APPENDIX E

2010 DEGREE COMPLETION EXPERIENCE SURVEY

ANALYSIS OF SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE/SHORTEN COMPLETION TIME
Appendix E: Summary of Student Suggestions to Improve/Shorten Time to Complete Degree:

At the end of the survey, students were asked the following question:

“If there is one thing SFU can do to improve/shorten the time to complete your degree, what would it be?”

An analysis was performed on all 1,964 responses. These responses were read and 9 categories were created that encompass the types of suggestions students made.

Table 1 shows the distribution of responses. The table shows that concerns regarding course availability dominated responses. Tuition/fees and services/advising were also concerns.

Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement/Suggestion:</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course availability, Variety and Scheduling</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition/Fees and Financial Aid</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services/Advising</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program requirements</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administration/Policy Decisions</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Choice/Problems – Delayed Completion was Not an SFU problem</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Content, Format and Workload</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors and TAs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life/Campus Environment/Transportation Issues</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1792</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear/No improvements/Nothing</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, the analyzed comments are summarized by topic, and then a selection of student comments pertaining to each topic is provided. All 1,964 analyzed comments can be found online at: [http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/surveys/degreecompletion/StudentComments.pdf](http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/surveys/degreecompletion/StudentComments.pdf)

Course Availability, Variety and Scheduling

- Course frequency:
  - Offer courses more often
  - Offer more courses in the Summer term
  - Offer required courses every term
  - Offer more upper division courses
- Course capacity:
  - Have more registration spots available in classes
  - Offer more seats and/or section in popular/required courses
  - Offer more spaces upper division courses
- Course scheduling:
  - Offer the same class at multiple times in the day/week
  - More flexible course times
  - Class length per session (one hour versus three hours)
  - More afternoon/evening courses
  - Schedule exams with less conflicting times
• Course location and mode of delivery:
  o More courses in Surrey, Vancouver
  o More on-line courses
  o More distance education courses
• Course variety:
  o Offer more courses with practical/hands-on material
  o Offer more courses with more specialization

Tuition/Fees and Financial Aid
• Lower tuition
• Lower student fees
• Increase number of bursaries/scholarships/student loans
• More awareness and easily obtainable bursaries/scholarships
• More student financial support services

Services/Advising
• More advisors for all Faculties and increase advising hours
• Better and more knowledgeable advisors to discuss required courses and when required courses will be offered
• Implement mandatory advisor meetings to keep students on track of planned schedules
• Provide interactive course planning service or course maps/plans for students to follow; outline which courses should be taken each year
• Offer program/degree information days
• Implement a mentoring program to help students learn about various services as well as program requirements
• Have more career counsellors and advisors to help students decide on a program or area of specialization and career options as well as job fair events
• More student support services including online degree completion criteria system, career exploration workshops, time management and study skills workshops, and daycare/childcare services
• Offer more financial aid information and services they provide

Program Requirements
• Remove WQB requirements
• Reduce WQB requirements
• Reduce the number of requirements for programs
• Reduce the number of electives required
• Have more focused and specialized programs
• Have more options for WQB courses
• Have more flexibility for pre-requisites and required courses between different programs (transferability of courses across programs/departments)
• Allow greater variety of electives to satisfy degree requirements
• Count co-op towards graduation requirements
• Make co-op mandatory
• Reduce the number of co-op terms required
University Administration/Policy Decisions

- Change grading system from 4.33 scale to 100 percentage scale
- Lower GPA requirements
- More acceptance of transfer credits from other institutions/departments/Faculties
- Increase the minimum course requirement to be a full-time student from 9 credits to 12 credits
- Allow more courses/credits to be transferrable between Faculties
- Allow the use of external work experiences count toward degree requirements
- Make registration process easier or priority enrollment for Majors
- Have set course schedules for Majors (cohort based system)
- Higher entrance/admission requirements
- Increase reputation/name recognition
- Offer more on-campus jobs/work opportunities
- Increase number of times allowed to repeat courses
- More accurately assign credits to courses according to workload

Personal Choice/Problems – Delayed Completion was Not an SFU Problem

- Personal choice
- Personal health issues

Course Content, Format and Workload

- More courses that are less theory based and more focused on hands-on/practical content
- More seminar/field-work type courses
- Reduce workload of courses

Instructors and TAs

- Hire more qualified professors/instructors/TAs
- Hire more professors/instructors/TAs that care about and are more supportive of students
- Have professors/instructors/TAs offer more office hours

Student Life/Campus Environment/Transportation Issues

- More inclusive and welcoming study environment
- Offer more campus events for better social atmosphere
- Improve transportation to and from Burnaby campus
- Better transit system to Burnaby campus
Sample of Student Suggestions by Topic

Course Availability, Variety and Scheduling

◦ Increase the availability of upper level courses and reduce tuition!
◦ -provide more than one class per sememster which serve as pre-requisite courses.
-provide guidance or suggestions to new students to SFU so they can determine early on which degree route they may be interested in pursuing.
◦ Make more lower division courses available, more online options available, open wait lists for courses enabling more students to join classes at the beginning of each term, give students volume discounts for taking more than three courses at once.
◦ Larger course availability
Courses that are part of the same program (degree requirements) should have consideration put into scheduling of the class times relative to each other
More course offerings at satellite campuses
◦ Offer more online courses and more variety of courses. Theory is very important but practical experience is as important as theory. Offer practical courses along with theoretical courses. This way students will appreciate the logic of theorizing.
◦ Offer bigger lower division with capacity to take on more students because from what I remember having a late registration date made it quite difficult to enroll in lower division core required courses.
◦ Less course time conflicts. For some reason the courses I need tend to overlap so I’m forced to reduce my course load.
◦ More options to take required courses outside of 9 - 5 time period so that I could work and take more of my required courses at night.
◦ More choices from the distance education programs.
◦ More courses available during summer semester.
◦ more online/distance ed courses
◦ more summer classes
◦ Offer more classes in the summer
Make the cost of courses less expensive so that you can afford to take more classes per semester
◦ More summer classes
◦ Offer more courses in the summer
◦ Offer more night courses.
◦ Offer more classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights.
◦ More lower division night classes
◦ It would be great if they offered more distance education courses.
◦ Offer more courses at the downtown campus.
◦ Offer more varied class times.
◦ Look more carefully at what courses to offer in the summer semesters. I was able to take 4 courses per semester every semester until reaching upper division courses when it became increasingly difficult to find 4 courses to take in the summer.
◦ more intercession courses
◦ Offer critical upper division courses [ie. 3rd and 4th year Engineering courses] on two campuses on an alternating schedule. -> ENSC 320 at BBY campus in the spring and Surrey in the summer semester.
◦ Many upper level physics courses are only offered once every year or even every two years,
which is difficult or impossible to schedule successfully when prerequisites are considered.

- increase the number of courses offered in the upper division and increase the class size for upper division courses
- Offer more space in upper division courses or offer more than one class for a popular course. This will help with scheduling and course availability.
- It would be good to have the upper division courses being closer together with each other in terms of schedule. This way, students get to go to campus on a couple days and use the rest to work if need be.
- Offer more sections of popular and/or required upper division courses
- Offer the courses more times in a year and try to plan out when the courses are offered so it does not conflict with its prerequisites or other courses in the same level so you don’t have to miss one just because they are offered concurrently.
- offer more courses that don't conflict. I found that often courses within my major has exams very close together or did not offer many seats, even though the course was mandatory.
- More offerings of the courses each year.

**Tuition/Fees and Financial Aid**

- Reduced tuition costs or increased online courses for working people
- Lower tuition fees, but that won’t happen
- More bursaries/loans, and offer popular courses more frequently.
- lower tuition. make student housing easier to get into.
- More supports for financially needed student
- reduce tuition.
- reduce competitiveness.
- offer scholarship or reduce tuition fee to students who complete, for example, 35 credits with the required courses the program they enrolled to
- If I may say - more provincial funding and less tuition fee.
- Bursaries and advertise to incoming students that they can apply for them if needed. I was not made aware of the possibility of applying for bursaries when I first entered SFU.
- Reduce tuition rates.
- Allow more funding for students who do not have student loans and work to pay their own tuition and expenses. Also more funding opportunities for older students.
- Make education cheaper
  Make programs more accessible -- grades are only half a person. I find even with the selection process for a masters degree at SFU, grades are heavily weighed and this impedes on student’s success in getting into the program.
- lower tuition fees, offer more classes per semester, make it easier to transfer between majors.
- We help with finance, money to pay for it. We need to provide economic benefits to students to make study on par with what it cost to students 30 years ago adjusted for inflation.
- Offer more financial incentives so students don’t have to work so much while going to school. I believe that is a pretty big one but I also know the university doesn’t have any money so perhaps not the most helpful advice.
- Provide more financial support for students who need help regardless of GPA.
- Provide more bursaries!
- Be more affordable. Necessity to work part-time in order to pay rent/bills etc. extends completion time of degree significantly.
In my case, lower tuition fees would have helped but I realize this is unlikely to occur due to the need to maintain a high standard of education and attract high level employees.

Lower Tuition fees and offer more courses at the Surrey Campus

Identify that most students are working to pay for school, or living expenses. By reducing tuition, that would cut back the number of students who need to be working (and working as often) so that they may register for more courses per semester.

Lower tuition. Bursaries for students who come from rural areas.

Tuition Fees

Lower tuition fees or increase scholarship opportunities.

Reduce tuition so I wouldn’t have to work 25-30 hours a week to pay for school, rent, etc.

Drop tuition. Peoples incomes aren’t rising proportionally to the increases in tuition prices. The cost is ludicrous and you’re not even guaranteed a job

Reduce tuition fees or increase scholarships available to students

reduce tuition, have classes available all year round.

Lower the cost of classes, residence.

**Services/Advising**

Availability of trained learning assistance for courses and general study skills. Had TAs that couldn’t speak english very well and were of no assistance in helping understand the work.

Have advisors that are willing to make exceptions for their students. Advisors were not able to make any exceptions for me and therefore I was unable to get the minor I wanted.

Provide better daycare options, increased mental health accommodations, better advertisement of support systems available, increased academic support for women pursuing a degree in the science fields, especially in the 1st and 2nd years.

Hold job fair events often to motivate students to be responsible for their career and graduate as soon as possible.

- Increase number and training of academic advisors - specifically in the Education Faculty
- Pay more attention to individual student experience with supporting staff

More amenities on campus open later.

Increase the size of campus to have more faculties/graduate school and classes.

offer more comprehensive course councilors. they were largely useless, and made my degree far more frustrating than it need be.

Offer counseling in your first semester of one hour a month to teach you coping mechanisms for stress, techniques for time management.

Mandatory counseling with a course adviser at the end of second year or the beginning of third year would have helped me create a workable class load in my fourth year. I realized late that there were many necessary second year classes I hadn’t taken.

Offer more assistance to those unsure of their path.

Provide enhanced and early career counselling/planning

Offer more information and guidance on which programs to take before and during 1st year of studies.

If i had help mapping out my course selections according to my strength and weakness in my freshman year, i would have probably save some time towards graduation.

Mandatory counseling each calendar year with faculty guidance or career counselor. It would have saved me 9 months and about $2500.

Mandatory academic advising hours

Better educate new students about services and help available on campus.
I think SFU’s website needs a overhaul, it is one of the worse websites to navigate around.

- Have more defined paths.
- For each program, have more information available to undergrad students for courses required to complete degree and structure of what course to complete each semester. This would help in completing degree in a timely manner.
- Provide interactive course planning service, perhaps one that keeps track of progress online.
- Offer more assistance or guides to completing in x time. For example, if I wanted to finish in 5 years and co-op show me all the options to achieve this. Also offer more required courses in the summer.
- Provide more assistance to those who are unfamiliar with their options. Ex: distance ed courses, degree informaion, timeline, program planing, and on campus options for those who would like to attend SFU after completing distance education courses.
- Provide more experienced and knowledgeable advisers and if they have had the back on track program at the time that I was RTWed.
- Make information on all faculties and opportunities visible and accessible.
- Offer accurate long time planning for students
- Outline which courses should be taken each year. Offer all courses each semester

Program Requirements

- Get rid of the WQB requirements, focus on the goal of the program the student is in rather than force courses that are not connected to the major on the students - there is no need for a science major to be taking arts classes and vice versa.
- dont waste time taking elective classes. if were aiming towards a certain degree and wanting to pursue a career in that field, theres not point of wasting time taking courses outside of that field.
- Let students have the option to skip the prerequisite courses if they have proven that their previous courses’ GPA is relatively high.
- Limit the amount of unrelated electives required for graduation. A lot of these courses have very little value in terms of what is gained academically.
- - decrease the number of credits needed for a major- similar to countries such as NZ and the UK
  - decrease the number of breadth credits needed (outside of current WQB requirements)
- Have a more specified degree of courses learned instead of broadening to learn everything but only knowing the basics.
- not make us take electives outside the field of study to complete the degree.
- Reduce number of electives
- I would recomend more flexibility between different classes for diffrent degrees. The current systems does not allow for very much (if any) flexibility in the classes for degree completion (at least in some science degrees).
- Have more electives count towards program credits. that way if peopl do switch majors or want to take extra electives they will not be taking more credit than required to graduate.
- restrict the number of electives allowed in a degree program
- Make less requirements or another way to get into the Criminology program. There were too many pre-regs that conflicted. It would be better if it was scheduled better.
- Have a little more flexibility with transferable credits. For example, I took stats 270 and had to go back to take a less hard stats course (202) because they were not transferable on the books, even though the content was very similar.
- Alleviate the course requirements and program enrollment for students that return to SFU from RTW, give weight to the CGPA from other post-secondary institution for enrollment in courses and programs.
- Introduce co-op into the FPA program. If students could get paid work experience that would fund their schooling and help their CVs the degree would pass much more quickly and be much more useful.
- Coop count as credits toward graduation.
- Count Co-op credits towards graduation credits.
- Don’t charge $600+ per Co-op term when Co-op staff are useless and unhelpful.
- Take into consideration the benefits of coop and count that towards the degree credits. I will have 4 semesters of coop done by the time I’m done my degree (perhaps 5). I would think applied knowledge is just as important as the courses.

University Administration/Policy Decisions

- The grading structure in science courses can be improved. The exams and midterms are weighted much more than other components in the course. That creates a tremendous stress and pressure for students.
- Allow more flexibility for students that already have credits from other institutions, plenty of work experience and all program requirements that exclude number of credits.
- Easier on the marking.
- For me, it was about lateral course recognition and transfer credit. Especially if the school is going to impose something as ineffectual as “breadth requirements”.
- Make some allowances for my external experiences to count toward my degrees and better transfer of past courses.
- Offer students who already in the Major / faculty can register in the next level course automatically.
- Improve the process for transfer credits. Make that process more clear, straightforward, and transparent. There should be an appeal or review process for it too.
- More transfer credits.
- Give course registration priorities to students participating in co-op or study-abroad programs.
- Get rid of the RTW policy- replace it with another policy that is more efficient.
- To facilitate students better in the course registration process. To enable more sessions in one semester so that students from some hot majors (Business Admin) could easily register courses.
  - To allow more scholarship to international students.
- Making the enrollment in courses much easier.
- Raise the bar of entrance requirements.
- Make courses required for graduation only open to those in the program. Nothing is more frustrating than finding out you didn’t get into a course because a bunch of English students thought it would be interesting.
- Transfer credits from other colleges. Most people around campus complain about the little amount of credits that could transfer. Even when speaking to an advisor and planning with transfer credits, it still does not work out.
- Make the degree process easier to understand. Especially with transfer credits I have difficulty making out what degrees I am closest too as my courses become more obscure.
- Make it easier to use the website. As a student in FSJ I always have trouble using the site and...
finding the links to register for courses or contact appropriate staff.
◦ Maybe not to shorten the degree, per se, but I do believe goSFU needs an overhaul.
◦ Assign credits to class based on workload.
◦ Grant higher number of credits for theatre courses.
◦ More credits for upper divison FPA classes the require large amounts of out of class time for completion
◦ Make all 300-400 courses 4 credit courses.
◦ Make it mandatory for students to take at least nine courses per year.
◦ Force students to take a full course load.
◦ Create more standard programs for degree completion. Allow sightly less flexibility in scheduling.
◦ Have a standardized timetable as an option. Prepare students for careers after university.
◦ Have a pre-set program.
◦ Create specific programs (ie: pre-determined course schedules) and reserved seating in specific courses required for that student to graduate
◦ Perhaps having programs with pre-organized (semestery) class schedules so that programs were layed out for students.
◦ It was difficult to plan out 5 courses/semester to finish in 4 years and complete all the requirements. A planned course schedule for my program for all 4 years would have been helpful.
◦ Stricter completion criteria if you’re in the program. (ex. UBC?)
  Predefined timetables of courses for students in program.
◦ Standard time tables or increase course offerings.

Personal Choice/Problems – Not an SFU Problem
◦ There really wasn’t anything SFU could have done in my situation because I chose to work full time. I was happy to be able to complete my degree in the time that I did. It was well worth it to finally complete the degree both financially and personally.
◦ I chose to take a long time, it wasn’t the fault or cause of SFU. I love SFU. Great school, great teachers, great staff, great campus.
◦ N/A. It took longer for me to complete my degree was because of my health problem. I had to seek medical attention outside of Canada at the time.
◦ I completed a 5 year degree (BEd.) in 5.5 years only because of personal injury, so I have no complaints of the university.
◦ My main program was theatre, so it takes many extra curricular hours. So, there is no real way to shorten my degree time.
◦ Time to complete degree was not a major issue for me.
◦ It was a personal decision
◦ SFU gave me all the support I needed. It was my own personal circumstances that prolonged my education.
◦ For me, it was more of a choice to complete my degree in five years, rather than four.
◦ I didn’t have registration problems, were able to take the courses that I wanted, it was because of my own choices that it took me longer.
◦ Finishing my degree within a set amount of time was never a priority for me.
◦ I don’t think SFU needs to do anything to improve/shorten the time needed to complete a degree. In my experience, my failure to complete my degree in four years was a matter of personal choice.
I finished two separate degrees in 6 years, plus did two co-op terms and a field school. I wouldn’t give up any of those things to have finished sooner. I was happy to take the time necessary to get everything I could out of my time at SFU.

I don’t feel that taking longer to finish my degree was a problem. I was able to get the courses I needed, perhaps not in the semester I wanted, but in a reasonable time-frame.

For me personally, there's not much that SFU could have done. I completed double majors in biology and economics, so had to take a lot of courses (which took a lot of time).

Encourage 1st year students to take their time. 5 years is nothing in the grand scheme of things and the extra time gives you time to figure out what you want to do once finished.

Nothing. I love SFU! I went through a lot health problems during my time at SFU and I really appreciate all the compassion I received from my profs, advisors and the centre for students with disabilities.

Course Content, Format and Workload

- make classes more interactive and engaging
- Reduce amount of work per class. Realistic expectations for courses.
- Reduce the work load so students can take more classes.
- Less difficult courses, combined with increased support, so that a five course workload per semester can be taken.
- Decrease workload so that students can take more courses in a semester and not feel overwhelmed by assignments/projects.
- Ease up the demands from each course so that more courses can be completed without damaging grades.
- Have more practical-based / less theory-based courses in the Communications department. That is my advice overall - does not necessary apply to length of degree but overall application in the workforce.
- Keep courses current and up-to-date with the actual marketplace.
- Simulate real-life work scenarios in conjunction with the theory.
- Some undergraduate courses chapters are really too theoretical. With today online study tools, an average student can deepen his knowledge. Focus on practice rather than theory.
- More interactive courses.
- Keep me engaged with experiential learning, locally relevant content and more collaboration between disciplines.

Instructors and TAs

- some professors dont offer one on one help , not because t hey dont want to but only because they offer one hour of availability a week
- qualified professors [instead of lecturers] for increased number of upper-level [computing science] courses.
- Have faculty that can teach as well as do their research.
  More funding for poor students.
  More work study opportunities.
  More flexibility for working professionals.
- better professors. sometimes we drop the courses because we did not like some profs...they might be good at researching, but they are not good at teaching
Professors should be more supportive to students
- Hire more teachers for upper division theatre courses.
- Improve the quality of professors! I had a few bad ones.
- Hire more qualified professors that can teach you what you need and treat you with respect.
- Attract better professors especially in the 1st and 2nd year.
- Get rid of teachers who are bad at teaching because after taking that course you realize it's a waste of time.
- Hire better staff who are helpful and know what they're doing. This is especially true of the professors and T.A.s -- no one seems to know how to teach, only how to ignore.
- Great professors overall in lower levels. But in upper levels, some professors are just not up to par. Offer some of the upper level courses more during the year so we don't have to wait a whole year to get in.
- Professor selection is important; most professors are the smartest people, but not all can teach. I actually get the feelings sometimes that some are uninterested in teaching. Sometimes some professors are hard to understand because of their heavy accent.
- Hire better professors or professors more qualified to lecture. Be more attentive of what courses are failing and why and take action to improve them.
- hire better lecturers who can teach well other than professors who mainly focus on their research

Student Life/Campus Environment/Transportation Issues
- Make the study environment more inclusive, welcoming and accessible. Ensure that every student who goes to the open labs actually acquire help from open labs and has the chance to finish all their questions.
- Have more events to enhance the communication between students.
- Provide and foster a better learning environment, so that hard working students are not forced to re-do multiple courses.
- Make campus a more desirable place to be - I came up to school for classes and left immediately. Maybe if campus was more enjoyable, I would have taken more courses more often, thus shortening my degree completion time.
- Improve campus atmosphere, increase student social opportunities.
- Move the campus off a frozen mountain
- More of a social campus... programs to get people together on campus... create a community.
- better community atmosphere
- Brighten the campus and make it more inviting.
- easier routes of transportation
- a skytrain that takes you directly to SFU campus in burnaby
- Better transit and more direct routes
- Improve transit system, so that commute to sfu would be quicker. Gondola system up the mountain would be good/speedier.