

Course Evaluations and Mercury Annual Report 2017-2018

Course Evaluation Advisory Group (CEAG)

- *Chair:* Laura Winer, Director, TLS;
- *Instructors:* Paul Clarke, Faculty of Medicine; Tony Mittermaier, Faculty of Science; Shane Sweet, Faculty of Education;
- *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;
- *SSMU representatives:* Jonathan Boretsky, SSMU; Saumia Ganeshamoorthy, SSMU; Qi Yue He, SSMU;
- *PGSS representative:* Vacant;
- *Departmental liaison staff members:* Amber Saunders, Faculty of Engineering; Monica Toribio, Faculty of Medicine;
- *Resource members:* Justin Fletcher, Learning Technology Consultant, TLS; Steve Tessier, EAS TRSL 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.

2017-2018 Goals and Results

Year-specific (2017-2018)

- Enhance the Mercury system with a focus on these two areas: a) mobile-friendly design for student response input, and b) tools for reporting and the interpretation of results for instructors and unit heads.
 - Conducted a notice of interest (NOI) with Procurement Services and IT Services to learn about third-party course evaluation management systems (CEMS);
 - Determined that obtaining a third-party CEMS is more sustainable than continuing to develop the home-built Mercury system;
 - Obtained funding for the third-party CEMS.
- 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;
 - Wrote recommendations for alternative means of collecting feedback for 1) courses with fewer than 5 students, and 2) guest instructors who are not responsible for a course.
- Update the recommended pool of questions and collaborate with academic units to improve questionnaire design.
 - Revised the document and added guidelines for writing course evaluation questions, to be released in August 2018;
 - Hosted a webinar for instructors in February 2018: “Customize your Course Evaluations: Writing Meaningful Questions.”

Ongoing

- iv. Provide support on interpreting results to Chairs, Departmental tenure, reappointment, and promotion committees; University tenure committees; Curriculum committees; instructors; Teaching Assistants; and students;
 - Provided advice on request;
 - Created a document to help instructors reflect on course evaluation feedback and develop a plan to act on student feedback, to be released in Fall 2018.
- v. 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 64 of 84 units in the Fall and 64 of 84 units in the Winter;
 - To date, 63% of the instructors (of the 3,628 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.
- vi. Increase student participation;
 - Met twice (once per term) with leaders of student associations to encourage participation and obtain feedback on course evaluation issues;
 - In 2017-2018, the response rate decreased by 2% for the Fall semester and stayed the same (within 1.0%) for Winter semester when compared to 2016-2017.
- vii. Continue to address issues related to equity and course evaluations and provide resources to students on how to give constructive feedback;
 - Collaborated with the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office to produce an instructional video on implicit bias and constructive feedback, to be released for the Fall 2018 evaluations.
- viii. Promote the availability of course evaluation results to students when registering for courses.
 - See section below (“System Updates”);
 - Communicated to students when Fall term course evaluation results became available for consultation.

System Updates

In 2017-2018, the following system enhancement was implemented:

Numerical results of course evaluations are accessible by McGill students and academic staff when an instructor has not objected to access and an adequate response rate has been received, depending on class size. As of Fall 2017, instructors can make permission decisions on a term-by-term basis rather than by academic year. A benefit of this change is that it allows students to view Fall term results when registering for courses for the upcoming academic year.

Participation data

	Fall 2017	Winter 2018
Students involved	33,217	30,288
Courses evaluated	2,601	2,637
Instructors involved	2,063	2,136
Overall response rate	46%	45%

Goals

Year-specific (2018-2019)

- i. Sign a contract with a third-party course evaluation management system (CEMS);
- ii. Create an Advisory Group to support the implementation of the system;
- iii. Launch new system for the Summer 2019 courses;
- iv. Develop a communications plan to highlight the benefits of the new system to members of the McGill community;
- v. Collaborate with academic units to improve questionnaire design using the newly-released bank of recommended questions and guidelines for writing course evaluation questions;
- vi. Raise awareness among members of the community about the impact of implicit bias in course evaluations.

Ongoing

- vii. Provide support on interpreting results to Chairs, Departmental tenure, reappointment, and promotion committees; University tenure committees; Curriculum committees; instructors; Teaching Assistants; and students;
- viii. Increase overall visibility of policies and resources for instructors, administrators, and students;
- ix. Increase student participation;
- x. Continue to address issues related to equity and course evaluations and provide resources to students on how to give constructive feedback;
- xi. 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>