The Undergraduate Student Survey has been conducted at Simon Fraser University every Fall semester since 1992\(^1\) (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, selected services, such as facilities and the Bookstore, and learning technologies.

A total of 5,955 students participated in this year’s survey, yielding an overall response rate of 24.3%. Highlights of the survey results are presented here. Statistics provided in this summary and in the full report are estimates based on survey respondents. Assuming that the sample is representative, proportions calculated on all respondents are accurate within ±1.9%, 19 times out of 20\(^2\). The full report is available on the Institutional Research and Planning web-site: [http://www.sfu.ca/irp/surveys/ugss.html](http://www.sfu.ca/irp/surveys/ugss.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 course availability, variety and scheduling, and
  - improve student life.

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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 year the survey was administered as two separate surveys, with the population of students randomly split between them. The margin of error reported above (±1.9%, 19 times out of 20) applies to questions that appeared on only one of the two surveys. However, some of the core questions appeared on both surveys. For those questions, proportions calculated on all respondents are accurate within ±1.3%, 19 times out of 20.
**Course Availability**

- This year’s course availability results were similar to the 2011 results. Most differences were not statistically significant (exceptions are noted.)

- **NUMBER of Courses:** 80% of respondents were able to register in the number of courses they wanted this fall, versus 77% last fall. This is a statistically significant increase.

- **SPECIFIC Courses:** 55% were able to register in all of the specific courses they wanted to take this term. This is very similar to last fall’s rate of 54%.

- **REQUIRED Courses:** 66% were able to register in all of the REQUIRED courses they wanted this term (vs. 64% last fall.)
  - 92% of respondents are taking required courses at SFU this term, and only 31% are taking any general interest courses outside of their program of study (excluding W/Q/B.)
  - Registration difficulty in required courses was most often due to:
    - full classes,
    - scheduling conflicts,
    - courses not being offered this term, and
    - spaces being reserved for other students.
  - 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 were least successful.

- **Credential Completion Time:** 57% of respondents reported that they are taking longer than expected to complete their credential (this is the same rate as in 2011 and 2010.)
  - 84% 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.; 58% of delayed respondents, down from 66% last year),
    - taking a reduced course load (40%, down from 50% last year), and
    - working in a job outside of co-op (35%, down from 40% last year).
  - Rates of delayed completion are highest in the Faculty of Health Sciences (71%) and lowest in the Faculty of Education (33%).
• **Trends**: Course availability has become generally more problematic over the past fifteen years, but has been fairly stable over the last five years.

![Trends in Course Availability and Delayed Degree Completion](image)

Note: Survey not administered in Fall 2002

• **Satisfaction with Course Availability**:  
  - Satisfaction with course availability decreases as course level increases.  
    - Satisfaction levels are similar to last year’s levels for lower division courses, and slightly lower for upper division courses.  
    - Satisfaction with the availability of 400-level courses is similar across Faculties, with the exception of being substantially higher among respondents in Education (EDUC).  
  - 67-77% of respondents are satisfied with course scheduling and the location (campus) of courses offered.  
  - 56-59% are satisfied with course frequency, available registration spots in courses (course capacity) and the variety of distance/online courses offered.

![Satisfaction with Course Availability](image)

• **Teaching and Curriculum**  
  - **Quality of Teaching**: 87% of respondents are satisfied with the quality of teaching at SFU.  
    - Students were asked to rank what qualities great teachers have. Of the list provided, the top choice was “clearly communicating the material”, selected by 44% of respondents.
• Teaching and Course Evaluation Process:
  o 73% of respondents are satisfied that the process gives students enough opportunities to provide feedback, and 55% are satisfied that the university is being responsive to student feedback.
  o 92% of respondents said that it is important for instructors to use the results to modify their teaching or the course, while 87% said it would be important to have students provide input mid-way through the term, so that instructors have time to make adjustments.

• Student Goals: Students were asked to indicate what they were hoping to get out of their education, when they decided to come to SFU. Respondents indicated that getting a good job was their top priority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When Students Decided to come to SFU, They were Hoping to... (Top 5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>get a good job</td>
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<tr>
<td>train for a specific career</td>
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<tr>
<td>fulfill their desire for knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet new friends and have a good time</td>
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<tr>
<td>prepare for graduate or professional school</td>
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• Student Learning Outcomes: Students were asked what qualities/skills they think an SFU graduate should have. Students could select up to three choices, and top choices are displayed in the graph below. Among the top five selected skills:
  o 85% are satisfied that SFU is providing them with critical thinking skills,
  o 72% are satisfied that SFU is providing them with the ability to apply the knowledge and methods they have learned,
  o 87% are satisfied that SFU is providing them with a solid foundation in their academic discipline,
  o 70% are satisfied that SFU is making them an engaged citizen with a sense of social responsibility, and
  o 65% are satisfied that SFU is providing opportunities for “learning through experience”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important Qualities/Skills/Experiences SFU Students should Have by the Time they Graduate (Top 5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be able to apply knowledge/methods learned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solid foundation in their specific academic discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be an engaged citizen with a sense of social responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Learning through experience&quot; (co-op, etc.)</td>
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</table>
- **W/Q/B Courses**: Just over half of this year’s respondents agreed that these courses produce the benefits for which they were designed (61% agreement for “W” courses, 56% for “Q” courses, and 57% for “B” courses).

![Percentage of Respondents who Agree that "W/Q/B" Courses Produce their Intended Benefits](chart)

- **Research with Faculty Members**: 15% of graduating respondents said that they have worked within a faculty member’s research team, outside of coursework. This is the same as last year’s result.

- **French Language Curriculum**:
  - 19% of respondents said they would be interested in taking courses taught in French within their program, and
  - 25% of respondents said they would be interested in taking elective courses taught in French outside their program.
  - The subjects with the greatest demand for French teaching are French, History, World Literature, and Education.

- **Preferred Campus/Location**:
  - 67% of respondents prefer taking courses at the Burnaby campus,
  - 21% prefer taking courses at the Surrey campus,
  - 11% prefer taking courses at the Vancouver campus, and
  - 1% prefer taking courses online.
  - 76% of respondents indicated that they would like to complete their entire program at their preferred campus/location, while 24% prefer to use multiple campuses.
  - 40% of respondents have taken at least one online class at SFU (28% by choice and 13% because there was no other choice).
  - 61% said that if a required course was only available online, they would be willing to take it, while 39% would not be willing.

**Services**

- **Facilities**: 80% of respondents are satisfied with the overall quality of on-campus facilities. This is a statistically significant increase from last year’s rate of 74%.

- **Bookstore/Textbooks**: 59% of respondents purchased all of their required textbooks in Fall 2012. Respondents who did not purchase all their textbooks cited the price of textbooks as the primary reason for their decision.
English Language Skills and Programs:

- 51% of respondents identified English as the language they first learned as a child and still use.
- 11% speak no English at home.
- 42% indicated that they sometimes struggle in their classes because of their instructors’ English language skills, compared to 14% who say they sometimes struggle due to their own English language skills.
- 71% of respondents indicated that they are interested in writing support related to their major, whereas 29% are interested in an upper division FAL course.

![Interest in Possible English Language Programs](chart)

Technology

- Use of Mobile Technology:
  - Use by Students:
    - 18% of respondents own an iPad, and 9% have used one for an SFU course in the past year. In contrast, 90% of respondents own a laptop computer, and 59% have used one for an SFU course in the past year.
    - The most common uses of mobile devices in academic work are to email/text professors or other students (76% of respondents), to check grades (62%), and to access course websites/syllabi (60%).
    - The most popular types of apps to use for SFU coursework/academic activities include search tool apps (used by 61% respondents), and dictionary/thesaurus apps (56%).
  - Use by SFU:
    - 91% of respondents indicated that their instructors have used projectors (connected to a computer for presentation purposes) over the past year, and of these, 98% said that it was valuable to their academic success.
    - In contrast, only 12% of respondents indicated that their instructors have used iPads over the past year, and of these, 69% said that it was valuable to their academic success.
    - 80% of respondents wish that SFU made more use of a course/learning management system (e.g. WebCT, Moodle, etc.), compared to 11% for online virtual worlds (e.g. Second Life, etc.)
• **Course Features:** 96% of respondents said that access to in-class lecture notes/recordings is important to successful learning, whereas only 48% said that the use of interactive learning technology (clickers, etc.) is important.

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<th>Importance and Satisfaction with Course Features</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access to in-class lecture notes and recordings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of visual presentation (PowerPoint, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online access to additional course resources (related readings, video, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile access to course website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of interactive learning technology (clickers, etc.)</td>
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- **Computer Platform:** When asked what platform they prefer, 60% of respondents indicated that they prefer Windows-based PCs, 23% prefer Apple computers, 1% prefer another platform, and 16% have no preference.

- **Cloud Computing:**
  - 41% of respondents indicated that they use cloud computing, 45% do not use it, and 14% are unsure.
  - 50% expect their use to increase over the next year, 48% expect it to stay the same, and 2% expect their use to decrease.

- **Communication with SFU:** The majority of respondents would prefer that SFU keep them informed by email.

**General**

- **Engagement at SFU:** Students were asked about their participation in various activities at SFU over the course of their education here. Among respondents:
  - 18% have participated in co-op, and an additional 63% said that they are interested in doing so.
    - Among respondents who are not interested, the main reasons are concerns over extending the length of their degree (53%) and not wanting to commit to at least 3 co-op terms (48%).
  - 12-14% had participated in an SFU volunteer program and a class project involving a community or business organization, and an additional 41-43% said they would like to.
  - 3-6% had participated in work-study, international exchange/study abroad, and field schools. An additional 51-67% said they would like to participate in these programs. Among those who are not interested, the main reasons are:
    - concerns over cost (cited by 52% for field school, and 60% for study abroad), and
    - concerns over time the program would take time away from studying (cited by 42% for work-study)
  - 11% indicated that they were unaware of SFU volunteer programs in which they could participate.
• **Engagement in the Community:** Students were asked about their engagement in their local community and in an international setting.

  o **Local community, in the last year:**
    - 38-40% have engaged in civic and humanitarian activities, and
    - 18-25% have engaged in environmental activities, social justice activities, and community service work that made use of their SFU education.
    - This year, there is a statistically significant increase in the proportion of respondents participating in humanitarian and environmental activities, as well as community service work that made use of their SFU education.

  o **International setting, in the last year:**
    - 12-13% have engaged in civic and humanitarian activities, and
    - 6-8% engaged in social justice activities, environmental advocacy, and community service work that made use of their SFU education.
    - Depending on the type of activity, 19-39% plan on engaging in these activities, and 52-70% indicated that they are not planning on engaging in these types of activities in an international setting.

• **Employment:** 53% of respondents are currently employed or self-employed. Among these:
  o 11% work 30 hours or more per week in a paid job,
  o 55% work 10-29 hours per week, and
  o 34% work less than 10 hours per week.
  o Employed respondents working 30+ hours per week were more likely to be engaged in civic and social justice activities in their local community.
Recommendations

- **Facilities:** While overall satisfaction with facilities is relatively high (80%), in the student comments, facilities were the most frequently cited improvement requested. Based on comments received, student satisfaction with facilities could be further improved by:
  - continuing to increase and improve study spaces, and increasing the number of outlets in study areas,
  - improving the accessibility and speed of wi-fi,
  - continuing to upgrade the technology and equipment used in classrooms, and
  - improving the heating and cooling of SFU buildings.

- **Course Availability and Scheduling:** Student responses suggest the need for continued effort to:
  - increase the frequency of required courses,
  - increase the seat capacity of courses that have been historically popular, and
  - schedule courses likely to be taken together at non-overlapping times (and at sufficiently spaced times, when they are offered on different campuses.)

- **Student Life/Campus Community:** Students continue to request improvements to student life and the campus community, such as holding more student events on campus and increasing advertising for athletic events, social events, and clubs.

- **Policies and Services:** Some additional student suggestions over the last few years for improving their experience at SFU include:
  - Reducing wait times to see academic advisors.
  - Providing more guidance to new students, such as maps, workshops, and orientation.
  - Improving the registration priority system, and communicating the algorithm to students.
  - Increasing the English-language communication standards for incoming students.
  - Lowering tuition and fees, and/or improving financial aid.
  - Continuing to improve the quality and price of food on campus.

- **Recent Improvements:** Students have also noticed recent improvements around SFU. In particular, respondents have praised:
  - the creation of new programs,
  - the introduction of a week-long reading break in the Spring Term,
  - renovations in the eating areas around campus (although students continue to express concerns around the price, quality, and variety of food options on campus),
  - improvements to washrooms, and
  - the introduction of water-filling stations around campus.