



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING

To: Senate

From: Liny Chan, Acting Director  
Institutional Research and  
Planning (IRP)

Subject: IRP Reports for Information

Date: August 9, 2013

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At a meeting of Senate held on March 7, 2011, Senator Paul Percival requested that relevant IRP reports, such as the annual Grades Report, be brought to Senate for information.

Attached are two reports for information:

- **2012/13 Grades Report:** This report is prepared once a year and it summarizes student course grades at the University over a ten year period. The 2012/13 Grades Report covers the period from 2003/04 to 2012/13. Attached is the Summary Report. The full report is located at IRP's website at:  
[http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/students/grades\\_report/grades.report.pdf](http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/students/grades_report/grades.report.pdf)
- **2012 Undergraduate Student Survey (UGSS) Report:** The UGSS survey is conducted every fall term. The attached Highlights Report presents a summary of key findings from the Fall 2012 survey. Topics covered are selected in consultation with Faculties, Student Services and other administrative units of the University. The topics included: course availability, teaching and curriculum, learning technologies and selected services, such as Facilities and the Bookstore. The full report is located at:  
<http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/surveys/ugss/ugss2012report.pdf>

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Liny Chan".

Enclosure



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING

**2012/13 Grades Report:  
Summary  
Historical Distribution of  
Undergraduate and Graduate Course Grades  
2003/04 to 2012/13**

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Summer 2013



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## I – Introduction

This report summarizes student course grades at Simon Fraser University over the ten year period from 2003/04 to 2012/13<sup>1</sup>. The full report, which presents the full grade distributions in both tabular and graphical formats, is available online, here:

[http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/students/grades\\_report/grades.report.pdf](http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/students/grades_report/grades.report.pdf)

## II – Definitions and Notes

To calculate the average course grades, each grade is assigned a numeric value, defined in Table 1. These values are weighted by the number of students who received each particular grade, to produce an overall average.

**Table 1: Simon Fraser University's Grade Scale**

|           |           |           |           |          |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| A+ = 4.33 | B+ = 3.33 | C+ = 2.33 | D = 1.00  | N = 0.00 |
| A = 4.00  | B = 3.00  | C = 2.00  | F = 0.00  |          |
| A- = 3.67 | B- = 2.67 | C- = 1.67 | FD = 0.00 |          |

Notes: FD is defined as a fail (academic discipline) and has only been in use since Summer 2009.

In graduate courses, C- and D grades have a numerical value of 0.00.

Table 2 lists the grades that have no numerical equivalent, and are therefore omitted from the calculation of average grade. Although they are not included in the average, credit is granted for the following grades: "AE", "CC", "CR", and "P".

**Table 2: Grades with No Numerical Equivalent**

| Grade | Definition                                 |
|-------|--------------------------------------------|
| AE    | aegrotat standing, compassionate pass      |
| AU    | audit                                      |
| CC    | course challenge                           |
| CF    | course challenge failed                    |
| CN    | did not complete challenge                 |
| CR    | credit without grade                       |
| DE    | deferred grade                             |
| FX    | formal exchange                            |
| GN    | grade not reported                         |
| IP    | in progress                                |
| P     | pass, ungraded                             |
| W     | withdrawn                                  |
| WD    | withdrawal                                 |
| WE    | withdrawal under extenuating circumstances |

Among undergraduate courses, "lower division" courses are those numbered from 001 to 299 inclusive. "Upper division" courses are numbered 300 to 499 inclusive.

<sup>1</sup>Effective April 1, 2009, SFU introduced two new Faculties: the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology, and the Faculty of Environment. Also, effective April 1, 2011, the Department of Archeology moved from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences to the Faculty of Environment. This new Faculty structure has initiated the move of certain courses to different Faculties. All data in this report reflect the current Faculty structure.

Data reported on a yearly basis refers to fiscal year. For example, 2011/12 grades are the grades accumulated over the 2011 Summer term (SFU term code: 1114), the 2011 Fall term (SFU term code: 1117), and the 2012 Spring term (SFU term code: 1121).

To protect student privacy, grade distributions based on five grades or fewer are not reported. Co-op courses, work-terms, and practicums are excluded from this report. Where they could be identified, courses graded as Pass/Fail are also excluded.

### III – Analysis

#### III.A – Undergraduate Course Grades

##### III.A.1 – Lower Division Course Grades (Courses Numbered 001-299 Inclusive)

##### FACULTY COMPARISONS (see Table 3 and Figure A):

- The Faculty of Education (EDUC) has awarded the highest average lower division course grades in six of the last ten years, with an average awarded grade of 3.03 over the past decade.
- In 2006/07, the Faculty of Health Sciences (HSCI) began offering undergraduate courses. In its first three years, courses in Health Sciences awarded the highest average lower division grades. The Faculty has awarded the second or third highest average lower division course grades in each year since then (7-year average of 3.04).
- The average grades awarded in lower division courses in the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology (CAT) courses have been generally increasing over the past decade. This Faculty awarded the highest lower division grades in 2012/13.
- All the other Faculties have consistently awarded lower average grades in their lower division courses. In general, lower division courses in the Faculty of Environment (ENV) have awarded higher grades than those in Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS) and Applied Sciences (APSC), while lower division courses in the Beedie School of Business (BUS) and the Faculty of Science (SCI) have awarded the lowest average grades.

**Table 3: Average Undergraduate Course Grades Awarded and Percentage of “A” Grades Awarded, by Course Faculty – Lower Division**

| Course Faculty                    | Average Course Grades |                 | % “A” Grades Awarded |                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|                                   | 2012/13               | 10-Year Average | 2012/13              | 10-Year Average |
| Applied Sciences                  | 2.65                  | 2.59            | 26.0 %               | 25.2%           |
| Arts and Social Sciences          | 2.59                  | 2.63            | 17.1%                | 17.7%           |
| Business                          | 2.50                  | 2.51            | 13.6%                | 13.4%           |
| Communication, Art and Technology | 2.96                  | 2.95            | 26.9%                | 26.7%           |
| Education                         | 2.95                  | 3.03            | 28.2%                | 33.9%           |
| Environment                       | 2.73                  | 2.69            | 23.5%                | 21.2%           |
| Health Sciences                   | 2.93                  | 3.04            | 30.1%                | 35.0%*          |
| Science                           | 2.52                  | 2.50            | 20.1%                | 20.2%           |
| University Total                  | 2.63                  | 2.63            | 20.3%                | 20.3%           |

\* The Faculty of Health Sciences began offering undergraduate classes in the Fall 2006 term.

## **LONG-TERM COMPARISONS WITHIN FACULTIES<sup>2</sup>:**

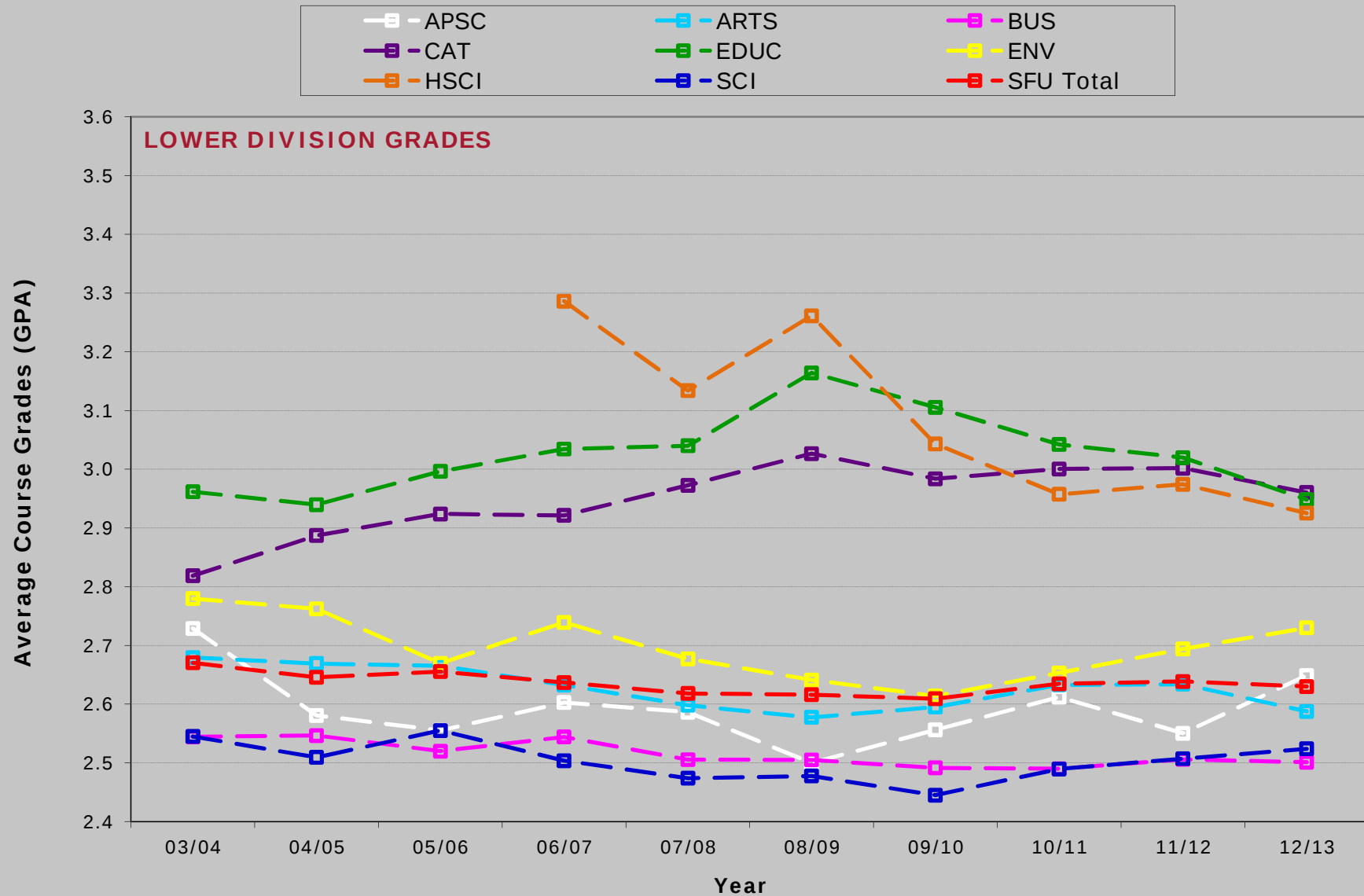
Comparing the average lower division grades awarded over the last ten years:

- Applied Sciences (APSC):
  - o Courses in Engineering Science (ENSC) have awarded the highest average lower division course grades.
  - o Mathematics & Computing Science (MACM) courses have awarded grades considerably below the APSC average.
- Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS):
  - o Courses in Persian (PERS) have awarded the highest average grades. In fact, the five subjects in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences to award the highest average grades in the last ten years are all language subjects (Persian, First Nations Languages, Chinese, Greek, and Italian). Note that this is only the third year that PERS courses have been offered.
  - o Philosophy (PHIL), Economics (ECON) and Business Administration & Economics (BUEC) courses have awarded the lowest average lower division grades.
- Business (BUS):
  - o Over the last ten years, lower division courses in Business Administration & Economics (BUEC) and Business Administration (BUS) have awarded very similar average grades.
- Communication, Art and Technology (CAT):
  - o Contemporary Arts (FPA) and Interactive Arts and Technology (IAT) courses have awarded the highest lower division course grades over the last ten years.
  - o Communications (CMNS) courses have awarded the lowest average grades.
- Education (EDUC):
  - o On average, Education (EDUC) courses have awarded higher lower division grades than Foundations of Academic Literacy (FAL) courses.
- Environment (ENV):
  - o The highest average lower division grades have been awarded in Environment (ENV; note that very few grades have been awarded in ENV.)
  - o Geography (GEOG), Archeology (ARCH) and Development & Sustainability (DEVS) courses have awarded the lowest average grades. Note that this is only the second year that DEVS courses have been offered.
- Science (SCI):
  - o The highest average lower division grades have been awarded in Management and Systems Science (MSSC; note that very few grades were awarded in Management and Systems Science.)
  - o Actuarial Mathematics (ACMA), Mathematics & Computing Science (MACM) and Mathematics (MATH) courses have awarded the lowest average grades.

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<sup>2</sup> Faculties with only one subject are not discussed in this section since there is no comparison to make.

**Figure A**  
**Average Lower Division Course Grades Awarded by Faculty**



## **CURRENT COMPARISONS AND TRENDS WITHIN FACULTIES<sup>2</sup>:**

### ***2012/13 Average Lower Division Course Grades:***

- Applied Sciences (APSC):
  - o The highest average lower division grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Mechatronic Systems Engineering (MSE).
  - o The lowest average grades were awarded in Mathematics & Computing Science (MACM) courses.
- Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS):
  - o The highest average grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Greek (GRK) and Persian (PERS).
  - o The lowest average grades were awarded in Philosophy (PHIL) and Economics (ECON).
- Business (BUS):
  - o Business Administration & Economics (BUEC) courses awarded lower average grades than Business Administration (BUS) courses in 2012/13.
- Communication, Art and Technology (CAT):
  - o The highest average grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Contemporary Arts (FPA) courses.
  - o The lowest average grades were awarded in Communications (CMNS).
- Education (EDUC):
  - o In 2012/13, Education (EDUC) courses awarded higher average lower division grades than Foundations of Academic Literacy (FAL) courses.
- Environment (ENV):
  - o The highest average grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Environment (ENV; note that very few grades were awarded in ENV in 2012/13.)
  - o The lowest average grades were awarded in Development and Sustainability (DEVS) courses.
- Science (SCI):
  - o The highest average grades in 2012/13 were awarded in Management & Systems Science (MSSC; note that very few grades were awarded in MSSC this year.)
  - o The lowest average grades were awarded in Actuarial Mathematics (ACMA).

### ***Large Changes in 2011/12 to 2012/13 Average Lower Division Grades:***

- The following subjects have seen large changes (of at least 0.25) in the average lower division grade awarded from last year to this year:
  - o Increases: Environmental Science (EVSC: 2.92 to 3.26) and Greek (GRK: 3.15 to 3.57).
  - o Decreases: Cognitive Science (COGS: 2.90 to 2.57), Resource & Environmental Management (REM: 2.89 to 2.60) and Japanese (JAPN: 2.88 to 2.61).

### III.A.2 – Upper Division Course Grades (Courses Numbered 300-499 Inclusive)

#### FACULTY COMPARISONS (see Table 4 and Figure B):

- With the exception of 2006/07, the Faculty of Education (EDUC) awarded the highest average upper division course grades in each of the last ten years (average grade awarded: 3.48).
- After Education, the Faculties of Communication, Art and Technology (CAT) and Health Sciences (HSCI) have awarded the highest upper division average grades over the past ten years (10-year average of 3.20 and 3.21, respectively.) It should be noted that HSCI has only been offering undergraduate courses for the past seven years, and the averages for its first two years were based on relatively small sample sizes.
- The remaining Faculties have consistently awarded lower average upper division grades, averaging in the range of 2.91 to 3.04. Upper division grades awarded in the Faculty of Environment (ENV) have generally been higher than those awarded in the remaining Faculties.

**Table 4: Average Undergraduate Course Grades Awarded and Percentage of “A” Grades Awarded, by Course Faculty – Upper Division**

| Course Faculty                    | Average Course Grades |                 | % "A" Grades Awarded |                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|                                   | 2012/13               | 10-Year Average | 2012/13              | 10-Year Average |
| Applied Sciences                  | 2.90                  | 2.92            | 31.3%                | 32.4%           |
| Arts and Social Sciences          | 2.87                  | 2.91            | 25.7%                | 27.8%           |
| Business                          | 3.03                  | 2.96            | 30.5%                | 26.8%           |
| Communication, Art and Technology | 3.14                  | 3.20            | 34.4%                | 40.1%           |
| Education                         | 3.55                  | 3.48            | 64.1%                | 58.9%           |
| Environment                       | 3.07                  | 3.04            | 34.0%                | 32.9%           |
| Health Sciences                   | 3.18                  | 3.21*           | 38.4%                | 40.9%*          |
| Science                           | 2.87                  | 2.92            | 30.0%                | 32.3%           |
| University Total                  | 2.99                  | 3.00            | 31.7%                | 32.6%           |

\* The Faculty of Health Sciences began offering undergraduate classes in the Fall 2006 term.

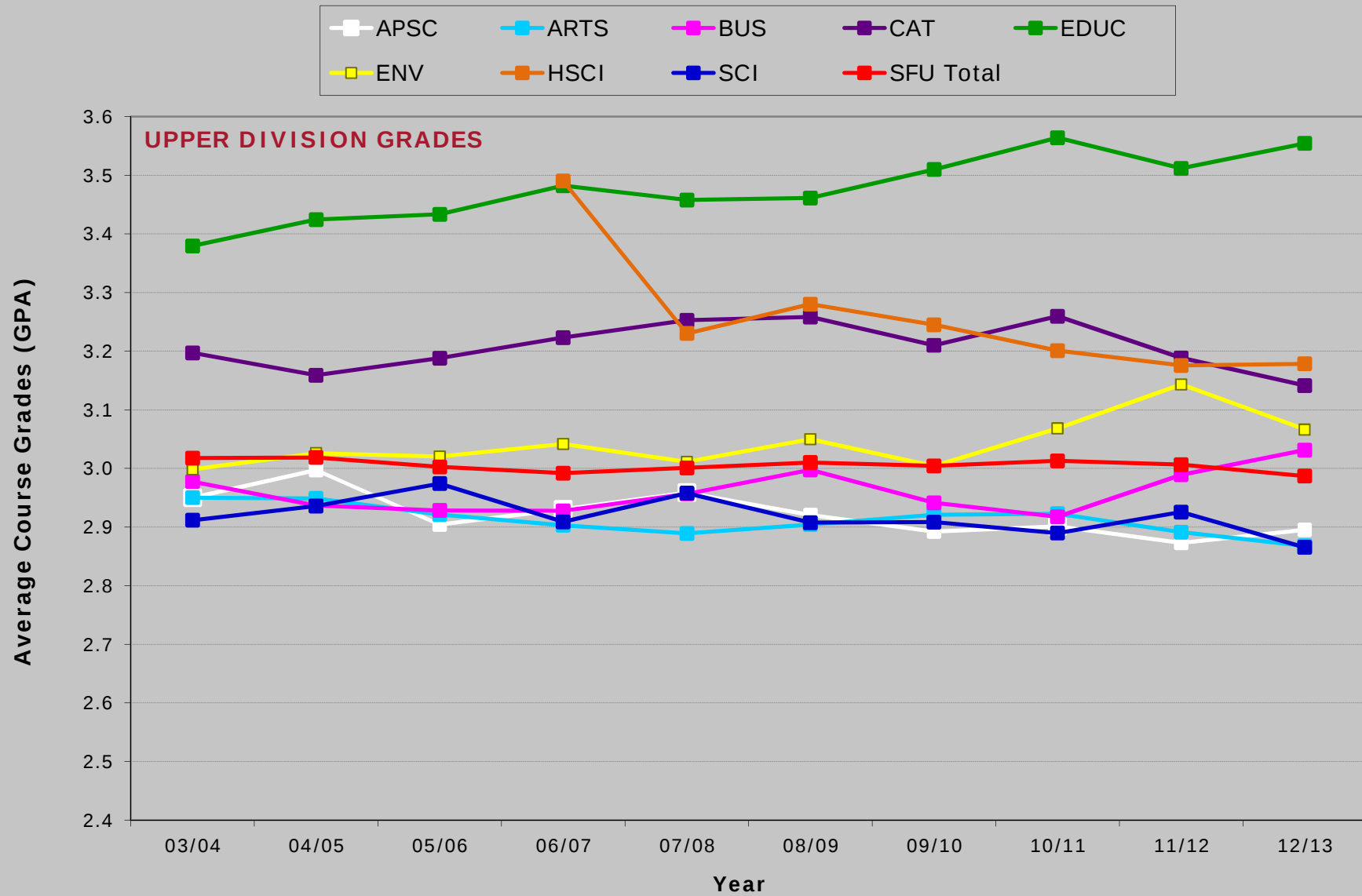
#### LONG-TERM COMPARISONS AND TRENDS WITHIN FACULTIES<sup>3</sup>:

Comparing the average upper division grades awarded over the last ten years:

- Applied Sciences:
  - o On average, Mechatronic Systems Engineering (MSE) courses have awarded higher upper division grades than Engineering Science (ENSC) courses, which have awarded higher upper division grades than Computing Science (CMPT) courses.

<sup>3</sup> Faculties with only one subject are not discussed in this section since there is no comparison to make.

**Figure B**  
**Average Upper Division Course Grades Awarded by Faculty**



- Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS):
  - o The highest average upper division grades have been awarded in Italian (ITAL; note that very few grades were awarded, and that upper division ITAL courses have only been offered in five of the last ten years.)
  - o Business Administration & Economics (BUEC) courses have awarded average grades considerably below the Faculty average.
- Communication, Art and Technology:
  - o Contemporary Arts (FPA) courses have awarded the highest average upper division grades.
  - o Publishing (PUB) courses have awarded the lowest upper division grades. Note that this is based off of only three years of data.
- Environment (ENV):
  - o Sustainable Community Development (SCD) courses have awarded the highest average upper division grades.
  - o Geography (GEOG) courses have awarded the lowest average upper division grades.
- Science (SCI):
  - o The highest average grades have been awarded in Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue (DIAL) and Marine Science (MASC). Note that MASC usually awards fewer than 40 upper division grades each year.
  - o Science (SCI), Mathematics & Computing Science (MACM), Mathematics (MATH), and Nuclear Science (NUSC) courses have awarded the lowest average upper division grades.

### **CURRENT COMPARISONS AND TRENDS WITHIN FACULTIES<sup>3</sup>:**

#### ***2012/13 Average Upper Division Course Grades:***

- Applied Sciences (APSC):
  - o In 2012/13, Mechatronic Systems Engineering (MSE) courses awarded higher upper division grades than Engineering Science (ENSC) courses, which awarded higher upper division grades than Computing Science (CMPT) courses.
- Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS):
  - o The highest average grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Italian (ITAL) and Cognitive Science (COGS). Note that very few grades were awarded in either subject.
  - o International Studies & Political Science (ISPO) and Business Administration & Economics (BUEC) courses awarded the lowest average upper division grades in 2012/13. Note that very few grades were awarded in ISPO this year.
- Communication, Art and Technology (CAT):
  - o The highest average grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Contemporary Arts (FPA).
  - o The lowest average grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Publishing (PUB).

- Environment (ENV):
  - o The highest average grades awarded in 2012/13 were in Development and Sustainability (DEVS; note that very few grades were awarded in DEVS this year.)
  - o The lowest average grades were awarded in Resource and Environmental Management (REM).
- Faculty of Science (SCI):
  - o The subjects awarding the highest average grades in 2012/13 were Marine Science (MASC) and Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue (DIAL). Note that very few grades were awarded in MASC this year.
  - o The lowest average grades were awarded in Mathematics (MATH).

***Large Changes in 2011/12 to 2012/13 Average Upper Division Course Grades:***

- The following subjects have seen large changes (of at least 0.25) this year over last year's average upper division grade awarded:
  - o Increases: Development and Sustainability (DEVS: 2.93 to 3.54), Nuclear Science (NUSC; 2.37 to 2.90) and Cognitive Science (COGS: 3.37 to 3.62). Note that very few grades have been awarded in all of these subjects.
  - o Decreases: Latin American Studies (LAS: 3.85 to 2.76), Japanese (JAPN: 3.21 to 2.82), Statistics (STAT: 3.12 to 2.78), and Resource and Environmental Management (REM: 3.22 to 2.89). Note that very few grades have been awarded in LAS and JAPN.

***III.A.3 – General Observations (All Undergraduate Courses)***

- In 2012/13, the average undergraduate grade awarded was 2.78.
- The average undergraduate grade awarded over the past ten years is 2.79.
- Over the past ten years, upper division courses have consistently awarded higher grades than lower division courses in all Faculties.

### **III.B – Undergraduate Course Grades by Student Faculty**

This section summarizes the 2012/13 undergraduate course grade distributions within each Faculty, controlling for the Faculty of undergraduate students enrolled in the courses.

**Table 5: 2012/13 Average Undergraduate Course Grades Awarded and Percentage of “A” Grades Awarded, by Faculty of Student**

| <b>Faculty of Student</b>         | <b>Average Course Grades</b> | <b>% “A” Grades Awarded</b> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Applied Sciences                  | 2.64                         | 23.6%                       |
| Arts and Social Sciences          | 2.67                         | 20.5%                       |
| Business                          | 2.94                         | 28.3%                       |
| Communication, Art and Technology | 2.86                         | 26.2%                       |
| Education                         | 3.35                         | 54.4%                       |
| Environment                       | 2.91                         | 29.4%                       |
| Health Sciences                   | 2.84                         | 26.5%                       |
| Science                           | 2.84                         | 28.4%                       |
| All Undergraduate Students        | 2.78                         | 25.0%                       |

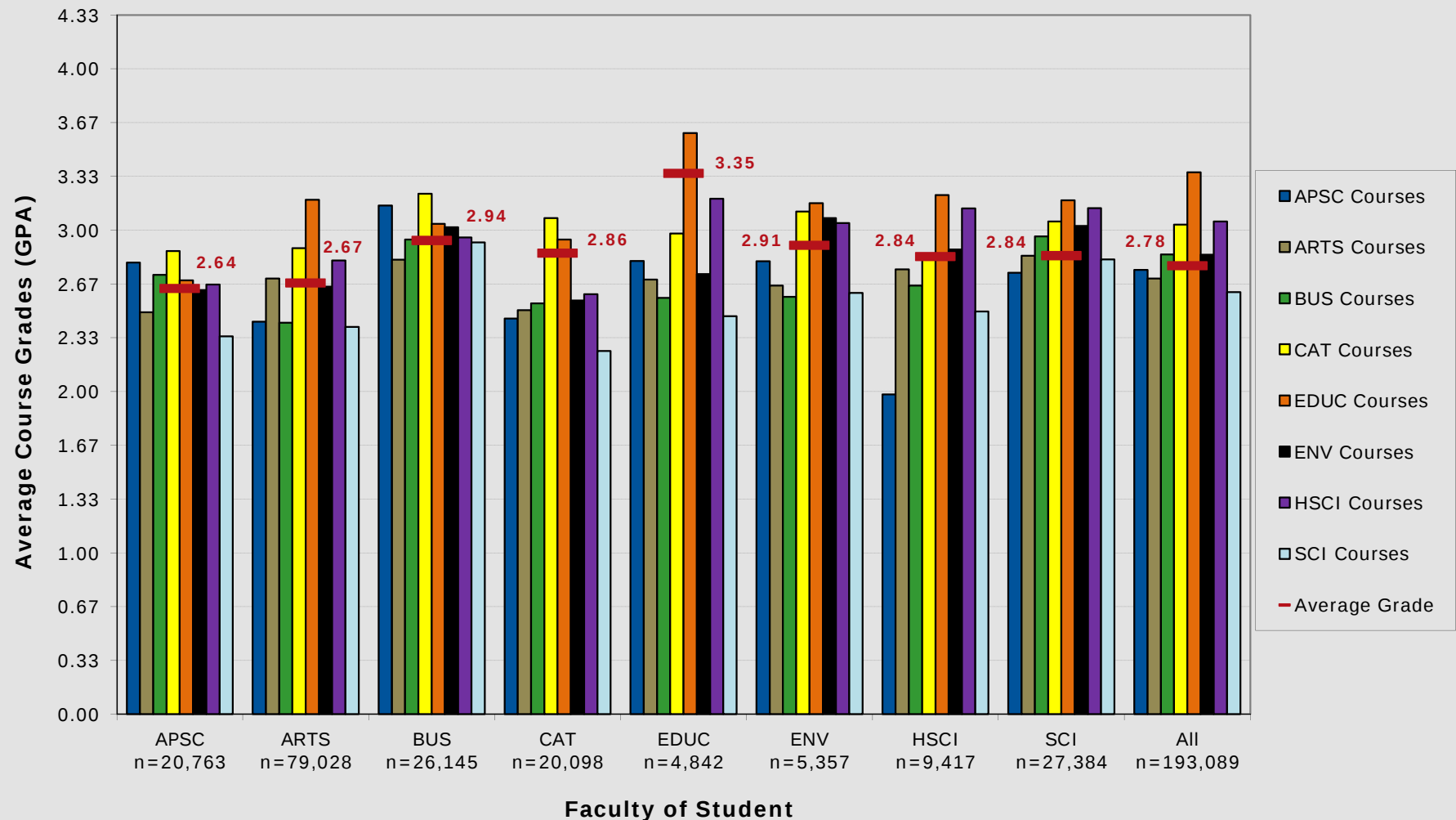
#### ***By Faculty of Students:***

- Students from the Faculty of Education (EDUC) were awarded the highest grades overall in 2012/13, with an average course grade of 3.35.
- Students from the Beedie School of Business (BUS) and the Faculty of Environment (ENV) were awarded average course grades of 2.94 and 2.91, respectively.
- Students from the Faculties of Communication, Art & Technology (CAT), Health Sciences (HSCI) and Science (SCI) were awarded average grades from 2.84 to 2.86.
- Students from the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS) and Applied Sciences (APSC) were awarded the lowest average grades in 2012/13, with an average course grade of 2.67 and 2.64 respectively.
- Students from all Faculties most commonly took courses from their own Faculties.
- Students from the Faculties of Applied Sciences (APSC), Communication, Arts & Technology (CAT) and the Beedie School of Business (BUS) achieved their highest average grades in courses taught in Communication, Arts & Technology (CAT).
- Students from all other Faculties achieved their highest average grades in courses taught in Education (EDUC).

#### ***By Faculty of Courses:***

- In courses offered by the Faculties of Education (EDUC) and Health Sciences (HSCI), students from the Faculty of Education (EDUC) received the highest average grades in 2012/13.
- In courses offered by the Faculty of Environment (ENV), students from the Faculty of Environment (ENV) received the highest average grades in 2012/13.

**Figure C**  
**Simon Fraser University: Undergraduate Course Grades, 2012/13**  
**Faculty of Course vs. Faculty of Student**



Notes: Only averages based on 6 or more grades are graphed.  
 'All' category includes students who are not associated with a Faculty.  
 Only includes grades awarded to undergraduate students.

- In courses offered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS) and the Beedie School of Business (BUS), students from the Faculty of Science (SCI) received the highest average grades in 2012/13.
- In courses offered by the remaining Faculties (APSC, CAT and SCI), students from the Beedie School of Business (BUS) received the highest average grades in 2012/13.
- Apart from the Faculty of Environment (ENV), courses in all Faculties were most frequently taken by students from within those Faculties. Faculty of Environment (ENV) courses were most often taken by students from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS), followed by students from the Faculty of Environment (ENV).

### **III.C – Graduate Course Grades**

#### **FACULTY COMPARISONS (see Table 6 and Figure D):**

- The Faculty of Environment (ENV) has awarded the highest average graduate level course grades in nine of the last ten years, with an average awarded grade of 3.92.
- The Faculty of Education (EDUC) has been one of the top two Faculties in eight of the last ten years, in terms of average graduate grades awarded (10-year average is 3.89.)
- The Faculties of Communication, Art and Technology (CAT), Health Sciences (HSCI), and Science (SCI) have awarded similar average grades over the past decade, with 10-year averages of 3.84, 3.81 and 3.81, respectively.
- The Faculties of Applied Sciences (APSC) and Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS) have generally awarded lower average graduate grades than all other Faculties except Business (10-year averages of 3.75 and 3.69, respectively).
- The Beedie School of Business (BUS) has awarded the lowest average grades in each of the last ten years, with an average grade awarded of 3.47.

**Table 6: Average Graduate Course Grades Awarded and Percentage of “A” Grades Awarded, by Course Faculty**

| <b>Course Faculty</b>             | <b><u>Average Course Grades</u></b> |                        | <b><u>% "A" Grades Awarded</u></b> |                        |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                   | <b>2012/13</b>                      | <b>10-Year Average</b> | <b>2012/13</b>                     | <b>10-Year Average</b> |
| Applied Sciences                  | 3.81                                | 3.75                   | 81.0%                              | 77.8%                  |
| Arts and Social Sciences          | 3.67                                | 3.69                   | 72.2%                              | 75.9%                  |
| Business                          | 3.48                                | 3.47                   | 49.1%                              | 48.4%                  |
| Communication, Art and Technology | 3.86                                | 3.84                   | 88.2%                              | 86.2%                  |
| Education                         | 3.92                                | 3.89                   | 91.1%                              | 89.7%                  |
| Environment                       | 3.98                                | 3.92                   | 96.8%                              | 94.5%                  |
| Health Sciences                   | 3.77                                | 3.81*                  | 82.8%                              | 84.8%*                 |
| Science                           | 3.84                                | 3.81                   | 84.3%                              | 82.6%                  |
| University Total                  | 3.71                                | 3.70                   | 72.7%                              | 72.6%                  |

\* The Faculty of Health Sciences began offering graduate classes in the Fall 2005 term.

### **LONG-TERM COMPARISONS AND TRENDS WITHIN FACULTIES<sup>4</sup>:**

Comparing the average graduate course grades awarded over the last ten years:

- Applied Sciences (APSC):
  - o On average, Engineering Science (ENSC) and Computing Science (CMPT) courses have awarded similar grades.
- Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS):
  - o Psychology (PSYC), Criminology (CRIM), and Linguistics (LING) have awarded the highest average grades over the past decade. Note that Linguistics (LING) awarded fewer than 50 graduate course grades in each year.
  - o Applied Legal Studies (ALS), International Studies (IS) and Economics (ECON) have awarded relatively low average grades.
- Communication, Art and Technology (CAT):
  - o Communications (CMNS) has awarded the highest average grades.
  - o All other subjects have awarded very similar average course grades.
- Environment (ENV):
  - o Resource & Environmental Management (REM) has awarded the highest average grades.
  - o Development & Sustainability (DEVS) has awarded the lowest average graduate course grades. Note that the average grades for this subject are based on a small sample size, and that this is only on the third year that DEVS courses have been offered.
- Science (SCI):
  - o Courses in Molecular Biology & Biochemistry (MBB) and Biological Sciences (BISC) have awarded the highest average graduate course grades.
  - o Physics (PHYS) courses have awarded the lowest average grades.

### **CURRENT COMPARISONS AND TRENDS WITHIN FACULTIES<sup>4</sup>:**

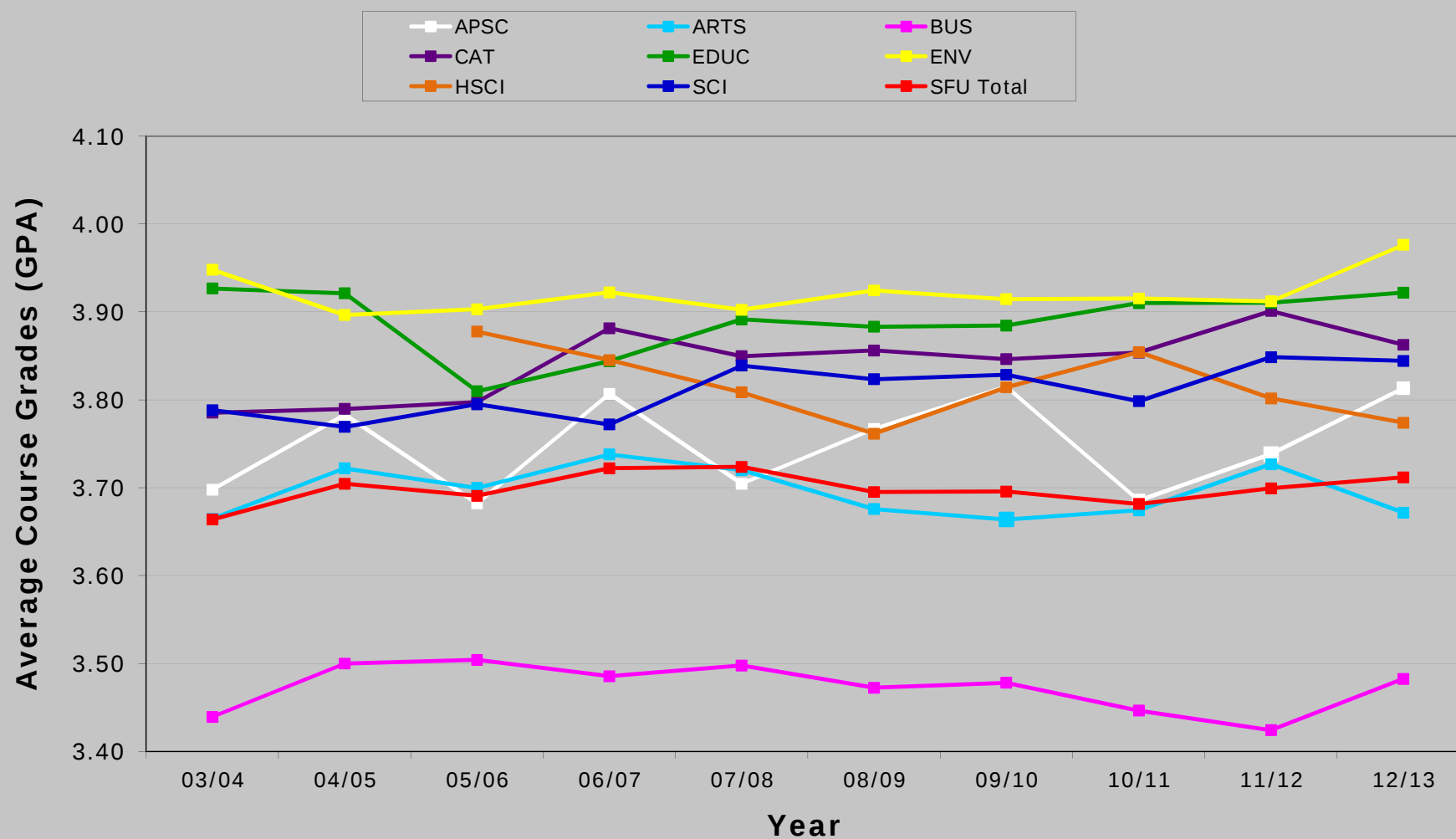
#### ***2012/13 Average Course Grades:***

- Applied Sciences (APSC):
  - o In 2012/13, Engineering Science (ENSC) awarded higher average graduate course grades than Computing Science (CMPT).
- Arts and Social Sciences (ARTS):
  - o The highest average grades in 2012/13 were awarded in Psychology (PSYC) and Linguistics (LING; note that very few grades were awarded in LING.)
  - o Philosophy (PHIL), Applied Legal Studies (ALS), and International Studies (IS) courses awarded the lowest average graduate course grades in 2012/13.
- Communication, Art and Technology (CAT):
  - o The highest average grades in 2012/13 were awarded in Contemporary Arts (FPA) courses.
  - o Courses in Interactive Arts & Technology (IAT) awarded the lowest average grades.

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<sup>4</sup> Faculties with only one subject are not discussed in this section since there is no comparison to make.

**Figure D**  
**Average Graduate Course Grades Awarded by Faculty**



- Environment (ENV):
  - o In 2012/13, courses in Archaeology (ARCH) and Geography (GEOG) awarded the highest average grades.
  - o Development & Sustainability (DEVS) awarded the lowest average grades in 2012/13.
  - o Note that very few grades were awarded in these three subjects.
- Science (SCI):
  - o The highest average grades in 2012/13 were awarded in Kinesiology (KIN; note that very few grades were awarded in KIN.)
  - o The lowest average course grades were awarded in Physics (PHYS).

***Large changes in 2011/12 to 2012/13 Average Course Grades:***

- The following subjects have seen large changes (of at least 0.25) in the average graduate course grade awarded from last year to this year:
  - o Increases: Archaeology (ARCH: 3.69 to 4.01), and Applied Mathematics (APMA: 3.61 to 3.92).
  - o Decreases: Philosophy (PHIL: 3.59 to 3.05), Humanities (HUM: 3.93 to 3.56) and Latin American Studies (LAS: 3.99 to 3.68). Note that very few grades were awarded in graduate level HUM and LAS courses.

**GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:**

- In 2012/13, the average graduate grade awarded was 3.71, a slight increase from last year's. The average graduate grade awarded at the university has been fairly stable over the last 9 years.
- The average graduate grade awarded over the past ten years is 3.70.



## HIGHLIGHTS

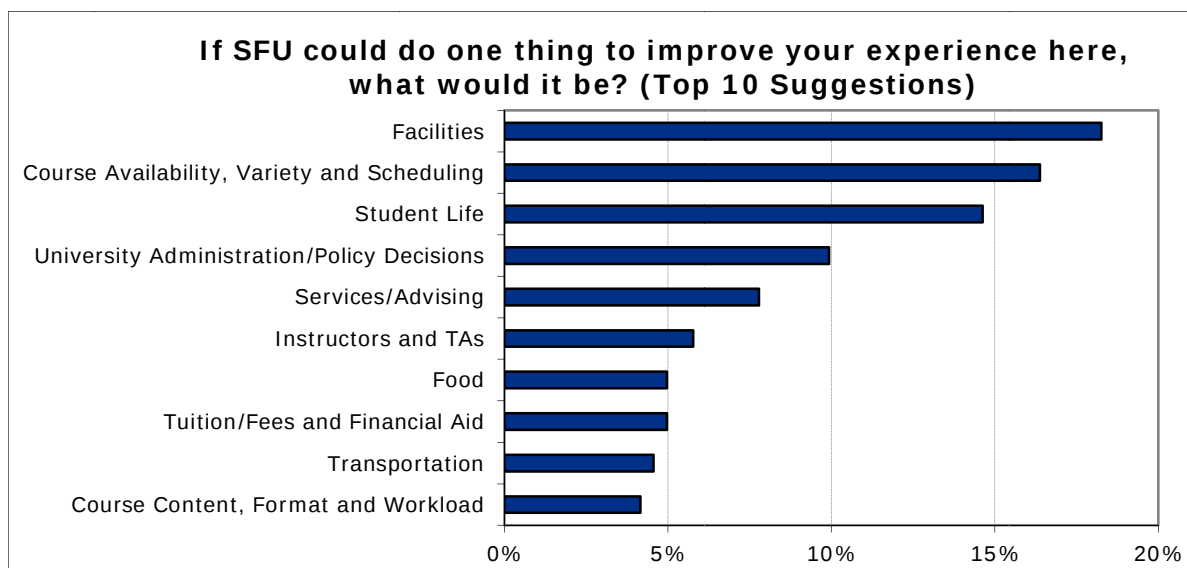
### FALL 2012 SFU UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SURVEY

The Undergraduate Student Survey has been conducted at Simon Fraser University every Fall semester since 1992<sup>1</sup> (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  $\pm 1.9\%$ , 19 times out of 20<sup>2</sup>. 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.
- When students were asked what single thing SFU could do to improve their experience here, the most common responses were:
  - o improve facilities,
  - o improve course availability, variety and scheduling, and
  - o improve student life.

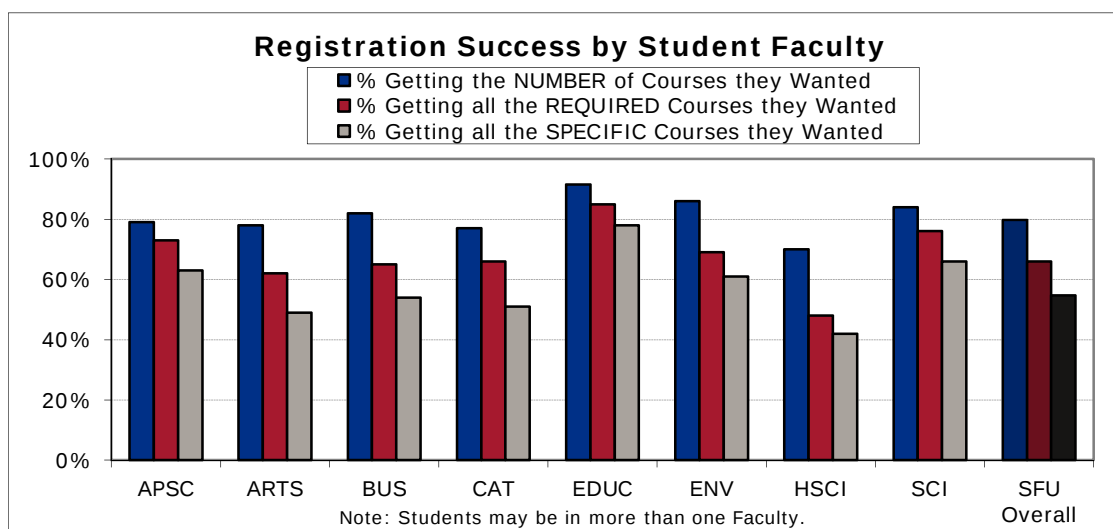


<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that a change in methodology, from in-class paper survey to online survey, was instituted in 2006. The paper surveys, administered to a random sample of classes, resulted in a "captive audience" and high response rates. In contrast, the online surveys, usually administered 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 ( $\pm 1.9\%$ , 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  $\pm 1.3\%$ , 19 times out of 20.

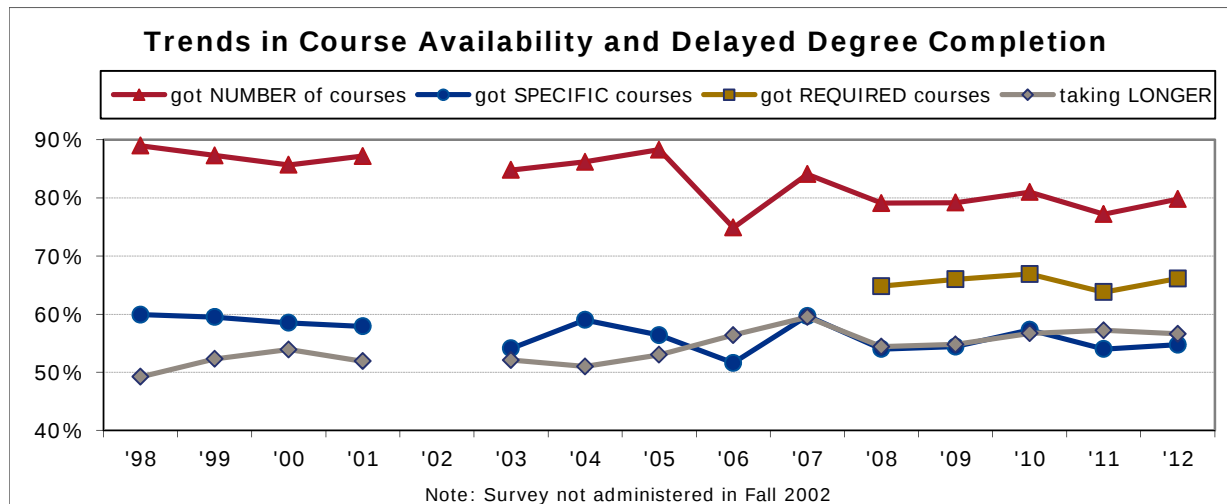
## Course Availability

- 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.

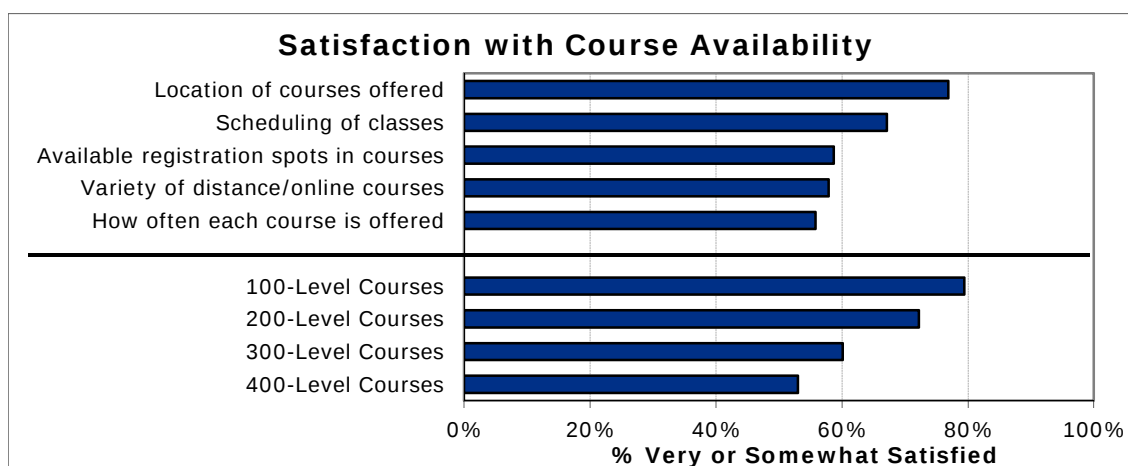


- Credential Completion Time:** 57% of respondents reported that they are taking longer than expected to complete their credential (this is the same rate as in 2011 and 2010.)
  - 84% of students felt that it was important to finish within their expected timeframe.
  - Commonly cited reasons for delay 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.



- **Satisfaction with Course Availability:**
  - o 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).
  - o 67-77% of respondents are satisfied with course scheduling and the location (campus) of courses offered.
  - o 56-59% are satisfied with course frequency, available registration spots in courses (course capacity) and the variety of distance/online courses offered.



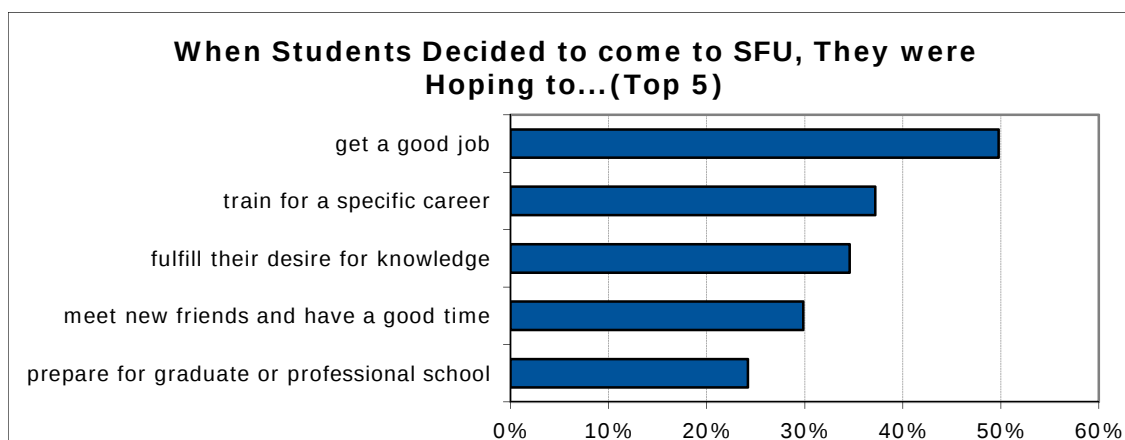
## Teaching and Curriculum

- **Quality of Teaching:** 87% of respondents are satisfied with the quality of teaching at SFU.
  - o 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:**

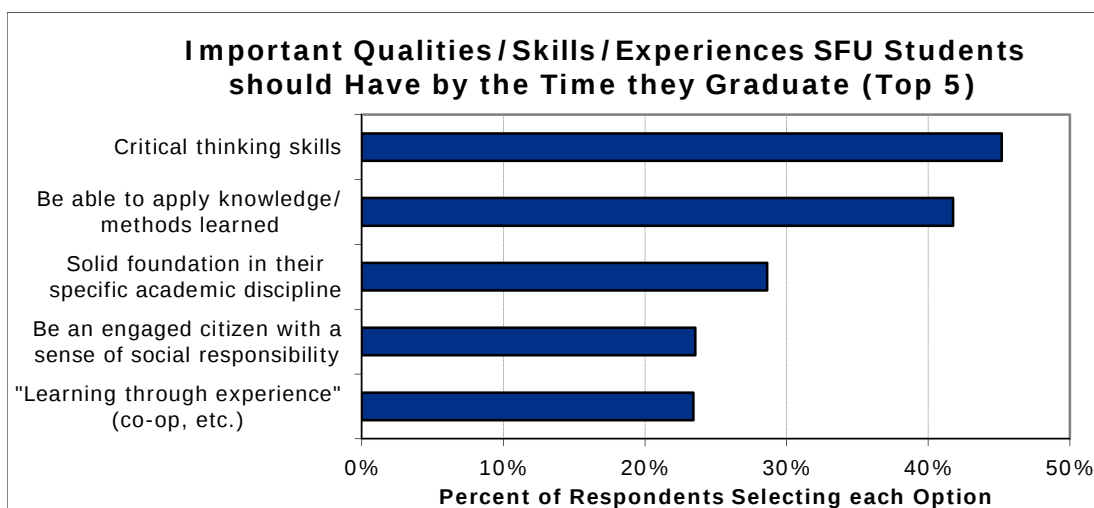
- o 73% of respondents are satisfied that the process gives students enough opportunities to provide feedback, and 55% are satisfied that the university is being responsive to student feedback.
- o 92% of respondents said that it is important for instructors to use the results to modify their teaching 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.

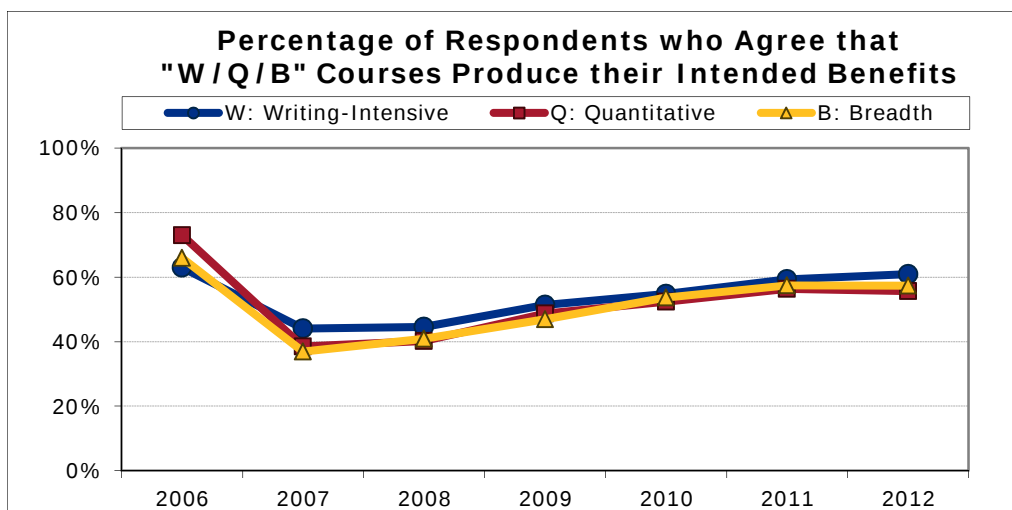


- **Student Learning Outcomes:** Students were asked what qualities/skills they think an SFU graduate should have. Students could select up to three choices, and top choices are displayed in the graph below. Among the top five selected skills:

- 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".



- **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).



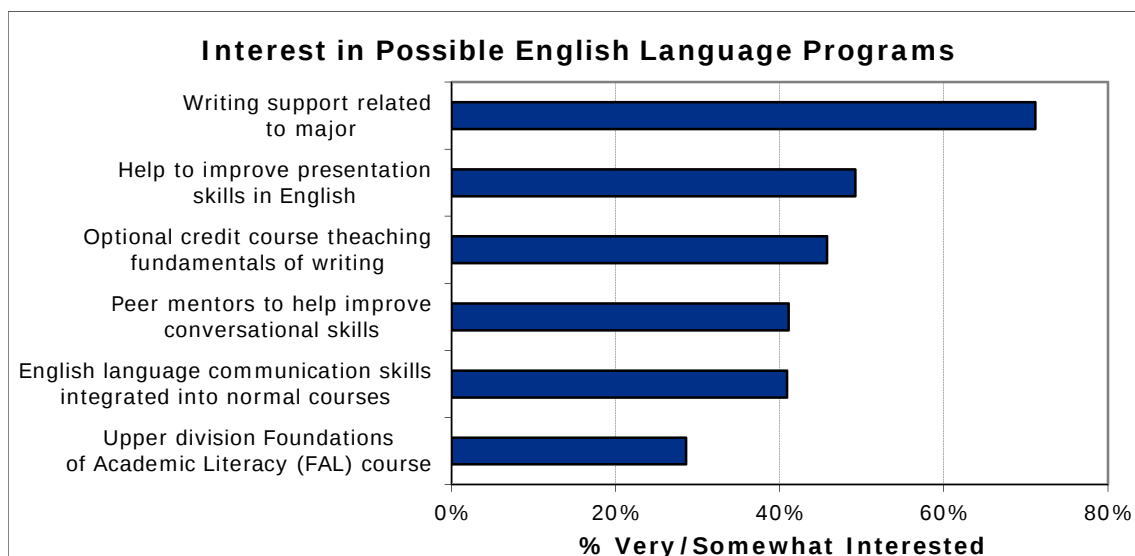
- **Research with Faculty Members:** 15% of graduating respondents said that they have worked within a faculty member's research team, outside of coursework. This is the same as last year's result.
- **French Language Curriculum:**
  - o 19% of respondents said they would be interested in taking courses taught in French within their program, and
  - o 25% of respondents said they would be interested in taking elective courses taught in French outside their program.
  - o The subjects with the greatest demand for French teaching are French, History, World Literature, and Education.
- **Preferred Campus/Location:**
  - o 67% of respondents prefer taking courses at the Burnaby campus,
  - o 21% prefer taking courses at the Surrey campus,
  - o 11% prefer taking courses at the Vancouver campus, and
  - o 1% prefer taking courses online.
  - o 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.
  - o 40% of respondents have taken at least one online class at SFU (28% by choice and 13% because there was no other choice).
  - o 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:**

- o 51% of respondents identified English as the language they first learned as a child and still use.
- o 11% speak no English at home.
- o 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.
- o 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.

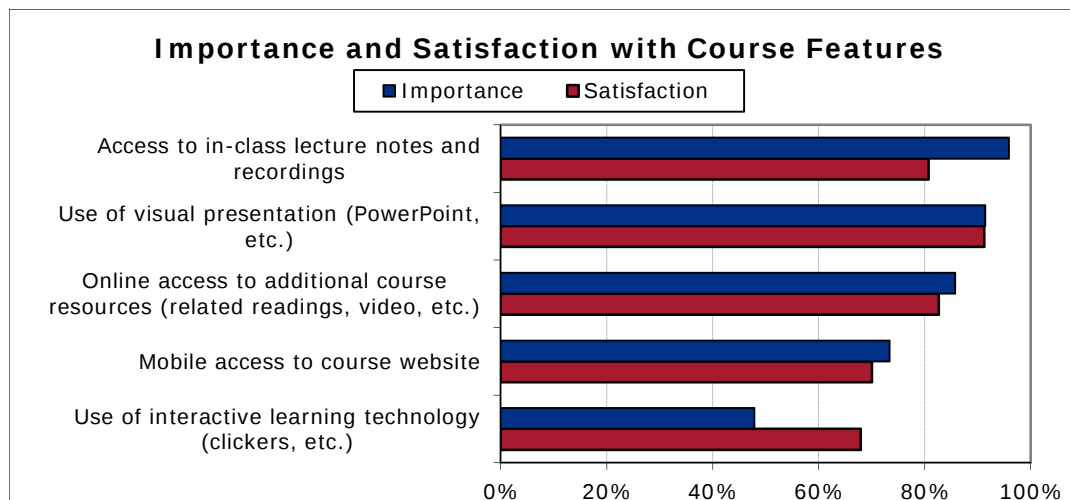


## Technology

- **Use of Mobile Technology:**

- o 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%).
- o 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.

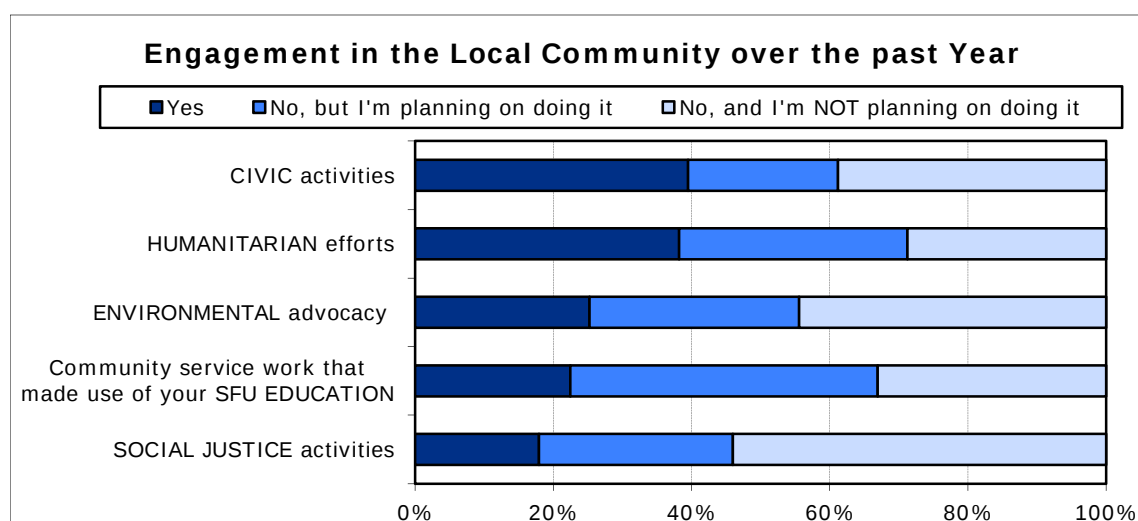


- **Computer Platform:** When asked what platform they prefer, 60% of respondents indicated that they prefer Windows-based PCs, 23% prefer Apple computers, 1% prefer another platform, and 16% have no preference.
- **Cloud Computing:**
  - o 41% of respondents indicated that they use cloud computing, 45% do not use it, and 14% are unsure.
  - o 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:
  - o 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%).
  - o 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.
  - o 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)
  - o 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:
  - o continuing to increase and improve study spaces, and increasing the number of outlets in study areas,
  - o improving the accessibility and speed of wi-fi,
  - o continuing to upgrade the technology and equipment used in classrooms, and
  - o improving the heating and cooling of SFU buildings.
- **Course Availability and Scheduling:** Student responses suggest the need for continued effort to:
  - o increase the frequency of required courses,
  - o increase the seat capacity of courses that have been historically popular, and
  - o 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:
  - o Reducing wait times to see academic advisors.
  - o Providing more guidance to new students, such as maps, workshops, and orientation.
  - o Improving the registration priority system, and communicating the algorithm to students.
  - o Increasing the English-language communication standards for incoming students.
  - o Lowering tuition and fees, and/or improving financial aid.
  - o 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:
  - o the creation of new programs,
  - o the introduction of a week-long reading break in the Spring Term,
  - o renovations in the eating areas around campus (although students continue to express concerns around the price, quality, and variety of food options on campus),
  - o improvements to washrooms, and
  - o the introduction of water-filling stations around campus.