Comments on the draft UWA Student Experience Survey

Response rate

1. During September students will receive frequent emails inviting them to complete the University Experience Survey. If, immediately after the UES has closed, they are invited to complete an even longer survey, also about the student experience, they are likely to be surprised and possibly irritated, and may well decide not to participate.

2. What response rate is needed for the survey to yield the information required? The last 3 student engagement surveys conducted at UWA, in September 2007, 2008 and 2010, had response rates of 26%, 15% and 24%. Based on this experience, the response rate for a local student experience survey conducted in September/October, immediately after the UES, could be as low as 15%. This would be too low for the data to be meaningful, especially when broken down by discipline, faculty and school levels as is desired.

Items

1. The rationale states:

   “The usefulness of such an instrument is exemplified by the Melbourne Experience Surveys (MES). The University of Melbourne developed its own student experience instrument to determine some of the academic and social outcomes arising from the introduction of the Melbourne Model. The outcome of collecting this information has resulted in evidence based improvements to enhance the student experience.”

Which aspects of the student experience were changed by the implementation of the Melbourne Model? Have the items that measured these aspects at the University of Melbourne been included in the draft UWA survey?

2. At the Future Framework Implementation Committee meeting in October, 2011 it was agreed that we should not commit to questions taken from the current CEQ while its future is uncertain (the CEQ is currently under review) or before the contents of the UES are known.

3. The draft UWA instrument duplicates some draft UES items, e.g., attributes and skills acquired.

4. There are no questions in the draft instrument about actual participation in social activities arising from being at UWA, how many friends have been made, etc.

Greg Marie
23.4.2012
First Year Survey

Professor Gia Parish

I agree with the other points made so far regarding questioning students on their actual participation in/utilisation of learning activities provided by teaching staff. I also have another comment somewhat related to this. With regard to the question about paid work in the student info section, I think it would be useful to find out how many students are undertaking paid work for financial necessity as opposed to work experience/enhancement of career prospects. Anecdotal evidence indicates that many students are undertaking extra work for the latter reasons, to the detriment of their participation in the learning/enrichment activities available through their studies. It would be nice to know if this is actually true or if they are genuinely mostly working for financial necessity.

Winthrop Professor Andy Fourie

My comment relates to the first item, ‘Good Teaching’. As you know, in ENSC1002 there are 19 different ‘facilitators’. If this question is to have any use it would have to ensure the names of each facilitator are recorded. Is this the intention? It could get quite tedious interpreting the results.

Professor Rachel Cardell-Oliver

I have concerns about two areas in the proposed survey questions: good teaching and learning support. Good Teaching questions are intended to measure "student perception of teaching: feedback, motivation, attention, understanding."

In my view the 6 questions given in this section measure the (perceived) "effort" put in to teaching by the instructor rather than whether students learnt anything significant. I put a lot of time into my teaching and providing feedback, and my vanity is soothed by my students being grateful for that. But I also know that deeper learning will occur if I focus that effort into encouraging students to learn ways of solving problems on their that don't focus on "just ask the lecturer for the answers". First year students are particularly prone to this shallow learning approach, and so I am unhappy about UWA encouraging it, even if unintentionally.

There is an implicit assumption in this question set that instructors who provide all the answers, as soon as asked, are teaching better than those who manage to teach students how to analyse and solve the problems they encounter as they learn. For example, "teaching staff put a lot of time into commenting on my work" needs to be related to whether students were motivated to make use of this feedback and learn from it, for example, "I used the feedback provided to improve my work and was able to solve the problem on my own next time". Students may be more satisfied by the former (it is much easier for them) but they are likely to learn more if they are encouraged to do the latter.

Learning Support

The questions on Learning Support mention online support and the library, but nowhere in the question set seemed to ask about the learning support provided by lectures, tutorials and labs.

I agree with Nazrim that it is more useful to ask students what use, or how much use, they made of lectures, tutorials and labs, rather than just whether they were satisfied that the lectures, tutorials and labs were there. However, when I have asked about this in my surveys I found that students greatly overestimated "how many lectures did you attend" (they mostly reported 80% or so, when the reality was much lower). So I changed the question to this one:
Various learning opportunities were provided to help you assimilate the material in this unit. Please rate how you made use of these opportunities by placing a cross in the appropriate column next to each question.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost always (&gt;=80%)</th>
<th>Usually (&gt;50%)</th>
<th>Sometimes (&lt;=50%)</th>
<th>Hardly ever (&lt;20%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture attendance</td>
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<td>Practical class attendance</td>
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<td>Lecture handouts</td>
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<td>Recommended reading in text books</td>
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<td>Other reading materials e.g. on the online bibliography</td>
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<td>Out of class help from the lecturer and tutor</td>
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<td>Own research</td>
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</table>

Assistant Professor Nazim Khan
One important aspect missing from this and most surveys is: How many lectures have you attended? 0-10% 10-20% 20-30% 30-40% 40-50% 50-60% 60-70% 70-80% 80-90% >90%

These participation scores should be correlated with student satisfaction scores. Students who choose not to engage with the university certainly will not have score in other areas that are meaningful or based on their experience. If we do not include attendance information then the a lot of the survey results are meaningless – only to be used be administrators to target academic staff. I once made the mistake of doing a SPOT during a test – and got caned by students who never came to classes!

Winthrop Professor Caroline Baille
1. The question relating to research to enhance student learning is not well phrased. Students will not necessarily know that this has been done - nor will they understand the language of this question. For example all our work on thresholds in first year will be at best presented to them as thresholds in their learning but not as 'research to enhance learning'. I think this data is best taken from the course developers.

2. There are many questions which will not necessarily yield good results unless the students are somewhat educated about the importance of certain aspects. It is our experience that students will say units are disorganised when they are not in the same lecture/tutorial/lab format as they are used to. Flexibility of learning opportunities and allowing for creative and critical thinking in open ended problems often seem to the students that we are not organised - when in fact we are very structured but we are not keeping them in a straight jacket by telling them exactly what steps to take. We call this being in a 'liminal space' - an important place of some confusion and allowing the brain to sort out what to do - if we tell them everything they do not learn the required thinking skills. However they are likely to grade the unit or degree as 'disorganised' or not well planned.
Hi Kaye,

We only have a couple of comments.
1. We don't seem to see any specific questions about cohort (Major) identity for 1st yrs? Several discussions previously had highlighted it as an important issue.
2. Under Student Support Q6 (question required on student service). Maybe there could be a question around the prevention of the 'Tennis ball' as this was one the main goals set by the SS Team. Advice given by Student Services allowed me to resolve my issue through one encounter.

Regards

Asst/Prof Jeromy Harvey
Acting Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning School of Indigenous Studies
Feedback on the UWA Student Experience Questionnaire
(Draft 8 September 2011)
Collated by Siri Barrett-Lennard, Student Services

General feedback (whole document):

- Ensure consistency of end punctuation for questions/items (full stop or no full stop).
- Consider using IT terms most commonly used in student information documents, eg. LMS (vs Moodle) and MyUWA (vs Portal).

SECTION I

Generic skills

New item: Consider adding:

- The degree improves my skills in spoken communication.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Item 2: Simplify wording, e.g.

- My degree refers to research findings.

Item 3: Simplify wording, e.g.

- My degree encourages learning outside the classroom.

Item 4: Simplify wording, e.g.

- My degree effectively uses information and communication technology to facilitate learning.

SECTION II

General feedback (this section):

- Add more questions on general Student Support so that the focus is not mainly/exclusively on transition or change the title of this section (see suggestions for additional questions below under Student Support heading below).

Learning Support

Item 5: Change wording:

- I am generally satisfied with the online classroom environment (e.g. LMS, LCS, MyUWA)
New item: Consider adding:

- Academic learning support (STUDYSmarter, Graduate Education) is appropriate to my needs.

Student Support

Item 5: Change wording:

- MyUWA provides good access to the information I need.

Item 6: Consider inserting:

- Services that support student welfare (e.g. careers advice, counselling, medical centre, housing office, financial aid, disability services) have been adequate for my needs.

Item 8+: Consider adding further questions:

- Ask UWA provides good access to the information I need.
- I was easily able to access services that support my mental health and well-being while studying.
- When experiencing a difficulty, student services helped me get back on track.
- Student services helped me manage concerns and enjoy university more.
- Student services events made me feel optimistic about my studies.

SECTION V

General feedback (this section):

- Fix grammar of introductory sentence, i.e. This section lists...

Support Service: Consider adding:

- Childcare services
- Faculty advising
- Learning resources: ACE, CARS, ISE
- Volunteer services: UniMentor, UniSkills, Guild Volunteer Hub
- Financial aid services: Guild, Scholarships, International and Financial Aid Offices

Support Service: Change wording:

- International student support – change to International Centre support
- Student housing – change to Housing Office support or Accommodation Assistance
- English language programs and support – change to:
  - Academic language, learning and numeracy support (STUDYSmarter)
  - AND
  - Graduate research education resources and training

SECTION VII
**Student Info**

**Item 3: Consider adding:**

- Is this work degree-related?

**Item 4: Consider separating community service and volunteering activities from family and sporting commitments:**

- Do you have significant community service, volunteering or pro-bono work commitments outside university?

AND

- Do you have other significant responsibilities or commitments, e.g. parenting, caring for an aged parent, sporting commitments, musical commitments?

**FIRST YEAR MEASURE OF ENGAGEMENT**

**General feedback (this section):**

- Instructions are required.
- Use consistent format (verb plus noun group) for items (see below).

**Items: Change wording of first four items, collapsing first two:**

- Undertake practicum, internship, fieldwork, industry placement or work experience.
- Do community services or volunteer work.
- Participate in study group, peer learning group, mentoring or learning community.
Hi Kaye,

We have reviewed the proposed survey and I attach the document with a few comments.

Overall there were very few comments about the questions apart from the general criticism of the CEQ questions and their bias against large classes when compared to small classes.

I have some reservations about questions like:
6. UWA uses the results of student surveys to improve learning and teaching

4. The units covered the breadth of the discipline

My reservations relate to the awareness of the student to be able to validly answer such questions.

Another comment concerns how we might interpret the results to questions which group “administrative staff or services” and “student support staff and services” into one question as respondents might not know exactly what they are being asked .. career services? Medical services? IT staff? Student Centre staff? Moodle?? Faculty level vs University level? How do we analyse responses to “The advice I received about degrees and unit offerings/choice was clear”?

Cheers,

Phil

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From: Kaye MacPherson-Smith
Sent: Monday, 16 April 2012 5:42 PM
To: Brian Greene; Cara MacNish; Denise Chalmers; Elaine Sharplin; Greg Marie; Jane Long; Jeromy Harvey; Kaye MacPherson-Smith; Kelly Smith; Linc Schmitt; Mark Israel; Mary Davies; president (guild); Mike Shearer; Neil O'Sullivan; Peter Whipp; Phil Hancock; Philip Goldswain; Raoul Oehmen; Sally Sandover; Sandra Carr; Sato Juniper; Siri Barrett-Lennard
Cc: Andrea Fraser; Dianna Brooks; Lesley McCann; Rebecca Stuart-Coombe; Vicki Wallis
Subject: FW: Chair's email to TLC members

Dear TLC members,

A reminder that I will need to receive your feedback regarding the draft survey by COB April 23 (refer attached docs and Chair’s information as below).

Please let me know if you have any queries about this.

Best regards
Kaye