FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

FIRST-YEAR ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE SURVEY

FALL 2013 VS. WINTER 2014
Survey details

- Population: 2,807 first-year Arts and Science students
- Surveys conducted online using FluidSurveys
- **Fall 2013**
  - Response rate: 28% (791 of 2,807)
  - Completion rate: 89% (701 of 791)
  - Timing: November 2013, week 10 of Fall Term
- **Winter 2014**
  - Response rate: 15% (409 of 2,807)
  - Completion rate: 82% (337 of 409)
  - Timing: March 2013, week 10 of Winter Term
- **Matched data set** (Fall 2013 & Winter 2014)
  - 202 students
# Sample distribution comparisons

**NOTE.** Representativeness of samples: Whether samples had similar distributions of respondents in terms of number of registered courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Registered Courses</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Sample</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td><strong>75.1%</strong></td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2807</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td><strong>79.4%</strong></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>776</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 2014</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td><strong>79.0%</strong></td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>385</td>
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<td>Matched set</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td><strong>78.2%</strong></td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>202</td>
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</table>
Q1. Thinking about your overall academic experience so far this year, please indicate how great a challenge each of the following activities has been.

Q2. Thinking about all of your courses this term, indicate how valuable you have found each of the following course components.

Q3. What strategies have you employed to manage your time? Indicate how often you have employed each of the following strategies so far this term.

Q4. Have you taken advantage of any of the following course- or university-wide academic support resources?

Q5. Overall, I feel I am managing the challenges of my first-year courses.

Q6. What advice, if any, do you have for instructors of first-year courses?
Interpretation of data

- Student interpretations of questions
- Perceptions vs. reality
- Students learn in different ways
Thinking about your overall academic experience so far this year, please indicate how great a challenge each of the following activities has been.
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### Challenges: (within course) activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navigating website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in group</td>
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<tr>
<td>discussions</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending class on a regular basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding material and concepts</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Red: Major Challenge
- Yellow: Moderate Challenge
- Blue: Minor Challenge
- Black: Not a Challenge
1. Thinking about your overall academic experience so far this year, please indicate how great a challenge each of the following activities has been.

Challenges: completing tasks

- Independent work outside of class
- Required online work
- Required readings
- Homework before class

*Major Challenge*
*Moderate Challenge*
*Minor Challenge*
*Not a Challenge*
1. Thinking about your overall academic experience so far this year, please indicate how great a challenge each of the following activities has been.
Thinking about all of your courses this term, indicate how valuable you have found each of the following course components.
2. Thinking about all of your courses this term, indicate how valuable you have found each of the following course components.
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2. Thinking about all of your courses this term, indicate how valuable you have found each of the following course components.
Q3.

What strategies have you employed to manage your time? Indicate how often you have employed each of the following strategies so far this term.
3. What strategies have you employed to manage your time? Indicate how often you have employed each of the following strategies so far this term.

- Knowing deadlines
- Using weekly timetable
- Good study location
- Establishing a weekly routine
- Minimizing procrastination
3. What strategies have you employed to manage your time? Indicate how often you have employed each of the following strategies so far this term.

- Setting realistic study goals
- Using time effectively
- Prioritizing tasks
- Work w/ peers
- Work/life balance

**Fall 2013 Winter 2014 Fall 2013 Winter 2014 Fall 2013 Winter 2014 Fall 2013 Winter 2014**

- Always
- Usually
- Occasionally
- Not at all
Q4.

Have you taken advantage of any of the following course- or university-wide academic support resources?
4. Have you taken advantage of any of the following course- or university-wide academic support resources?

**Course-specific resources**

- **Fall 2013**
  - Course checklists
  - Moodle calendar

- **Winter 2014**
  - Course checklists
  - Moodle calendar
4. Have you taken advantage of any of the following course- or university-wide academic support resources?
4. Have you taken advantage of any of the following course- or university-wide academic support resources?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human resources</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Winter 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joined study group</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assistants</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/peer advisors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, I feel I am managing the challenges of my first-year courses.
5. Overall, I feel I am managing the challenges of my first-year courses.
Q6.

What advice, if any, do you have for instructors of first-year courses?
6. What advice, if any, do you have for instructors of first-year courses?

Fall 2013
• Focus was on course components and students’ compliments and suggestions regarding components

Winter 2014 (4 themes)
• Challenge of first year transition
• Encouraging course engagement
• Scaffolding learning
• Challenge of juggling multiple courses
6. What advice, if any, do you have for instructors of first-year courses?

**Challenge of first year transition**

- "Remind students the importance of time management."

- "Perhaps realizing that first year students are coming to university with hardly any knowledge of how it works. I'm not saying that standards should be lowered but I believe that professors can spend more time explaining/demonstrating how best to succeed in their courses."

- "I think that more emphasis should be placed by the instructors on the importance of keeping on top of things in 1st year; it can be disorienting to suddenly have no one reminding you to do so. Finally, what might be helpful would be to have optional, regular study group meetings as part of a course to discuss topics. This would help clarify material as the course went along."
6. What advice, if any, do you have for instructors of first-year courses?

**Encouraging course engagement**

- "Weekly quizzes and homework assignments are an effective way to help students stay on track with the required work that should be completed. It also provides insight as to important concepts we should be focusing on. Please continue these as a component of first year grades."

- "try to make lectures more engaging, maybe add in some hands on activities or presentations?"

- "Regular 1-clicker use and discussion in lecture promotes learning and interaction among peers. I would encourage more of it. It is also a great way to engage students, keeping them awake and focused. Examples in class (where possible) also help."
6. What advice, if any, do you have for instructors of first-year courses?

**Scaffolding learning**

- "more summaries, more notice about deadlines, open quizzes (unlimited attempts) really do help with learning. more assignments to divide up marks for the year other than relying only on midterm and final marks to make up a grade."

- "Make sure the TA's are more prepared to help students and ensure that they are clear on any assignment and are able to help a student in need"

- "It's very helpful when the instructors have various options for their office hours, so that students can chooses a time that is good for them."
6. What advice, if any, do you have for instructors of first-year courses?

**Challenge of juggling multiple courses**

- "Occasionally courses tend to assign multiple assignments with similar due dates. Although separate courses are completely unrelated to each other and by no means do they have to coordinate it is nice when professors recognize the stress students are under and include things such as grace periods for assignments."

- "Make sure the amount of readings for each week is somewhat realistic and can be managed on top of four other classes and the readings and assignments these entail."

- "Ensure that all the assigned readings are actually relevant to what is being taught and what will be tested. Be aware that students are trying to balance all the readings in all of their courses."
Two students responded to Q6 by providing advice directed to fellow first-year students...
Advice to fellow first-year students

• "Do what you need to do first. If you have readings for more than one course but some of the readings assigned are optional, do the required readings for all your classes first then, move on the extra reading material."

• "Never procrastinate, do establish a weekly routine schedule for course readings. Attend small study groups for each course because it helps you to learn more, be more engaged in the material and be motivated to study."