The Undergraduate Student Survey has been conducted at Simon Fraser University every Fall semester since 1992 (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. This year’s topics included teaching and curriculum, language skills and support, and selected services, such as the library, the Bookstore, and academic advising.

A total of 5,929 students participated in this year’s survey, yielding an overall response rate of 23.9%. 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 ±1.2%, 19 times out of 20. The full report is available on the Institutional Research and Planning web-site: http://www.sfu.ca/irp/surveys/ugss.html

General Experience

- 88% of respondents are satisfied with their general SFU experience.
- 58% agree that SFU supports students to have a healthy work-life balance.
- When students were asked what single thing SFU could do to improve their experience here, the most common responses were:
  - improve student life,
  - improve facilities, and
  - improve course availability, variety and scheduling.

![If SFU could do one thing to improve your experience here, what would it be? (Top 10 Suggestions)](image)

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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.
Course Availability

- This year’s course availability results were similar to the 2012 results. Most differences were not statistically significant (exceptions are noted).

- **NUMBER of Courses:** 82% of respondents were able to register in the number of courses they wanted this fall, versus 80% last fall.

- **SPECIFIC Courses:** 58% were able to register in all of the specific courses they wanted to take this term. This is a statistically significant increase from last fall’s rate of 55%.

- **REQUIRED Courses:** 67% were able to register in all of the REQUIRED courses they wanted this term (vs. 66% last fall).
  - 93% of respondents are taking required courses at SFU this term (Fall 2013), while only 33% are taking any general interest courses outside of their program of study.
  - 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 (EDUC) were most successful in registering for all of the required courses they wanted to take, while those in the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS), Health Sciences (HSCI) and Communication, Art and Technology (CAT) 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 the last three years).
  - 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.; 53% of delayed respondents, down from 58% last year),
    - taking a reduced course load (42%, up from 40% last year), and
    - working in a job outside of co-op (32%, down from 35% last year).
  - Rates of delayed completion are highest in the Beedie School of Business, the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology, and the Faculty of Health Sciences (61% each) and lowest in the Faculty of Education (36%).
• **Trends**: Course availability has become generally more problematic over the past fifteen years, but has been fairly stable over the last six years (slight improvements in the past two years have yielded a return to the 2010 levels).

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

**Trends in Course Availability and Delayed Degree Completion**

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 higher 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.
  - 68-75% of respondents are satisfied with course scheduling and the location (campus) of courses offered.
  - 56-61% 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)

**Satisfaction with Course Availability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of courses offered</th>
<th>Scheduling of classes</th>
<th>Available registration spots in courses</th>
<th>How often each course is offered</th>
<th>Variety of distance/online courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-Level Courses</td>
<td>200-Level Courses</td>
<td>300-Level Courses</td>
<td>400-Level Courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching and Curriculum**

• **Quality of Teaching**: 85% of respondents are satisfied with the quality of teaching at SFU.
  - Students were asked to indicate, from a list, the two most important qualities of a course instructor. Of the list provided, the top two choices were “clearly communicates course content” (selected by 59% of respondents) and “connects all course components” (38%).
- **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.

![Graph showing top five student goals for coming to SFU](image)

- **Student Learning Outcomes:** Students were asked what qualities, skills or experiences 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:
  - 86% of respondents are satisfied that SFU is equipping them with critical thinking skills,
  - 73% are satisfied that SFU is preparing them to apply the knowledge and methods they have learned,
  - 84% are satisfied that SFU is giving them a solid foundation in their academic discipline,
  - 72% are satisfied that SFU is providing opportunities for “learning through experience”, and
  - 74% are satisfied that SFU is making them an engaged citizen with a sense of social responsibility.

![Graph showing top five important qualities/skills/experiences for SFU students](image)

- **Academic Integrity:**
  - 93% of respondents indicated that they have been told that academic integrity policies exist at SFU.
  - In the past year, 25% of respondents have suspected another student of cheating during a test or exam, and 21% have suspected another student of cheating on a major written assignment.
- **WQB Courses**: Just over half of this year’s respondents agreed that these courses produce the benefits for which they were designed (59% agreement for “W” courses, 55% for “Q” courses, and 53-62% for “B” courses).

![Percent of Respondents who Agree that "WQB" Courses Produce their Intended Benefits](chart)

- **Research with Faculty Members**: 16% of graduating respondents said that they have worked within a faculty member’s research team, outside of coursework. This is similar to last year’s result.

**Language Skills and Support**

- **English Language Skills**:
  - 88% of respondents speak some English at home, and 40% speak only English at home.
  - 60% speak at least one non-English language at home, and 12% speak no English at home.
  - 43% were identified as English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. Among these students, 26% indicated that they speak no English at home.
  - Students were asked if they felt prepared when they first arrived at SFU for the level of English required of them in their courses. Overall:
    - 93% of respondents felt prepared for the level of English listening skills required,
    - 88% felt prepared for both the level of reading and speaking skills, and
    - 77% felt prepared for the level of writing skills required.
  - 40% of respondents said that they sometimes struggle in their classes because of their instructors’ English language skills, and 38% sometimes struggle due to their TA's English language skills.
  - 15% of respondents felt they would perform better in their classes if they had English language support.

- **English Language Support**:
  - When given a list of English language programs, respondents said that they would be likely to participate in a program with writing support related to their major (62% very/somewhat likely).
  - When asked what topics they want support in, most respondents indicated that they want support in technical and professional writing for their discipline (59%).
**Services**

- **Advising:** 79% of respondents have used academic advising services at SFU, and of those who have used these services, 78% are very/somewhat satisfied.

- **Library:**
  - 46% of respondents indicated that they have used the course reserve materials in the library, while
  - 30% were unaware of library research assistance available online by chat, e-mail or text.

- **Bookstore/Textbooks:**
  - 71% of respondents purchased textbooks from the SFU Bookstore (physical store) in Fall 2013,
  - 10% purchased textbooks from the SFU Online Bookstore/eShop, and
  - 56% purchased textbooks from another location.

**General**

- **Engagement at SFU:** Students were asked about their participation in various activities at SFU over the course of their education here. Among respondents:
  - 32% had participated in a department, program, or faculty event, while 11% indicated that they were unaware of such events.
  - 13-17% had participated in co-op, an SFU volunteer program, or a class project involving a community or business organization.
    - Approximately 39-64% more said they would like to participate in these experiences.
  - 3-7% had participated in work-study, international exchange/study abroad, or field schools.
    - An additional 47-65% said they would like to participate in these programs.
    - 22% of respondents indicated that they were not aware of field schools at SFU.
  - Finally, 4% had participated in student government, with 21% indicating that they were interested in participating, and 60% saying they are not interested in participating.
**Engagement in the Community:** Students were asked about their engagement in their local community and in an international setting.

- **Local community, in the last year:**
  - 39-42% have engaged in civic and humanitarian activities, and
  - 18-26% have engaged in environmental activities, social justice activities, and community service work that made use of their SFU education.

- **International setting, in the last year:**
  - 11-13% have engaged in civic and humanitarian activities, and
  - 6-7% engaged in social justice activities, environmental advocacy, and community service work that made use of their SFU education.

**Employment:** 55% of respondents are currently employed or self-employed. Among these:

- 11% work 30 hours or more per week in a paid job,
- 57% work 10-29 hours per week, and
- 32% work less than 10 hours per week.

Employed respondents working 30+ hours per week were more likely to be engaged in civic, humanitarian, and social justice activities in their local community.

**Recommendations**

- **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.

- **Facilities:** Based on comments received, student satisfaction with facilities could be further improved by:
  - continuing to increase and improve study spaces,
  - continuing to renovate and repair buildings, such as changing the flooring in the AQ and improving the lighting,
  - continuing to improve the washrooms,
  - fixing the broken chairs and desks in classrooms,
  - 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 number of sections available for courses that have been historically popular,
  - schedule courses likely to be taken together at non-overlapping times (and at sufficiently spaced times, when they are offered on different campuses), and
  - increase the number of classes offered online and in the evening.

• **Policies and Services:** Some additional student suggestions over the last few years for improving their experience at SFU include:
  - providing more guidance to new students, such as maps, workshops, and orientation,
  - improving advising, such as providing more advice about what courses to take,
  - providing more career-based courses with practical/hands-on work,
  - providing more academic help,
  - continuing to improve the website, enrollment system, and online course systems,
  - lowering tuition and fees, and/or improving financial aid, and
  - continuing to improve the quality and price of food on campus.