

Course Evaluations and Mercury Annual Report 2008-2009

POLICY issues:

1. As of the winter 2009 term, all 80 academic units had updated their questionnaires to comply with the policy, notably including the new four core questions and respecting the 25 question limit.
2. The Course Evaluation Advisory Group (CEAG) was formed this year to assist TLS by reviewing information, advising on communications approaches and materials as well as the Policy review, and making recommendations for any proposed changes. The CEAG advised TLS on proposed strategies and instruments to increase student participation, aid instructors and administrators in the interpretation of results and increase the number of instructors participating in the dissemination of results.

The CEAG began meeting in winter 2009, and will continue through the Senate-mandated review of the Course Evaluation policy in 2010. Meetings are scheduled monthly during the academic year.

The 2008-09 group was composed of:

- Laura Winer, Associate Director, TLS (Chair);
- Badar Yasin, Science (1 SSMU representative);
- Nancy Czettel, Law & Amber Saunders, Engineering (2 departmental liaison staff members) ;
- Nigel Roulet, Geography; James Brawer, Medicine & Alfred Jaeger, Management (3 instructors);
- Tim Moore, Chair, Geography & Philip Oxhorn, Director, Developing Area Studies (2 academic unit heads);
- Enrica Quaroni, Associate Dean, Arts (1 academic administrator);
- Effi Kaoukis, Learning Technology Consultant, TLS; Joan Barrett, SIS Project Manager & Tommy Chan, Programmer, ISR (3 resource members: Learning Technology Consultant, TLS; 2 ISR)

This year the group reviewed the Mercury response report and provided feedback on the document providing definitions for terms used in Mercury reports, (<http://www.mcgill.ca/tls/courseevaluations/mercury/definitions/>), the FAQ on response rate and bias (<http://www.mcgill.ca/tls/courseevaluations/mercury/reports/>), correspondence to all academic unit heads, and other TLS activities related to Mercury and other aspects of the course evaluation system.

Our goals for the 2009-2010 year are:

- Increase student participation
 - Develop university-wide incentives
 - Work directly with student associations
- Increase the number of instructors giving permission to disseminate results
- Support academic unit heads in the interpretation of results.

Updates:

2008-2009: Effi Kaoukis, the TLS Mercury Administrator, collaborated with the programmer from ISR to design and implement the following system enhancements.

1. Automatic email reminder sent to instructors to encourage them to communicate with their students about the importance of completing course evaluations.
2. Creation of text and PowerPoint resources for instructors to use in their classes.
3. In response to requests from instructors, they may now write their own comments to provide contextual or other information for the course evaluation data that will be available to the members of the McGill community when viewing the numerical results.
4. The Mercury departmental liaison can customize the start/end dates for intensive or non-regular courses.
5. The departmental liaison can insert questions for a specific course.
6. A number of minor wording and screen layout modifications suggested by users.

2009-2010: The following updates are already under development:

1. Instructors will be able to select individual courses for which results will be available to the McGill community rather than have to select all or none of their courses.
2. Students will be able to indicate that they do not wish to complete the evaluation. This will give us more accurate participation statistics.
3. A more flexible reporting tool for departments and instructors to have aggregate views.

Mercury:

Response rates for Fall 2008:

Students involved	26,161
Courses evaluated	1,928
Instructors involved	1,217
Overall response rate	45%

Response rates for Winter 2009:

Students involved	27,167
Courses evaluated	2,007
Instructors involved	1,220
Overall response rate	42%

Full report posted online: <http://www.mcgill.ca/tls/courseevaluations/mercury/reports/>