COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SURVEY REPORT – 2015

Student Survey Report

Part A - Executive Summary

Method

As part of its Quality Assurance (QA) processes, the IPA conducted a general survey of 'live' students and graduates in late 2014 to obtain feedback on selected programmes. The survey was targeted at five principal programme groupings: (i) BA, (ii) BBS, (iii) specialist one-year Diplomas, (iv) MA and (v) MSc in Business & Management.

The survey tool used was Survey Monkey. There were 572 responses to the surveys. The response rate from 'live' students was in the region of 40%, whereas the graduate student rate was 25%. In addition, the IPA received comments and suggestions, giving valuable feedback that can be used in the QA process. While there were 572 respondents, not all respondents answered every question, and some questions were targeted at either graduates or 'live' students.

Students were asked approximately 10 questions depending on their student status and programme grouping. In broad terms, they were asked to rate in 4 bands (Very Good, Good, Average, and Unsatisfactory) the following:

1. Their programme in terms of increasing their knowledge and understanding of the field of study
2. Quality of weekend seminars/tutorials at the IPA Dublin
3. Quality of evening lectures at the IPA Dublin
4. Quality of distance education manuals
5. Assignments as a contribution to their learning
6. Quality of dissertation supervision
7. Level of academic support and guidance from IPA academic staff
8. Online resources provided, namely Moodle
9. Efficiency of IPA in dealing with administrative queries

Students were also invited at the end of the survey to give additional comments or feedback on areas not covered by the questions.

Results

The surveys were a useful source of data and they provided valuable feedback that is essential for internal Quality Assurance (QA) processes. They highlighted both key areas of strength and areas for improvement. Due to the satisfactory number of respondents – 572 from across the courses offered in the IPA – the surveys are a reliable and relevant source of information.

Part B of this report examines the responses of students as percentages in a bar chart and provides a short interpretation of the results. Below is a summary of the main findings arising from the survey.

1. The survey shows a very <u>high satisfaction rate for each of the programmes in increasing knowledge and understanding</u> (question 1 below). This is very positive as it is one of the most important questions asked in the survey.

2. Furthermore, <u>across all questions, an average of 82% of respondents rated the Institute as either 'Very Good' or 'Good'</u>. This ranges from 92% satisfaction with the quality of programmes in increasing knowledge and understanding to 60% satisfaction with Moodle.

3. There was also <u>a high satisfaction rate with the efficiency of the administration</u>, another important rating given the requirement for flexible and complicated course delivery structures in the IPA.

4. <u>While still a majority rating, Moodle, the on-line support platform, lagged behind the other ratings, with a 60% rating in the 'very good' or 'good' category</u>. Comments generally indicate that much more use could be made of Moodle, from uploading DE Manuals, podcasts of lectures, submitting assignments through Moodle, and getting exam results through it. Presently, there are system constraints which prevent the Institute from acting on all suggestions, though we are working to overcome these.

5. Student comments were a helpful outcome of the survey. Students said we should more strongly promote ourselves as a national centre of excellence; we should offer more collaborative programmes with government departments to maximise expertise from both academic and professional environments; we should extend our partnerships to other universities (departments of government and public policy).

6. There were helpful suggestions made on course delivery, administration and assessment, and these recommendations were circulated to relevant staff.

7. While the results of this general survey were useful, it is expected that the next cycle of <u>individual and standardised course specific surveys will yield more detailed information</u>, which will be provided to the programme coordinators as part of their annual module reviews.

Part B - Results

This report will proceed as follows through the 10 questions:

i.   The responses of students will be examined as percentages in a bar chart.
ii. There will then be a short interpretation of the results.

Course	Number of Respondents
BA Students	104
BA Graduates	135
BBS Students	84
BBS Graduates	79
Specialised Diplomas	70
MA Students	34
MA Graduates	21
MSc	45

Q1: Quality of programme in increasing knowledge and understanding
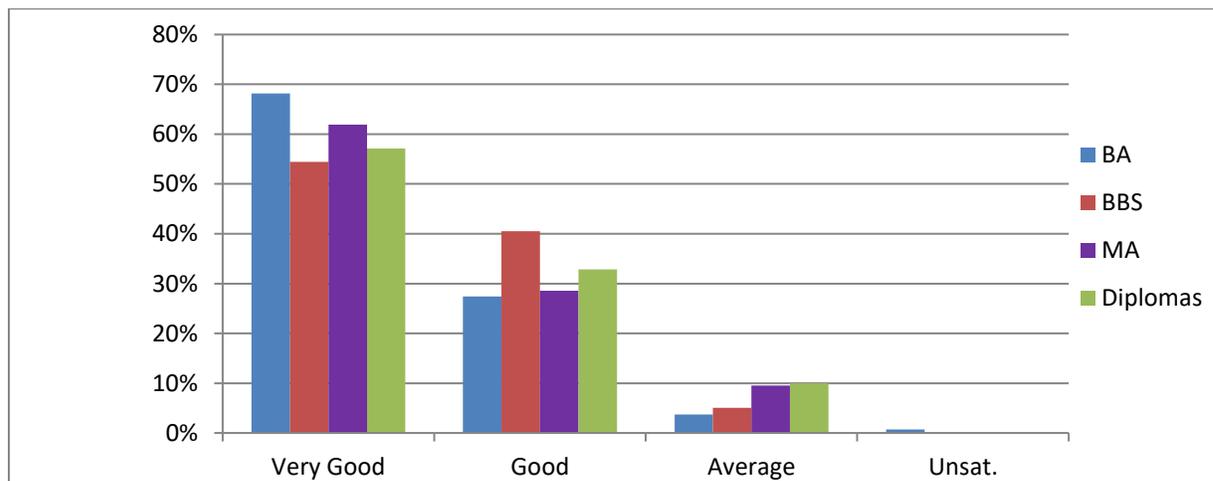
Interpretation of the results

This question was directed at graduates. Overall the results of this question were very positive. Over 92% of respondents across the courses rated the quality of their programme in the 'Very Good' or 'Good' band. This was generally reflected in the comments, which stated that the programmes were current and relevant, and that they related well to the field of public management and the economy in general. There were a few generalised critical comments, accounting for the 8% average rating: observations that some programmes were too basic to complaints that certain courses tried to cover too much in a short amount of time.

Q2: Quality of Weekend Seminars/Tutorials for Distance Education Students
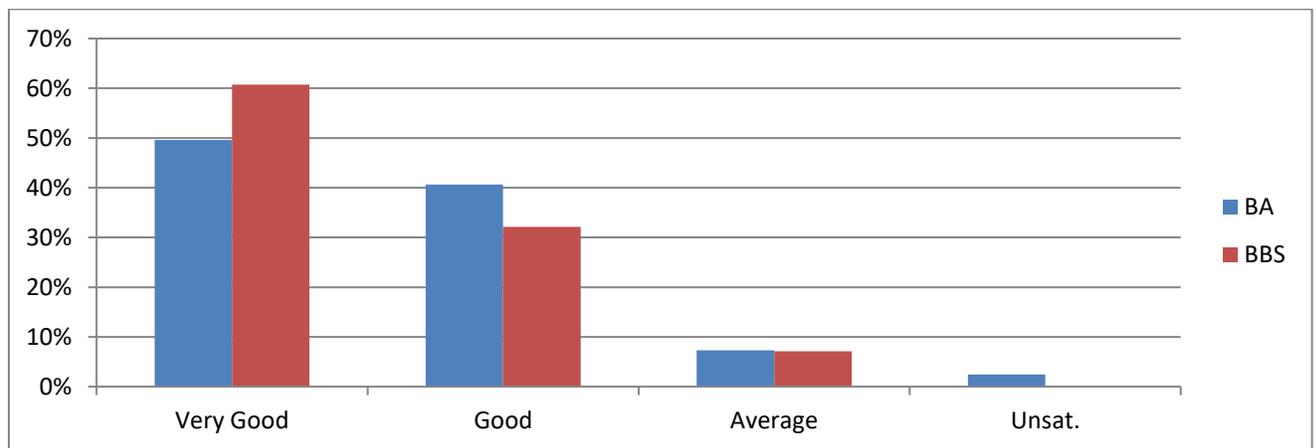
Graduates
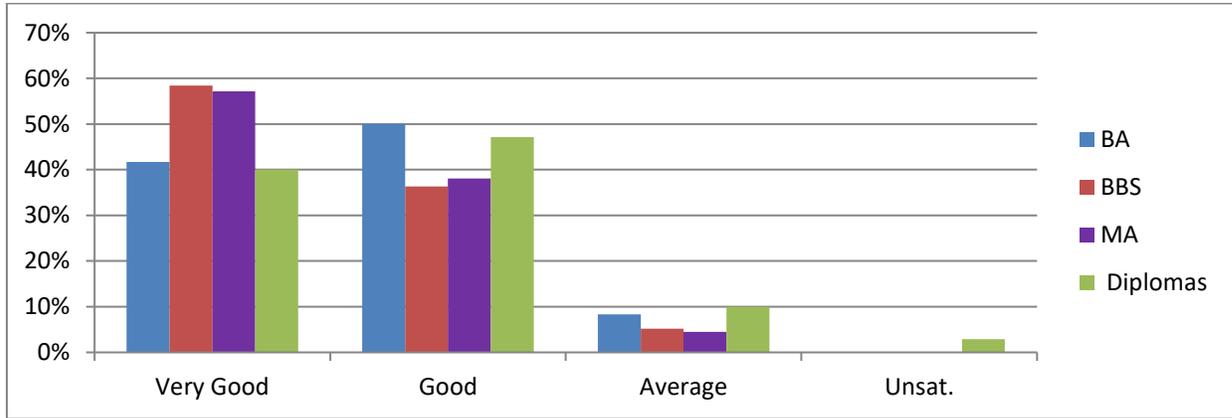
'Live' Students
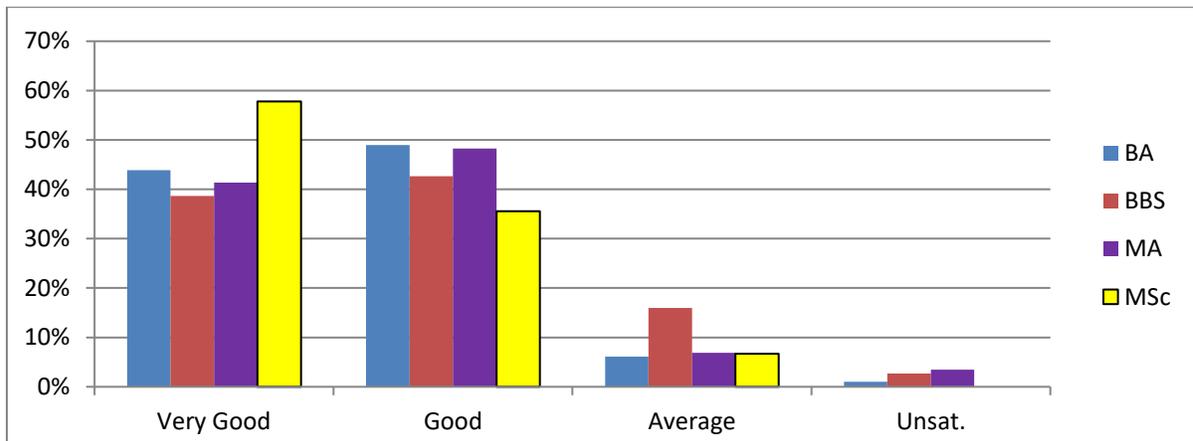
Interpretation of the results

90% of respondents across the courses rated the quality of Weekend Seminars/ Tutorials as 'Very Good' or 'Good'. This is a positive outcome for the IPA given that the majority of face-to-face tuition occurs at these weekend tutorials & seminars. The satisfaction rate was reflected in the comments, with most students acknowledging how important these sessions were. Most remarked on how much they had learned at these weekends; and there were numerous compliments for individual lecturers distributed across both graduate and 'live' cohorts.

Some students commented that the quality of the individual subject sessions could vary, especially in the business area. This view is not unexpected given the range of modules across the different streams and programmes. Helpful student comments, which have been passed onto programme co-ordinators, include: lectures tried to cover too much within the timeframe; notice of the topics to be covered at a weekend should be provided in advance; accommodation in the area was very expensive, especially on match days.

Q3: Quality of lectures at the IPA Dublin

Graduates

'Live' Students
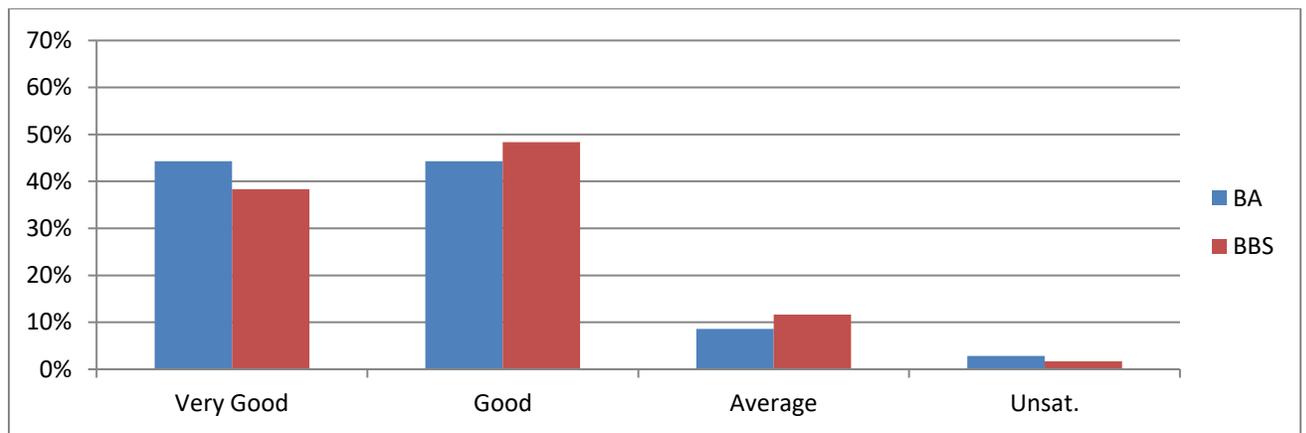
Interpretation of the results
Over 89% of respondents rated the quality of the lecturers in the IPA as 'Very Good' or 'Good', a similar outcome to the rating for weekend seminars & tutorials, which feature the same suite of teaching staff.

There were many comments made, with a proportionately higher number coming from graduates. The nature of the comments was similar across both graduate and 'live' groupings. On the whole, the feedback was very positive, though some students were critical of lecturers who they felt merely read from books or slides. Also, some 'live' accounting students requested more 'practice' in class.

Q4: Quality of Distance Education Manuals

Graduates
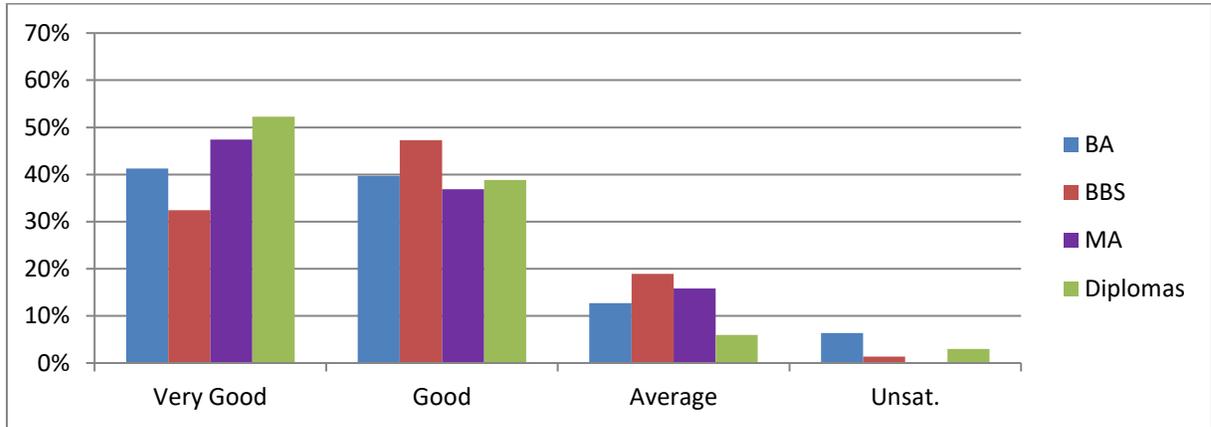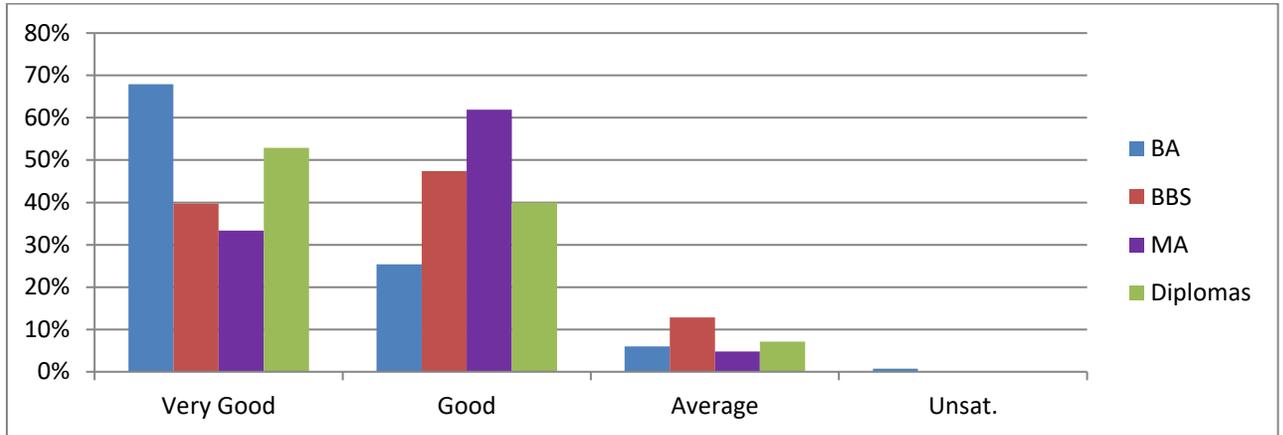

'Live' students
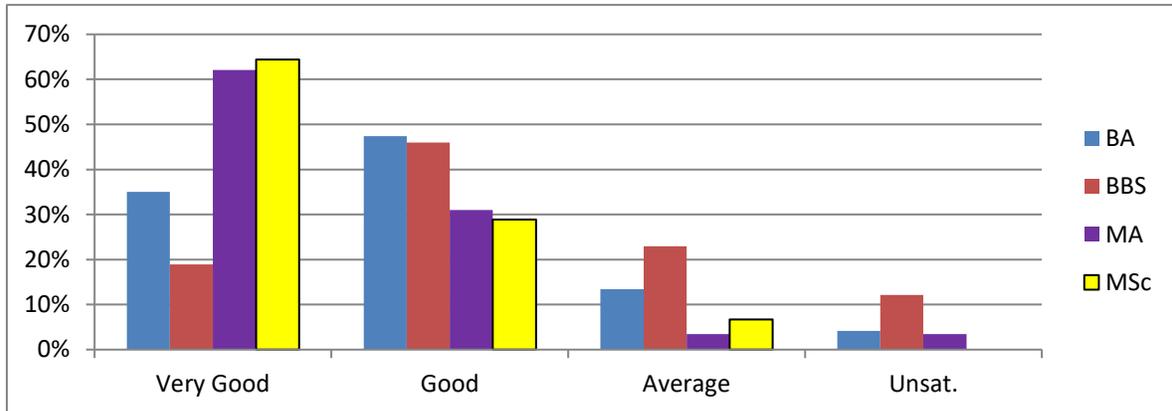
Interpretation of the results

The Distance Education Manuals received another high satisfaction rate: over 84% of respondents rated the Distance Education Manuals as either 'Very Good' or 'Good'.

There were numerous comments in this area, divided equally between graduate and 'live' students. The comments of the 'live' students were particularly positive, praising the clarity and structure of the manuals and complimenting their usefulness in providing foundational knowledge before engagement with the textbook. A number of students indicated that some manuals are in need of updating, most particularly in the IT and accounting areas. Other students asked for more on-line content.

Q5: Assignments as a contribution to their learning

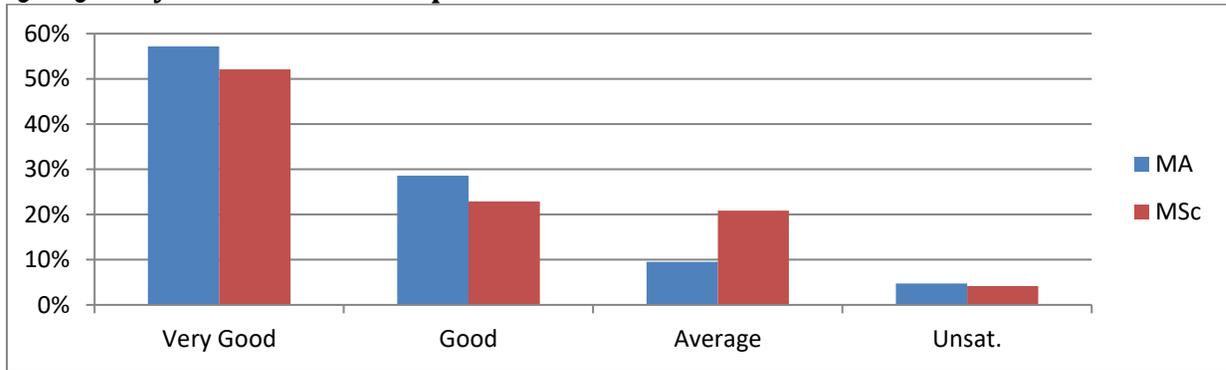### Graduates

'Live' Students
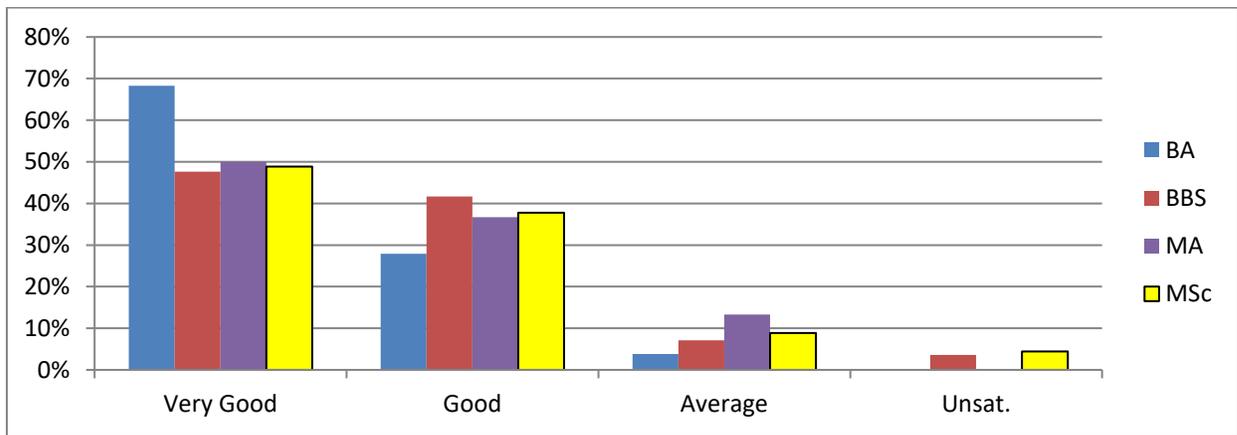
Interpretation of the results

The feedback was very positive on assignments. Over 90% of respondents rated the quality of the assignments in the 'Very Good' or 'Good' band.

The majority of comments came from 'live' students. They found that the assignments were hugely beneficial in helping them to understand discrete areas of a course; they helped distance education students impose a valuable study methodology on their work; they were useful revision tools in advance of exams.

There were many helpful suggestions for improvement, even from students who expressed high satisfaction with the assignments. These comments included issues such as: "Assignments should be worth more marks"; "Feedback should be enhanced" and "should be legible"; "It should be possible to send in assignments over Moodle"

Q6: Quality of dissertation supervision

Interpretation of the results

This question related to postgraduate students who had completed their programme. 80% of respondents rated dissertation supervision as 'Very Good' or 'Good'. This relatively high rate of satisfaction is also reflected in the comments. There was high praise for individual supervisors, though a number of students requested more engagement with the supervisor.

## Q7: Academic support and guidance
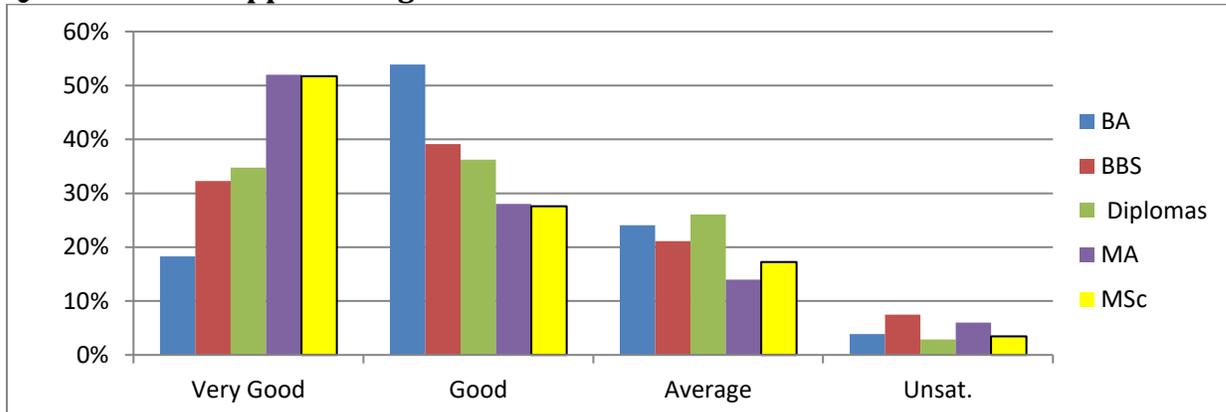
Interpretation of the results

Over 74% of respondents rated academic support as either 'Very Good' or 'Good'. There appears to have been some confusion about the purpose of this question, with many respondents using the opportunity to praise particular lecturers.

There were many positive comments praising individual lecturers, while some students commented that some lecturers were better than others at answering queries. There were also suggestions for improvement around the provision of more supporting classes in the regional centres. However, more useful data would have been generated if the question was clearer and if it was targeted primarily at distance students.

Q8: Online resources, namely Moodle

Graduates
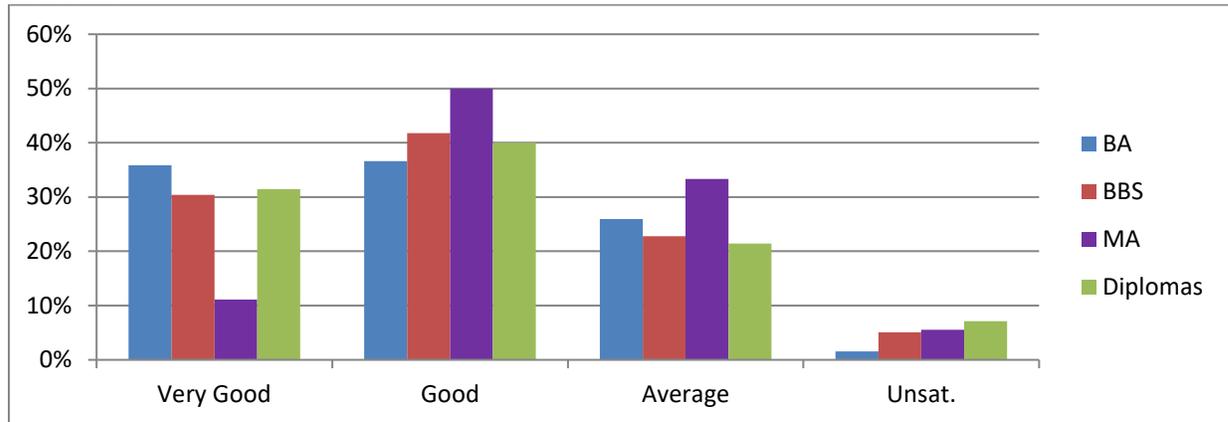
'Live' Students
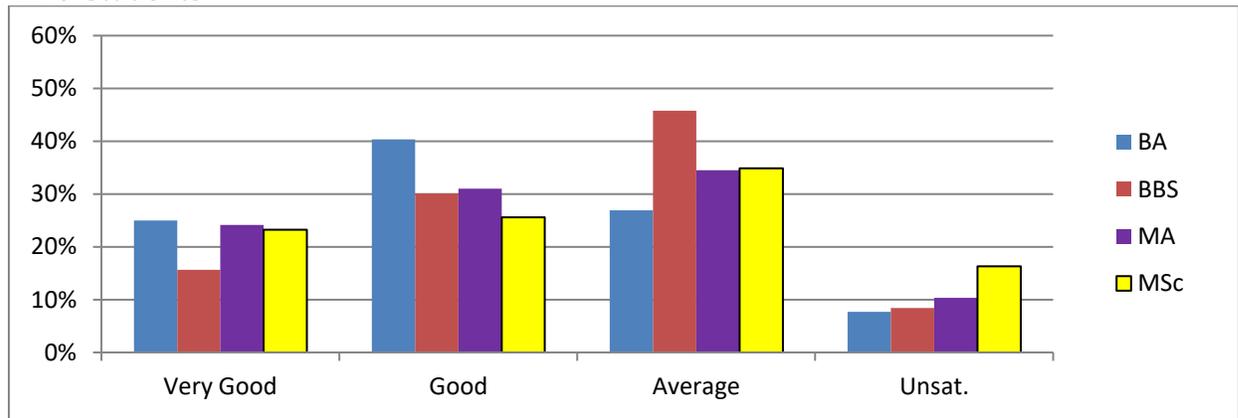
Interpretation of the results

Just over 60% of respondents rated Moodle 'Very Good' or 'Good'. While still a majority rating, this was much lower than the positive ratings in other areas.

There were many suggestions for improvement spread fairly evenly across 'live' students and graduates. Generally, these can be categorised as follows:
- ➢ Both 'live' students and graduates wanted lectures to be shown online and greater use of digital technologies;
- ➢ A number of them indicated that they would have used Moodle if the IPA had promoted it more among the teaching staff and students;
- ➢ A small percentage asked to submit and receive assignment grades over Moodle

Many of these commentators were appreciative of the IPA's practice of uploading lecturers' slides and notes after a weekend seminar or tutorial. They were also very responsive to the short instruction videos featuring IPA lecturers (accounting, law) and, particularly, some lecturers' practice of holding live online Q&A sessions.

Q9: Efficiency in administrative queries

Graduates
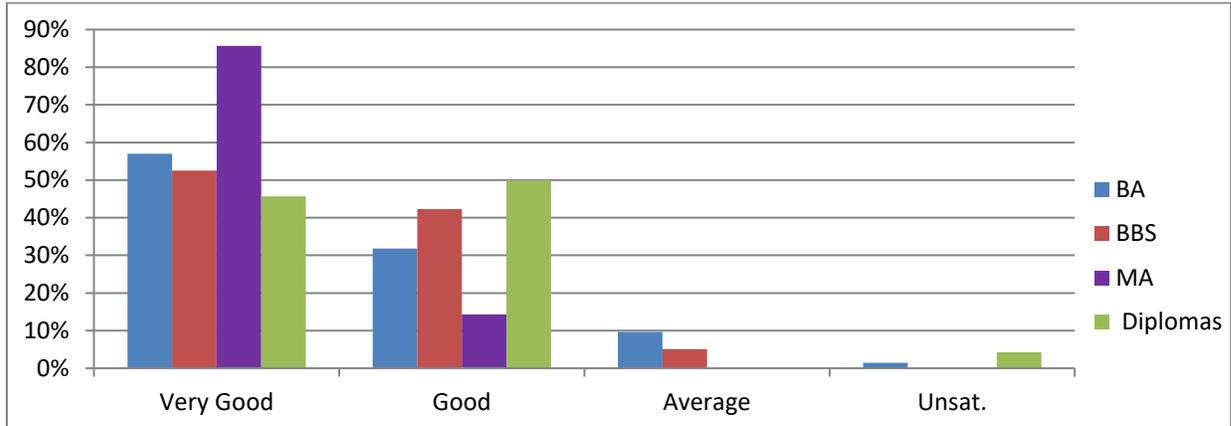
'Live' students
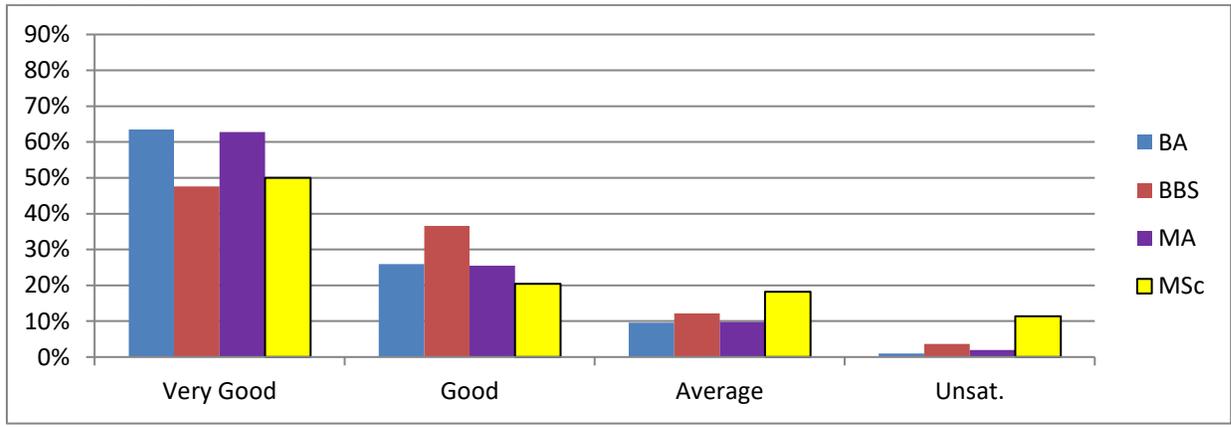
Interpretation of the results

86% of respondents across the courses rated the administration as 'Very Good' or 'Good'. There were a few minor issues such as slow responses and notification failures, but these were related to individual circumstances rather than structural ones. Incidentally, these surveys were conducted when resources were very constrained. In this context, the positive satisfaction rate is encouraging.

Q10: Any other comments or feedback

<u>Summary of results</u>
There were 117 comments in this section.
There were 73 positive comments, which focused particularly on the helpfulness of the IPA staff and on the benefit of the IPA course to their career.
There were 22 negative comments of a general nature, ranging from complaints about the food at weekends to general dissatisfaction with the IPA.

The remaining 22 were suggestions for improvement for the IPA ranging from the general to the specific, such as: promoting itself more as a centre of educational and public service excellence; partnering with government departments in programme delivery; making more use of digital technologies; on-line exam results; standardised presentation of notes & handouts from lecturers; more annual surveys; use of final year students to give talks to first year students.