STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND COURSES

THE TEACHING AND COURSE EVALUATION PROJECT
FINAL REPORT

NOVEMBER 27, 2013

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the Teaching and Course Evaluation (TCE) project has been to make recommendations to govern the selection/development of an updated system for student evaluation of teaching and courses. It is important to stress that the project did not arise from dissatisfaction on the part of students or academic administrators about the quality of instruction or curriculum. Rather, the purpose of the project was to develop an updated instrument and process that reflects new understanding from educational research and is more focused on student learning. The project was based on earlier work by the Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL) and the Task Force on Teaching and Learning (TFTL).

In particular, our goal has been to recommend key requirements for the replacement of the existing instrument and processes with an emphasis on:

• Improving the teaching and learning environment
• Ensuring efficient methods of data collection, storage are protection of privacy
• Adopting guidelines for best practices in the use of evaluation data.

The project utilized a pragmatic approach starting with a literature review in support of the goals of the project and consultation with other institutions. The heart of the approach was a strong focus on engaging with the SFU community. Lastly, a proof of concept was completed as a small scale practical application of the recommendations that had emerged.

SCUTL acted as the project steering committee and the core project team consisted of a project manager, the Chair of SCUTL, members of the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) as well as members of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP).

RESEARCH

Four main themes emerged in the broad literature review:

1) The complexity and multi-dimensionality of teaching
2) The recent shift to a more learner-centred pedagogy
3) The many challenges to validity that can be introduced in the design process, implementation, and interpretation of results
4) The importance of using a set of evaluative processes.

From a faculty perspective, the research suggested two main concerns with respect to student evaluation of teaching:

• Validity and the effect of student bias
• Use of data for tenure and promotion decisions by personnel without a sophisticated understanding of how to interpret the data.

For academic administrators and decision-makers, concerns centred more on:

• Perception by faculty that bias may exist in the use of the data for tenure and promotion
• Capacity and commitment of the university to provide training and development that supports faculty teaching
• Ensuring that staff undertaking administrative roles in the evaluation process are familiar with and sensitive to issues that can distort the results.

From the student point of view, the research indicated that “improvement in teaching” is the outcome they consider most valuable from participation in the evaluation process.

An additional review of the literature specifically related to evaluation instruments highlighted similar concerns to the broad review. The instrument review also indicated that flexibility is key to enable giving special attention to local definitions of effective teaching, priorities and standards at an institution.
Another strong theme was that numerous studies clearly demonstrate that online evaluations can produce reliable and valid results if they are designed and tested according to rigorous theoretical and psychometric principles. This can be accomplished by utilizing an existing databank of questions that have been rigorously tested and then continuing to add to this databank with the assistance of the appropriate expertise.

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Interviews were conducted with 23 different institutions that were categorized as leaders, competitors, comparables and others. The emphasis was on learning from the experiences of the institutions.

Key best practices that emerged from discussions with those interviewed included:
- Defining governing principles and implementing policies that align with these principles
- Adopting a flexible framework capable of meeting the needs of stakeholders
- Providing structured support from a designated department in the institution
- Taking a careful, thoughtful approach.

SFU COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A communications strategy was developed along with a community engagement strategy. The community engagement included:
- Interviews with 33 managers, advisors, secretaries, assistants and directors involved with administering student evaluations of teaching and courses; this was an update to the 2008 survey conducted for SCUTL
- A survey of undergraduate students
- A survey of all faculty and instructors who taught a course in 2012
- 11 focus groups conducted across 6 faculties and 3 important stakeholder groups.

PROOF OF CONCEPT

A small scale demonstration or “proof of concept” for the emerging recommended approach was conducted to obtain pragmatic feedback from SFU instructors and students. The proof of concept also:
- Demonstrated that the adapted multi-level framework appears to be sufficiently flexible
- Provided insight into the challenges of implementation
- Highlighted the importance of providing adequate support when moving to the new system
- Underscored the importance of clearly defining reporting requirements up front
- Confirmed that, with careful attention to encouraging student participation, it is possible to achieve a strong response rate with online evaluations at SFU.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, our findings can be characterized in seven key areas:
1) Care must be taken in evaluation design, implementation and interpretation to produce reliable and valid results
2) The instrument must have sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of a wide range of stakeholders including the university as a whole, individual faculties, individual schools or departments, and instructors
3) Responsible use of the data is paramount and requires a keen focus on training and support of those undertaking administrative roles in the evaluation process
4) Proactive measures are needed to encourage the use of evaluation data to improve teaching
5) Efficiency is critical both in administering evaluations and in making the results easier to access and interpret
6) Engagement of faculty and students in the evaluation process is essential
7) Adequate structured support for design, implementation and interpretation of evaluations is a critical success factor.
A number of clear recommendations have been identified in each of the seven key areas outlined above.

CONCLUSIONS, HIGH LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND NEXT STEPS
A great deal of common ground and similarity was evident between our findings in the literature, the consultation with other institutions and our engagement with the SFU community. The framework that has emerged has been adapted slightly to meet the specific needs of SFU and was successfully demonstrated in a small scale trial or proof of concept. The SFU community has clear concerns that need to be addressed as part of the implementation, and have indicated a strong organizational readiness for change. The steps in a high level implementation plan have been developed and a rough timeline in three phases suggested.

Once Senate approval is received, it is recommended that a team be formed to undertake a formal Request for Proposal process. It is also recommended that a parallel process begin immediately to define key institution-wide policies and teaching and learning priorities for institution-wide questions.
2 SFU PROJECT ON STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND COURSES

2.1 BACKGROUND
The Teaching and Course Evaluation (TCE) project carried forward earlier work by the Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL) and the Task Force on Teaching and Learning (TFTL). The focus of this work is to enable student evaluations of teaching and courses at SFU to provide more useful feedback to instructors for the purposes of self-evaluation, and higher quality information to those who evaluate performance for reappointment, salary review, tenure and promotion.

It is important to stress that the project did not arise from dissatisfaction on the part of students or academic administrators about the quality of instruction or curriculum. Rather, the purpose of the project was to develop an updated instrument and process for student evaluation of teaching that reflects new understanding from educational research on such evaluations. It also provided an opportunity to consider how these evaluation processes could be used to gather information on the learning environment, and thus to focus less on student perceptions of instructors, and more on how students learn. The original project charter is included in Appendix I of this report.

2.2 SCOPE
The scope of the project was to make recommendations with respect to:
1) Replacing SFU's form(s) for student evaluation of teaching and courses with an emphasis on improving the teaching and learning environment for course instructors and students
2) Ensuring efficient methods of data collection and storage are used and that the privacy rights of instructors and students are protected
3) Adopting guidelines for best practices in the use of evaluation data.

It should be emphasized that developing methods for faculty evaluation was not in scope for the TCE project. Evaluation of the various instruments that are currently in place across the University was also not in scope. SCUTL previously completed a comprehensive evaluation of the University's current practices and tools related to student evaluations of courses and instructors. This project built on that earlier work.

Additionally, as the focus was on instructors, the evaluation instrument used for Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Tutor Markers (TMs) was not in scope. It should be noted that meetings were held with representatives of the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU) to get their input and feedback on the project. The scope of the project was discussed and feedback was noted regarding ensuring students had an opportunity to indicate evaluation questions were not applicable to them, and that sessional instructors were given an opportunity to respond to the instructor survey. It was also discussed that, once the new evaluation system is implemented, it can be offered to the TSSU to determine if they would recommend adoption for TAs and TMs.

The final outcome of the project is outlined in this report. The Senate, as the representative body that governs academic matters, is requested to approve the implementation of the recommendations contained herein.
2.3 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME
The goals, objectives and outcome of the Teaching and Course Evaluation (TCE) Project are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: TCE Project Goals, Objectives and Outcome

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<td>• Enhance student learning</td>
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<td>• Enable effective and responsible use of evaluation data and information</td>
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<td>• Replace SFU's instrument and processes for student evaluation of instructors and courses</td>
<td>• Engage the SFU community throughout the project</td>
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<td>• Develop a best-practices guide on interpretation and use of the data</td>
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2.4 A PRAGMATIC APPROACH
The project utilized a pragmatic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. The foundation of the approach was a literature review and consultation with other institutions. The heart of the approach was a strong focus on engaging with the SFU community. The importance of this engagement was such that the project duration was significantly lengthened to ensure comprehensive and meaningful input. Lastly, a proof of concept was completed as a small scale practical application of the recommendations that had emerged. Figure 1 illustrates the project approach.

Figure 1: TCE Project Approach

2.5 THE PROJECT TEAM
The project and commitment of resources for this initiative were approved by Senate at the May 2011 Meeting. The Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL) has overseen the project (for a current list of SCUTL representatives please see SCUTL Standing committee), with support provided by the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and Institutional Research and Planning (IRP).

The project team members included:
• Corinne Pitre-Hayes, Project Leader – Managed the timelines for the activities of the project; coordinated the activities of the team members, SCUTL, and the broader participation by SFU instructors, administrators, and students; coordinated logistics for meetings and sessions for participation in the project; coordinated correspondence and deliverables for the project
• Stephen Spector, former Chair of SCUTL – Provided direction and guidance and contributed to overall coordination of the project
• Johanne Provençal, Researcher – Reviewed the research literature on student evaluation of teaching and courses; provided comprehensive summary of the literature for the SFU community
• Hui Niu, Researcher – Reviewed and summarized the research literature on student evaluation of teaching and courses from instrument development and methodological perspectives; reviewed instruments and processes at other universities, gathered feedback from SFU community
• Chris Groeneboer, Associate Director, TLC – Participated as core team member; developed the community engagement strategy; assisted in gathering and documenting input from the SFU community
• Mark Bachmann, Communications Officer, TLC – Participated as core team member; managed the communications requirements for the project; assisted in gathering and documenting input from the SFU community
• Vea Banana, Communications Assistant, TLC – Participated as core team member; assisted with developing project communications
• Daniel Ahadi, Coordinator, Applied Research in Teaching and Learning, TLC – Participated as core team member; assisted in gathering and documenting input from the SFU community
• Jessica Tilley, Intermediate Analyst, IRP – Participated as core team member; assisted with the development, delivery and analysis of student and faculty surveys
• Joanne Quan, Intermediate Analyst, IRP – Participated as core team member; assisted with the development, delivery and analysis of student and faculty surveys; assisted in gathering and documenting input from the SFU community.

3 RESEARCH

3.1 LITERATURE SEARCH

In the past 30 years, student evaluation of teaching has become widely adopted internationally. Significant research literature on student evaluation of teaching (and courses) has formed. The full overview of key issues affecting the discussion from the research literature is included in Appendix II.

In summary, four main themes that emerged in the literature review:

1) The complexity and multi-dimensionality of teaching
2) The recent shift to a more learner-centred pedagogy
3) The many challenges to validity that can be introduced in the design process, implementation, and interpretation of results
4) The importance of using a set of evaluative processes.

From a faculty perspective, the research suggested two main concerns:

• Validity and the effect of student bias
• Use of data for tenure and promotion decisions by personnel without a sophisticated understanding of how to interpret the data.

For academic administrators and decision-makers, concerns centred more on:

• Perception by faculty that bias may exist in the use of the data for tenure and promotion
• Capacity and commitment of the university to provide training and development that supports faculty teaching
• Ensuring that staff undertaking administrative roles in the evaluation process are familiar with and sensitive to issues that can distort the results.

From the student point of view, the research indicated that “improvement in teaching” is the outcome they consider most valuable from participation in the evaluation process.
3.2 INSTRUMENT

The project also conducted an additional literature review focused on evaluation instruments. The full overview of research findings on student evaluation of teaching and courses with a focus on instrument development and related issues is included in Appendix III.

Similar to the overall literature review, this additional review highlighted concerns regarding the complexity and multi-dimensionality of teaching. The research showed that what constitutes effective teaching may vary from institution to institution, discipline to discipline, and faculty to faculty. Therefore, special attention should be given to local preferences, priorities and standards pertinent to effective teaching at an institution.

Another strong theme in the instrument review was that numerous studies clearly demonstrate that online evaluations can produce reliable and valid results. With respect to ensuring validity and reliability, the literature suggests that this can be achieved by designing and testing instruments according to rigorous theoretical and psychometric principles. Psychometrics is the field of study concerned with the theory and technique of psychological measurement. The field is primarily concerned with the construction and validation of measurement instruments and includes the development of theoretical approaches to measurement. An efficient approach to designing in accordance with psychometric principles is to utilize an existing databank of tested and validated questions and then testing and validating new questions as they are added to the databank.

3.3 OTHER INSTITUTIONS

A key reason for reviewing and updating student evaluation of teaching and courses at SFU is the desire to take advantage of more recent knowledge and understanding in this area – both nationally and internationally. To that end, a key component of our research included consultation with other institutions. Interviews were conducted with 23 different institutions that were categorized as leaders, competitors, comparables and others.

The emphasis was on learning from the experiences of these institutions. Topics related to evaluation frameworks, processes used, types of instruments, use of evaluation data and best practices were explored.

Key best practices that emerged from discussions with those interviewed included:

- Defining governing principles and implementing policies that align with these principles
- Adopting a flexible framework capable of meeting the needs of stakeholders
- Providing structured support from a designated department in the institution
- Taking a careful, thoughtful approach.

Consultation with other institutions raised questions that the team explored further in the Proof of Concept phase of the project. The full summary of the findings of this phase of research can be found in Appendix IV.

4 SFU COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 COMMUNICATION PLAN

A two part communication plan was developed for the TCE project. It consisted of an overall communication strategy and a summary of communication and information resources for the Proof of Concept phase of the project. Communications for the project were managed from the perspective of those most affected by the evaluation process.

Critical communications issues were identified and addressed:

- For those who are evaluated (faculty members and instructors)
- For those who evaluate (students)
• For those who use the evaluation data (e.g. administrators)
• For those who coordinate the evaluation process (e.g. departmental managers).

The following communication and information resources were completed:
• A website containing information regarding the project, research reports, project reference documents and interesting articles on the subject of student evaluation of teaching and courses
• Articles in SFU News, The Peak and other SFU-related media
• General information, sample scripts, Q&As, how-to guides as support materials for the Proof of Concept.

The project Communications Plan is included in Appendix V.

4.2 ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEWS

In 2008, the Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL) conducted a survey of how academic units use evaluations. The results of this survey can be found in the document "Evaluating How We Evaluate: Examining SFU's course and instructor evolution system" (Summer 2008). Building on this earlier work, our engagement with the SFU community included interviews with staff involved with the administration of student evaluation of teaching and courses. Interviews were conducted with 33 managers, advisors, secretaries, assistants and directors.

The objectives of these interviews were to:
• Update our information on the types of instruments currently in use at SFU
• Gain a deeper understanding of the current student evaluation business practices across the institution
• Obtain insight into the organizational readiness of the SFU community to embrace a new approach to student evaluation of teaching and courses; as assessment of readiness includes consideration of whether there is a clearly defined need for change, how open the community is to change, whether the resources are available to make the change and what might be needed to sustain the change.

Key themes that emerged from discussions with individuals across the institution involved in teaching and course evaluation processes include:
• Significant challenges with the existing largely paper based processes
• Opportunities for better faculty and student engagement with the evaluation process
• Concern regarding use and interpretation of evaluation results.

Almost everyone interviewed agreed that an online approach would help create efficiencies. In general, the top priorities for a new system are reducing time and cost while increasing interactivity between students and faculty. Overwhelmingly, all academic units interviewed would like to see a redesigned evaluation process that helps create a consistent approach to improving teaching and learning through effective course delivery. A full summary of the key findings of the faculty administration survey are included in Appendix VI.

4.3 STUDENT SURVEY

In order to invite wider student input on the teaching and course evaluation process, a few questions were included in the SFU Undergraduate Student Survey, administered in October 2012 by SFU's Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Of the 12,260 students invited to participate, 2,785 responded to these questions, yielding a response rate of 23%.

Respondents said that the following improvements are important:
• Having individual instructors use the findings to modify their teaching or the course (selected by 92% of respondents)
• Showing that departments are taking the findings seriously (90%)
• Clearly informing students about what's being done with the findings (90%)
• Providing training for instructors who score below a certain level (88%)
• Having students provide input mid-way through the term, so that instructors have time to make adjustments (87%).

The details of the survey results can be found in Appendix VII.

4.4 FACULTY SURVEY

Since not all faculty/instructors could be included in focus groups, faculty and instructors who taught a course in 2012 were invited to participate in a survey, to provide feedback on the teaching and course evaluation process. The survey, administered in Spring 2013 by SFU's Office of Institutional Research and Planning, was sent to 1,429 faculty and instructors. In total, 519 responded, yielding a response rate of 36%.

Faculty/instructors were asked how student evaluation results should be used. Among respondents:
• 77-78% indicated that results should be used to a great/moderate extent when:
  o Making changes to teaching methods or course designs
  o Identifying opportunities for teacher development
  o Reviewing candidates for teaching positions
• 29-34% said that tenure & promotion and merit increases should be impacted very little or not at all by student evaluation of instruction.

Respondents said that the following are important aspects of an evaluation process:
• Clearly informing faculty (selected by 87%) and students (81%) about what's being done with the findings
• Allowing customizable sections where departments (selected by 83%) and individual instructors (77%) may choose their own questions.

Faculty/instructors were also asked which aspects of teaching need to be included on an evaluation in order for it to be a representative assessment of teaching.
• 12 aspects of teaching were identified as important by more than half of respondents
• The most commonly selected aspects were:
  o Organization of teaching and course material (82%)
  o Clarity of presentation (81%)
  o Appropriate assessment and feedback (78%)
  o Stimulation of critical thinking (78%).

The details of the survey results can be found in Appendix VIII.

4.5 COMPARISON OF STUDENT VS FACULTY RESPONSES

The Fall 2012 student survey and the Spring 2013 faculty/instructor survey had several questions in common. Among respondents:
• Both students and faculty/instructors said it is important to clearly inform students about what is being done with the findings (92% of student respondents and 81% of faculty/instructor respondents indicated this was important)
• Student respondents were more likely to say that it is important for individual instructors to use the findings to modify their teaching or the course (87%, versus 69% of faculty/instructor respondents)
• Student respondents were nearly twice as likely to say that completing a mid-term evaluation is important (90%, versus 47% of faculty/instructor respondents).

The details of the survey results can be found in Appendix VII (student survey) and Appendix VIII (faculty/staff survey).
4.6 FOCUS GROUPS

In order to facilitate a more in-depth dialogue with members of the SFU community, 11 focus groups were conducted across 6 faculties and 3 important stakeholder groups. The focus groups included:

- Beedie School of Business
- Faculty of Applied Sciences
- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Health Sciences
- Faculty of Science
- SFU Faculty Association
- TPC Chairs
- Students.

While there were wide ranging and instructive comments from faculty, many of the main concerns related primarily to:

- Validity and the effect of student bias
- The fundamental need for a flexible instrument
- Inappropriate use of data for tenure and promotion.

Concerns of TPC Chairs centred around:

- Faculty attitudes and perception of bias in the use of the data
- Concerns about how evaluation data may sometimes be the only source of information available and may be used inappropriately for decision making
- Capacity and commitment of departments to provide training to TPC Chairs.

Students expressed concern regarding:

- Whether the data is used at all for “improvement in teaching”
- Student access to more reliable information to make course selection decisions.

Focus groups provided perspective, deep insights and many valuable suggestions for implementation. A full summary of the 11 focus groups is included in Appendix IX.

5 KEY FINDINGS

Research, consultation with other institutions and engagement with the SFU community have provided a strong foundation and a rich source of insight for recommendations to replace SFU’s form(s) for student evaluation of teaching and courses.

In general, our findings can be characterized in seven key areas:

1) Care must be taken in evaluation design, implementation and interpretation to produce reliable and valid results

2) The instrument must have sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of a wide range of stakeholders including the university as a whole, individual faculties, individual schools or departments, and instructors

3) Responsible use of the data is paramount and requires a keen focus on training and support of those undertaking administrative roles in the evaluation process

4) Proactive measures are needed to encourage the use of evaluation data to improve teaching

5) Efficiency is critical both in administering evaluations and in making the results easier to access and interpret

6) Engagement of faculty and students in the evaluation process is essential

7) Adequate structured support for design, implementation and interpretation of evaluations is a critical success factor.
6 PROOF OF CONCEPT

6.1 PROOF OF CONCEPT OVERVIEW

A small scale demonstration of the emerging recommended approach was conducted to obtain pragmatic feedback from SFU instructors and students. This demonstration, or “proof of concept”, was based on an adaptation of a flexible, multi-level framework from the University of Toronto which included a large set of psychometrically tested questions.

A total of 14 volunteer instructors from six different faculties participated. There were 14 lecture/seminar and 4 CODE courses ranging in size from 13 to 329 students for a potential total of 1,329 evaluations. Participants were provided with a number of support materials. A compendium of support materials provided to participants is included in Appendix XI.

Care was taken to ensure the privacy rights of instructors and students were protected. The proof of concept was in compliance with University Policy | 10.08, Collection and Disclosure of Instructor and Course Evaluations.

The response rate for this small scale effort was 72% overall, with lecture/seminar courses at 82% and CODE courses at 27%. For lecture/seminar courses, the response rate was considerably higher that the typical range of 30-60% reported for online evaluations in the literature (Rawn 2008). The main differences between lecture/seminar and CODE courses were that lecture/seminar courses included a direct appeal from the instructors and, in a number of cases, also included an a small bonus mark incentive.

6.2 VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK

On the whole, the feedback was very positive. Participants also provided valuable constructive feedback and suggestions.

Key themes in participant feedback included:

- The flexibility of the multi-level framework is great, but it will be very important and could be challenging to reach agreement on the right questions to ask at the different levels
- The support materials provided were good, but personal support is strongly recommended during the transition to the new system
- The reports were valuable and useful, but more sophisticated reporting capabilities would be very helpful
- With a strong focus on encouraging student participation, the online approach seemed to produce good response rates and the open-ended responses were longer and more thoughtful.

More details on the feedback from volunteer instructors can be found in Appendix X.

6.3 STUDENT FEEDBACK

6.3.1 EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

During the Summer 2013 proof of concept administered by eXplorance Inc., a few questions were included at the end of each evaluation, asking students about their experience with the evaluation process. All 1,297 students who received invitations to fill out the proof of concept course evaluations were also invited to participate in the survey. Of these students, 960 participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 74%.
Among respondents:

- 95% agreed that the evaluation questions were clear, and that the evaluation interface was user-friendly
- Students also had the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. Among those who gave feedback:
  - Most said that the process was a positive experience
  - Many expressed their preference for an online system over the current in-class paper evaluations
  - Many students provided constructive feedback to improve the evaluation process.

The details of the survey results can be found in Appendix XII.

6.3.2 REPORTS

At the beginning of the Fall 2013 term, all 1,297 students who were enrolled in courses that participated in the Summer 2013 proof of concept were invited to view reports with aggregated results from the online teaching and course evaluations, as well as a guide to help them interpret the reports. A survey, administered by eXplorance Inc., was then sent to these students, seeking their feedback on the reports. In total, 180 students responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 14%.

Among respondents:

- 70% had read the guide, and of these 86% found it useful in helping them understand the evaluation report
- 89% were satisfied with the readability of the reports
- 60 - 69% said it was important to include means and bar charts to describe responses to evaluation questions
- Fewer than 50% said it was important to include median, mode, standard deviation, frequency tables, and a comparison of course scores to average faculty or university scores.

The details of the survey results can be found in Appendix XII.

6.4 CONCLUSION

Overall, the project team felt that the proof of concept was a valuable exercise. It demonstrated that the multi-level framework adapted from the University of Toronto appears to be sufficiently flexible and provided insight into some of the challenges that will need to be overcome for implementation. It highlighted the importance of providing adequate support during the transition to the new system. The importance of clearly defining reporting requirements up front and ensuring strong reporting capabilities during system selection was strongly underscored. Finally, it demonstrated that, with careful attention to encouraging student participation, it is possible to achieve a strong response rate with online evaluations at SFU.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 2 summarizes our recommendations specifically aimed at addressing our findings in the key areas outlined above.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Areas</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Results</td>
<td>1. Set clear evaluation goals, including clear definitions of what constitutes effective teaching at each level in the organization, and ensure that evaluation questions reflect these goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Design and test instruments according to rigorous theoretical and psychometric standards; this can be accomplished by utilizing a databank of questions that have been rigorously tested by the University of Toronto (used in the proof of concept) as the basis for implementation and then continuing to develop and test additional questions for inclusion in the databank with the assistance of the TLC and IRP.</td>
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<td>3. Include appropriate supplementary evidence with evaluation data</td>
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<td>4. Establish appropriate and standardized policies and processes for the administration of course evaluations; namely, ensure that:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Policy and practice about the administration of evaluations is standardized at the administrative level at which comparison between instructors or courses (if employed) is made</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An appropriate amount of data is distributed to appropriate populations; appropriate and consistent policies for access to and storage of data are developed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The privacy of instructors and students is protected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>5. Multiple-level approach to instrumentation is recommended including a core set of questions common to all forms (institutional level), faculty-wide question set if desired, department-level question set if desired, and instructor selected and/or created questions if desired</td>
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<td>6. The results of instructor selected/created questions should be private to the instructor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Select an evaluation instrument with flexible, sophisticated reporting capabilities</td>
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<td>8. The timing of evaluations will be flexible to meet the local needs of the faculties, schools, department and specific courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsible use of the data</td>
<td>9. Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) should not be the sole source of data for decision-making around teaching performance; other sources might include peer evaluation (classroom observation) and/or teaching portfolios</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. One of the principles in the literature is that evaluation results should not be interpreted without incorporating contextual information about the course (such as class size, CGPA of students, year level of students, etc.); the recommended approach to address this issue is to use evaluation data to create a model that takes into account contextual factors that are beyond the instructor’s control; this will indicate whether an achieved evaluation score is above, below, or within expectation; Institutional Research and Planning undertook an exercise to demonstrate this approach using the proof of concept data; the process is described in Appendix XIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of evaluation data to improve teaching</td>
<td>11. Request a brief summary from faculty about their teaching practices, goals, and challenges for each course that would accompany and help contextualize evaluation results; a set of questions can be provided to assist faculty with structuring the summary; the timing and audiences for these summaries may vary across faculties</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Use evaluation data as a means of providing diagnostic or formative feedback</td>
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<td>13. Use evaluation data for summative purposes</td>
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<td>14. Offer students other means to provide feedback, such as mid-course evaluations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Test and review instruments when institutional priorities or teaching practices change</td>
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<td>16. Conduct self-studies and internal research on evaluation validity and factors affecting evaluation responses</td>
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</table>
17. Establish policy frameworks for the collection, administration and use of student course evaluation systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Areas</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Efficiency  | 18. Establish more automated processes for collecting, storing and distributing evaluation data  
19. Present data so that it can be easily and accurately interpreted |
| Engagement  | 20. Articulate and broadly communicate evaluation goals and purpose  
21. Provide sufficient information to instructors and students about the administration and use of evaluations  
22. Provide instructors and students with access to appropriate evaluation results; it should be noted that there are concerns with regard to sharing evaluation data with students; the general principle of sharing with students is recommended, however, the details of which results are communicated to students may vary across faculties  
23. Promote to instructors and students ways in which the data can be used to make improvements in teaching  
24. Ensure that evaluation methodologies and approach continue to be relevant through ongoing engagement with the SFU community regarding student evaluation of teaching and courses |
| Structured support | 25. Encourage and provide the infrastructure for consultation on teaching evaluations  
26. Provide an opportunity for instructors to receive individualized assessment and advice  
27. Provide faculty with information about evaluation data collection and use  
28. Educate and train administrators  
29. Develop educational materials and support and make these materials centrally available |

8 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

8.1 CONCLUSIONS
The project team has observed a great deal of common ground and similarity between our findings in the literature, the consultation with other institutions and our engagement with the SFU community. The framework that has emerged has been adapted slightly to meet the specific needs of SFU and was successfully demonstrated in a small scale trial or proof of concept. The SFU community has clear concerns that need to be addressed as part of the implementation, and have indicated a strong organizational readiness for change.
8.2 HIGH LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The steps that outline a high level plan to implement a new system for student evaluation of teaching and courses at SFU are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Outline of High Level Implementation Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Form initial implementation team</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Draft project charter and confirm steering committee (SCUTL is recommended)</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Draft formal Request for Proposal (RFP), conduct selection process</td>
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<td>Step 4 (Note: Step 3 and 4 could be conducted in parallel)</td>
<td>Conduct process from VPA Office to set clear evaluation goals, including clear general definitions of what constitutes effective teaching, and develop institution-wide evaluation questions that reflect these goals; it is recommended to ensure both education and evaluation expertise are involved in this process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Confirm and validate goals, definitions and questions set in Step 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Confirm and validate the adapted evaluation framework for adoption by SFU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Define phases of implementation project in partnership with selected vendor and SFU community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 8</td>
<td>Begin phase 1 of the implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 9</td>
<td>Define, build and/or update structured support for student evaluations of teaching and courses in the Teaching and Learning Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 10</td>
<td>Complete phase 1 of the implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 11</td>
<td>Conduct brief review of lessons learned in phase 1 of the implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 12</td>
<td>Initial implementation of proposed solution for incorporating context into the interpretation of evaluation results (please refer to Appendix XIII for details)</td>
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</table>

Based on consultation with other institutions, it is recommended to tackle the implementation of a new system incrementally by starting with two to three faculties and then slowly rolling the system out to the rest of the community. Depending on the phases defined in Step 7, and the lessons reviewed in Step 11, it is recommended that the subsequent phases of the implementation project follow a similar pattern to Steps 8 through 11. Following the completion of the first phase of the project, it is recommended that the solution for incorporating context into the interpretation of evaluation results outlined in Appendix XIII be implemented and further explored.

Figure 2 illustrates a suggested high level timeline for rolling out the implementation in three phases of two to three faculties each. The initial rollout begins in the Fall of 2014 following the conclusion of the formal RFP process. Phase 2 and 3 would follow with the target for all faculties to be fully implemented by mid 2017.
8.3 **RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS**

Once Senate approval is received the following next steps are recommended:

- Form a team to draft a Request for Proposal for online evaluation system with participation from TLC, IRP, IT, SCUTL and faculty members
- Conduct a formal selection process for an evaluation system
- In parallel with the evaluation system selection process, begin a process of defining key institution-wide policies aligned with recommended principles including defining teaching and learning priorities for institution-wide questions.