

Employers' Feedback Study of NEUST College of Architecture Graduates

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of the architecture profession has underscored the need for academic programs to adapt and align with industry demands. This study evaluates the performance of graduates from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) College of Architecture, specifically those who completed their studies between 2019 and 2023. The research aims to assess how well these graduates meet the expectations of employers, focusing on competencies such as technical knowledge, communication skills, project management, and innovation.

To achieve this, a structured survey was distributed to various employers, gathering qualitative and quantitative data on the graduates' performance. The results indicate that while NEUST graduates generally possess strong technical skills and a solid theoretical foundation, there are notable areas for improvement, particularly in soft skills and adaptability in dynamic work environments. These findings provide valuable insights that could inform future curriculum adjustments, ensuring that NEUST continues to produce graduates who are not only well-prepared for the current industry landscape but also equipped to excel in an ever-changing professional environment.

The study concludes that continuous feedback from industry stakeholders is essential for maintaining the relevance of architectural education. By addressing identified gaps and reinforcing strengths, NEUST can enhance the employability and success of its graduates, contributing to the overall advancement of the architectural field.

Keywords: Architecture education; Curriculum development; Employer's feedback; Graduate performance; NEUST College of Architecture

1. Introduction

The architecture profession is inherently multidisciplinary, requiring a blend of technical proficiency, creative problem-solving, and effective communication skills. As the industry continues to evolve with technological advancements and shifting client expectations, architecture programs must adapt curricula to ensure that graduates are well-prepared to meet these demands. Recent studies emphasize the importance of aligning academic training with industry requirements, highlighting the gap that often exists between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Dela Cruz et al., 1994; Aguilar, 2004; Antonio et al., 2009).

In response to these challenges, the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) College of Architecture has continually revised its curriculum to better prepare students for the professional field. However, the effectiveness of these efforts can only be fully understood through systematic feedback from employers who directly observe the graduates' performance in the workplace. Employer feedback is a critical component in assessing the readiness of graduates and identifying areas where further improvements may be needed (Esteban, 2008; Cruz, 2005; Kusriani and Saleh, 2009).

This study seeks to evaluate the performance of NEUST College of Architecture graduates from 2019 to 2023, based on employer feedback. By analyzing key competencies such as technical knowledge, communication skills, project management, and innovation, this study aims to provide data-driven insights that can inform future curriculum development. The originality of this work lies in its focus on recent graduates within the context of the post-pandemic workplace, where adaptability and resilience have become increasingly important (Aquino et al., 2009).

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the ongoing discourse on curriculum relevance in architecture education, offering a foundation for continuous improvement at NEUST. By addressing both strengths and areas for enhancement, the study aims to support the university in producing graduates who not only meet but exceed industry expectations.

2. Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive survey design to gather and analyze employer feedback on the performance of NEUST College of Architecture graduates from 2019 to 2023. The survey aimed to assess key competencies relevant to the architecture profession, providing insights into areas of strength and opportunities for curriculum enhancement. The following sections detail the methodology used, including sampling procedures, respondents, and research sites.

2.1. Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling method was employed to select 30 companies that have consistently hired NEUST College of Architecture graduates over the past five years. These companies were chosen to ensure a diverse representation of the architecture and construction industry, encompassing design firms, construction companies, and architectural consultancies. The selection criteria focused on employers with direct experience in supervising and assessing the performance of NEUST graduates. Data collection followed established protocols for confidentiality and reliability (Esteban et al., 2016).

2.2. Respondents

The respondents comprised hiring managers, team leaders, and senior architects from the selected companies. These individuals were directly involved in the recruitment, supervision, and performance evaluation of NEUST graduates. Their feedback provided a comprehensive perspective on the graduates' abilities across various competencies, including technical skills, communication, and project management.

2.2.1 Research Site

The study was conducted remotely, with survey data collected electronically via a secure online platform. Respondents were located across different regions, reflecting the widespread employment of NEUST graduates in various parts of the Philippines. The online methodology ensured a broad geographic reach, allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of graduate performance in different working environments.

3. Results and Discussion

The survey results revealed a generally high level of satisfaction with NEUST graduates. The majority of employers rated the graduates as either "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" across most competencies. Notably, competencies such as CAD skills, observational skills, and team collaboration received high satisfaction ratings.

Key Competencies Assessed

1. Technical Skills

This category assesses the graduates' proficiency in the technical aspects of architectural work, including manual drafting, CAD skills, 3D modeling, rendering, and graphic design.

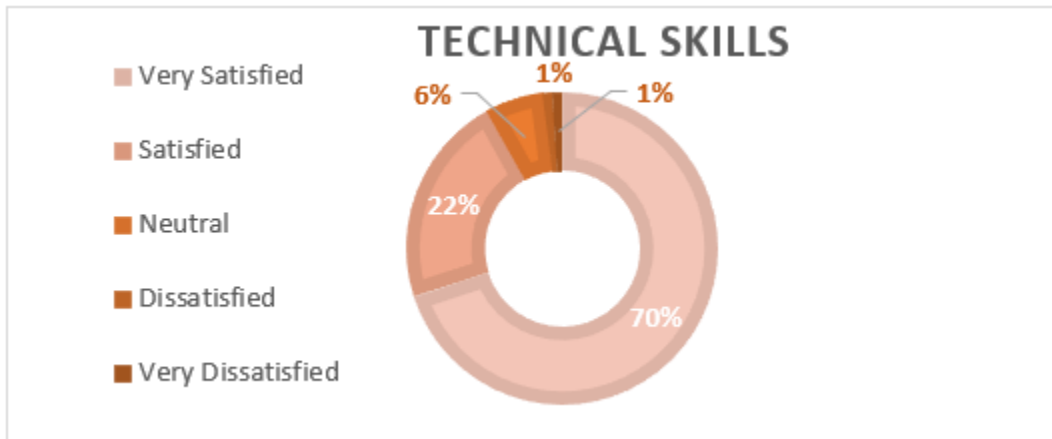


Figure 1. Showing the the satisfaction for Technical Skill skills of the Graduates

2. Project Execution

This category focuses on the graduates' ability to effectively execute architectural projects, including time management, project management, and meeting deadlines.

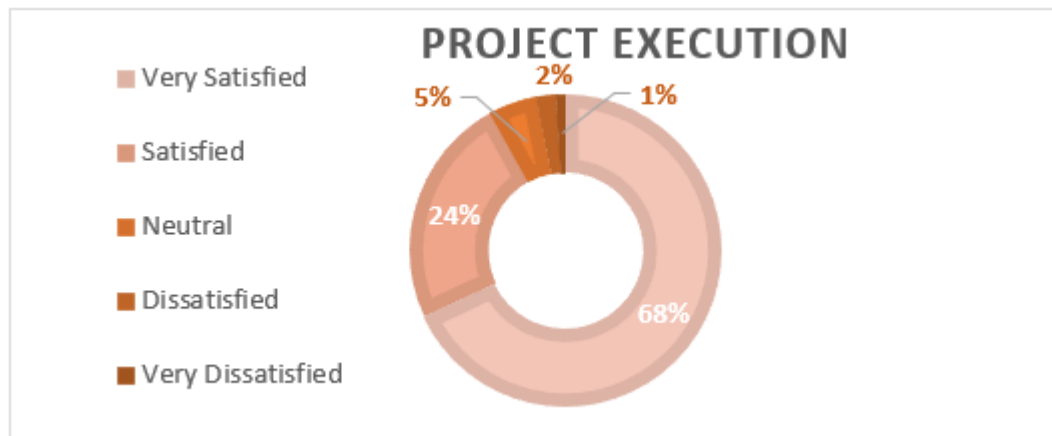


Figure 2. Showing the satisfaction for Project Execution of the Graduates

3. Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

This category evaluates the graduates' ability to observe, identify, and solve site problems, as well as their effectiveness in decision-making under pressure.

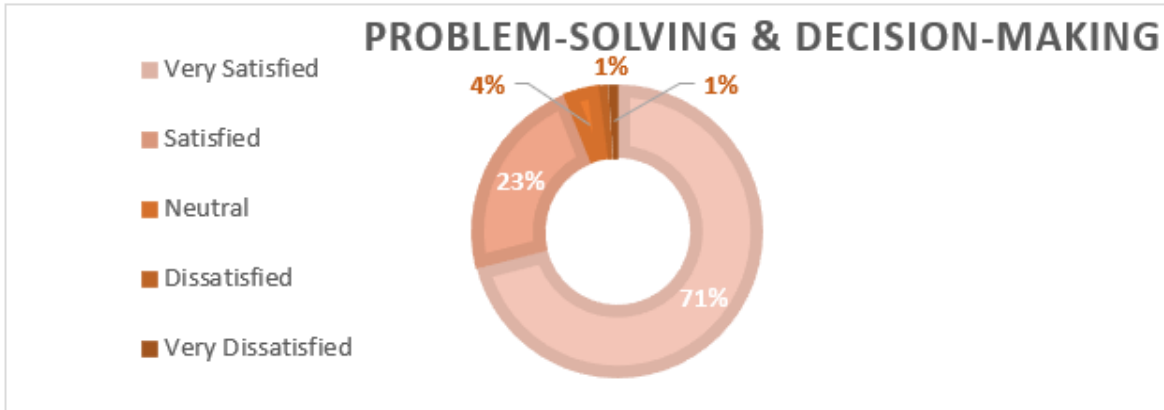


Figure 3. Showing the the satisfaction for Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills of the Graduates

4. Communication and Collaboration

This category measures the graduates' ability to communicate effectively with clients, team members, and other stakeholders, as well as their collaboration skills within a team.

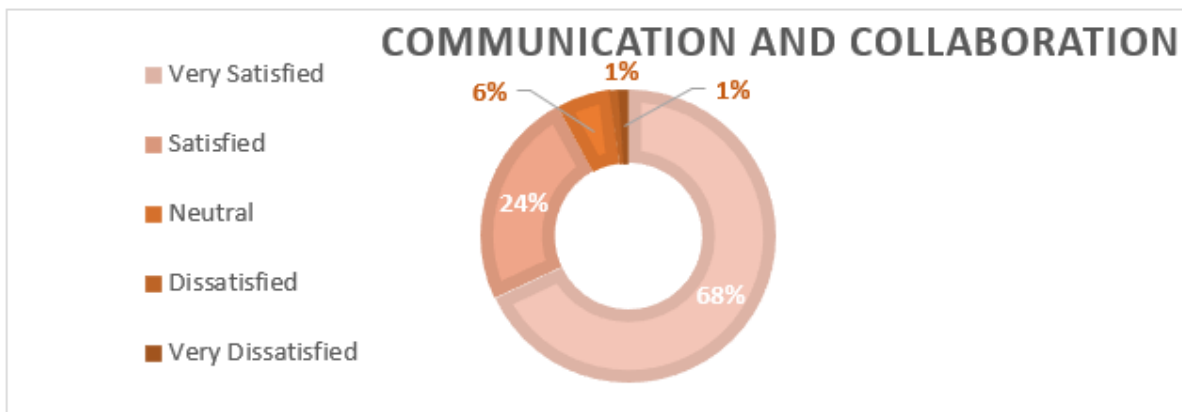


Figure 4. Showing the satisfaction for Communication and Collaboration Skill of the Graduates

5. Leadership and Innovation

This category examines the graduates' potential for leadership, their creativity, and their capacity to innovate within the architectural field.

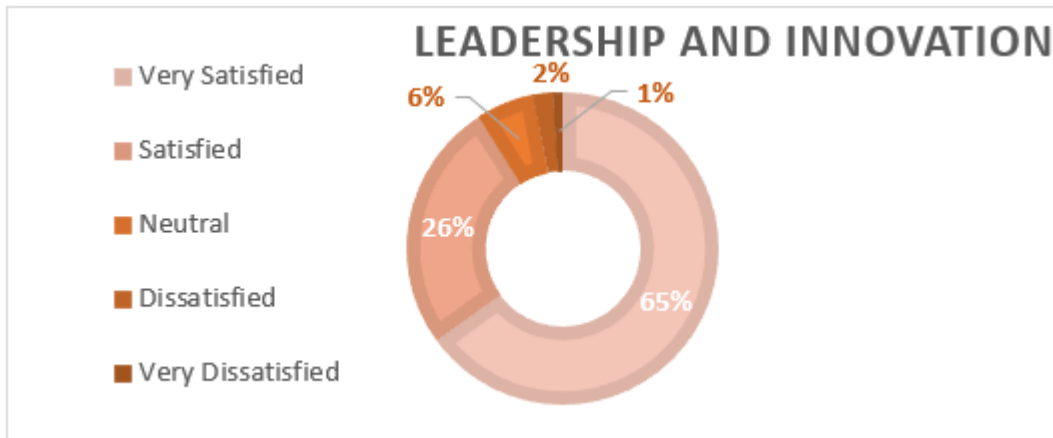


Figure 5. Showing the satisfaction for Leadership and Innovation Skills of the Graduates

6. Sustainability and Technical Knowledge

This category assesses the graduates' understanding and application of sustainable design practices, as well as their overall technical knowledge in architecture.

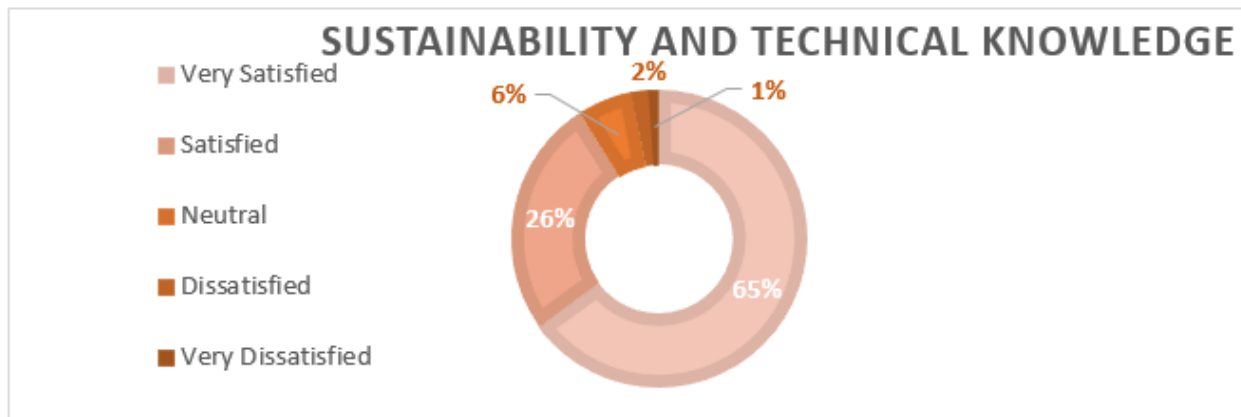


Figure 6. Showing the Overall Sustainability and Technical Knowledge of the Graduates

7. Client Interaction and Professionalism

This category evaluates the graduates' ability to interact with clients professionally and their overall adherence to industry standards and codes.

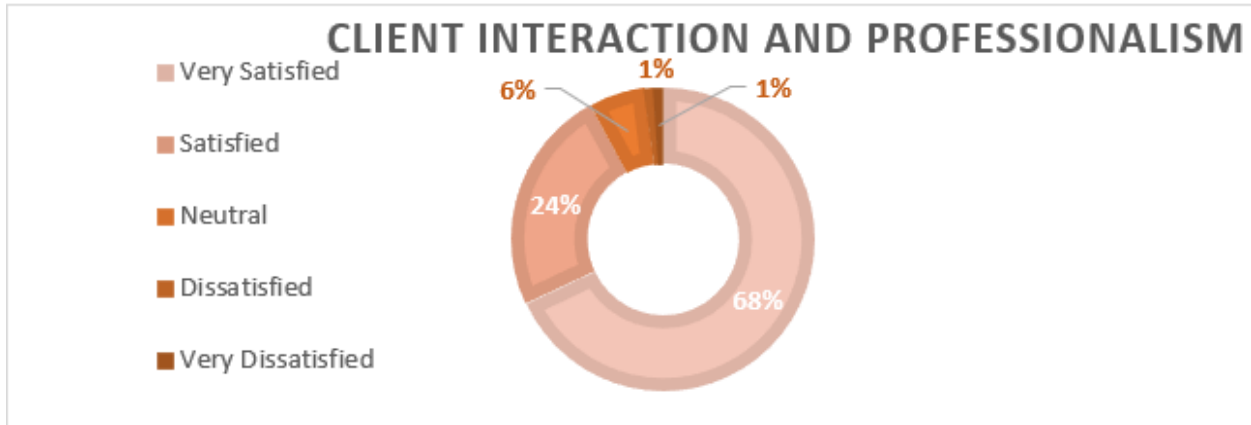


Figure 7. Showing the satisfaction for Client Interaction and Professionalism of the Graduates

8. Career Development and Adaptability

This category assesses the graduates' commitment to continuous professional development and their adaptability to changing work environments and challenges.

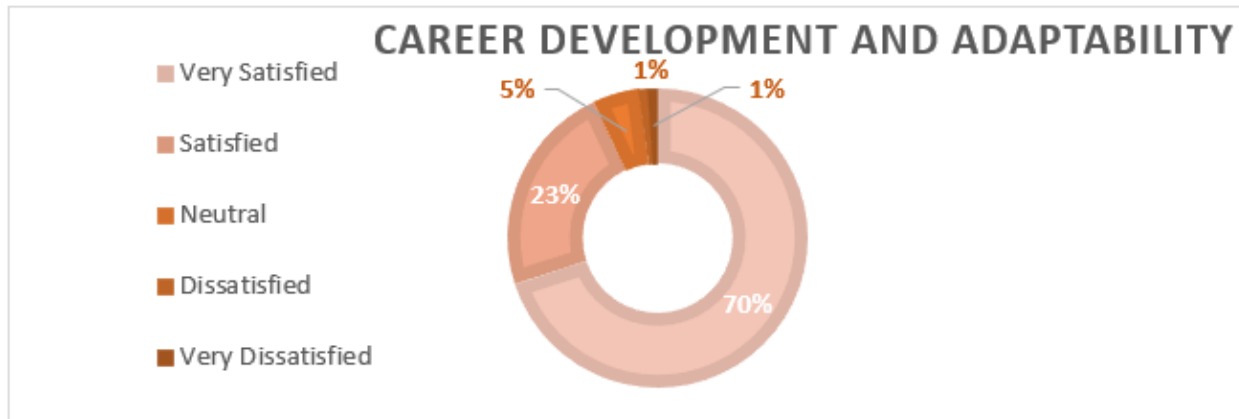


Figure 8. Showing the Overall Career Development and Adaptability of the Graduates

These survey categories were meticulously crafted to evaluate the multifaceted competencies of NEUST College of Architecture graduates, ensuring alignment with both contemporary industry standards and emerging trends in architectural practice. These criteria encompass a broad range of skills, from technical expertise in CAD, 3D modeling, and building code knowledge, to operational capabilities such as project management, time management, and decision-making under pressure. Additionally, soft skills such as communication, leadership potential, and client interaction were scrutinized to assess graduates' readiness to navigate complex professional environments and foster effective collaboration.

Overall Satisfaction of Hiring NEUST College of Architecture Graduates

Overall Satisfaction Summary:



Figure 9. Showing the Overall Satisfaction Summary of the Graduates

These criteria were derived through a rigorous process involving consultations with industry stakeholders, analysis of academic curricula, and consideration of the latest developments in architectural technology and sustainability practices. The survey's primary objective was to pinpoint the strengths and potential areas for enhancement in graduates' skill sets, providing actionable data to refine NEUST's architecture program and ensure its graduates are well-equipped to meet the dynamic challenges of the profession.

Overall, the satisfaction levels of hiring a graduate from the College of Architecture are highly positive, with **69% of respondents being "Very Satisfied"** and **24% being "Satisfied"**. The levels of dissatisfaction are deficient, reflecting a positive perception of the graduates' skills and abilities in various categories, such as technical skills, problem

Discussion

Strengths

The study revealed that NEUST architecture graduates are particularly strong in technical knowledge, CAD skills, team collaboration, and adaptability. These strengths suggest that the university's curriculum effectively prepares students in the technical and collaborative aspects of architectural practice. The high satisfaction in these areas indicates that graduates are well-prepared to meet industry standards and contribute effectively to their workplaces.

Areas for Improvement

The feedback also identified several areas where graduates could improve, particularly in financial management, leadership potential, and advanced communication skills. While the graduates are generally capable, enhancing these areas could significantly improve their performance and career progression. Additionally, fostering greater innovation and creativity could further distinguish NEUST graduates in a competitive job market.

Curriculum Implications

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the NEUST College of Architecture consider integrating more comprehensive training in financial management, leadership, and client communication into its curriculum. Moreover, offering workshops or courses focused on sustainability practices and innovation could help graduates stay ahead of industry trends. Enhancing practical experiences, such as internships or project-based learning, could also bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional demands.

4. Conclusions

The Employer's Feedback Study of NEUST College of Architecture graduates has provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the university's program in preparing students for the architectural profession. While there are clear strengths in areas like technical knowledge, CAD proficiency, and teamwork, there are also important areas for growth, particularly in leadership, financial management, and communication.

To ensure that graduates continue to meet and exceed industry expectations, it is crucial for NEUST to continuously review and enhance its curriculum, incorporating feedback from employers and adapting to the evolving demands of the architectural field. By addressing the identified areas for improvement, the university can further elevate the quality of its graduates, ensuring their success in the competitive world of architecture.

Recommendations

1. **Curriculum Enhancement:** Integrate more focused training on financial management, leadership, and client communication.
2. **Professional Development:** Encourage continuous learning and professional growth through workshops and seminars on emerging trends like sustainability and innovation.
3. **Industry Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with industry professionals to provide real-world experience through internships and project-based learning.
4. **Feedback Mechanism:** Establish an ongoing feedback loop with employers to assess graduate performance and make timely curriculum adjustments regularly.

This study serves as a foundation for ongoing improvements at NEUST, ensuring that its graduates are not only competent but also leaders in the architecture industry.

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