

Course Evaluations and Mercury Annual Report 2015-2016

Course Evaluation Advisory Group (CEAG)

- *Chair:* Laura Winer, Director, TLS;
- *Instructors:* Shane Sweet, Faculty of Education; Paul Clarke, Faculty of Medicine; Alfred Jaeger, Desautels Faculty of Management;
- *Academic unit heads:* Jane Everett, Chair, Dept. of French Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts; Jim Fyles, Dept. of Natural Resource Sciences, Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences;
- *Academic Administrators:* Andre Costopoulos, Dean of Students; Tamara Western, Associate Dean, Faculty of Science;
- *Student representative:* Robin Luo, SSMU;
- *Departmental liaison staff members:* Margie Gabriel, Faculty of Medicine; Karen Oberer and Amber Saunders, Faculty of Engineering;
- *Resource members:* Anna Melios, ISR Portfolio Manager; Justin Fletcher, Learning Technology Consultant, TLS.

The CEAG worked with TLS to:

- develop strategies and instruments to increase student participation;
- increase the number of instructors participating in the dissemination of results;
- advise on other TLS activities related to Mercury and the course evaluation system in general.

2015-2016 Goals and Results

- i. Increase overall visibility of policies and resources for instructors, administrators, and students;
 - The default period, ending 2 days after the end of the exam period, was used by 62 of 85 units in the Fall and 60 of 83 units in the Winter;
 - Contacted all instructors who did not have a permission decision registered;
 - To date, 63% of the instructors (of the 3,279 who have accessed the permission form) have given permission while 31% have not granted permission to make their results available to the McGill community. The remaining 6% have accessed the form but not registered a decision.
- ii. Launch a standalone website dedicated to Course Evaluations (www.mcgill.ca/mercury);
 - Migrated all course evaluation information from the Teaching and Learning Services website to a standalone website: www.mcgill.ca/mercury, launched in August 2015, which has improved access to information.
- iii. Increase student participation;
 - In 2015-2016, the response rate stayed the same (within 1.0%) for the Fall semester and increased by 1% in the Winter semester when compared to 2014-2015;
 - Met twice (once per term) with leaders of student associations to encourage participation and obtain feedback on course evaluation issues.

- iv. Promote the availability of course evaluation results to students when registering for courses;
 - Secured approval to modify the procedure for instructors to register permission decisions, which will ensure that instructors are informed about the permission decision deadlines and that relevant course evaluation results are available to students during the registration period;
 - Encouraged website managers to add a link to previous course evaluation results on websites with course listings.
- v. Develop and implement new strategies to encourage student participation;
 - Partnered with academic units and student associations to better understand why students do not complete their evaluations;
 - Visited classes and used polling software to understand why students do or do not complete their course evaluations;
 - Secured funding to hire a student to work on developing Mercury testimonials.
- vi. Make progress on enhancements to the Mercury system;
 - Implemented processes to delete course evaluation data in the cases of student errors and issues related to discriminatory and hateful course evaluation comments;
 - Technical developments were on hold because of the Banner upgrade.
- vii. Evaluate impact of course evaluation policy changes on course evaluation results from Fall 2014 and Winter 2015 through statistical analyses;
 - Conducted analyses using data from the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Law on the impact of final exams on course evaluation ratings.
- viii. Support academic unit heads, instructors, and tenure committees in the interpretation of results;
 - Provided advice on request.
- ix. Increase instructor awareness of the customization of course evaluations through the new webform for instructors to add questions to their course evaluations.
 - Encouraged Mercury Liaisons to relay information to instructors about the option to add questions. In total 54 instructors added questions in Fall 2015; 53 in Winter 2016.

System Updates

In 2015-2016, the following system enhancement was implemented:

- Course evaluation responses may now be deleted in the following two scenarios:
 1. Upon the direct request of a student when the student makes a mistake while completing their course evaluation (e.g., selecting “strongly disagree” instead of “strongly agree”);
 2. Upon approval from the Associate Provost (Policies, Procedures, and Equity) and the SSMU Equity Commissioner when comments that are determined to be hateful or discriminatory on the basis of gender, sexual identity, race, ethnicity or religion call into question the individual's ability to fairly assess an instructor's teaching.

Participation data

	Fall 2015	Winter 2016
Students involved	31,804	29,787
Courses evaluated	2,501	2,591
Instructors involved	1,991	2,056
Overall response rate	48%	46%

2016-2017 Goals

- i. Increase overall visibility of policies and resources for instructors, administrators, and students;
- ii. Increase student participation;
- iii. Update and develop Guidelines for Interpretation for the following audiences: Chairs; Departmental tenure, reappointment, and promotion committees; University tenure committees; Curriculum committees; instructors; Teaching Assistants; and students;
- iv. Continue to address issues related to equity and course evaluations and provide resources to students on how to give constructive feedback;
- v. Provide guidance to units on alternate methods of collecting feedback from students on courses and instructors, in cases where Mercury is not the most appropriate tool to use;
- vi. Create a bank of instructor testimonials related to course evaluations to communicate the importance of course evaluation feedback to students;
- vii. Promote the availability of course evaluation results to students when registering for courses;
- viii. Make progress on enhancements to the Mercury system;
- ix. Support academic unit heads, instructors, and tenure committees in the interpretation of results;
- x. Encourage more instructors to add questions to their course evaluations.

For additional information, please consult the full report available at:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/mercury/about/reports>