

TSSU STRIKE IMPACT ON FALL 2023 COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEY SCORES

Prepared by LEAP (leap@sfu.ca)

From June to mid-October 2023, the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU) implemented various strike actions, including an overtime ban, teach-ins, and a full work stoppage from late September to mid-October. SFU Community members have noted that the strike affected students' course experiences and expressed concerns about how this may be reflected in Course Experience (CE) survey responses.

This report provides a high-level overview that compares mean scores for the core questions (asked on all CE surveys) from Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 at the university-level.

BACKGROUND AND UNIVERSITY-WIDE OVERVIEW

- **Survey Period:** CE Surveys ran from November 22nd to December 6th for the Fall 2022 semester and November 21st to December 5th for the Fall 2023 semester for most academic units. University-wide response rates were similar at 25% for both semesters.
- **Total Number of Surveys:** There were 21,537 completed surveys in Fall 2023 (compared to 20,061 in Fall 2022).
- **Survey Mean Scores:** When comparing the mean scores for the closed-ended core questions, there was little to no change between the Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 semesters at the university level.
- **TSSU Strike-Related Comments:** 1,265 comments in 1,136 surveys referenced the strike in response to the core questions, which is 5.27% of all 21,537 survey responses. Comments were identified using the following keywords, including possible misspellings: disruption(s), job action, picket(s), protest(s), strike(s), and TSSU.

COMPARISON OF RESPONSE RATE AND MEAN SCORES FOR FALL 2022 AND FALL 2023

Tables of response rates and mean scores for Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 are presented below at the university level. Please refer to the section following the tables for an explanation of the terms used in the comparison tables. For more information on the common core questions, refer to the Course Experience Survey website: <https://www.sfu.ca/course-experience-surveys/about-SETC/our-question-set/developing-common-core-questions.html>.

Readers should interpret the results with caution as differences in students' course experience are affected by multiple factors, including but not limited to, changes in course syllabus, class size, and instructor's teaching styles. Differences in scores between semesters cannot be wholly attributed to the labour disputes in Fall 2023.

RESPONSE RATE

University Response Rate Fall 2022 N: 20,061	University Response Rate Fall 2023 N: 21,537
25%	25%

CORE QUESTION 1: I SPENT ____ TIME ON [COURSE NAME] THAN EXPECTED BASED ON ITS NUMBER OF CREDITS.

Response scale: Less (-1), The same amount of time as expected (0), More (1)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 19,892	Fall 2023 N: 21,397	Biggest negative change in mean score (away from zero) among units	Biggest positive change in mean score (towards zero) among units
M: +0.11 SD: 0.65	M: +0.12 SD: 0.62	-0.11	+0.39

CORE QUESTION 2: I FOUND THIS COURSE TO BE...

Response scale: Not challenging (-1), The right level of challenge for me (0), Too challenging (1)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 19,256	Fall 2023 N: 20,621	Biggest negative change in mean score (away from zero) among units	Biggest positive change in mean score (towards zero) among units
M: +0.14 SD: 0.52	M: +0.13 SD: 0.51	-0.11	+0.15

CORE QUESTION 3A: WAS IT CLEAR TO YOU HOW YOUR WORK (I.E., ASSIGNMENTS, ESSAYS, TESTS, LEARNING ACTIVITIES) WOULD BE GRADED?

Response scale: Not at all (1), A little (2), Somewhat (3), Mostly (4), Very much (5)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 18,895	Fall 2023 N: 20,246	Biggest decrease in mean score among units	Biggest increase in mean score among units
M: 3.98 SD = 1.10	M: 3.99 SD = 1.09	-0.58	+0.34

CORE QUESTION 3B: DID THE ASSESSMENTS REFLECT WHAT YOU WERE TAUGHT (I.E. LEARNING ACTIVITIES, CONCEPTS, MATERIALS)?

Response scale: Not at all (1), A little (2), Somewhat (3), Mostly (4), Very much (5)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 18,657	Fall 2023 N: 19,995	Biggest decrease in mean score among units	Biggest increase in mean score among units
M: 4.11 SD = 1.02	M: 4.10 SD = 1.02	-0.65	+0.38

CORE QUESTION 4: HOW COMFORTABLE DID YOU FEEL APPROACHING YOUR INSTRUCTOR (IN PERSON OR ONLINE)?

Response scale: Not at all comfortable (1), Somewhat comfortable (2), Completely comfortable (3), I did not contact the instructor, but the reason had nothing to do with the instructor's approachability (N/A)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 15,151	Fall 2023 N: 16,659	Biggest decrease in mean score among units	Biggest increase in mean score among units
M: 2.70 SD = 0.56	M: 2.71 SD = 0.56	-0.22	+0.19

CORE QUESTION 5A: I THINK [INSTRUCTOR NAME] _____ TRIED TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING (I.E., USED A VARIETY OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES, INVESTED IN MY SUCCESS, INVITED AND RESPONDED TO STUDENT FEEDBACK).

Response scale: Almost never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Almost always (5)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 19,088	Fall 2023 N: 20,780	Biggest decrease in mean score among units	Biggest increase in mean score among units
M: 4.14 SD = 1.01	M: 4.14 SD = 1.02	-0.75	+0.40

CORE QUESTION 5B: I _____ FELT ENGAGED BY [INSTRUCTOR NAME]'S TEACHING APPROACH (I.E., ACTIVITIES, LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS).

Response scale: Almost never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Almost always (5)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 19,113	Fall 2023 N: 20,785	Biggest decrease in mean score among units	Biggest increase in mean score among units
M: 3.83 SD = 1.15	M: 3.83 SD = 1.16	-0.57	+0.34

CORE QUESTION 5C: HOW OFTEN DID YOU UNDERSTAND [INSTRUCTOR NAME]'S EXPLANATION OF COURSE CONCEPTS?

Response scale: Almost never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Almost always (5)

University-level Mean Scores

Fall 2022 N: 19,422	Fall 2023 N: 21,130	Biggest decrease in mean score among units	Biggest increase in mean score among units
M: 4.02 SD = 0.97	M: 3.99 SD = 0.99	-0.65	+0.27

EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED IN THE TABLES:

- Response rate (RR): Calculated based on the number of survey completions among the number of survey invitations sent out.
- Mean (M): The mean score summarizes the overall (or average) response to the question.
- Standard deviation (SD): Standard deviation describes the degree of variation in responses. The standard deviation would be smaller when responses are consistent (i.e. most students selected the same response options). In contrast, the standard deviation would be larger when students select a wider range of response options.
- Number of survey responses (N): The number of responses used for calculation of the mean and standard deviation.
- Biggest negative/positive change in mean score (away from/towards zero) among units: For Core Question #1 and #2, this reflects the biggest change in mean score *away* from the ideal mean score of zero (i.e. more students indicated that they spent more or less time as expected and/or more students found the course not challenging enough or too challenging), and the biggest change in mean score *towards* the ideal mean score of zero (i.e. more students indicating that they spent the same amount of time as expected on the course and/or more students found the course to be the right level of challenge).
- Biggest decrease/increase in score among units: This reflects the biggest negative/positive change in score for a question among all units that participated in CE Surveys for Fall 2022 and Fall 2023.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS REFERENCING THE TSSU STRIKE

A content analysis was broadly performed on all student comments to common core questions in the Fall 2023 CE surveys to identify the frequency of strike-related comments. This involved searching student comments for the word “strike” and then identifying additional strike-related keywords from these comments. These keywords and possible misspellings were then searched for across all comments: disruption(s), job action, picket(s), protest(s), strike(s) and TSSU.

All comments including these keywords were reviewed. Those that included the keywords but did not reference the TSSU strike (e.g. “strike a balance”) were excluded from the analysis.

This analysis may not capture all strike-related comments as students may have used other terms to reference the strike.

Number of Surveys with Strike-Related Comments to the Core Questions

	Total <i>n</i> of Surveys	<i>n</i> of Surveys w/ Strike-Related Comments	% of Surveys w/ Strike-Related Comments
University	21,537	1,136	5.27%

Number Of Strike-Related Comments for Each Open-Ended Common Core Question

Questions	University <i>n</i> of Strike-Related Comments	University % of Strike-Related Comments
1a. You responded as having spent <i>less time</i> on this course than expected. Please explain your response.	164	13%
1b. You responded as having spent the <i>same amount of time</i> on this course as expected. Please explain your response.	122	10%
1c. You responded as having spent <i>more time</i> on this course than expected. Please explain your response.	152	12%
2a. Why did you rate this course as <i>not challenging</i> ? Comments	3	0%
2b. Why did you rate this course as <i>too challenging</i> ? Comments	30	2%
4a. You responded as having felt <i>not at all comfortable</i> approaching your instructor. Please explain your response.	33	3%

Questions	University n of Strike- Related Comments	University % of Strike- Related Comments
4b. You responded as having felt <i>somewhat comfortable</i> approaching your instructor. Please explain your response.	32	3%
4c. You responded as having felt <i>completely comfortable</i> approaching your instructor. Please explain your response.	115	9%
4d. You responded that you <i>didn't approach</i> your instructor, but the reason had nothing to do with their approachability. Please explain your response.	38	3%
6. Which aspects of this course helped you learn and why?	86	7%
7. How would you improve this course for future students?	490	39%
Total	1,265	100%