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Students' Perceptions of Effective Teaching in Higher Education

Investigators

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Research supported by

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Purpose of the Study

- Continuation of similar work completed in high school setting

- Determine students' expectations of effective teaching

- Compare students' expectations across modes of delivery

- Determine if items on CEQs matched student expectations

Survey

- Online survey of 49 items

- The first nine requested demographic information – respondents clicked on the appropriate choice

- The forty remaining were open-ended, asking for text-based responses

Students were asked to:

- Identity five characteristics of effective on-campus and distance teaching

- Explain why the characteristic is important

- Describe the instructor behaviours that demonstrate the characteristic

- Rank the five characteristics (5 being the most important, 1 being the least)

Characteristic 1

Question 10

Characteristic

Question 11

Why this characteristic is important?

Question 12

How can an instructor demonstrate this characteristic?

Question 13

With 5 referring to the most important characteristic, and 1 referring to the least, rank this characteristic with the others you have mentioned.

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

Why this approach?

- Likert scale surveys ask students to respond to preconceived concepts

- Provide a direct student voice

- Wanted students to link instructor behaviours to characteristics

- Data could be collected for both on-campus and distance instruction

Demographics

- ~17,000 students had access during the winter semester of 2008

- Over 2,500 students accessed the survey

- 330 provided usable data

- Survey demographics very similar to the university population

- 161 students provide data on distance

Marketing the Study

- Banners

- Campus newspapers

- Web site

- Offered incentives

Your Opinions Matter

Let us know what you think about the characteristics of effective teaching. Complete the survey for a chance to win one of two $1,000 tuition vouchers.

www.distance.mun.ca/survey

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Method of Analysis

- Data were collected in a spread sheet

- Identified 69 unique characteristics, assigning a number to each

- Manually coded the data according to the characteristics

- Correlated the data by the characteristics (unique numbers)

Method of Analysis

- Compiled descriptions of and behaviours associated with each characteristic

- Created definitions for the characteristics highlighting students' comments

- Grouped characteristics by definitions and instructor behaviours into nine categories of behaviours that students describe as effective

On- Campus

- Respectful
- Knowledgeable
- Approachable
- Engaging
- Communicative
- Organized
- Responsive
- Professional
- Humorous

Distance

- Respectful
- Responsive
- Knowledgeable
- Approachable
- Communicative
- Organized
- Engaging
- Professional
- Humorous

Distance Respondents

- Significant concern over timely communications from instructors (email, discussion postings, audio conferencing)

- Organization – Students expect well organized web sites, course material, and evaluation guidelines

- Responses were framed in an online context

Respectful (On-campus and Distance)

(caring, compassionate, concerned, consistent, diplomatic, empathetic, fair, flexible, helpful, kind, open-minded, patient, reasonable, realistic, humble, sincere, trustworthy, understanding)

- Two areas of instructors' behaviours were highlighted:
  - Personal attributes
    - Courteous to students
    - Patience with students' questions
  - Pedagogical attributes
    - Testing what's covered in class
    - Setting clear guidelines

Knowledgeable (On-campus and Distance)

(competent, credible, current, eclectic, flexible, practical, qualified, reflective)

- Two areas of instructors' behaviours were highlighted:
  - o Content knowledge
  - o Pedagogical knowledge
  - o Good understanding of technology (distance)

Approachable (On-campus and Distance)

(accessible, friendly, happy, helpful, personable, positive)

- Three main themes:
  - Positive interaction between professors and students
  - Comfortable learning environment
  - Sincere effort on the part of instructors to help students meet academic goals

Engaging (On-campus and Distance)

(assertive, challenging, charismatic, creative, energetic, enthusiastic, interactive, interesting, motivating, passionate, positive, stimulating)

- Three main themes:
  - Passion and enthusiasm for the discipline and teaching
  - Ability to share their passion with students
  - The need for passion and enthusiasm to influence pedagogical choices

Communicative (On-campus and Distance)

(attentive, clear, constructive, thorough, understandable)

- Five main themes
  - Coherent use of a variety of organized teaching methods
  - Clear and concise course outlines
  - Good command of the English language
  - Astute listening skills
  - Clarity in expectations
  - Prompt high quality feedback

Organized

(efficient, focused, prepared)

- Students focused on pedagogical issues pertaining to organization
  - o Preparing for class
  - o Using technology appropriately
  - o Offering coherent lectures
  - o Asking students for feedback on how the course is progressing

Responsive (On-campus and Distance)

(accommodating, available, efficient, helpful, perceptive)

- Students focused on two attributes
  - Second most mentioned characteristic by distance students
  - Timely and constructive feedback
  - The instructor's awareness of individual students needs by being attentive to signs that indicate that students are experiencing difficulty with content

Professional (On-campus and Distance)

(confident, dedicated, dependable, hygienic, punctual, trustworthy)

- Students focused on two aspects of professionalism

  o The relationship with students
    - Maintain a measured presence
    - Prompt responses

  o Responsibilities to good teaching
    - Staying on track
    - Punctual
    - Maintain high expectations

Humorous (On-campus and Distance)

(happy, pleasant)

- Students focused on a number of attributes
  - The possession of a positive outlook on teaching
  - Being kind and approachable, creating a relaxed, stress free environment.
  - Improve student-teacher rapport
  - Development of more engaging pedagogical experience

The final report is available at:

http://www.distance.mun.ca/survey

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