ANU-UPNG Partnership: 2022 Semester 2 Report

30 January 2023

Name of Organisation: Development Policy Centre, Australian National University

Project title: ANU-UPNG Partnership

Project objectives: To help realise a stronger UPNG School of Business and Public Policy, as well as a deeper and lasting relationship with ANU.

Reporting period: Second half of 2022

Table of Contents

Implementation progress – second half of 2022

Stream 1: Strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience

Faculty changes

Andrew Anton Mako joined the Partnership team as Visiting Lecturer/Project Coordinator in September. He is based in Port Moresby (POM) and will start teaching in Semester 1 2023. Andrew completed his undergraduate studies in economics at UPNG and graduated from the ANU Master of International and Development Economics in 2012. He was a Research Fellow at the National Research Institute (2012-14) before moving to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as Economic Officer.

Dr Toan Nguyen joined the Partnership in November and delivered a MEPP course in Trimester III 2022. He will be teaching in person at UPNG in Trimester 1 2023. Dr Nguyen is a Research Fellow at the Development Policy Centre, working on labour economics and migration. Toan has held academic appointments at the University of Queensland and Curtin University.

Maholopa Laveil, the first recipient of the ANU Scholarship to work as a Lecturer at UPNG, is the first recipient of the KW Taylor Pacific Research Award granted by the Lowy Institute. In November 2022, Maholopa commenced his research on economic resilience and development in the Pacific region with the Lowy Institute. He is currently based in Sydney and is expected to return to UPNG in 2024.

Teaching

Five ANU lecturers and four ANU-trained lecturers taught 15 courses with 156 female and 379 male students (535 in total) in Semester 2, Trimester II and Trimester III. All courses were taught in person, with the exception of two courses delivered online. A list of all courses taught is provided below.

No.	Course	Lecturer	Year Level	Students			
				Female	Male	People with a disability	Total
Trimester II (May-Aug)							
1	Issues in Public Sector Management	Nematullah Bizhan	PG1	8	33	0	41
2	Qualitative Research Methods (online)	Melanie Pill	PG1	9	31	0	40
3	Macroeconomic Analysis and Policy	Martin Davies	PG1	8	32	0	40
4	Global Economic and Policy Issues	Eugene Ezebilo	PG2	8	17	0	25
Semester II (July-Dec)							
5	Monetary Economics	Kelly Samof	UG4	8	20	0	28

#	Course	Lecturer	Level				
6	Principles of Macroeconomics	Jollanda Mathew	UG2	34	63	0	97
7	Labour Economics	Jollanda Mathew	UG4	8	19	0	27
8	Advanced Macroeconomics	Maholopa Laveil	UG3	11	20	1	31
9	Quantitative Economics II	Maholopa Laveil	UG3	10	19	1	29
10	Applied Economics and Business Statistics	Kelly Samof	UG3	10	18	0	28
11	Economic development	Bobby Kunda	UG3	13	17	0	30
12	Policy Monitoring and Evaluations (online)	Peter Graves	UG4	15	22	0	37
Trimester III (Aug-Dec)							
13	Applied Cost-benefit Analysis	Toan Nguyen	PG1	7	36	0	43
14	Development Thinking and Policy	Nematullah Bizhan	PG1	7	32	0	39
Yearlong course							
15	MEPP research papers	Lawrence Sause and Nematullah Bizhan	PG2	1	4	0	5
	TOTAL/AVERAGE			**157**	**383**	**2**	**540**

Each course was evaluated, with the exception of two, and the average course and lecturer scores were 4.1 and 4.2, respectively out of 5.

MEPP

The Master of Economics and Public Policy (MEPP) is a major focus of the project. ANU staff teach into the project, supervise research students, and help coordinate the program.

Key progress and challenges:

- Although some students have withdrawn since Trimester I, there were over 40 students enrolled in total for Trimester II and III, beating our 2021 record. This shows increasing and continuing demand since the inception of the program with only nine students in 2017, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years.
- This increasing demand has posed some challenges, especially on lecturers. With the increased teaching load, maintaining the quality of teaching and sustainability of the current format of the program remain a challenge. As in Trimester I, additional tutoring and marking support was provided to lecturers in Trimester II and III as a temporary measure. Despite the challenges faced, the average scores of MEPP course and lecturer evaluations remained high – 4.4 and 4.5 respectively out of 5. The following possible long-term solutions have been discussed with UPNG, however, they are yet to be implemented:
    - Limiting the number of students to approximately 40, and
    - Introducing an additional merit-based selection process.

As it takes time for UPNG to implement changes, it is importance that the Partnership can continue providing the support for teaching and program coordination in the coming years.

- A research grant of K1,500 was introduced by the Partnership in 2021. For the 2022/2023 round, research proposals from five students were approved and they have received the first instalment (K750) to commence their research. ANU and UPNG researchers are supervising the students.

MEPP class of 2022

Initiatives to improve teaching

- **Lecturer and tutor guidance:** The four returned ANU Scholarship recipients were mentored by ANU lecturers, as were three economics tutors. We are currently conducting some consultations with the lecturers to see how we can best provide guidance to them in 2023.

- **Tutor induction workshop:** Due to the delayed start of Semester 1 and staff changes within the Partnership, the tutor induction workshop was not held in 2022. We are currently reviewing the workshop format to implement it as part of the 2023 program.

- **Mobile internet:** As the lecturers were forced to shift their teaching online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Partnership provided a monthly data allowance of 50GB to the ANU supported lecturers and tutors to help with online teaching. This support was provided from 2020 to August 2022. As most of the courses were delivered in-person in Semester 2, this support ceased in August 2022. We are reviewing the need for this support for tutors who will be assisting online teaching and other project activities in 2023.

Improving the student experience

- **Film discussion nights:** UPNG Inspired has been one of the key activities of the Partnership. Each screening during the semester showcases selected films on various issues in PNG. UPNG economics lecturer Kelly Samof continued to lead the coordination of the UPNG Inspired in Semester 2 2022. All screenings were well attended by students and staff. As in

Semester 1, 2023/2024 ANU Scholarship recipient, David Poka continued assisting Kelly with the event operation.

- **Student associations:** The Partnership provides financial support to the Economics Student Society (ESS) and Public Policy and Management Student Association (PPMSA) up to K5,000 per semester (K2,500 each). Both ESS and PPMSA continued their activities in Semester 2, some of which were supported by the Partnership.

PPMSA president, Clyde Mbai speaking at the End of Year function.

- **Alumni association:** As part of the Partnership's effort to maintain contact with UPNG alumni, the Partnership is continuing to promote and expand the Partnership's economics alumni Facebook page for recent graduates. A separate WhatsApp group and LinkedIn page are also being used to further expand this effort. The three channels are used as platforms for sharing information about economic research, job opportunities, and other outreach activities.

Stream 2: Collaborative research and outreach

Books

The edited volume, *Papua New Guinea: Government, Economy and Society*, was published by ANU Press in March 2022, and launched by PNG Prime Minister Hon. James Marape at the 2022 PNG Update in October. The book is free to download online (https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/pacific/papua-new-guinea-government-economy-society).

(L to R) Professor Helen Sullivan, Dean of the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific; Robert Igara, Chancellor of UPNG; Hon. James Marape, Prime Minister of PNG; Professor Frank K. Griffin, Vice-Chancellor of UPNG; Jon Philp, Australian High Commissioner to PNG

A full draft has been prepared of PNG economic history book, *Struggle, reform, boom and bust: An economic history of Papua New Guinea since independence.*

State Fragility: Case Studies and Comparisons, edited By Nematullah Bizhan, which includes a chapter on PNG, was published in September 2022: https://www.routledge.com/State-Fragility-Case-Studies-and-Comparisons/Bizhan/p/book/9781032286143/. In November, Dr Bizhan delivered a seminar on the challenges of state fragility and key lessons learned based on the findings of the book at the Papua New Guinea National Research Institute (NRI) in Port Moresby.

(L to R) Dr Osborne Sanida, Director of the PNG NRI, Dr Nematullah Bizhan, and Wilson Thompson, Chairman of the PNG NRI

PNG Central Banking Act Review: second phase

ANU project director, Stephen Howes has been part of the three-person Independent Advisory Group to review the PNG Central Bank Act since 2021. Research support to the review is being provided by both ANU and UPNG economics staff.

The second phase of the review focuses on the financial sector, including the commercial banks and both the superannuation and insurance sectors. The second phase issues paper was published in August (https://pngcentralbankactiag.org/wp-content/uploads/Issues-paper-10-August-FINAL.pdf), and consultations with numerous stakeholders in the financial sector occurred in late 2022.

The Partnership continued to maintain the Review website: https://pngcentralbankactiag.org/.

ANU-UPNG seminar series

The month seminar series co-hosted by ANU and UPNG was introduced in 2020 to provide a platform for research supported through the Partnership and to invite guest speakers who are also working on issues in PNG. We continued the series in Semester 2, and held four hybrid seminars across two venues – ANU Crawford School of Public Policy and UPNG School of Business and Public Policy. The events were well attended with more than 60 registrations for each seminar. We will recommence this monthly seminar series in February 2023.

We were pleased to include a seminar delivered by ANU's Emeritus Professor William Maley on 'Institutional sources of cooperation, competition and conflict in developing countries'.

Emeritus Professor William Maley presenting in the September ANU-UPNG seminar

PNG Update

Organised by the UPNG and ANU, the annual PNG Update is the premier forum for the discussion of research and analysis relating to contemporary economic and public policy issues in PNG.

The 2022 PNG Update was held at UPNG SBPP on 20–21 October, with the theme, 'Pathways to development amid COVID-19 and beyond PNG's 10th election'.

A separate report for the conference is attached as Annex 1, which includes the evaluation survey results. Key highlights include the following:

- The conference was opened by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Honourable James Marape MP. Other keynote speakers included:
    - Robert Igara, Chair, Independent Advisory Group on the Central Banking Act
    - His Excellency Mr Jon Philp, Australian High Commissioner to PNG
    - Professor Frank Griffin, Vice Chancellor, UPNG, and
    - Professor Helen Sullivan, Dean, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.
- The conference was attended by over 700 attendees across two days.
- Participants found the 2022 PNG Update to be of high quality overall – the average rate of 4.4 out of 5.
- We had a strong representation of Papua New Guinean speakers and authors – 84% of presenters and 79% of authors were from PNG.
- The number of female presenters declined compared to 2019, and it will be an area of improvement for 2023.
- The Asia Foundation provided support for nine PNG and Pacific Island postgraduate students to travel to and present at the conference.

PNG Project
Research is being pursued under the headings of economics, governance and elections, service delivery and gender.

SBPP librarian
The project continued to fund a UPNG librarian in 2022 to maintain a dedicated library in the SBPP building. Over 3,000 books are now available for more than 500 library membership holders, which include both students and staff.

PNG Databases
During Semester 2, we kept our PNG databases up to date.

- **PNG Budget Database** (https://devpolicy.crawford.anu.edu.au/png-project/png-budget-database)**:** The database was updated with the 2021 Final Budget Outcome. The sixth ANU Scholarship recipient Kingtau Mambon worked on updating the database as a Greg Taylor Scholar during the semester break. The Greg Taylor Scholarship is provided to PNG and Pacific scholars to undertake research at the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy as part of the Development Policy Centre on a topic relating to the economic development of PNG and the Pacific.
- **PNG MP Database** (https://devpolicy.org/pngmps/)**:** This database was comprehensively updated during the 2022 elections, and is being further developed to provide additional data on PNG's MPs.
- **PNG Elections Database** (https://devpolicy.org/pngelections/)**:** To be updated once the PNG Electoral Commission has made the necessary information publicly available for the 2022 elections.
- **PNG Economic Database** (http://devpolicy.org/pngeconomic/)**:** The database was updated to include 2021 values for series including GDP, CPI, and fiscal indicators from the 2022 Budget and 2021 FBO, and 2020 values for the balance of payments.
- **PNG District Level Database**: No update was needed.

PhD supervision and examination, and MEPP research supervision

Dr Grant Walton is supervising a UPNG PhD candidate. Dr Nematullah Bizhan, Dr Walton and Dr Terence Wood are supervising five MEPP students' research projects.

Research workshops and training

- **Reading groups:** This series of reading groups was introduced in 2021 to provide UPNG students and staff members with an opportunity for discussions outside the classroom. Unlike other research workshops, reading groups are small and informal, and aim to have a high level of participation and engagement from attendees. Maholopa Laveil continued to lead the coordination of the reading groups, with assistance from Jollanda Mathew. Maholopa and Jollanda are both former ANU Scholarship recipients and current UPNG lecturers.

  The two reading groups were held in a hybrid format (online and in person) in Semester 2, focusing on political instability in PNG. The reading groups were attended by UPNG students and invited ANU researchers. The series is planned to continue in 2023, however in a different format. Based on the feedback from the lecturers and attendees, we believe that greater focus is needed to help students develop their reading and analytical skills.

- **Training:** We combined two workshops that we planned to hold in Semester 2 and organised one comprehensive training session for UPNG research students, many of whom are also public servants in PNG government departments. The first part of the workshop focused on qualitative research methods and free data sources with the aim to help students become familiar with analysing economics, budgets, elections, along with other available PNG datasets. The second part provided training on cost-benefit analysis in Excel. Although we initially planned to hold STATA training, it had become apparent through consultations with research students that they want to further develop their skills with Excel because it can be directly applied to their work and research projects. The feedback from the workshop participants has been positive and we plan to continue the training in 2023.

Research collaboration and mentoring

This occurs via our research projects, such as the book, visiting lecturers and via the co-authored Devpolicy Blogs.

Outreach

- **The Devpolicy Blog:** Devpolicy.org is the online public outreach portal for the Development Policy Centre at ANU. In the second semester, Devpolicy.org continued to publish a number of posts related to or directly on PNG. Many of those blogs were authored or co-authored by Papua New Guineans. These blog posts are widely read in PNG, and those focusing on PNG are often republished in PNG newspapers. The Blog Incentive Scheme continued in the second semester to encourage blog submissions from UPNG staff and students and other PNG writers (authors are paid K200 per published blog).

- **PNG Project News:** The newsletter provided regular Partnership-related updates every four weeks during Semester 2 and continued to highlight PNG-related research, blogs and events, and currently has over 1,300 subscribers.

Stream 3: Student and faculty exchanges in economics and public policy

Masters' students

- **ANU scholarship:** The scholarship program supports UPNG graduates in economics through postgraduate study of a Master of International and Development Economics (MIDEC) at ANU. Five ANU scholarship recipients have completed their studies at ANU and returned to lecture in economics at UPNG. Four are now working as lecturers; tragically, one died. Three out of four lecturers are now on permanent contracts. The sixth recipient, Kingtau Mambon successfully completed the first year of the Master of International and Development Economics (MIDEC). The two recipients for the 2023/2024 round, David Poka and Anna Kapil, have successfully completed one year of tutoring at UPNG, and safely arrived in Canberra to commence their study at ANU in early January 2023. We have finalised the selection process for the 2024/2025 round, and the ninth recipient, Masidah Tonaim, will start tutoring at UPNG in Semester 1 2023.

- **UPNG MEPP scholarship:** The Partnership started providing this scholarship to tutors in UPNG's Public Policy Management (PPM) Division in 2020 with the aim to build up the teaching capacity in the division. Recipients study the Master of Economics and Public Policy (MEPP) at UPNG, and upon the completion of study, they continue teaching as a lecturer or tutor in the Division. The first two recipients, Kenneth Baliwasa and Moses Sakai, successfully completed the program and graduated in April 2022. They are currently teaching at SBPP. The 2022/2023 recipients, Raymond Dorum and Loretta Dilu, completed the first year successfully. We have finalised the selection process for the 2023/2024 round, and Issabelle Vilau has been selected as the recipient. Issabelle was one of the participants in the 2020 ANU Summer School and she has been tutoring at the PPM Division.

ANU Summer School

The ANU-UPNG Summer School provides an opportunity for five of the best third-year students from the Division of Economics and five of the best third-year students from Public Policy Management each year to attend an intensive program of study at ANU. Ten candidates (five females and five males) were selected to participate in the 2023 ANU Summer School. We spent Semester 2 preparing for their travel and to redevelop the program based on the lessons learnt from past years. Although there were some issues, such as the delays in passport issuing and rejections of the students' Australian visa applications, ten students safely arrived in Canberra in time for the program commencing in January 2023.

Stream 4: Project management

Partnership management arrangements

The new Project Coordinator/Visiting Lecturer Andrew Anton Mako joined the team in September, and played a critical role in the preparation of the ANU Summer School.

Management priorities

Our priority for Semester 2 was ensuring the safety of staff members and visitors in PNG. During and after the 2022 National General Elections, there were some unexpected security issues and concerns for staff and students. Partnership staff maintained regular contact with the Abt Security team to

ensure the safety of PNG-based staff members. For the PNG Update, we also worked closely with the Abt Security team to ensure the guests' safe and smooth travel and attendance.

With new staff, Andrew Anton Mako and Dr Toan Nguyen, joining the Partnership during Semester 2, facilitating a smooth on-boarding process was another area of focus for Semester 2. Clear guideline and information sharing helped this process.

We continued to have monthly meetings with the UPNG team during the semester to facilitate effective communication and collaboration.

Performance

Economics exam

ANU has run an annual exam in economics at UPNG since 2013. One of its aims is to measure the effect of the Partnership on student performance over time, especially from 2015 when ANU lecturers started teaching economics at UPNG.

The exams test basic math, microeconomics, and macroeconomics. As of 2014, the exams have been designed to be comparable over time by retaining this structure of 'math, micro, macro' questions. The standard is roughly comparable to what would be expected of second year undergraduate students at the ANU.

This year's exam showed a significant decline in performance on the part of the UPNG SBPP students relative to 2021, and a major deviation from the trend of score improvements over the life of the Partnership. The results are discussed in detail in Annex 2 attached.

The relatively low performance in this year's exam has been discussed in detail between the ANU and UPNG teams. A new undergraduate foundation course, Applied Business Maths, will be introduced at UPNG in 2023 to improve quantitative skills. There was also a substantial decrease in exam participation compared to 2020 and 2021, and a clash with another exam on the same day. In 2022, with the turnover in staff, we did not give the exam sufficient profile. We will correct this next year.

Reporting against partnership objectives

The project judges its progress against several important indicators as set out in each annual plan. Performance against these using a 'traffic light' rating system is summarised below. The rating considers the fact that many functions, such as holding events were constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions.

INDICATOR	RATING	COMMENTS
Strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience		
ANU lecturers in place and teaching at UPNG (in person or virtually)		Australia-based lecturers continued teaching online as needed with minimal disruption.
Online lecturing		Semester 2 and Trimester II and III were successfully completed with few technical issues.
Teaching evaluations		The lecturers and tutors managed to maintain high evaluation scores. Average course score of 4.1 and lecturer score of 4.2.
ANU-UPNG annual exam in economics		The exam was conducted with 27 students attending. The results show a significant decline in performance. A greater effort to improve students' quantitative skills is needed.

Induction and mentoring programs		The tutor induction workshop was not held in 2022. ANU lecturers provided teaching and mentoring support to four UPNG lecturers and three UPNG tutors.
MEPP		More than 40 students enrolled in Trimester II and III 2022, beating the 2021 record. The program is running well.
Undergraduate programs		Positive feedback from course evaluations.
Collaborative Research and Outreach		
Research outputs		*Papua New Guinea: Government, Economy and Society* was published in March and launched by PNG PM James Marape at the PNG Update in November. The final draft of the PNG economic history book is under review.
ANU-UPNG research collaboration		Both major books, seminar series and other smaller projects show a high level of collaboration.
Seminars/workshops/presentations at ANU/UPNG		Four ANU-UPNG seminars, one workshop, and one major conference.
Student and faculty exchanges in economics and public policy		
ANU scholarships		The current ANU master's student successfully completed the first year of study. Four other ANU Scholarship students are now lecturing at UPNG. The two ANU scholarship recipients for the 2023/2024 have completed one year of tutoring at UPNG, and arrived in Canberra to commence their study at ANU in early January 2023.
Program management		
COVID-19 safety		COVID-19 action plan under implementation.
Adequate M&E and risk management		Timely reporting. Risk management adequate.

Challenges, risks and lessons learnt

Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years, the Partnership managed to transition back to its full capacity in 2022, in terms of staff based in PNG and key project activities. Three full-time staff are now based in Port Moresby at any one time, and we have recommenced key activities that were on hold due to COVID-19, including the ANU Scholarship, PNG Update conference, and ANU Summer School.

Building on our experience in the last two years, we have also been able to incorporate online teaching into regular course deliveries, which offers the flexibility needed when teaching is disrupted by unexpected events. We plan to continue to offer the online teaching delivery as needed in 2023.

Overall, the project is going well and on track to completed key deliverables. However, some risks and ongoing challenges remain:

UPNG

- MEPP students are progressing well in their study, however, ongoing close attention to the progress of individual students is needed.
- While the increased number of students enrolled in MEPP is positive, the selection process needs to be tightened to maintain the sustainability and quality of the program. Long-term solutions are yet to be implemented.
- Many reforms are needed at UPNG, and they are not happening or not happening fast enough. For example, delays in the salary payments of temporary lecturers cause high levels of stress and undermine morale of lecturers. As discussed above, the selection process for MEPP also needs to be revised.
- Safety for women, and vulnerability to sexual harassment at UPNG, continues to be an issue that needs to be addressed by university management.
- The relatively low performance in the annual economics exam needs to be addressed in the coming year.

The Partnership

- With Partnership staff returning to PNG, it has been important to keep updated on the security and safety conditions in Port Moresby, particularly during the elections period. We will continue to maintain good communication with the Abt Security team for support.

Annex 1: 2022 PNG Update – post-conference analysis

Alyssa Leng, Arichika Okazaki, Grant Walton

Introduction

The 2022 PNG Update was held on 20-21 October at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) School of Business and Public Policy (SBPP). The theme of this year's Update was: Pathways to Development Amid COVID-19 and Beyond PNG's 10th election. The two-day conference was launched by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Honourable James Marape MP. Other keynote speakers included:

- Robert Igara, Chair, Independent Advisory Group on the Central Banking Act.
- His Excellency Mr Jon Philp, Australian High Commissioner to PNG;
- Professor Frank Griffin, Vice Chancellor, UPNG;
- Professor Helen Sullivan, Dean, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.

The conference included sessions on climate change, COVID-19, economic policy, the 2022 elections, women in the workforce, public sector governance, corruption and policing, and gender, family and sexual violence among many others. Special plenary sessions examined Chinese investment in PNG, the Papua LNG and modernising PNG's Central Banking Act. It featured the launch of *Papua New Guinea Government, Economy and Society*, a newly published book edited by the ANU's Professor Stephen Howes and Professor Lekshmi Pillai from UPNG's School of Business and Public Policy. The book was officially launched by the Prime Minister, the Honourable James Marape MP.

The annual event is jointly organised by the UPNG's School of Business and Public Policy and the ANU's Development Policy Centre. UPNG management organises most of the site logistics for the Update, with student volunteers and departments across the university helping with preparation and running it. The Department of Hospitality and Tourism organises catering. In 2022, the media and ICT team at UPNG organised media and promotion, recorded sessions and streamed keynote sessions live to Facebook.

Funding was provided by the PNG-Australia Partnership, with assistance for travel from The Asia Foundation and additional support from the National Gaming Control Board.

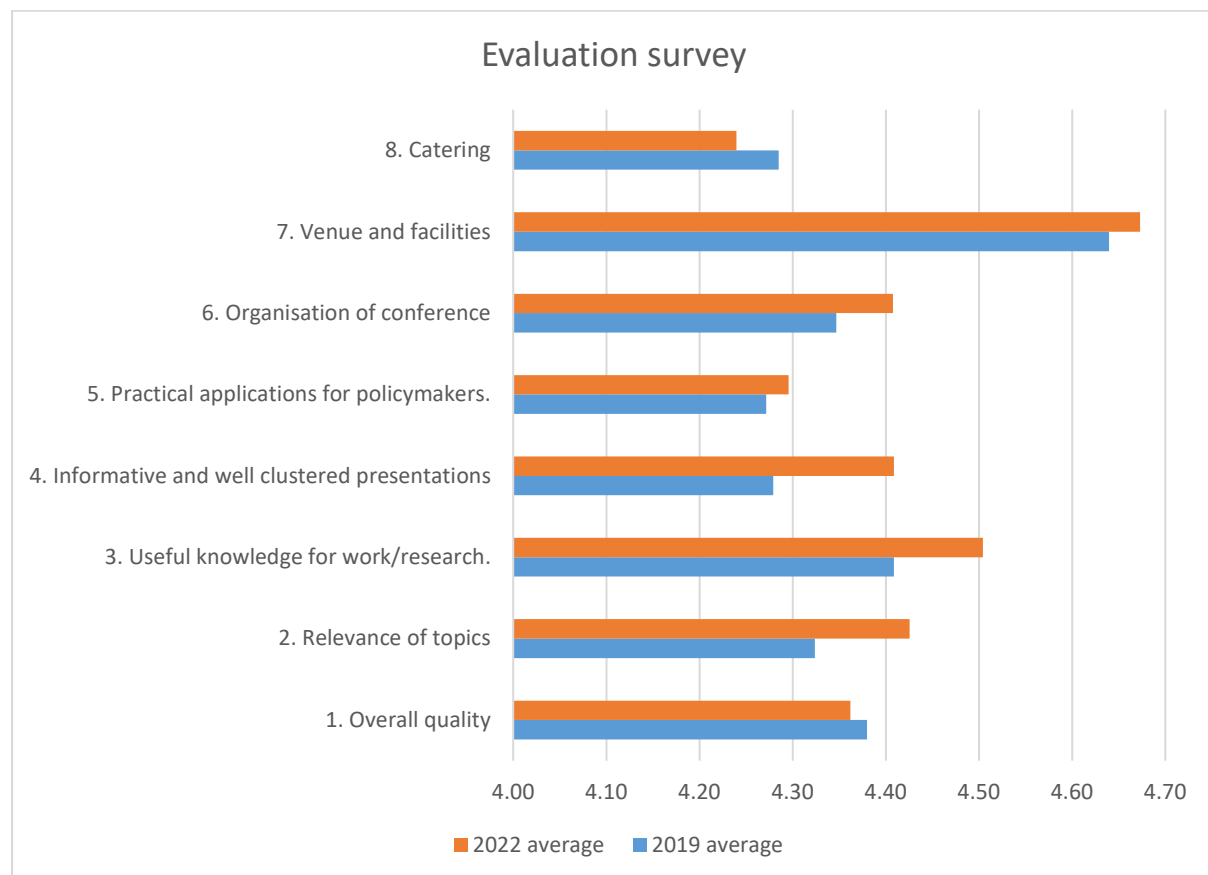In total 750 people attended the conference in 2022.

Overall the event was considered a success. This is evidenced in the following sections of this report which examine feedback from participants and organisers. The final section features photos of the event and key takeaways for 2023.

Evaluation

This year, 116 feedback and evaluation forms were received from participants. The following results are drawn from these evaluation forms, which featured eight quantitative questions asking participants to provide a numerical rating, and six qualitative questions asking participants to provide a comment.
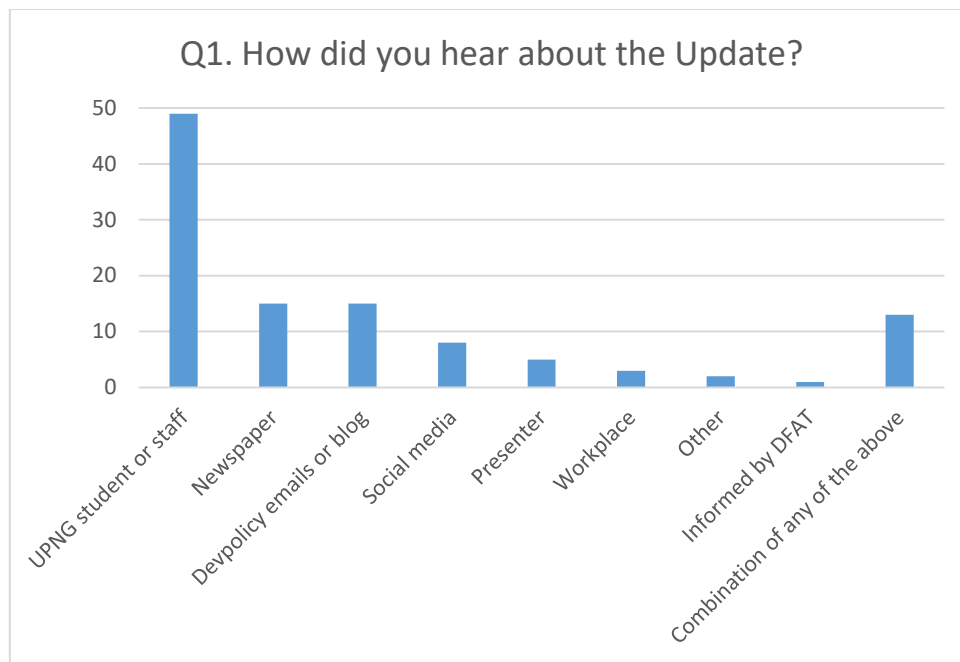
Participants found the 2022 PNG Update to be of high quality overall. On a scale of 1 to 5 (very poor to excellent), average ratings across all areas and days of the conference were all above 4. Participants

were most impressed by the venue and facilities, and the usefulness of knowledge gained. Catering and practical applications of research for policymakers scored the lowest.
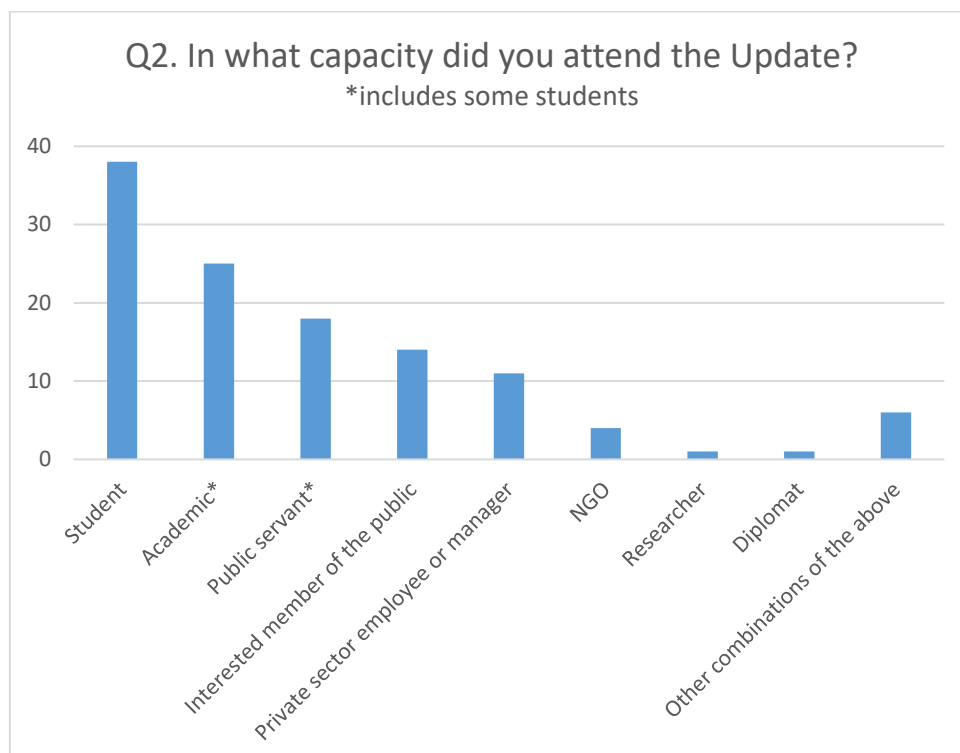

Scores improved relative to 2019 (the previous year in which the conference was held) across all questions except for overall quality, which registered a very marginal decline, and catering, which fell more noticeably. The relevance, usefulness and information of presentations increased noticeably relative to 2019, signalling that the content of the conference itself was well received.
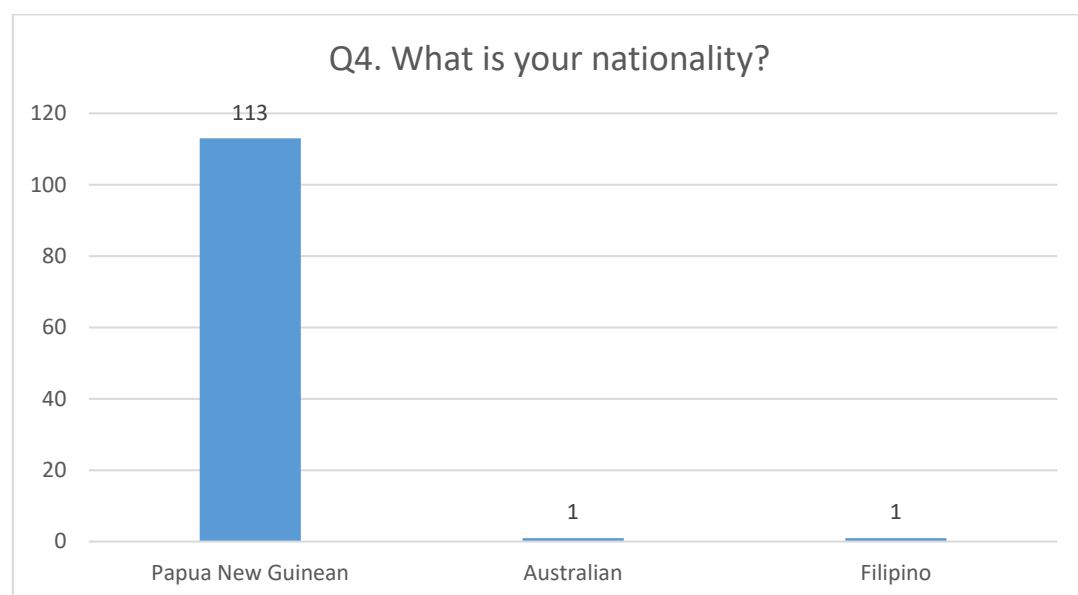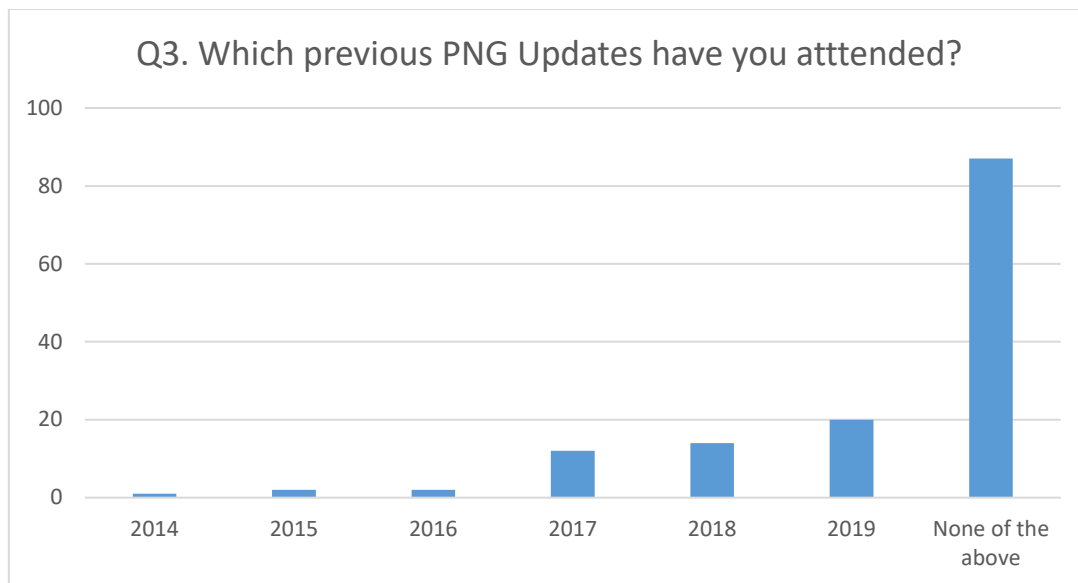
Most participants who filled in evaluation surveys heard about the PNG Update through UPNG students or staff. Publicity through newspapers, Devpol emails/blogs and other social media channels were also relatively influential.

Q1. How did you hear about the Update?

In terms of attendees, students made up the largest proportion of participants. Academics and public servants were also particularly well represented, with a number of these also categorising themselves as students. A not insignificant number of private sector employees and other members of the public also attended.

Q2. In what capacity did you attend the Update?
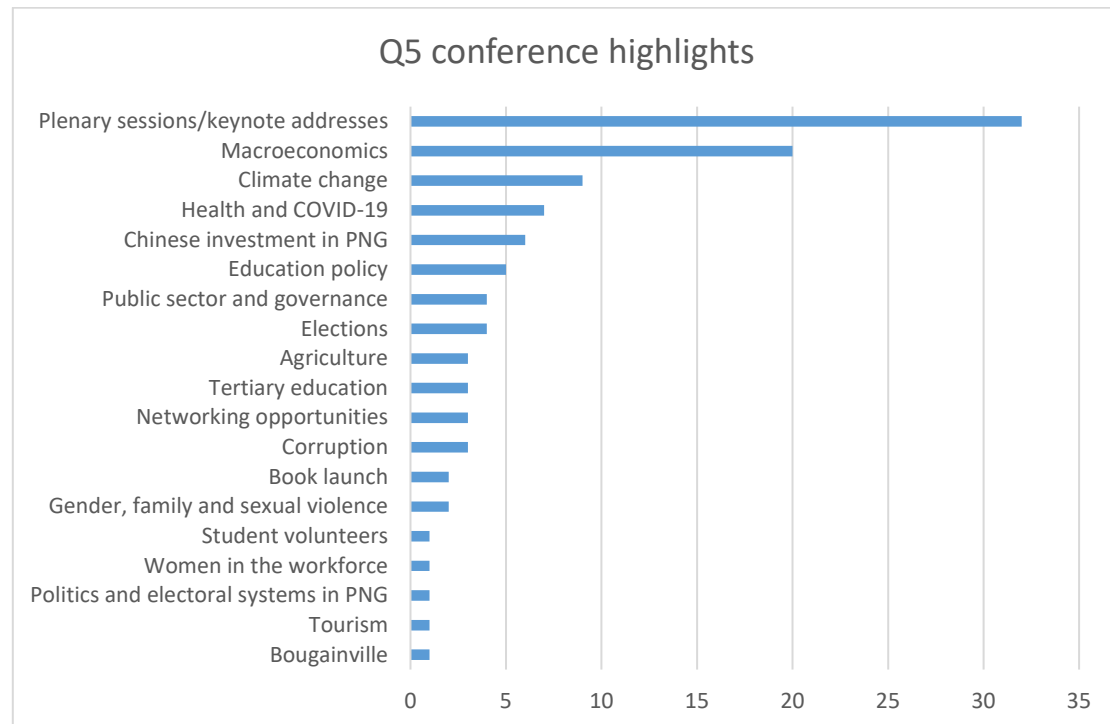*includes some students

Most participants who filled in evaluation forms had not previously attended a PNG Update. One reason for this could be previous attendees being predominantly undergraduate students, who may now have graduated and are no longer attending the conference, given the last Update was held in 2019. Despite the three year break between conferences, there are still a number of participants who previously attended, showing there is consistent interest over the years. Attendee nationality was predominantly Papua New Guinean, with just one Australian and one Filipino filling out the evaluation form.

Q3. Which previous PNG Updates have you atttended?

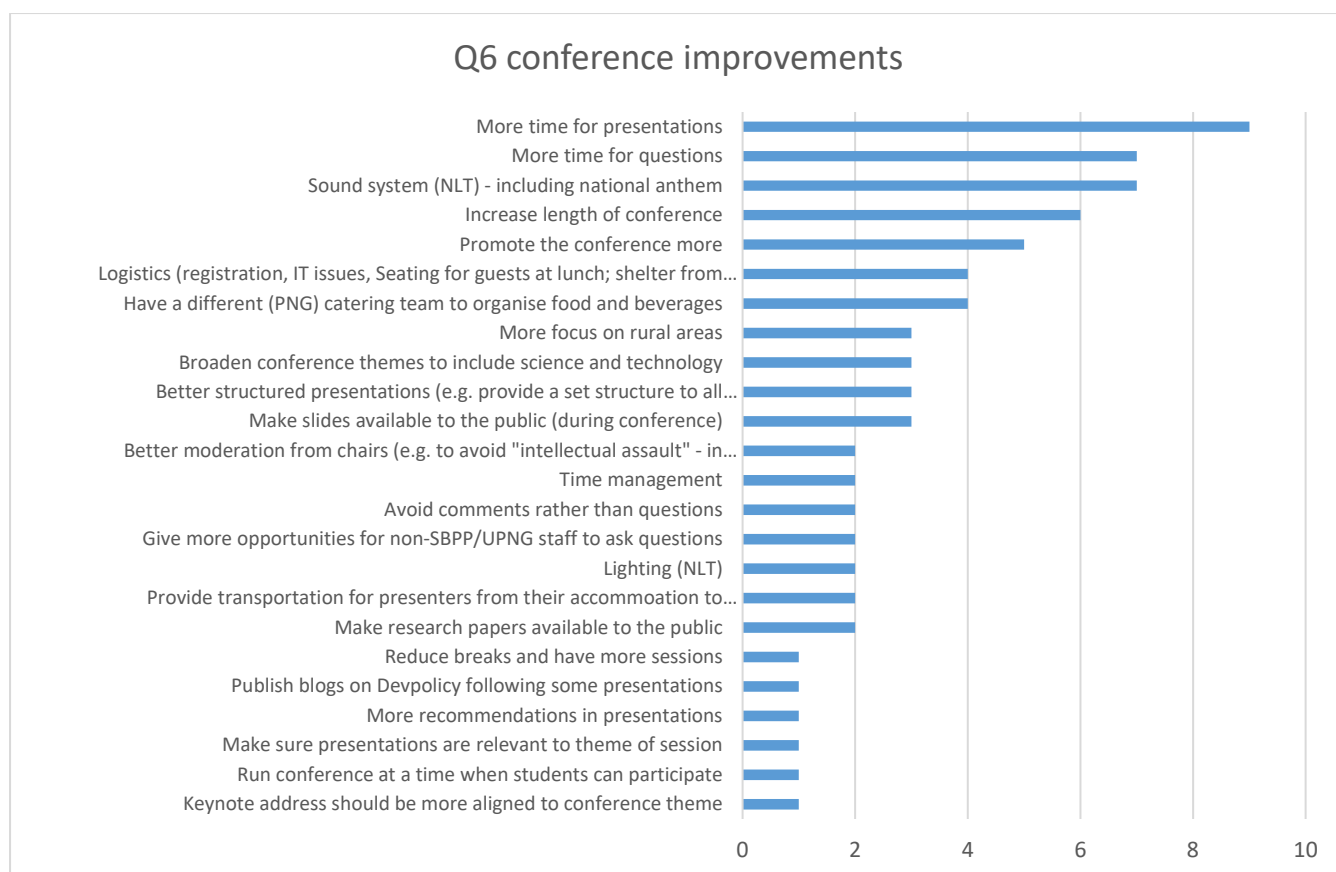Q4. What is your nationality?

The part of the conference that participants most enjoyed were the plenary sessions. The PM's address was very warmly received and specifically noted in comments written by many participants. The central bank reform address given by Chancellor Robert Igara was also mentioned several times, as were Professor Helen Sullivan's and Vice Chancellor Frank Griffin's keynote addresses.

Other notable highlights for participants included the paper presented on PNG LNG in the plenary session, as well as the parallel session 1B Economic Issues. Both were mentioned several times in comments by participants. There was also broad interest across many topics including climate change, health and Chinese investment in PNG. This suggests that while economics remains a popular component of the Update, participants enjoyed the broader range of topics seen this year.

Q5 conference highlights

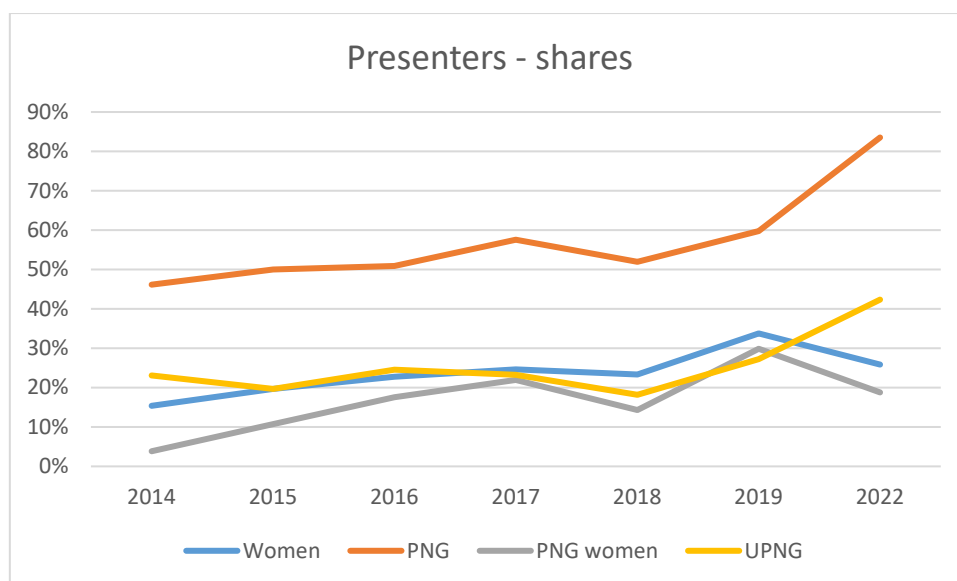| Topic	Value
Plenary sessions/keynote addresses	32
Macroeconomics	20
Climate change	9
Health and COVID-19	7
Chinese investment in PNG	6
Education policy	5
Public sector and governance	4
Elections	4
Agriculture	3
Tertiary education	3
Networking opportunities	3
Corruption	3
Book launch	2
Gender, family and sexual violence	2
Student volunteers	1
Women in the workforce	1
Politics and electoral systems in PNG	1
Tourism	1
Bougainville	1

Many improvements to the conference were suggested. The most frequently discussed issues were more time for presentations and questions. One way to take this into account in future conferences would be to move towards having three papers per session rather than four where possible. Additionally, audio and lighting issues (especially in NLT) were mentioned numerous times. Other key issues were greater promotion of the Update and logistics issues.

Q6 conference improvements

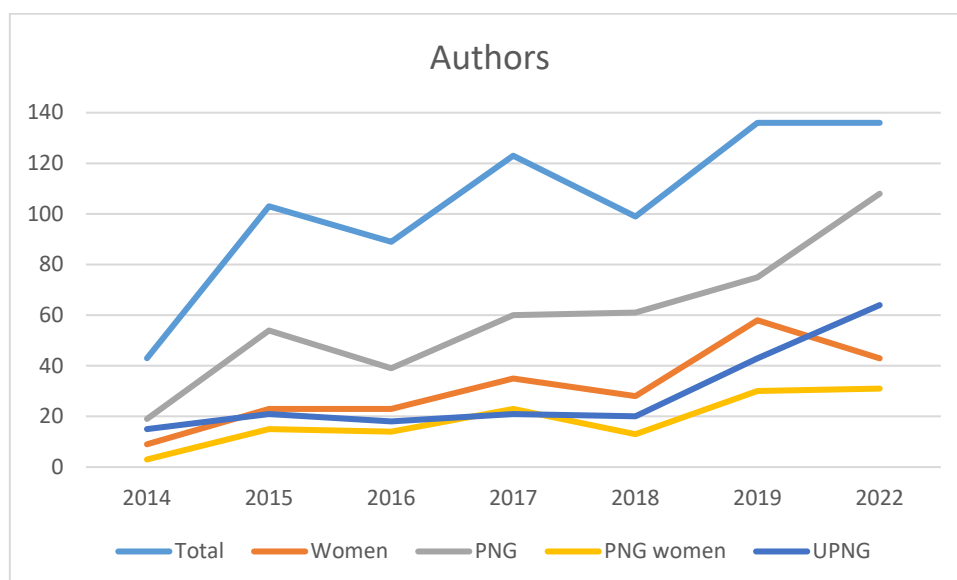| Improvement	Count
More time for presentations	9
More time for questions	7
Sound system (NLT) - including national anthem	7
Increase length of conference	6
Promote the conference more	5
Logistics (registration, IT issues, Seating for guests at lunch; shelter from…	4
Have a different (PNG) catering team to organise food and beverages	4
More focus on rural areas	3
Broaden conference themes to include science and technology	3
Better structured presentations (e.g. provide a set structure to all…	3
Make slides available to the public (during conference)	3
Better moderation from chairs (e.g. to avoid "intellectual assault" - in…	2
Time management	2
Avoid comments rather than questions	2
Give more opportunities for non-SBPP/UPNG staff to ask questions	2
Lighting (NLT)	2
Provide transportation for presenters from their accommoation to…	2
Make research papers available to the public	2
Reduce breaks and have more sessions	1
Publish blogs on Devpolicy following some presentations	1
More recommendations in presentations	1
Make sure presentations are relevant to theme of session	1
Run conference at a time when students can participate	1
Keynote address should be more aligned to conference theme	1

Analysis of presenters and authors

There were 85 presenters and 136 authors at the 2022 PNG Update. 26% of presenters and 32% of authors were female, and 84% of presenters and 79% of authors were Papua New Guinean.

The share of presenters from Papua New Guinea increased dramatically in 2022 to its highest value since the conference series began. But the proportion of female presenters, and PNG female presenters, declined this year relative to 2019. Both shares remain above their 2018 levels however, and the trends remain positive over the years. The plenary sessions were also dominated by male presenters and chairs, with some notable exceptions (particularly the Demystifying Chinese Investment in PNG session). Participation from UPNG continues to grow, with over 40% of presenters from UPNG in 2022.

Presenters - shares

The story is similar for authors. The number of authors in 2022 was the same as in 2019, the highest amount in the conference's history. While the number of Papua New Guinean authors increased significantly, the number of female authors declined relative to 2019 (though the 2022 figure remains higher than all previous years). Encouragingly, the number of Papua New Guinean women authors increased this year relative to 2019 and past years. Author representation from UPNG continues to grow significantly.

Authors

<u>Lessons learnt</u>

As outlined above, overall the conference was a success. Still, even the best conferences can do with some tweaking and improvement. Based on the survey results above and discussion that the organising committee had after the conference, the following are the key takeaways for next PNG Update.

Program

- Limit the number of presenters per session to three to allow more time for questions and discussions.
- Encourage more submissions/presentations from female researchers, especially the ones from PNG. We could do so possibly by:
    - Targeting female researchers while promoting the conference, and
    - Providing additional assistance to female presenters (e.g., travel assistance).
- Invite one or more female keynote speakers.

Promotion

- Promote the conference consistently leading up to the event days. There was no promotion in PNG between the call for papers and a few days before the conference. Newspaper seems to be one of the most effective channel, but it is costly. We could use newspapers more effectively by:
    - Setting consistent publication dates across the preparation period between the call for papers and the start of the conference, and
    - Increasing the number of ads going out while reducing the size of the ads (e.g., we could reconsider if it is necessary to include the whole program).
- Promote the call for papers by contacting other universities and research institutions directly. Only invitations to the conferences were sent out this year.

Logistics

- Conduct AV testing well in advance to avoid any issues on the event days, especially in NLT.
- Find a way to stop the sunlight from coming into NLT, so attendees can see the presentation projected.
- Review the catering menu and consider providing local/PNG food.
- Increase the response rate of the conference evaluation. We could do so by:
    - Distributing evaluation forms in the conference bag,
    - Placing collection boxes across the venue (so people can submit their forms before they leave – some people only attend part of the conference and they may not be around when the volunteers collect the forms),
    - Offering participants an option to fill out the form digitally (a QR code can be included on the nametag and conference program), and
    - Sending out the digital form to the registrants via email on the last day of the conference (if we are going to ask people to register in advance).

Prime Minister of PNG Hon. James Marape arriving at SBPP, UPNG

Prime Minister of PNG Hon. James Marape delivering an opening address

PNG Update audience

PNG Update audience asking a question

(L to R) ANU Scholarship recipients (Kelly Samof, Maholapa Laveil, Jollanda Mathew); Professor Helen Sullivan, Dean of the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific; Dr Nematullah Bzhan, Lecturer, ANU; Professor Lekshmi N. Pillai, Executive Dean of the UPNG School of Business and Public Policy

Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, His Excellency Mr Jon Philp delivering an inaugural address

UPNG and ANU staff members

Annex 2: 2022 ANU-UPNG Economics Exam Report

Alyssa Leng

5 October 2022

Introduction

This note reports on results from the latest ANU-UPNG economics exam, held in August 2022.

The ANU has run an annual exam in economics at UPNG since 2013. Student participation in this exam is voluntary. Students who sit the exam are almost exclusively 3rd or 4th year economics majors.

The purpose of the annual economics exam is threefold:

1. assist with the ranking and selection of candidates for the annual ANU-UPNG Scholarship in Economics under the Partnership;
2. provide an objective measure of the ability of a student cohort in a given year; and
3. provide a measure of the effect of ANU's partnership with UPNG on student performance over time: since 2015, ANU lecturers have been teaching economics at UPNG.

The exams test basic math, microeconomics, and macroeconomics. As of 2014, the exams have been designed to be comparable over time by retaining this structure of 'math, micro, macro' questions. The standard is roughly comparable to what would be expected of second year undergraduate students at the ANU.
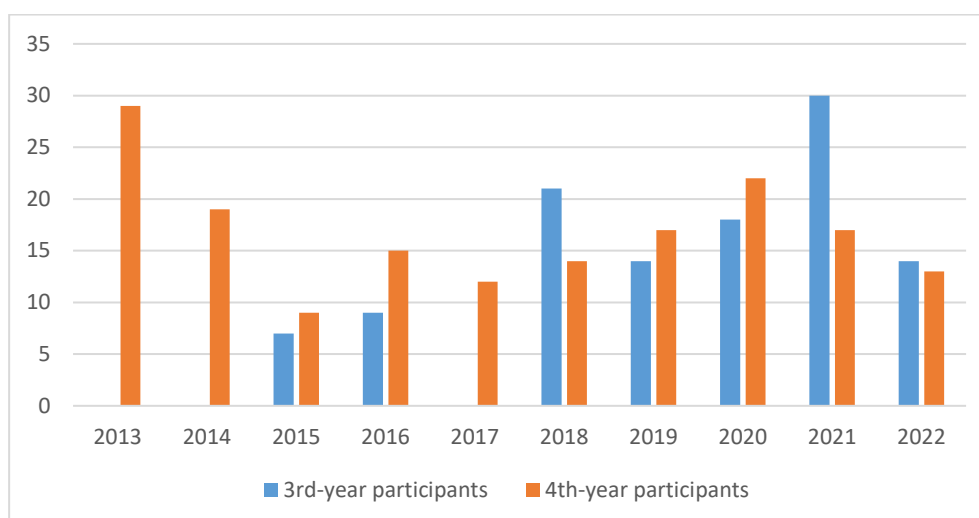
This year's exam shows a significant decline in performance on the part of the UPNG SBPP students relative to 2021, and a major deviation from the trend of score improvements over the life of the ANU-UPNG Partnership.

Comparisons to previous years

Participation

This year 27 students took the exam, comprising 13 4th year students and 14 3rd year students. This is a substantial decrease from attendance in 2020 and 2021, but not dissimilar to attendance levels in years prior to that. Low attendance numbers may mean the results are less useful and comparable as they represent fewer people, and should be interpreted with caution.
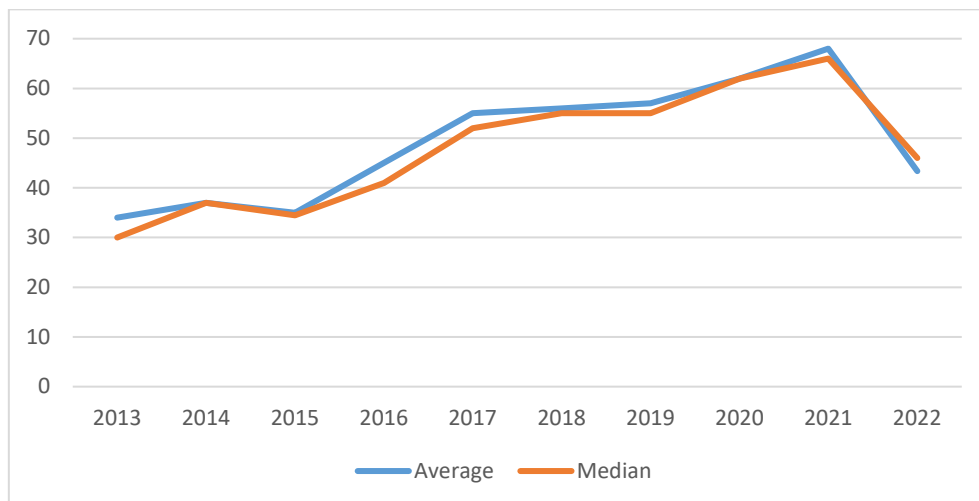
Figure 1: 3rd and 4th year exam participant numbers, 2013–2022
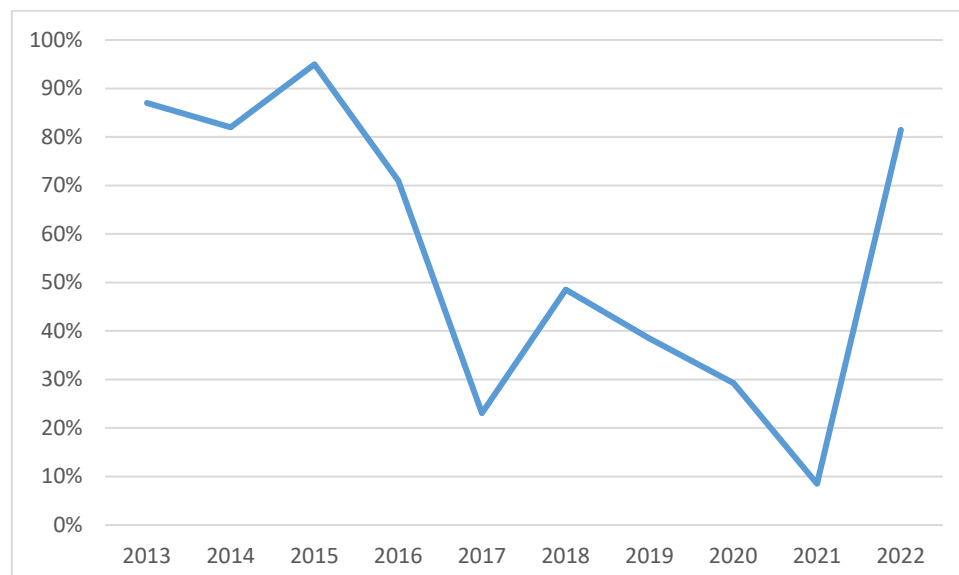
<u>Scores</u>

4th year scores remain the key metric of comparison over time, as 3rd year students did not always participate. While scores have generally improved over time, the 2022 results mark a sharp deviation from this trend. This year, the average score for 4th year students was 43 out of 100, the lowest average score since 2015 (the year the ANU-UPNG partnership began). The median score for 4th year students was 46 out of 100, which marks the lowest median score since 2016.

Figure 2: 4th year student average and median grade out of 100, 2013–2022

Until 2022, the failure rate in the ANU exam had declined significantly over the life of the scaled-up ANU-UPNG Partnership (2015-2022). This year's results have however reversed many of these gains; in 2022, the failure rate rose to 81.5% from a low of 8.5% in 2021. This is the highest failure rate recorded since 2015.

Figure 3: Failure rate for 3rd and 4th year candidates, 2013–2022

Looking at the overall distribution of scores, only five students out of the total twenty-seven candidates achieved a score of 50 percent or above. The range of scores in 2022 was between 16

and 60 out of 100, compared to 32 and 100 out of 100 in 2021. The distribution of grades remains close to a normal distribution, but grades appear to have declined across the board.

Figure 5: Distribution of 3rd and 4th year candidate scores out of 100, 2013–2022
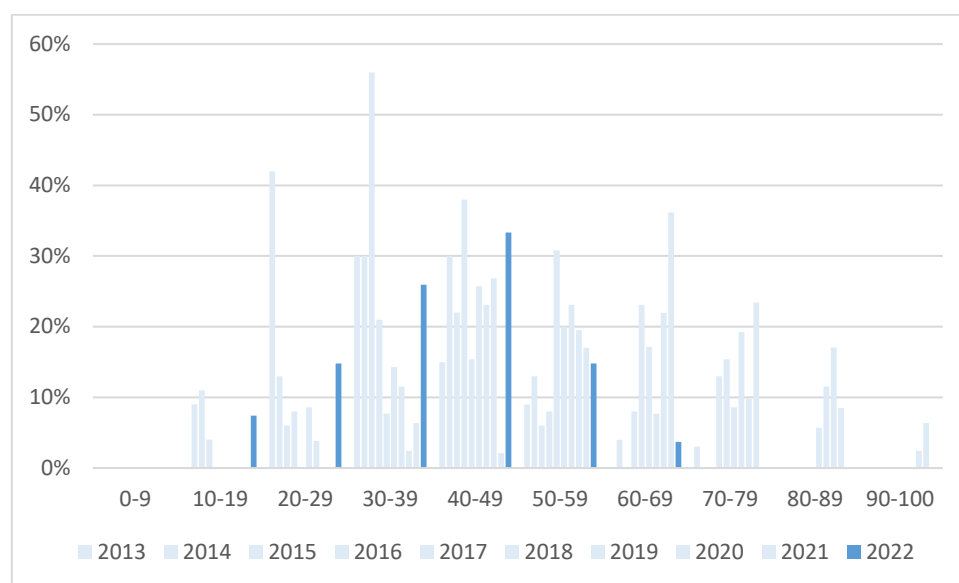

Figure 4 and Table 1 show average and median ANU exam grades from 2013-2022 for both 3rd and 4th year students. As in previous years, 4th year students outperformed 3rd years in 2022. However, the difference in score between 3rd and 4th years this year was the largest recorded since 2018.

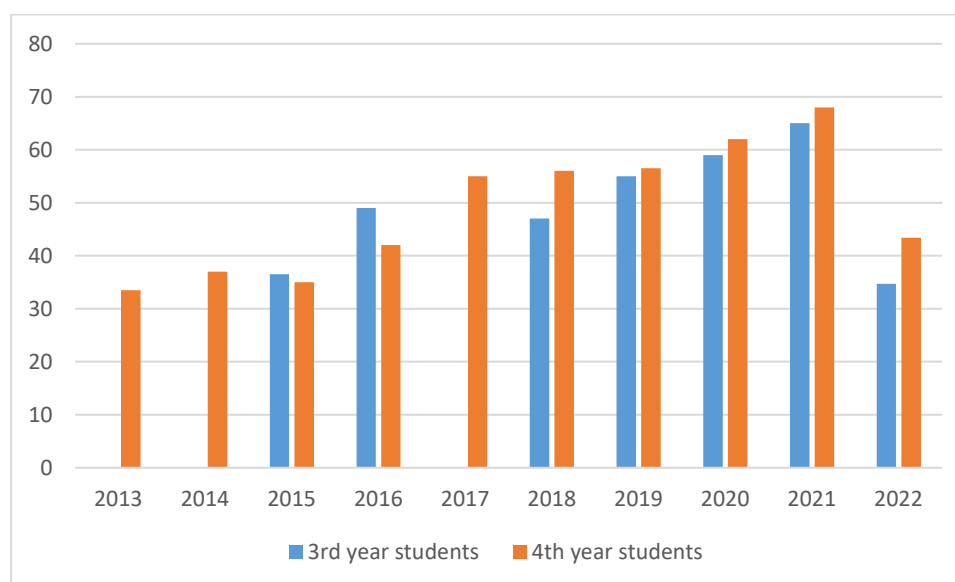**Figure 4: 3rd and 4th year exam average scores out of 100, 2013–2022**

Table 1: Average and median by year group, 2022

	Average	Median
3rd year students	35%	34%
4th year students	43%	46%

The exam is split in to three sections, maths, microeconomics and macroeconomics. This year, scores in the maths section garnered the highest scores across the three sections (48% on average across 3rd and 4th year students). As shown by Figure 5, scores in macroeconomics followed closely behind, while performance in microeconomics was significantly lower.

Figure 5: Average scores by exam section, 3rd and 4th years combined, 2022
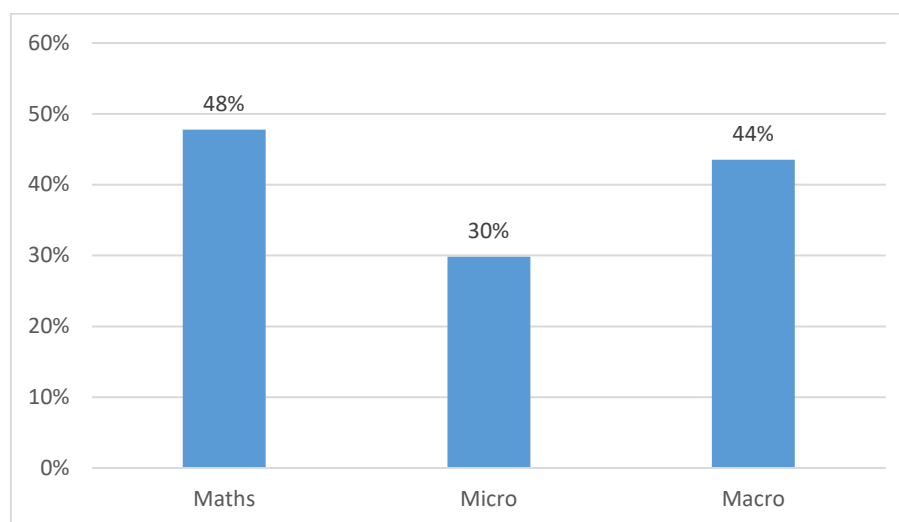

Table 2 shows how students in their 3rd and 4th years respectively performed on average across different sections of the exam. The highest and lowest scoring sections for each year group (on average) are labelled green and red respectively. Performance by 3rd year students was best in the maths section, and worst by a large margin in the microeconomics section. The 4th year students performed best in the macroeconomics section, but scored at similarly low levels in both maths and microeconomics.

Table 2: Average scores by exam section and year group, 2022

	Maths	Micro	Macro
3rd year students	57.1%	21.8%	36.4%
4th year students	37.7%	38.5%	51.2%

Notably, the 4th year students performed worse on average in maths than 3rd year students, with the caveat that fewer 4th year students than 3rd year students participated in the exam. However, the 4th year students appeared to perform more consistently across all sections of the exam than the 3rd year students.

Table 3 shows the sections in which students scored highest (green) and lowest (red) in any given year since 2017. Over the last six years, students have mostly performed best in maths and worst in microeconomics. Performance in both microeconomics and macroeconomics improved between 2018-2021 but fell in 2022. Maths outcomes also declined significantly in 2022.

Table 3: Average scores in separate exam sections, 3rd and 4th years combined, 2017[1]–2022

	Maths	Micro	Macro
2017	72%	74%	54%
2018	65%	43%	51%
2019	58%	40%	57%
2020	58%	61%	61%
2021	67%	63%	69%
2022	48%	30%	44%

Conclusion

In general, the fact that this exam is voluntary limits the representativeness and comparability of results. Lower attendance in 2022 also warrants caution in interpreting this year's results in particular.

The 2022 results are a stark change from the upward trend in results across previous years. This year's results show a decline in average performance across maths, microeconomics and macroeconomics, and an increased number of low-performing students in both the 3rd and 4th year cohorts. The high failure rate this year is of particular concern, as the decline in performance appears to be broad-based rather than concentrated amongst low or high-performing students.

The poor results were a surprise and have led to extensive and high-level discussions between the ANU and UPNG teams. Several factors appear to be relevant. The COVID-19 pandemic and a consequent lack of face-to-face teaching would be particularly relevant for 3rd year students, who have had much of their first and second year disrupted by the pandemic. Less lecturing from ANU staff, as the ANU-UPNG partnership's focus turned towards postgraduate-level study and the pandemic limited travel, may have also impacted student performance.

Lecturers also have a sense that students are weaker in quantitative skills than they used to be. A new undergraduate foundation course, Applied Business Maths, will be introduced at UPNG in 2023 to improve quantitative skills.

There were also some specific factors that may have led to poor performance, in particular a competing compulsory exam on the same day. With the turnover in staff, we did not give the exam the profile it needs. Following senior level ANU-UPNG discussions, the profile of the economics exam will be greatly increased in 2024.

It is not feasible to make this exam compulsory – nor is there any guarantee that students forced to take the exam would put in significant effort. Despite its limitations, we still think that the exam is a valuable evaluation tool, and plan to continue with it on an annual basis.

---

[1] 2017 was chosen as the first year of comparison due to differences in exam structure in years prior.