The Undergraduate Student Survey has been conducted at Simon Fraser University every Fall semester since 1992¹ (except in 2002.) This annual survey provides essential feedback on the academic experiences and concerns of our undergraduate students. Every year, the survey asks students about their experiences with course availability at SFU, as well as a range of other topics that change from year to year. The new topics for this year’s survey were teaching and curriculum, language skills, and a selected range of services.

A total of 5,832 students participated in this year’s survey, yielding an overall response rate of 28.6%. Highlights of the survey results are presented here. Statistics provided in this summary and in the full report are estimates based on survey respondents, and are accurate within ±1.3%, 19 times out of 20². The full report is available on the Institutional Research and Planning web-site: http://www.sfu.ca/irp/surveys/ugss/index.html

General Experience

- 88% of respondents are satisfied with their general SFU experience.
- When students were asked what single thing SFU could do to improve their experience here, the most common responses were:
  - improve facilities,
  - improve student life, and
  - improve course availability, variety and scheduling

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¹ It should be noted that a change in methodology, from in-class paper survey to online survey, was instituted in 2006. The paper surveys, administered to a random sample of classes, resulted in a “captive audience” and high response rates. In contrast, the online surveys, usually administered to the entire SFU undergraduate student population, result in larger samples but lower response rates, which could make the results less generalizable. Measures were taken to reduce potential biases resulting from a lower response rate.

² This margin of error applies to estimates based on the entire sample, assuming that the sample is representative.
How did Students Choose SFU?

- When asked where they heard the information that led them to choose SFU for their studies, respondents most often cited friends, high school counselors/teachers, and family.
- International respondents most commonly cited friends, the SFU website, and University Rankings (e.g. MacLean’s.)

Course Availability

- In general, this year’s course availability results were similar to the 2009 results. Most differences were not statistically significant (exceptions are noted.)
- **NUMBER of Courses**: 81% of respondents were able to register in the number of courses they wanted this fall, versus 79% last fall.
- **SPECIFIC Courses**: 57% were able to register all of the specific courses they wanted to take this term, a statistically significant increase over last fall’s rate of 54%.
- **REQUIRED Courses**: 67% were able to register all of the REQUIRED courses they wanted this term (vs. 66% last fall.) Registration difficulty was most often due to:
  - full classes,
  - scheduling conflicts,
  - courses not being offered this term, and
  - inconvenient scheduling.
  - Respondents in the Faculty of Education were most successful in registering for all of the required courses they wanted to take, while those in Health Sciences and in Arts and Social Sciences were least successful.

- **Delayed Credential Completion**: 57% of respondents reported that they are taking longer than expected to complete their credential (vs. 55% last fall.)
  - 85% of students felt that it was important to finish within their expected timeframe.
  - Commonly cited reasons for delay include:
    - course availability issues (e.g. full courses, scheduling conflicts, courses not being offered, etc.; 60% of delayed respondents),
    - taking a reduced course load (50%), and
    - employment (37%).
Rates of delayed completion are highest in the Beedie School of Business (62%) and lowest in the Faculty of Education (36%).

- Many Business students were delayed due to entering a co-op program. Since the co-op program is intended to enhance the educational experience, delayed completion may not be a negative outcome in some cases.

- **Trends:** Course availability has become generally more problematic over the past fifteen years. However, there have been slight improvements in registration success rates since 2008.

### Trends in Course Availability and Delayed Degree Completion

- **Satisfaction with Course Availability:**
  - Satisfaction with course availability decreases as course level increases. Satisfaction by course level improved slightly from Fall 2009 to Fall 2010.
  - 76% of respondents are satisfied with the location (campus) of courses offered.
  - 63 - 65% are satisfied with course frequency (how often courses are offered) and scheduling.
  - 56 – 58% are satisfied with available registration spots in courses (course capacity) and the variety of distance/online courses offered.

### Satisfaction with Course Availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Level</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-Level Courses</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-Level Courses</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-Level Courses</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400-Level Courses</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Registration Spots</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance/Online Offerings</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching and Curriculum

- **W/Q/B Courses:** Just over half of this year’s respondents agreed that W/Q/B (writing-intensive, quantitative, and breadth) courses produce the benefits for which they were designed. This is a statistically significant increase over last year’s results.

  ![Percentage of Respondents who Agree that “W/Q/B” Courses are Beneficial](image)

- **W/Q/B Curriculum:** In both 2006 and 2010, students were asked a set of questions relating to writing, quantitative, and breadth content in courses, as well as the value of their education at SFU. It was hoped to determine whether the WQB courses had impacted student perception about the importance of these aspects of coursework, their confidence in their own skills in these areas, and their perception of the value of their educational experience here.

  - Overall, there were few changes: the percentage of respondents agreeing with the WQB curriculum statements changed by no more than 5% from 2006 to 2010.
  - Students who are further along in their credential seem to place a higher value on writing and quantitative aspects of coursework, and have more confidence in their own writing and quantitative skills, but appear to have less confidence in the value of their education at SFU.

- **Cohort Programs:**
  - 63% of respondents said that if they were to start their SFU studies over again, they would be interested in joining a cohort program (a group of students who take courses together at the same time.)

  ![First Choice Location for a Cohort Program](image)
• **Quality of Teaching:** 85% of respondents are satisfied with the quality of teaching at SFU.

• **Research with Faculty Members:** 13% of graduating respondents said that they have worked within a faculty member’s research team, outside of coursework.

**English Language Skills**

• **English Language Skills of Instructors:** Students were asked how often they encounter instructors who have difficulty communicating in English. Overall:
  
  o ~70% of respondents have had SFU instructors who did not speak clearly, and instructors with poor English or an accent they had trouble understanding
  
  o ~45% have had SFU instructors who used unfamiliar language (e.g. slang, difficult vocabulary, etc.)
  
  o Only 4-8% have experienced these problems with “most” or “all” of their SFU instructors.
  
  o These problems were experienced most often by respondents in Applied Sciences, and least often by those in Education.
  
  o International students were more likely to complain about instructors using unfamiliar language and not speaking clearly, while domestic students were more likely to complain of instructors with poor English or an accent they had trouble understanding.

• **Use of English by Students:** Most respondents speak, read, and write in English outside of class on a daily basis (95%, 96% and 88%, respectively.)

• **English Language Programs:** Over 70% of international respondents indicated that they are interested in programs that help to improve their English language conversation skills, presentation skills, and pronunciation/accent. Interest levels are considerably lower among domestic students.

**Services / General**

• **Orientation:**
  
  o 54% of respondents attended an Orientation program when they first came to SFU.
  
  o Approximately 70% of these students agree that orientation was useful to them, and that all students should participate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Orientation Participants who Agree that:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation helped them transition into university life and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students should participate in Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation made them feel more connected to SFU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

• **Facilities:** 77% of respondents are satisfied with the overall quality of on-campus facilities.
• **Bookstore:** 88% of respondents are satisfied with extended hours during the first week of classes, while 46% are satisfied with the Book Buyback Program.

• **Library and Student Learning Commons:**
  - 72% of respondents have used the Library’s quiet study areas.
  - 32% have borrowed laptops or digital projectors.
  - 27% have attended workshops, consultations, or drop-in sessions on research/writing/study/computer skills.
  - 26% have used novels, music, and movies from the Library, while 27% were not aware that the Library collection includes these items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you could improve one thing about the SFU Library/Student Learning Commons (SLC), what would it be? (Top 10 Suggestions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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• **Financial Aid:**
  - 50% of respondents have used the Financial Aid and Awards advising services, while 47% have used/attended their websites, presentations, or brochures/information sheets.
  - Roughly half of those who have used these services went on to apply for financial aid opportunities. Comparing respondents who used advising services with those who used websites/presentations:
    - respondents who used advising were more likely to apply for government student loans,
    - respondents using websites/presentations were more likely to apply for scholarships, bursaries, and the work-study program.

• **Employment:** 53% of respondents are currently employed or self-employed. Among these:
  - 10% work more than 30 hours per week,
  - 34% work 16 – 30 hours per week, and
  - 45% work 6 – 15 hours per week.
  - 56% of employed respondents are also studying full-time (at least 12 credits in Fall 2010, compared to 63% of non-employed respondents.)
  - Respondents working 16+ hours per week have similar registration success as other students, but are more often taking longer than expected to complete their credential (67% delayed, versus 53% among other students.)