

Course Evaluations and Mercury Annual Report 2014-2015

Course Evaluation Advisory Group (CEAG)

- *Chair:* Laura Winer, Director, TLS;
- *Instructors:* Nathan Hall, 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, Arts;
- *Academic Administrators:* Andre Costopoulos, Dean of Students; Tamara Western, Associate Dean, Faculty of Science;
- *Student representative:* Victoria Gies, SSMU;
- *Departmental liaison staff members:* Margie Gabriel, Faculty of Medicine; Karen Oberer, 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.

2014-2015 Goals and Results

- I. Increase student participation;
 - In 2014-2015 there was a 1% decrease in the overall response rate for the fall term and a 2% decrease in the winter term when compared to 2013-2014;
 - Met twice (once per term) with leaders of student associations to encourage participation and obtain feedback on course evaluation issues;
 - Used feedback from student associations to develop new Mercury graphics and to revise system email reminders.
- II. Communicate policy changes and encourage engagement of academic units and instructors in decisions about timing of evaluation period and dissemination of results;
 - The default period, ending 2 days after the end of the exam period, was used by 65 of 82 units in the Fall and 63 of 84 units in the Winter.
 - Contacted all instructors who did not have a permission decision registered;
 - To date, 63% of the instructors (of the 3,002 who accessed the permission form) have given permission while 30% have not granted permission to make their results available to the McGill community. The remaining 7% have accessed the form but not registered a decision.
- III. Disseminate new recommended pool of questions and suggest revisions to questionnaires where appropriate;
 - Translated and posted information on course evaluations website;

- Created a new webform to facilitate instructors’ adding up to 3 individual questions to their course evaluation questionnaires.
- IV. Disseminate 5-year report to all academic unit heads;
- Created a 6-year trend report on response rates, which will be sent to Deans in August 2015
- V. Develop a mobile app “responsive design” for Mercury;
- Partnered with Office of the Deputy Provost (Student Life & Learning) to use the existing McGill app to promote course evaluations to students;
 - Included information about students’ being able to complete their course evaluations on a mobile device or tablet in the system email reminders.
- VI. Support academic unit heads, instructors and tenure committees in the interpretation of results;
- Provided advice on request.
- VII. Create video profiles of instructors and “How To” video clips for students and instructors.
- Did not complete.

System Updates

In 2014-2015, the following system enhancements were implemented:

- i. Numerical course evaluation results are disseminated if the instructor does not object to access, provided response thresholds are met (Senate policy change, April 2014);
- ii. Course evaluation results from the past 5 years are now available to the McGill community, instead of 3 (Senate policy change, April 2014);
- iii. Primary and secondary questionnaires for 16 academic units were combined to reduce the number of evaluations that students have to complete;
- iv. Course evaluation questionnaires can be managed so that unit heads and liaisons have access to course evaluation departmental summaries from previous years.

Participation data

	Fall 2014	Winter 2015
Students involved	31,999	29,891
Courses evaluated	2,493	2,480
Instructors involved	1588	1652
Overall response rate	48%	45%

2015-2016 Goals

- i. Increase overall visibility of policies and resources for instructors, administrators, and students;
- ii. Launch a standalone website dedicated to Course Evaluations (www.mcgill.ca/mercury);
- iii. Increase student participation;
- iv. Promote the availability of course evaluation results to students when registering for courses;
- v. Develop and implement new strategies to encourage student participation
 - a. Partner with academic units and student associations to better understand why students do not complete their evaluations.
- vi. Make progress on enhancements to the Mercury system;
 - a. Improve University and departments' response rate tracking during evaluation periods;
 - b. Improve usability of disseminated course evaluation results: allow users to filter between instructor- and course-specific questions and to view the results of more than one evaluation at a time;
 - c. Ensure that newly admitted students who confirm their registration are able to view previous course evaluation results;
 - d. Enhance the student experience when completing course evaluations by displaying the current response rate to students and by adding associated numbers to text responses (i.e., 1: Strongly Disagree... 5: Strongly Agree);
 - e. Reconfigure Mercury system email reminders so that they can be customized at the Faculty-level.
- vii. Evaluate impact of course evaluation policy changes on course evaluation results from Fall 2014 and Winter 2015 through statistical analyses;
- viii. Support academic unit heads, instructors, and tenure committees in the interpretation of results;
- ix. Increase instructor awareness of the customization of course evaluations through the new webform for instructors to add questions to their course evaluations.

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

<http://www.mcgill.ca/tls/teaching/course-evaluations/reports>