with workspaces and don't just talk about it!	2
fix lifts [AC building]	1
foster more interaction between students	1
provide compensation for working from home	1
provide opportunities to connect ("students on North Campus feel isolated")	1
provide separate meeting rooms	1
provide soft drinks	1
replace carpet (gives off toxic fumes)	1

- "Please remove the piano on the first floor [WH] so that we will not be disturbed by the noise."
- "I am going often on the field and there are no special loading or unloading areas in front of WU building, so it's not really convenient."
- "Unauthorized master students holding meetings or chatting openly in pH D hub isn't pleasant for those of us trying to concentrate [WG]"

14. Are there any other comments that you would like to make on this topic?

- Not mandatory
- Free-text
- 55 responses

Theme	#
Explaining personal situation in comment	11
Venting/disappointment in facilities at AUT	11
Worried that circumstances will get worse with larger numbers of PhD students	10
Every student should have a personal workspace and storage	6
My workspace is inconvenient to access or on the wrong campus	6
We can't grow PhD numbers with the current arrangements	6
Thank you for doing this survey	5
Distance study and supervision via Skype/Zoom is working well for me	3
I have not been allocated a space/given an access card/don't know how to access	3
Other people use my allocated, personal space against my will	3
Please don't place us in open plan labs	1

Hot-desking doesn't work for my lab work	1
Hot-desking is stressful	1
Workspace should be located among peers	1

Notable quotes

“You cannot expect to increase Doctoral students without also increasing the amount of space allocated to us as a whole. Altering the wording regarding studio spaces for practice-led PhDs (from ‘appropriate space’ to simply ‘a space’) in the student handbook year by year has not gone un-noticed.”

“Respect for silence, especially from professors who do have an office. They could close the door but leave it open and basically scream on the phone or with their guests.”

“I have worked in small offices most of the times but have also talked to other students in bigger offices without allocated seating - this adds a lot of pressure and stress on students and is not beneficial for the productivity. I am worried that the increase in students will lead to less productivity. Considering the high living costs most students don't have enough space/freedom to work from home so this is vitally important for any student to have a space where they can work from.”

“Each faculty has different policies for PhD students even we are all AUT PhD students, feeling like kind of discrimination.”

“I feel like in a factory. Everyone looks like a slave. No space for creativity because everyone was just expected to sit and write and no academic culture has been developed. The world has been progressing with smart designs to increase creativity process. AUT should follow this kind of approach instead of only preparing table in cubicles, which is such a conservative and primitive way compared to other parts of the world. PhD students are junior scientists, they are not office workers. The sitting now feels like a factory producing papers rather than scientists working together and discussing interesting topics that can increase their

“I recommend that another survey is taken in 6 weeks' time, to ascertain whether the new 'paddock' system is functional. Not that I really think that anyone's opinion will ever be taken seriously, as the new structure for the ECMS PhD students moving to WZ seems to be set in stone...”

"I would like 24/7 access to my experiments but security kicks us out after 11:00pm...oh dear....this is POSTGRADUATE and we are adults....sorry about that rant....but it is a sore point amongst a lot of students. I am fine kicking out students who are asleep but come on - I am awake, nocturnal and fully-functional. I am often also yawning less than the security guards <laugh>."

"It would be good if there was an induction process for the shared work spaces so you know what resources are available and how to use them etc. i.e photocopier, kitchen facilities, meeting rooms"

"There should be workspaces available for distance students that come to campus for functions. We are often left feeling disconnected and nomadic when in the workspace of our fellow students."

"Please don't take our spaces away, these are important. The rigours of doing a PhD are very hard at times. Not many of us get scholarships and even though I am lucky to have my fees paid for three years, I still have to earn money. So that makes it very tough at times and I know it's tougher for others. This space and safe haven is all we have and that kitchen and common area to chat, eat lunch and have tea and coffee. We need this space just for PhD's it makes a massive difference. Do not underestimate how much it means and how important that it is."

"Postgraduate students love to nest...settle down with their stuff and work in a stable, familiar environment. I do not want an office; that is unnecessary but I need to leave stuff running in a shared but secure area surrounded by my peers and fellow students. My nest is part of my PhD security blanket <laugh>. Research is tough enough without making us nomadic too <smile>"

"Have you seen the office spaces at University of Auckland? Students are treated well there."

"Increasing PhD enrolment could be very bad for AUT in my opinion. Research at AUT is already chronically underfunded - increasing the number of PhD students is only likely to put further strain on resources and dilute the quality of the work done here. I think a far better approach would be to increase the quality rather than quantity of research, which will bring in more funding and therefore eventually allow an increase in student intake. At the moment I feel this is far from appropriate (particularly in our department where research costs are high)."

“I feel ripped off as I was told when I started PhD there was a shortage of space and no room but my fees were the same”

“The university as a whole cannot expect to grow the program without investing in its students, both financially, and in the way it deals with staffing and space.”

“If you plan to increase the number of doctoral students, you need to make sure current students won't have to compromise, which means you have to adapt your capacity! Our office is already at its absolute maximum as with more people the noise increases, which affects the overall working environment. However, a quiet work space is essential in order to conduct efficient research, writing and studying. Besides affecting the workspace situation it will also impact the quality of supervision of doctoral students which needs to be considered by AUT. Competition among doctoral students might become a serious issue. This would be sad as a good relationship among the community directly contributes to a successful PhD journey which should be in the interest of AUT.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

- (1) Most PhD students value a dedicated working space that is quiet and close to their supervisors and peers. They like to have a space to leave their belongings since PhD studies are long-term and involve the accumulation of research material.
- (2) Equally, most students complain about overcrowding and the resulting noise plus lack of storage space. Further significant sources of complaints are poor air conditioning and inadequate break room facilities.
- (3) Some students have quite strong opinions on this topic because it affects them every day for several years. Students are worried that an increasing number of PhD students will put further strain on the existing shortage of facilities and that they will not be able to fully focus on their PhD studies in hot-desking situations or crowded environments.
- (4) Students need to be better informed about the “1,500 by 2025” target, and how it could affect them. Specific issues need to be resolved in a timely and effective manner, and students should be made aware of whom to contact for this. Systemic issues should be discussed in relevant committees and considered in strategic decisions.
- (5) Students should be informed about the outcome of this survey and the changes that will be implemented based on these findings.