

FALL 2023

IMPROVING CES RESPONSE RATE

CES (Course Experience Surveys) has had a lower response rate post-pandemic (25% in Fall 2022, 25% in Spring 2023, and 23% in Summer 2023) than our pre-pandemic rate of 45% (Fall 2019). Improving response rate is important to ensure the responses represent and include diverse student demographics, provide insightful feedback to instructors, and increase the validity of the surveys.

In Fall 2023, the [Learning Experience Assessment and Planning \(LEAP\)](#) team is implementing the following strategies to increase response rate, in collaboration with participating departments and instructors:

- Strategy 1: Live Response Rate Monitor
- Strategy 2: Survey Period Extension
- Strategy 3: Supporting Instructor CES Engagement

Using a logistic regression analysis model, we will measure the impact of these different strategies in improving student response rate. As part of this analysis, we will also consider how the TSSU strike impacted student response rate.

STRATEGY 1: LIVE RESPONSE RATE MONITOR

*"I think the most effective way to get the most responses to a survey is to do it in person in the class before exams." - SFU Student #11**

We implemented a new feature, **Live Response Rate Monitor** in Blue, to encourage allocated in-class time for students to complete CES. This feature is intended to make in-class surveys easy, seamless, and interactive to encourage student participation.

The feature includes:

- A unique QR code that directs to the survey of the course, making it easy for instructors to share the link with their students
- A Live Response Monitor that shows real-time submission rate for instructors

*Quote from a participant in the [SETC Improvement Project](#)

STRATEGY 2: EXTENDING THE SURVEY PERIOD

*“[I would prefer to complete the surveys] after the exam period. During the exam period I don't think the majority of people have time, or that's not on their mind. After the exam period, that's typically when everything can be summed up and everything is finalized, your whole experience is mostly concluded. So, then you can have more of a just idea of how you want to proceed with that survey.” - SFU Student #6**

We are piloting an extended survey period with participating departments to measure whether extending the survey period will increase response rate. CES is typically accessible for students to complete during the last two weeks of classes. For Fall 2023, the survey will open on November 21st and close on December 5th. For the pilot, the participating departments will extend their survey period by:

- 1 week – November 14th to December 5th, which does not include the final exam period, or
- 2 weeks – November 21st to December 20th, which allows two additional days after the final exam period.

We initially planned to pilot an extension of 2 weeks, including the final exam period for all departments. However, some departments shared their concerns that including the final exam period may introduce bias to students' responses and negatively affect the survey results. The collaborative discussion around these concerns led to the option of a one-week extension, which does not include the final exam period.

Benefits of Extension:

1. *Increased Participation:* Students get more time to complete surveys, increasing opportunities for participation.
2. *Reduced Survey Fatigue:* Extending the survey period reduces fatigue from receiving multiple surveys within a short period of time.

Benefits of Including the Final Exam Period:

1. *Holistic Feedback:* Including the exam period allows students to provide feedback on their whole learning experience including the final exam.
2. *Rich Reflection:* Students expressed that completing the survey after the busy and high-stress period may allow them to have the capacity to meaningfully reflect on their learning experience.

*“I think after the exam period when the stress level is not high anymore, and you feel like you have time, you can do [the surveys] right. People will be more inclined to do it too because you're not stressed out and they have the time.” - SFU Student #9**

*Quote from a participant in the [SETC Improvement Project](#)

STRATEGY 3: SUPPORTING INSTRUCTOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CES

*“Some professors do a really good job trying to prioritize or make it sound like this feedback is really going to be used. [They communicate that] ‘It’s really important that we hear your voice, so I can understand how I can improve my course in the future.’ In those cases, I’ll try to fill out the survey.” - SFU Student #10**

Our response rate data shows that instructors who actively engage with CES by adding instructor questions have a higher response rate than those who do not. Students have also expressed that they are motivated to complete a CES for a course when the instructors communicate the value of students’ feedback and remind students to complete CES.

We are taking the following initiatives to support instructors’ engagement with CES, to both help instructors gain valuable feedback, and to improve CES response rate:

Improved Question Bank

We analyzed the questions instructor select from the question bank, as well as the questions they create, to update our CES question bank to provide an effective and relevant set of questions that instructors can use directly or customize to fit their needs.

Workshops for Instructors

In Fall 2023, LEAP supported TILT with the workshop “[Tools for Inquiry: Conducting Inquiry Using CES](#)”, to encourage and support instructors’ engagement and effective use of CES. This workshop will also be run in Spring 2024

*Quote from a participant in the [SETC Improvement Project](#)