

Course Evaluations and Mercury Annual Report 2016-2017

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:* Trevor Ponech, Dept. of English, Faculty of Arts;
- *Academic Administrators:* Christopher Buddle, Dean of Students; Vrinda Narain, Associate Dean, Faculty of Law; Tamara Western, Associate Dean, Faculty of Science;
- *SSMU representatives:* Jonathan Boretsky, SSMU; Robin Luo, SSMU; Amanda Montaque, SSMU;
- *PGSS representative:* Vacant;
- *Departmental liaison staff members:* Margie Gabriel, Faculty of Medicine (until Jan. 2017); Joelle Denomy, Faculty of Medicine (as of Jan. 2017); Amber Saunders, Faculty of Engineering;
- *Resource members:* Justin Fletcher, Learning Technology Consultant, TLS; Anna Melios, EAS Portfolio Manager; Carolyn Samuel, Academic Associate, TLS.

The mandate of the CEAG is to:

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

2016-2017 Goals and Results

- i. Increase overall visibility of policies and resources for instructors, administrators, and students;
 - As a result of ongoing communications, the default period, ending 2 days after the end of the exam period, was used by 60 of 82 units in the Fall and 64 of 84 units in the Winter;
 - To date, 63% of the instructors (of the 3,451 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. Increase student participation;
 - Met twice (once per term) with leaders of student associations to encourage participation and obtain feedback on course evaluation issues;
 - In 2016-2017, the response rate stayed the same (within 1.0%) for the Fall and Winter semesters when compared to 2015-2016.
- 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;
 - Did not complete.

- iv. Continue to address issues related to equity and course evaluations and provide resources to students on how to give constructive feedback;
 - Communicated to the community about the new protocol allowing for the deletion of course evaluations submissions that are discriminatory or hateful on equity grounds (www.mcgill.ca/mercury/about/equity). As of May 31, 2017, 4 requests were submitted and 0 were approved;
 - Secured collaboration with Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office on developing resources on 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;
 - Promoted the new Polling @ McGill web-based student response system as a method for obtaining immediate, anonymous feedback.
- vi. Create a bank of instructor testimonials related to course evaluations to communicate the importance of course evaluation feedback to students;
 - Interviewed 12 instructors, Chairs, and Directors about their perspectives on student feedback from course evaluations; testimonials are available at www.mcgill.ca/mercury/testimonials;
 - Solicited additional written testimonials via an online webform.
- vii. Promote the availability of course evaluation results to students when registering for courses;
 - Collaborated with IT on developing the specifications for the modified 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;
 - Added a link on the eCalendar to previous Mercury results.
- viii. Make progress on enhancements to the Mercury system;
 - See section below (“System Updates”);
 - TLS has identified top priorities for the Mercury system, including a mobile friendly design for student response input and tools for reporting and the interpretation of results for instructors and unit heads. Discussions have begun with IT Services about the redevelopment or replacement of the Mercury system.
- ix. Support academic unit heads, instructors, and tenure committees in the interpretation of results;
 - Provided advice on request.
- x. Encourage more instructors to add questions to their course evaluations.
 - Encouraged instructors to customize their course questionnaires to obtain feedback tailored to the course context by sending targeted emails and providing sample questions. In total 76 instructors added questions in Fall 2016 (an increase from 54 in Fall 2015); 85 in Winter 2017 (an increase from 53 in Winter 2016).

System Updates

In 2016-2017, the following system enhancements were implemented:

- **Data and display of results**
 - Standard deviations are now displaying to instructors and unit heads when accessing results.
 - Standard deviations are now displaying to Teaching Assistants when they access their personal results.
 - Excel files are now downloading as CSV files. This was in response to an issue where any Excel files downloaded from the Mercury system were not opening automatically through Microsoft Excel on Windows PCs.
 - The Submission Number has been added to the "Student Comments Only" view.
 - The same data categories (such as mean, standard deviation, standard deviation of the mean, etc.) are now displayed no matter which results format is accessed (Graphs, Excel, PDF).

Participation data

	Fall 2016	Winter 2017
Students involved	32,618	30,096
Courses evaluated	2,537	2,601
Instructors involved	1,999	2,064
Overall response rate	48%	45%

Goals

Year-specific (2017-2018)

- i. Enhance the Mercury system with a focus on these two areas:
 - Mobile-friendly design for student response input;
 - Tools for reporting and the interpretation of results for instructors and unit heads.
- ii. 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;
- iii. Update the recommended pool of questions and collaborate with academic units to improve questionnaire design.

Ongoing

- i. Provide support on interpreting results to Chairs, Departmental tenure, reappointment, and promotion committees; University tenure committees; Curriculum committees; instructors; Teaching Assistants; and students;
- ii. Increase overall visibility of policies and resources for instructors, administrators, and students;
- iii. Increase student participation;
- iv. Continue to address issues related to equity and course evaluations and provide resources to students on how to give constructive feedback;
- v. Promote the availability of course evaluation results to students when registering for courses.

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

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