

FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITY OF THEIR LEARNING

Preliminary Report of an April 2009 Survey of
First-Year Students at Queen's University

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INTRODUCTION

- This preliminary report focuses on the written responses of 470 students who responded in April 2009 to an anonymous online survey..
- Five graphs are provided at the end of this document to summarize responses to the fixed-choice questions.
- These materials are also available on line at <http://tinyurl.com/fysurvey>

MAJOR THEMES IN THE STUDENTS' RESPONSES

OVERALL, STUDENTS ARE NOT ASKING FOR A REVOLUTION IN HOW WE TEACH.

There seem to be several changes that, individually and collectively, could make a huge difference:

1. Ask students to talk in pairs or threes to neighbours for 2 minutes to share ideas on a complex or important issue.
2. Post “fill in the blank” notes before your lecture so students can print and bring the notes to class and fill in as you teach.
3. Ensure that assessment is fair, with consistency across TAs and between the professor and the TAs.
4. At all costs, avoid long, boring PowerPoint-driven lectures.
5. Avoid phrases such as “It’s easy to see that...” and avoiding assuming that everyone understands when the “genius in the front row” gives an answer that indicates understanding.
6. Remember that students need to know where they stand as the term unfolds. Provide feedback on overall progress, and consider more assignments that are smaller, so that each carries less weight. Make test and exam solutions available. Whenever possible, provide some element of choice on assignments.

Students are not asking professors to “dumb it down.” They ask that the work be challenging but also reasonable.

First-year students expected a shift from memorizing (in high school) to understanding (at university). If high school seemed like spoon-feeding, first-year university can seem like the opposite extreme of being talked at; they are looking for a middle ground where professors teach them.

Students want to learn and they want to do well; they expect to be met halfway.

Students are not easily fooled, and they see our teaching for what it is and what it is not. They dislike courses in which it seems obvious that a major goal is to “weed out” the 2 out of 3 who will not go on to major in the subject.

Learning is perceived to be most effective when:

- Professors know and care about students and their learning
- Professors are passionate and excited about:
 - the material
 - students' learning
- Professors tell students about their own research
- Professors are available for extra help and are happy to give it, without making students feel stupid for asking questions
- Students feel engaged by the material being presented when it is
 - interesting
 - surprising
 - related to the real world
 - related to students' own experiences
- Material is presented at an appropriate level
- Material is presented at a reasonable pace
- Material is presented in manageable chunks: step-by-step, or with appropriate background information
- Enough examples at different levels are given, in appropriate detail
- The most important material is the focus of both lectures and assessments
- Classes are interactive in some way. Common examples include:
 - demonstrations
 - class discussions (with or without a chance to discuss with neighbours first)
 - group tasks
 - students teaching some of the material
 - "fill-in-the-blank" notes posted online for them to bring to class, followed up by
- Students are given notes and other resources to allow them to come prepared, and to listen and learn during lectures (rather than scramble to scribble down too much information). Popular requests:
 - lecture notes posted online prior to class
 - readings posted online prior to class
- Assessments are fair:
 - students are given ample notice
 - marking is seen as fair: criteria are provided and T.A.s all mark to the same standard
 - students are given some choice: topic, how to complete the assignment, creative elements

THEMES FROM QUESTION 3:

Q3. Please describe the ways in which learning in your first year at Queen's has been different from your learning in high school.

Grades:

- More pressure to do well
- Less pressure from professors than there was from teachers in high school
- Harder exams
- Assignments and exams are worth much more (since there are fewer of them)
- Harder to know what will be covered on exams
- Few opportunities to practice material before final exams
- More multiple choice exams
- Stricter criteria for grading
- Some classes fail many of the students

Studying:

- Have to be much more independent: choosing what to study, how much to study
- Have to learn some material outside of class, independently
- Have to learn a lot more material on your own
- Need to motivate yourself
- Need to manage your time better
- Need to organize your studying
- Have to study much more and know the material more thoroughly
- Many students feel that it took them the entire year to work out an effective system of time management and good study habits

Course Work:

- Heavier workload
- Lighter workload, with fewer assignments (but each is worth more)
- More difficult work
- More material covered
- More challenging material
- Faster pace
- A lot more reading
- More focus on deeper understanding of broader concepts, and seeing connections between concepts
- Material is more relevant to the outside world and to life after university
- Classes include real world examples
- No more “busy work” / repetitive homework
- More group work
- Professors assume a lot of prior knowledge

Classes:

- Larger classes (this was repeated A LOT)
- Less individual attention
- Students seek out help when needed

- Harder to ask questions, and if you wait until the end of lecture or the tutorial you may forget your initial question
- Not much interaction with professors and T.A.s
- Interaction with professors via email rather than in person
- Feel more disconnected, professors don't know your name and you may not know theirs
- Need to take your own notes
- Need to take more notes than in high school
- Lectures are a place to gather notes and examples, learning happens later, on your own
- Take more classes at once
- Fewer examples in class, more focus on concepts
- There are more courses to choose from

Teaching:

- Varied teaching styles
- Less interactive teaching styles
- Lecturing is very new to many students
- In some classes, material is presented but not taught

General:

- Students have to be more independent and have more responsibility and more self discipline
- Students have more freedom to choose courses and learn as much as they want to, in areas they are really interested in
- Students have to be responsible for all aspects of their life
- More stress
- Different peers: some think there is more diversity, some say their peers are more intelligent as a whole

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION THREE

1. Quite simply, first year learning at Queen's is anything but simple, because there are too many things to learn. Here, I needed to learn how to live with a bunch of teenagers, decide when it was time to work and when it is time to relax, decide what to do. The complete change that first year brought to me was nothing like I heard when University students came to talk. In class, I had to learn what to write and what not to write, which assignments to work are more important to others, which classes it's okay to miss, what I should be reading etc. The lack of teacher-student relations is the hardest adjustment because in high school it's all for you with the help of the teacher, as to here it's all on you.
2. The grading was substantially different. My grades did encounter a shift, but lowering of grades encouraged me to do better, explore new options, and talk/be more open with my T.A. and professors. High School was more nurturing, as teachers would carry you along the way. On the latter, in my first year I experienced a lot more independence, which came with both positives and negatives. Some of the negatives were that I needed to learn how to manage my time better and keep up with the heavy weekly workload. After finding the appropriate method to organize my time, it became easier to do work. The benefit to being more independent is that although the workload did dramatically increase from high school to university, there was a lot more free time to accomplish work and be social, so long as extra time was used wisely. In all of my classes, the learning style was different. Some lectures allowed

computers, others did not and the way Profs lectured differed. This required small adjustments, but I found was a more engaging experience as I was forced to listen to the Prof during lecture, to fully understand the topic and main themes. Overall, since I was able to contact my T.A. for guidance, my first year experience was not the best (academically), but was a great step to better learning in the next four years.

3. I have found that in University the education is much more dependent on the individual and the effort they put into their class. I have also found that the professors, for the most part, are less accessible to their students in person. However, most professors are very accessible by e-mail, so this helps some of the difficulties. Lastly, I have found that there is a huge difference in the teaching styles of each professor, and that each class I attend has different expectations than the next. This is both an advantage and a burden. It is nice to be exposed to a vast array of teaching philosophies and styles, but it also becomes a problem to write an essay or complete an assignment according to five different formats and styles.
4. Larger class size: less individual attention, intimidating, hesitant to participate / ask questions. More individual responsibility: must actively seek help if required, not readily offered as was the case in high school. Also, lack previous networks of support from home (i.e. long term friends, family, teachers, coaches, etc). Heavy workload: difficult to balance in addition to adjusting to new university environment and living away from home. Greater social and academic pressure: more pressure to not only perform well in school, but also to party, drink, socialize. These two pressures conflict with each other. Harder to balance both aspects than it was in high school. Hinders learning of students.
5. Lectures of 200-400 students involve a different type of learning than in high school, in which my classes consisted of approximately twenty students. Lectures tended to be not as participatory as my high school classes - high school teachers would know the names of all of the students and could pinpoint individual problems and have everyone be involved. In that sense, high school classes were highly interactive; lectures were not. Tutorials, on the other hand, could sometimes address this problem, but only on a once-a-week basis. Overall, the level of anonymity in university essentially defined my first-year educational experience: it was up to me to help myself do well academically, not the teacher.
6. Expected to learn more independently. The material is gone through very quickly. It is difficult to predict the questions that will show up on the exam so you are forced to study everything. Assignments and exams are worth so much because there are no or very few quizzes.
7. A lot more freedom and independence. Everything here is a choice; if you don't want to study you don't have to.
8. A lot more independent; how much work you do is completely up to you. There is no teacher standing there telling you to work.
9. Fantastic freedom that I craved. No longer being led by the hand, but allowed to live and learn at my own pace. My mind being expanded by courses on topics I had never explored and learned to love.
10. Here they just tell you the material you're responsible for and then you go out and learn it yourself. In high school they spoon-feed you the material to study.
11. The primary difference between my first year at Queen's and my high school experience is the demanding nature of University. I was faced with far more out-of-class material than I ever had been before. Further, I caught on very quickly that while choosing to disregard such material is a tempting prospect, this will only bite you in the long run. In addition, attending Queen's has definitely depersonalized the

- learning experience. It took a long time to grow accustomed to being identified by a student number rather than by a name.
12. In high school most of the learning was directed by the teachers, whereas at Queen's I must do my fair share of self-guided learning. The material in high school that was required for us to know was presented in class and did not require supplementary reading/research, whereas at Queen's it does.
 13. You have to teach yourself, professors talk to you, they don't teach.
 14. I think learning at Queen's is much more self-directed. In high school the teachers essentially held your hand and guided you through everything. While at Queens the professors often give an overview of a topic and then encourage you to learn and discover more things on your own. As well, high school was often about you just learning what the teacher said and then repeating what you learned on a test while Queen's encourages you to express your own ideas.
 15. In some ways, my learning was more self-directed. This is in part due to the fact that my classes were much bigger. The responsibility of keeping up with the class was entirely my own. Also, essay writing often had little to do with what we were discussing in class; instead we researched topics that interested us.
 16. The most difficult part of learning in university is time management especially because you don't have the class everyday. It was hard to pace myself and divide the workload and prioritize courses.
 17. I've had to learn to study. What I learned in a week in high school is taught in one lecture. I worry more about where I get my information that I use in assignments.
 18. The material was covered much quicker with a higher emphasis on out-of-classroom learning. Professors generally covered the material and about one example, whereas in high school we covered many examples. In university is it more about a balance of classroom learning and your own learning, rather than high school were it is majority classroom learning.
 19. A lot less help and the concepts are explained in broader terms than the more specific this is what you do, step by step ways of high school.
 20. An even greater emphasis on looking deeper into the meaning of theory and into the things we were learning about, as well as focusing on connecting concepts.
 21. Classes are much bigger and it is hard to learn in big lecture halls. I go to lectures for notes and examples to learn in my own time later. Generally I can't concentrate enough in the classes to learn there.
 22. The lecture halls were much larger than in high school, which often kept me from asking questions until after the lecture or later on in tutorial (by which time, I often forgot my initial question).
 23. I went to a very small school where one-on-one time with teachers was encouraged and easy to attain. In first year, it is sometimes felt that it was an inconvenience for the professor. While discussions in tutorial were helpful and a good environment for questions, lectures were quite the opposite. If I was not genuinely interested in a topic being discussed/lectured, I found it very hard to pay attention and be attentive.
 24. I felt the professors only went through the main points in a lecture but you had to read the text book to better understand the material. The assignments were a lot harder than in high school. University is time consuming; sometimes I had 8 hours of classes (including labs) in one day.
 25. I'm actually learning about things I enjoy, and things that are relevant to the world. Every class relates to one another. I find this fascinating. I feel as though what I'm learning might actually help me after university, and this makes me more motivated. I no longer forget everything I've learned right after a test.

26. It has really taught me to apply my knowledge instead of just memorizing and reiterating it. Also, my marks decreased, but I think I now have the knowledge to do well next year with the knowledge and study habits I've picked up now.
27. In *one* class, I felt that there was much more freedom of thought. Anything could be questioned, and we were invited to think creatively and critically, to probe beneath the surface and look at ideas from many different sides. I really enjoyed this open-minded atmosphere, and it is also a great leveler--the environment made me feel as though I were equal to everyone else, and so there is no fear of voicing my opinion.
28. In high school, there was more focus on smaller tests, quizzes, and assignments. Here, there is more focus on larger midterms and exams. The whole setting is different, being in lectures and just listening to the professors talk, as opposed to sitting in a small class, being able to discuss things with your teacher in high school.
29. It was a lot harder to get help from professors and T.A.s, the grading was all multiple choice which I found was not fair and did not indicate proper understanding of the individual.
30. In *a faculty*, everything was very fast-paced--it was somewhat bewildering and disorienting because I felt like we never paused long enough to let concepts sink in. It was just one topic after another, and admittedly it was a challenge to keep up with the work. The things that I learned in *this faculty* were a lot more conceptual and a lot less structured than what I learned in my high school courses.
31. Learning in first year at Queen's is like going to a presentation and listening to an expert talk about a subject where as learning in high school is like going to classes and doing activities that will help me learn.
32. Lecture format provides rapid-fire knowledge without adequate time to fully absorb the knowledge.
33. Collaboration with other students has become necessary and study groups have become common.
34. There has been a lot more group work. The only class that I do not have a group projects in is my elective. The grading is much tougher than I expected, although in my elective it was easier than I anticipated.
35. The lecture system and stronger focus on labs gave stronger focus on interactive learning. I've never had fun doing lab write-ups, but it was good to see theory put to practice. The clickers were very helpful.
36. There is a lot less leniency and sympathy. I found that in several of my classes the course objective was for the bulk of the students to fail so that they would not be able to major in the topic. I have never had that experience before.
37. Whole new experience; not just education, but living independently, being responsible for your own actions, adapting to needs of others, be sensitive to many issues such as racism etc.

THEMES FROM QUESTION 5:

Without indicating any details that would identify the professor or course, please describe significant features of the course in which your learning has been most engaging and productive:

Student participation:

- Group work
- Group presentations
- Case studies
- Discussion
- Answering/asking questions
- Notes to be filled in during class time
- Practice problems to try and then get help with, if needed
- Clicker questions
- Being called on by name
- Role playing
- Learning things for yourself

Teacher's characteristics:

- Passionate
- Enthusiastic
- Knowledgeable
- Open-minded teacher presenting / considering various perspectives – from readings or from students in class
 - “allowing” students to disagree with the author of the reading
 - not letting on what his/her personal view was
- Cares about students
- Knows students' names
- Cares about students' learning
- Ensures students understand before moving on (clicker questions, discussion, soliciting questions, review of previous lessons)
- Available for extra help or discussion
- Has high standards
- Enjoys teaching
- Gives clear explanations
- Discusses own research
- Stays on topic

Other aspects of class:

- Well-organized
- Appropriate pace
- Reasonable workload
- Clear, concise notes provided
- Course notes posted on-line (sometimes before the class)
- Notes to be filled in during class time
- Not straight lecture for long periods of time
- Demonstrations

- Labs
- Tutorials, seminars
- Assignments
- A grade based on assignments as well as exams, not just exams
- Variety of types of assignments
- Timely feedback given to students
- Focus on understanding, not memorization
- Real world examples, current events
- Lots of examples
- Needing to think in new ways
- Laptop ban
- Use of laptops
- Use of PowerPoint
- No PowerPoint
- No previous knowledge assumed

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION FIVE

1. Students were not expected to memorize charts, but to learn concepts and apply those to varying data given during assignments/tests.
2. Courses in which the profs are available via e-mail to answer any questions I may have had about the course. I also appreciate that all my profs knew me by name and spoke to be if they saw me outside of class.
3. I had two favourite courses, both very different, but the feature that both of them share is that I felt that I was (at least somewhat) known.
4. Very approachable when asking for help, clarification on a topic or asking about a point of interest. Being able to talk to them openly about topics other than the course they teach... It makes you a lot more comfortable in the lectures and when writing tests or exams for the professor because you feel you know them and are more comfortable with them as a person.
5. Courses where professors talk to the students (rather than talking at them) are the most captivating. There were a few courses where the professors genuinely cared for how students learn, and cared that the students understood what they taught.
6. He is extremely knowledgeable on topics not just related to his subject matter, but also on current events. He always seems able to find a way to engage our class and involve us, even when we are less than keen on discussing the material due to poor personal preparation for the class. He's also very clearly passionate about his material, and seems to genuinely care if we understand the material.
7. I loved when the professors showed their passion and really demonstrated a wish to engage and rouse the students' passion. Some professors, and one T.A. I have in mind, began to get visibly more excited as the students asked more questions or showed interest and that was always so nice to see.
8. Learning is most engaging and productive when the professor is not only well versed in the subject area, but also interested in it; it is also crucial that the professor care about the success of the students.
9. My course in which my learning was most engaging and productive was one in which the professor presented material which left you thinking after the lecture. Nothing was straightforward.
10. Courses which required me to think in new ways. I was motivated to do my own reading and look ahead in such classes.

11. Courses that focus on fostering a passion and understanding of a discipline.
12. Enthusiastic professors who are passionate both about the material they teach and the students.
13. The professor was extremely knowledgeable about the topics covered & clearly enjoyed teaching them.
14. The professor used notes that followed a 'fill in the blank' format, forcing me to pay attention throughout the entire lecture. This method also allowed me to remember the material presented in class, making it easier to study for exams and tests.
15. The course was well organized, with all the lecture notes being posted online prior to the actual lecture. This allows the students to read ahead and have an understanding of the material before class. Thus, while in class, the mind is engaged and asking questions about the material.
16. It really helps when the profs upload the lecture notes (annotated from the lecture) after each class. Sometimes you miss something during a lecture, or have to miss the entire lecture for a legitimate reason, and then it's very helpful to have that reliable resource.
17. At the end of every Friday lecture we do a practice quiz question where we discuss the question and professor circulates and helps people out. As well in class clicker questions keep you focused.
18. Having a little fun quiz (one question and drawing was involved) after the last lecture of the week AND actually presenting some of students' answers on the overhead on the first class was engaging and refreshed memories of last week's lecture.
19. I-clicker use is also a very interesting way to answer questions especially in a lecture hall full of people. I believe that with the use of the I-clicker, I have taken more interest in attending lectures because it allows me to see if I am able to answer the questions given by the professor and see where I stand in terms of knowing the class material.
20. The use of I-clickers for little questions was also engaging and productive, and the clicker use was not counting for any points which made the student try their best but without feeling pressured or stressed.
21. Class discussions and questions that required the students to analyze the answer were very productive as it engaged the students and required us to pay attention, and it became apparent if you knew what was going on or not.
22. Class where the professor opened the class up for opinion and questions. He made the class engaging by giving difficult questions open for interpretation. He allowed us to disagree with the "writer" of the material.
23. In one of my tutorials, I had a great T.A. that sent out weekly emails that got us prepared for that week's tutorial. Beyond that he hosted an INCREDIBLE discussion in every tutorial where most people participated. In some of my lectures the ones where the class actually participated and discussed were the ones where I learned the most, remembered the best, and enjoyed the most.
24. The course that has been the most engaging and productive for me was quite interactive and allowed student input all the time. Discussions were always deep and student-run. As students, we were always encouraged to participate and give our input on what we had learned.
25. The most engaging course was *one course* because it involved group presentations, skits, and debates in class. This allowed students to discuss and analyze material, learning from each other and not only from the professor's lectures.
26. Consistent class involvement. The professor had a list of names of everyone in the class, which she used to randomly call on anyone to answer, which kept us all on top

of the issues. Also, even though the material may have been a little over some of our heads at points, that made me more engaged and active to understand what concepts were looking at.

27. Profs who were enthusiastic and engaging, when they taught a concept and then would give us a 'case study' to discuss it, and work through it.
28. I really like courses that are not about the professor standing at the front and lecturing for an hour. I prefer when the professor focuses on the student's ideas and stimulating class discussion.
29. I was most engaged when we did actual problems in class, and the class was given ample time to attempt to solve the problem themselves.
30. A classroom is most engaging when the mood of the classroom constantly is changing...the lecture is not just 50 minutes straight non stop with no examples using the material covered.
31. Any of my classes that had tutorials and assignments were very engaging. I was able to do hands on work that helped me to better understand what I was learning in lectures.
32. My learning has been most engaging when the tutorial or seminar reinforces the lecture material yet encourages discussion and debate.
33. The labs were helpful as they reinforced what we learnt in class and provided a practical side to the course. I did not get to know the T.A.s for courses that I did not have a lab or tutorial for so I was less likely to go to them for help.
34. Hands on experiences - as a prospective engineer it is rewarding to make something work or do what you intend it to do.
35. I definitely find the hands on aspects of some courses very engaging and productive as well. Going through problems and things like that yourself is a great way to learn.
36. I found that the most engaging course for me dealt with a lot of real world applications and events. It kept me in tune with the outside world, which is important when living in residence because you often forget that there is a world around you.
37. I find it helpful when there are many smaller tests and assignments distributed throughout the year, rather than having a mark based solely on an exam. It is too hard to try to learn everything in a week.
38. Basing the course around what is interesting to students. Using a variety of different assignments like drawing a map, creating a table of information and writing short papers.
39. Homework worth enough grades to encourage you to do it (= gradual practice is better than cramming before tests...) but not worth so much that you feel stressed and overwhelmed with work.
40. Courses that allow for extensive discussion/feedback on papers in order to better writing skills.
41. To ensure fairness, in a particular course the professor would go through all essays after the T.A. and make comments on the paper. This gave me double the feedback and allowed me to do significantly better on the winter term essay.
42. I found the mixture of PowerPoint and chalk board notes to be most stimulating, as it not only engaged me but slowed down the professor (some of whom, unfortunately, can fall into traps and never-ceasing babbling that is easy and desirable to block out).
43. I find that when the lecture is on overheads (or chalkboard) I can follow right along, whereas when it is on a PowerPoint it moves too quickly for me.
44. Professor who did not assume we knew any previous information on the subject matter.

45. The professor treated everyone in a professional way, and made the fair assumption that we were all capable of understanding simple concepts.
46. Good professors are the ones who have their own thoughts and perceptions on different issues and ideas and teach from different perspectives.
47. The professor presented both sides of topics equally well, without letting on as to what his personal beliefs were. This is the best approach as it allows us to think, analyze, and choose what we believe to be the right, not the beliefs of others who influence us.

THEMES FROM QUESTION 6:

Q6. Without indicating any details that would identify the professor or course, please describe significant features of the course in which your learning has been least engaging and productive:

Student participation:

- Being called on without volunteering
- Class discussions in large classes (takes time away from professor's teaching)
- No practice problems
- Questions are discouraged by teacher

Teacher's characteristics:

- Reading PowerPoint slides verbatim
- Too much text on PowerPoint slides
- Biased
- Fast-paced lecturing to get through material
- Fast pace through challenging material
- Lectures that are too slow
- Lack of knowledge, unable to answer questions
- Monotone voice
- Boring lectures
- Straight lecturing
- Too much talking
- Speaks to the board
- Spends a long lecture on derivations
- Lack of variety in teaching strategies
- Disorganization
- Unprepared for class
- Doesn't want to be there
- Not interested in teaching
- Not interested whether or not students understand material
- No contact with students
- Not answering emails about the material
- Unavailable after class
- Assumptions: that students have prior knowledge that they don't actually have
- Makes students feel stupid for asking questions
- Inconsistent marking
- Unfair marking

Other aspects of class:

- Lack of notes provided
- Copying notes, often at a very fast pace, making it difficult to learn anything during the lecture
- Material straight from the textbook or from course notes
- Irrelevant material
- Many tangents, main points are unclear

- No connections made between different concepts
- No connections made between material and real world issues
- Lack of examples in class
- Laptops banned
- Overuse of laptops
- Testing on irrelevant, random information
- Assessments didn't match focus of lectures
- Assessments were harder than examples in class
- Poor preparation for midterms and exams
- Assessment late in the course, allowing students to fall behind without realizing it until it's too late
- Memorization only, no higher level thinking
- Assignments with no link to course material or learning objectives
- Too few assignments, so students couldn't learn from their mistakes
- Unclear expectations
- Readings that are seemingly unrelated to the course material and lectures
- No perceived value for money
- Early classes
- Professor changed many times throughout course, hard to adjust
- Large classes, too impersonal
- Disrespectful T.A.s
- Unhelpful T.A.s
- T.A.s who didn't know what was happening in lectures, unable to help effectively

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION SIX

1. A course is least engaging when there are very limited practice problems as these are the real hands on tests of whether or not you know your material.
2. Having students share their ideas in a large class lecture. It is very distracting and takes away from what the professor is trying to teach! During this time I want to hear what the professor thinks of the material. Later, in tutorials or on my own time I can ask people individually what they think.
3. In the course I found least engaging, the professor would often just pose several questions to the class, which we should then discuss. I thought that the class was too large for this to be effective, and that it was too much like tutorial.
4. There was little engagement with the students or encouragement to improve.
5. Too many personal stories or irrelevant information being taught.
6. Picking random and insignificant ideas to test on exams makes it very difficult to stay motivated to study in the first place.
7. Assignments unrelated to learning objectives. Assignments not based on what has been taught in class.
8. In this course there were no slides or notes online to follow. The professor would not go into detail on the readings in lectures and would instead talk about big ideas and arguments, but not clear up specific information. He then tested on specific information from the readings and not from the big arguments we went over in class.
9. A class where the learning is from a lecture and textbook, and the only application is exams.
10. Testing requires no application of intellect: simply regurgitating facts and information.

11. Focusing only on memorizing information rather than the learning process and uses of the concepts.
12. Professors don't know how to teach and don't want to teach. The professor is more interested in their research.
13. Professor lectures fast to get through all the material.
14. Long, boring lectures with bad slides of unengaging material, where you are just handed blocks of information with no way of digesting it. This class was boring and I learned very little by going to the lectures, since the teacher barely knew what he was doing and wrote the textbook and the online notes onto a projector and just assumed you'd figure it out. He also wrote at a breakneck speed, so you couldn't copy the summarized notes that he wrote on the overhead, until many of my peers complained about the speed, and he eventually slowed down. I learned everything I knew from that class from the tutorials and was horribly disappointed with the lack of effort put into that class.
15. Talking and lecturing with PowerPoint slides in a monotone voice.
16. A course where the instructor simply reads off PowerPoint slides, or shows no variety of teaching methods in their lectures.
17. When notes were provided on WebCT this was VERY helpful, however, when the professor read off the information provided in these notes word for word, the information did not seem to register with me, and wanting to go to class stopped being a priority (as I could get the same information from just reading the notes on my own time).
18. When the professor teaches only things that are already on the slides it makes students regret going to class thinking "I could have just read this on my own". If the professor cannot provide anything that cannot be offered through texts than it is not as engaging. More importantly, if the professor does not seem engaged him/herself and presents lectures with little enthusiasm or changes in tone of voice, then it becomes more difficult for students to become engaged and to gain the full benefits of learning.
19. My least engaging learning experience this year occurred in lectures where the slides/notes were not posted before class and thus I spent most of the time scribbling down what was projected on the board, as opposed to actively listening and identifying the most important points for myself. When I have the lecture notes already printed out I can add to them as I see fit and really listen, as opposed to stressing about getting all the information down.
20. If the professor speaks to the chalk-board and spends the whole lecture creating/deriving/solving equations and problems.
21. Trying to learn from examples done in class when you have nothing that has the question on it. If I want to be able to study from my notes I need to write the question down, and by that point the professor is already far enough into the solution that I can not understand what he is doing.
22. Profs don't need to talk as much all the time. I can't remember much of what they say. If they did a little bit less explaining and elaborating or story telling sometimes and instead did a bit more pointing and were more selective with what they said, I would maybe have an easier time remembering the important aspects instead of a little vague bit of everything.
23. Lectures where the professor is disorganized, fails to acknowledge students or notice their confusion, doesn't acknowledge different learning styles and does not explain difficult concepts can be very challenging to do well in.

24. Just not enough background and context to give the information some relevance to my life. I remember points much more easily if they're related to something else, it is harder to spit out a random fact that has to do with nothing, or has no obvious connection to a larger point.
25. The course that was the least engaging and productive had professors who preached their own personal views rather than presenting both sides of an argument.
26. Not available after class and will not answer your questions without making you feel stupid.
27. I feel like there should be some sort of evaluation every 2 weeks for all courses, like *a course* for example, it has 2 midterms very late in the term so it is very easy to slack and not do work for 2 months and then realize how far behind you are.
28. The course that I have struggled greatly in throughout the year is by far the largest class I have attended. It is huge and impersonal, and there is no opportunity for personalized help.

THEMES FROM QUESTION 8:

Q8. What are the major ways that this first year at Queen's has been different from what you expected?

Grades:

- A lot of emphasis on grades
- Students are more interested in grades than their own learning
- High standards for marking of work
- Stricter grading than expected
- Very competitive for grades and for acceptance into second year programs
- Had to work harder to maintain grades
- Variations and inconsistencies in grading among T.A.s for same course
- Didn't do as well as expected, despite working hard
- Did much better than expected
- Expected grades to drop 15% from high school but they didn't
- Grades based on a small number of assignments and tests

Studying:

- Responsibility for your own work, learning, attendance
- Hard to prepare for exams
- Study habits had to change from high school, and didn't understand this until the first set of exams
- Studying for an exam or writing an essay the night before is not as effective as expected
- Very busy: there is always something to accomplish, no free time
- Not as busy as expected, lots of free time
- Important to manage your time well
- Students had to teach themselves a lot: due to missed classes or due to material not covered in class
- Students had to teach themselves how to learn

Course Work:

- A lot of reading
- A lot of group work
- Enjoyed group work more than expected
- A lot of essays
- A lot of work: higher workload than expected
- Not too much work: lighter workload than expected
- Boring, less interesting than expected
- Boring, unimaginative assignments
- Assignments that focus on learning and regurgitation of information, no original thought expected
- Academically challenging
- Not as difficult as expected
- Not much more difficult than high school material
- Not as difficult as students were told university would be
- Fast-paced

- Too much material presented
- Didn't have to take as many notes as expected – many courses supplied course notes
- More graded homework
- Exams are very long
- Had to adjust to multiple choice exams
- Unfair to use courses to weed students out
- Expected more hands-on learning and less theory
- Work from class, tutorial and lab didn't always connect
- Courses allowed students to discover their strengths and interests

Classes:

- Larger than expected
- Large classes less of a problem than expected, due to teachers learning students' names and caring about students
- Feel anonymous in some large classes
- Unexpected funding cuts to departments where students would like to take more courses
- Expected to love all courses, but didn't
- Loved all classes
- Schedules make it hard to take all the courses you want to
- Didn't attend all classes

Teaching:

- Disappointing teaching by professors and T.A.s
- Expected more interesting lectures
- Some lectures interactive and engaging, making lectures easier to adjust to
- Some lectures followed notes too closely
- Some excellent teachers
- Lots of help available
- Not enough help available
- Help available, but it's too hard to find
- Easy to contact faculty members
- Felt as though students, professors and T.A.s are all working together towards a common goal
- Friendly, helpful professors and T.A.s willing to help and answer questions and help improve assignments and essays
- Hard to get to know professors and T.A.s
- Not enough interaction with professors and T.A.s

Other Students:

- Lack of effort from peers
- Many more keen students than in high school, meeting people similar to yourself
- Lots of great people
- Open-minded students with lots of initiative to get involved
- Became close to other students in program
- Some students more interested in partying than studying
- Some students who enjoy partying on the weekends are the ones that study hard during the week

Social Aspects of University Life:

- Enjoyed engineering traditions
- Enjoyed Frosh Week: made connections with people that lasted all year
- Frustrated that students follow all traditions, even those bad for them
- Known by name to many professors
- Meeting lots of new people
- Not meeting enough people
- Not making enough friends
- Lots of opportunities to get involved
- Not enough opportunities to get involved
- Some clubs and organizations are too exclusive, too much like cliques
- Too competitive to be on committees, executives of clubs, or to get volunteer positions
- Lots of diversity
- Lack of diversity
- Racism
- Adjustment to live away from home
- Not feeling too young or immature to be at university
- Queen's is a great community and has a positive, inclusive learning environment
- Hard to balance social life and academic life
- A lot of drinking
- Some pressure to drink
- Not enough large gatherings

Residence:

- Loved residence
- Hated residence
- Great food
- Terrible food, especially for specialized diets
- Not very busy in residence
- Great don: very helpful
- Terrible don
- Residence life better than expected
- Lack of common rooms and kitchens
- Very disruptive: loud people, fire alarms
- Not as disruptive as expected: people are considerate, not many fire alarms
- Felt close to others on floor
- Didn't connect with others on floor
- Difficulty getting into residence

Facilities:

- Disappointing quality of facilities: lecture halls, poor quality of facilities and lack of gym to use on West Campus
- A lot of resources to offer students

Misc.:

- Year passed by very quickly
- Semesters seemed compressed compared to high school

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION EIGHT

1. Hearing that Queen's is one of the top schools I expected to be blown away by the teaching staff. There are definitely some amazing teachers, but sometimes the T.A.s or the professors themselves were disappointing in terms of the way that they presented the material, or the way in which they taught and organized the courses. In many ways I felt let down in many of my tutorials due to the T.A.s' teaching.
2. I expected to be lost in the big classes, but some professors take the time to know everyone and remember their names. They are all very caring and very approachable- the large class sizes do not bother me at all.
3. I thought the large class sizes would be intimidating and would make me simply a number among many others, but that was certainly not the case and it was not hard at all to adjust to the larger classes.
4. The professors at Queen's do recognize students as individuals. Frosh week was one of the greatest times of my life, it made me feel included in the Queen's community and it provided me with a group of mentors who were very useful throughout the year. Also, my best friends at Queen's were from my frosh group.
5. The fact that I often feel like I'm just a number to professors, but also that I kind of like it like that.
6. I expected to have more work than we did, and I expected lectures to be much harder to get used to. I found that the workload was totally manageable and that teachers were actually very engaging and interactive in lecture for the most part.
7. I thought there were going to be more interactive courses rather than mainly just lectures.
8. *Some* classes are smaller and more engaging than I predicted.
9. Labs, tutorials and lectures were not very interconnected which made it hard to apply the knowledge you learned in practical skills or in problems.
10. Didn't learn as much information as I thought I would, however, I now have a better feel of what I am good at, and what I am truly interested in.
11. First year at Queen's was overwhelming at first by the pace at which materials were given to us.
12. I didn't have to take as many notes as I thought I would have to. It was easy to get lecture notes off of WebCT.
13. Courses, professors and teaching assistants were not nearly as intimidating as I expected they would be. Everybody has been extremely friendly, and I was surprised at the relative ease with which I could contact virtually any faculty member.
14. I expected a very scary year, but I was pleased to find that the T.A.s didn't stare down their noses at you, or that the professors made eye contact. The teachers were even nicer than the ones I had in high school. It was nice to find that at Queen's everyone is sort of unified through the silent understanding that we're all working toward a common goal which is to gain knowledge and tools to enrich our lives and minds and also put the skills we learn to good use. Even professors do the same. They studied and learnt their subject and now are giving back.
15. I'm *in a program* and the professors are so approachable. Some are willing to talk over outlines with you before you hand in essays and some will even read rough drafts and make suggestions. I was surprised at how much they wanted to help you improve.
16. Did not get to know my teachers as much as I had hoped or expected.
17. I really did not expect the way some classes are structured through the assignments and exams to weed kids out. I do not think it is right that students who work hard and put a great deal of effort into their work do not get the high marks they deserve

- because that course can only accept a small number of students and it therefore must weed students out. I felt like telling some of these professors that I did not want to major in this course so please just give me the mark I deserve. It is really discouraging when in the first lecture in your first year, professors tell you that they are purposely trying to make you do bad so you won't continue in that field.
18. I expected it to be more difficult, and to jump into more advanced concepts much quicker. In high school, the expectation was built up that university would be very challenging, but as of yet it is not as difficult as I was led to believe.
 19. I expected that we would learn in a different style from high school and have more projects where we actually produce something tangible using the knowledge we obtain in class. In reality, it is the same as high school; boring and unimaginative.
 20. I found that there seems to be much less concern on what I think in an assignment and much more focus on how well I can read spoon-fed material and regurgitate it back into an essay. While I understand that written assignments need to have reliable source materials that can be verified, I often find myself feeling like I am doing nothing but summarizing facts that have already been pored over. I was expecting to come to Queen's and get to discuss and grow and have all of my beliefs proven entirely wrong, but instead I am finding that the professors seem much more interested in my ability to digest information. This process is very similar to the Grade 10 literacy testing, in that we are given selected passages and asked to answer questions relating to our understanding. The way I see it, I've already passed the literacy test, so why is my first year dedicated to similar work?
 21. A lot more difficult to study for exams than I expected. There is lots of help available (I didn't expect this) as long as you go out to seek it.
 22. I was really intimidated when I got here, to the extent that the thought of writing an essay terrified me. I quickly learned that while Queen's includes students with high academic skill and achievement, everyone was just as apprehensive as I was. Moreover, there are multiple resources that can help those who do not feel confident in their performances (i.e. The Writing Center), options that definitely alleviate stress.
 23. It's also different in the way that I never thought Queen's had this many services to offer me. From the learning strategies, to career services, to the sexual education centre, to LaSalle, Queen's really does have a vast array of resources that are extremely helpful and supportive of students.
 24. It was a lot harder to find resources and help for course selection and things like that. Every time I needed something it was a long line of referrals before anyone got back to me on what I needed to do.
 25. I didn't think I'd be teaching myself so much. For one class, I went to all the lectures first term, and did crappy on the exam. For the next term, I didn't bother going to class, and rather just taught myself from the textbook, and did much better.
 26. Learning how to learn on my own was probably the most difficult thing; that I can't study the night before for exams, midterms or tests; that essay writing is impossible the night before; that large spans of time in between class need to be used effectively.
 27. I thought that professors would go more into detail in the lectures but really half the material you had to teach yourself.
 28. Big piece of humble pie...everyone is a keener just like you! It's like mini-me's walking about campus.
 29. There is an overwhelming amount of work, and very intense (almost hostile at times) competition for marks. Also, however, I feel that despite the high entrance requirements, many students at Queen's are unwilling to do the required work or uninterested in the program they applied to and were accepted in. This has been

- quite discouraging to me, since I feel very passionate about my studies, and I don't like to see people who are apparently at this school doing next to nothing for no apparent reason. I expected a very studious and dedicated atmosphere throughout, but it appears that this was not as all-pervading as I thought it would be.
30. There is far less enthusiasm to actually learn than I expected. People are mostly concerned with getting good marks, or at least a passing grade, rather than truly learning the materials. It seems everyone just wants to be able to answer the questions even if they don't know exactly what their answer means.
 31. You have to work harder than ever to get good grades. You never have 'free time' no matter what there is always some form of work you should be doing: readings, studying, assignments etc.
 32. This first year is all about learning. It is not easy to get the same grades you did in high school, but they are achievable by constant study and attention to work. You need to take an initiative in every course to ensure your marks are decent.
 33. I didn't expect my study habits to need to change so drastically and I wish I was aware of this before the first set of exams in December.
 34. I've spent more time at the libraries than I ever thought I would.
 35. I didn't expect to struggle so much academically. It was also a huge adjustment to live away from home, but it turned out to be an amazing experience.
 36. I did not expect the grading scheme to be as difficult as it is, but it is something I have gotten accustomed to. Overall there was nothing I wasn't able to handle.
 37. A lot more emphasis on grades and even though it is understood that high marks are difficult to get, especially at Queen's, I did not expect it to be to the extent that it is.
 38. The marks you receive are based on a small number of assignments or tests.
 39. Everyone is so open minded, lots of student initiative, plenty of chances for first year students to get involved.
 40. The atmosphere is very inclusive and warm, so that I feel like I am a significant member of the community. I expected that it would be a lot easier for me to become a "number" and that none of my professors would care about my success, however, for the most part, that it is not true, they really do care!
 41. It's been harder to get involved. While there are a huge number of activities on campus, there are also a huge number of keen individuals competing for spots. I felt as though it was all a competition - there were times when I had an application and interview just to get a volunteer role!
 42. I definitely wasn't expecting the large amount of racism, coming from a very multi-cultural high school; I found it kind of surprising that such a good school could have such a high amount of prejudice. Also, I wasn't expecting just in general the lack of diversity in terms of people's backgrounds or even hometown.
 43. Hate residence. I thought I would love it, everyone else loves it but my don was horrible and did nothing with us all year. I thought people would be friendlier, too.
 44. I expected that, as a student in Victoria Hall residence, I would have the same rights to a common room, stove, microwave, etc. as all the other Queen's students.
 45. It's nothing like what the tour guides (3 of them), pamphlets or information guides told me it would be. They don't tell you that if you live in Victoria Hall first year, to prepare yourself for over 30 fire alarms throughout the year. They don't tell you that even though you're accepted into the University for a specific Arts&Science concentration that there is a great likelihood that you won't be able to officially declare it at the end of first year if you don't make the cut. And they don't tell you that if you're not a big under-aged drinker or if you don't do illegal drugs that you

likely won't be accepted by your peers. Yes, I thought these things were a little bit of a shock myself. Too bad.

46. It is not as intense as I had expected, I expected to be swamped all the time but I find that with a little effort I can manage my time very well.
47. It's hard to go to all my classes, and to balance work (part-time job) and school.
48. Time management is probably the most important key to success, which in the beginning of the year I didn't realize. Also, I wasn't expecting the timeline for a semester to be so much more compressed than high school.
49. Some major differences are the amount of class I have chosen to attend (100% in high school to 80% here).
50. I expected first year to be very tough but I believe that the thing I underestimated was getting used to not living at home.
51. I had no idea I was going to become so close with everyone in my program. It made it worth getting up in the morning on those ugly days in the winter.
52. I thought that it would be easier to make friends. I thought that we'd all be in the same boat, but some people are always the cool kids.
53. I have really enjoyed all of the group work my program features, I didn't fully expect this.
54. I worked with groups a lot more than I first expected, and that helped me grasp concepts easier; I was surprised how well this group work worked.
55. It was a wonderful experience. I had no clue what I want to be when I came to Queen's. Going through all kinds of different courses helped me discover who I am and what I really want to be.

THEMES FROM QUESTION 9:

Q9. If you were Principal of Queen's, what one change would you make to improve the quality of the first-year learning experience at Queen's University?

Grades:

- More assessment throughout course, so each assignment or exam is worth less of the final grade
- Ensure fair grading, among T.A.s in a course especially
- Have professors check T.A.s' marking
- Fewer multiple choice exam questions, more short answers that assess understanding and show you where "you go wrong"

Studying:

- Have more help available for first year students
- Advertise available help better
- Help sessions addressing these areas: how to write an essay, how to research, how to prepare for exams, how to better manage your time
- More study groups
- More practice exams / sample questions
- More exam review sessions
- Study week before exams

Course Work:

- More feedback on assignments and exams – many have no comments and most are never seen again
- Use courses to let students explore their options rather than to deliberately fail large numbers of students

Classes:

- Smaller classes – this was repeated A LOT
- Time to solve problems and ask questions during tutorials
- More clickers
- More interactive notes
- More interactive elements in lectures
- Keep the small language departments
- Make it less competitive to get into major programs in second year

Teaching:

- More effective T.A.s who teach effectively and answer questions at any time
- Better communication between professors and T.A.s about material and marking of student work
- Interesting lectures
- More engaging teaching during lectures
- Professors should use a variety of teaching strategies

- Professors need better teaching skills (many students would like professors to take courses in teaching)
- Professors need to care about their teaching and students' learning
- There is some concern about clear English from some professors and T.A.s

Social Aspects of University Life:

- More activities to build community, rather than focusing on competition (between students, between faculties)
- Teach students to work with the community
- Diversity is important – invest in it
- More advertisement of campus events
- More social events for first year students living off-campus

Residence:

- Better food in the cafeterias
- Some residences are perceived to be much better than others: better facilities, better locations, etc.
- Overcrowded

Facilities:

- Some students think money would be better spent on programs that face cuts, and making classes smaller, rather than on a new athletic complex

Misc.:

- Bring back homecoming

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION NINE

1. DON'T CUT FUNDING TO LANGUAGES. They are important, and taking Advanced French this year was one of my best courses. If the principal is so worried about diversity at the university, cutting funding to programs that encourage a better understanding and appreciation of different cultures is plain hypocrisy.
2. Encourage students to find out who they are, what their beliefs/morals/values are, and empathy for the world. Encourage RESPECT for themselves, others, and their environment - whether that is Queen's as a whole, their residence, their classrooms, etc. If Queen's put as much effort into these aspects as they did their academic environment, I believe Queen's would be a better place to live, grow and learn.
3. More advertisement of events/ways to get involved around campus or in the community.
4. More advertising and promotion for student support services. Many first year students will not actively seek help if they need it or may not even consider seeking help because they are not aware of the services available.
5. I want to hold extra tutorial sessions (ones that are not part of the course and are not mandatory) for 1st years. I want these help/support sessions to exist for every first year course. In these sessions, upper years can tutor 1st year students and help them out. This should be free of charge, so all the first year can take advantage of it. I am not sure if this program exists already. If it does, then I would improve on the advertising and letting the students be aware of this.

6. I would have very specific learning sessions continuously throughout the year on how to write various types of essays, including how to research. In addition, there would be sessions to better prepare us for our first year exams, because they are terrifying.
7. Have more old exams available to every class or at least practice questions since first year students don't know what to expect.
8. More half year courses so students can chose what they want to take and not be stranded in a course they don't like for a full year. Certain courses should not be made to just to eliminate people.
9. Perhaps have course evaluations during the course, so that changes can be made for the students in the course, not just seen and thought about for future years.
10. I would make and give a STUDY WEEK prior to the beginning of the exams...seriously... even u of t has it... I STRONGLY believe that the school should give time for the students to get prepared for the exams... instead of trying to fail us...Not many people are ready for the exams due to the last minute assignment hand ins... Or...the alternatives may be setting all the assignments and lab due dates a week before the exam week... STUDENTS ARE NOT some ROBOTS...we need some TIME OFF to be physically, mentally and emotionally prepared for the exams.
11. I would not put so much emphasis on grades; it's intimidating and makes me feel stupid when I don't score well.
12. Make the learning more practical and not have as many exams on only facts memorized out of textbooks. These facts are most often just forgotten after exams.
13. Less multiple choice tests, more short answers that actually assess understanding.
14. I suggest that there be more small assignments. In almost all of my courses there are just huge exams and a couple (usually just one) huge essays which make up my mark. This puts a lot of pressure and stress on us.
15. Have more assignments to balance out the weighting on the exams and tests. For the courses with assignments already, have them weigh a bit more. Using only tests and low-weighted assignments is not necessarily a clear representation of one's knowledge in a certain subject.
16. Perhaps less emphasis on exams, because it should not be one word-vomit session that determines 40% of your grade - grades reflect effort, and that should be effort that is shown throughout the year and not at one 3 hour period. What about students who have shown up to class consistently? And done all the readings and work? And put a lot of effort but perhaps that just some how did not show AS MUCH in the exams?
17. I think that more constructive criticism of assignment, tests, etc. would be helpful to first year students.
18. Also, give more money to hire markers so that not all of our exams are multiple choice. Having a multiple choice Exam is not a good indication of your understanding. Also, scantron cards do not help you learn from your mistakes because you never see your answers again.
19. Slow down the path of studying, sometimes I think professors are just rushing to get the lecture done, which I don't know why.
20. I would ensure that all of the hired professors were capable of handling a large university class, while still maintaining a good learning environment.
21. I would make it a very selective process for somebody to become a professor of a first-year class. I feel that often students can lose interest if their instructor is uninspiring or unengaging, so it is in the best interests of holding attention and promoting scholarship to pick first-year professors that can make a course truly above average.

22. I would make sure that the best Profs were teaching first year courses in their respective faculties. Having the Profs that are good at keeping attention and intriguing students makes it so much easier for people to make the transition into university style teaching.
23. Make sure professors vary the learning techniques used - students get bored with bland notes every day.
24. Ensure that there is at least some form of Prof-student interaction (i.e. I-clicker questions or just a sample multiple choice question). It's hard to stay focused when the Prof is just talking continuously for 50 minutes.
25. Make clickers quizzes more necessary. More interactive note taking.
26. Make Profs take some kind of teaching course. Also, it's really engaging if Profs can talk about what they do in research or link what they do into the course material. Because that education can only come from them as an individual. I can't go to McGill or U of T and hear the exact same thing. Also, less multiple choice tests in science, you don't learn where you go wrong and it's really bad.
27. I would require professors to observe the teaching methods of high school teachers that taught similar subjects to the ones they are involved in. The methodology of some subjects is very different from the methodology I learned in high school even though many problems were similar.
28. The quality of the Profs often makes the class. I would look for professors that were good at teaching, not just brilliant in their field.
29. I would make sure the professors have at least a course in education or teaching.
30. Make the professors that do well on USAT forms teach all sections of a course.
31. Stay consistent with just one or two Profs for the entire year because some of the courses had too many Profs teaching which means that you would have to get used to many different teaching styles.
32. Better Teaching Assistants (i.e. allow students to ask questions outside of lab time as opposed to saying "sorry I have over 130 students, please avoid asking me questions outside of lab time").
33. Invest most in creating an engaging and challenging learning environment by constantly improving the teaching staff. Yes, facilities are important, and I did state that it was one of my big let downs, but by having a top class teaching staff, you can overcome all the downsides of having less appealing buildings with the best professors and T.A.s.
34. If I were Principal of Queen's I would improve the quality of the first-year learning experience through insisting that there be better communication between the professors and the T.A.s and between the professors and students.
35. I would say to have more consistent feedback from professors and T.A.s. Overall, it was pretty good this year but there were some courses that the T.A. would say something completely different from what the professor had said and it would be very confusing as to what they were looking for on the assignment. You were not sure if you were to follow the advice of the T.A. because they were the ones marking it, or if you were to follow the advice of the professor since they were the ones who designed the project and came up with the marking scale.
36. Smaller class sizes where the professors can get to know students better, students are more likely to attend class, it is easier to ask questions/get appropriate answers, and marks may better reflect effort.
37. I really think you need smaller class sizes so that students actually connect with the professors in the same way we connect with our T.A.s. We are coming from high school where we are used to our teachers knowing our names and having that one-

on-one connection with us. Then you come to university and you are dealing with so many changes and added to that is the fact that to your professor you are just one of many unknown faces. So, if classes were smaller, it would make students feel a great more connected with the school and their professors.

38. I would decrease the amount of students in larger lectures by having more professors teach the course. Lectures with 400 people are often noisy, unproductive, and a nuisance for the professor teaching them.
39. Keeping lecture sizes small (100-200).
40. Limit the enrollment of the department. For many of the first year courses there were just too many individuals for the available resources.
41. The one change that I would make to improve the quality of the first year learning experience at Queen's would be to improve the cafeteria food. A balanced, healthy diet is absolutely vital to learning and I thought that the catering this year at Queen's was absolutely despicable.
42. MAKE THE FOOD BETTER. PLEASE.
43. I would stop taking funding away from programs! Without funding how are the professors going to finance new and interesting ways to take in material? It's disgraceful when an educational institution is spending millions of dollars on an athletics complex and taking money away from the programs that make it a top school.

THEMES FROM QUESTION 16:

Q16. What recommendations would you make to all Queen's professors that might improve the quality of your learning?

(Try using phrases such as "Do more. . ." or "Do less. . ." as well as "Please stop. . ." or "Please start to. . .")

Teacher's characteristics:

- Be enthusiastic
- Be confident
- Show that you care about students
- Interact with students more
- Be available outside of class
- Use a voice that is not a monotone
- Help students understand without making them feel stupid
- Ask students to be quiet and not talk
- Use a microphone in a large lecture
- Tell jokes

Teaching strategies:

- Give fewer lectures
- Talk less
- Do not simply reiterate the material in the textbook
- Stay on topic
- Make class more interactive
- Give interactive course notes E.g. fill-in-the-blank
- Include more examples in class
- Include more complex examples in class
- Give more assignments / homework with posted solutions
- Include more real world examples
- Ensure that labs and tutorials relate to the class
- Use a variety of teaching strategies
- More class discussions
- Fewer class discussions: the same few students repeat the same few ideas
- Ask more questions, and not just to the students in the front row
- Don't ask questions if a student doesn't raise their hand
- Do more group work
- Use more videos
- Check for student understanding before moving on (from all students, not just the front row)
- Don't assume prior knowledge
- Review background knowledge needed for more complex concepts
- Review the previous day's material
- Go at a slower pace
- Emphasize important concepts
- Explain concepts more clearly and thoroughly
- Explain concepts at a level appropriate to a first year student

- Use more demonstrations
- Challenge the students more
- Teach critical thinking, not just regurgitating the material
- Use fewer guest speakers
- Start and end on time
- Get feedback from students

Marking and grades:

- Give clear expectations for assignments and how they will be marked
- Use rubrics for marking
- Ensure that all T.A.s are marking work in a similar way
- Make the focus of lectures reflect the focus of tests and exams
- Do more exam review and examples
- Give more assignments so that marks are based on more than a few exams
- Post solutions to tests and exams, not just answers
- Don't use only multiple choice questions, as they don't assess understanding
- Give students more feedback to allow them to improve

Technology:

- Use PowerPoint in a clear and organized way
- Do not read PowerPoint slides
- Use PowerPoint less
- Use more forms of multimedia, not just PowerPoint
- Use i-clickers more
- Give participation marks for clicker questions
- Don't mark clicker questions or participation
- Post notes on WebCT
- Post notes on WebCT before lectures so that students can print them and bring them to class
- Post readings on-line
- Post readings on-line before class so students can be prepared for class
- Ban laptops

Course work:

- Assign a reasonable amount of readings
- Assign the important parts of the readings, not the entire chapter if it is unnecessary
- Assign relevant readings that complement the material presented in class
- Be organized: announce assignment due dates and test dates early so students can plan for it

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION SIXTEEN

1. If you are going to bother with PowerPoint, make sure that you are adequately skilled at composing clear and organized presentations (if you are not, the PowerPoint will only function to confuse the students).
2. Please stop having disorganized PowerPoint presentations and customize your lectures a little more rather than always re-using the same material without making it fresh.

3. Organize lecture slides specifically and in only headings so that students can stay organized and together while still being able to listen and take notes on what the lecturer is saying. If you supply lecture notes, post them well beforehand so that they can be printed out and brought to class, allowing students to be able to listen more clearly.
4. Do more online notes because then students aren't scrambling to copy and not understanding the concepts.
5. Put nice, detailed lecture notes and slides on the course website so that I can listen more in class. Do provide notes because it's impossible to write down everything you say.
6. Please start to post lecture readings from the textbook before the lecture.
7. Start referencing the textbook so that lectures complement what is being assigned, instead of assigning readings that will never be revisited. Stop assigning pointless work.
8. Please stop assigning so much reading. Please start to assign the necessary pages instead of making the students read an entire chapter when only a couple pages of it are important.
9. Please stop assigning ridiculous amounts of readings and try to appreciate that yours is not the only course on our timetables; when the amount of readings is impossible to complete, the course becomes a source of stress and anxiety rather than of interest and enjoyment.
10. Do not read your lectures. Ever. Do not post the entire lecture on slides - only post images and at most main bullet points and let the students take their own notes. But do use a lot of images.
11. Stop reading slides - we can read them ourselves.
12. Don't just read notes to the class for the entire hour. Try using different resources (notes, slideshows, media, and work problems) to help different types of learners.
13. Please make your lectures more engaging and relate to as many relevant examples as you can. Please stay on topic. Please attempt to condense the information in lecture to the important information and not too much unimportant (though sometimes interesting) information.
14. Please start using more technology, if possible. For example, one of my professors recently went on the CBC website and found archive video footage relating to the lecture. Another professor likes to find authentic photos to show. This sort of stuff really interests students and helps in remembering when it comes to assignments and tests.
15. Do more "incomplete" lecture notes so the students get involved in the lecture.
16. A little less talking and a little more teaching.
17. Do more teaching and less regurgitating. Finish examples in class, don't just assume the end is simple and skip it. It is not simple for everyone. Professors may be really smart and can give Queen's their great reputation but when it comes to class time you need to be able to teach. Queen's advertises all the accomplishments of the research the professors have made, but when it comes to learning I learn more from high school teacher who focus on teaching.
18. Please stop repeating the exact same thing over and over unless it is going to be on the exam.
19. Please explain complicated theories that you know other years have had difficulty with.

20. Don't treat us like we are stupid, but in the same instance, don't treat us like we are astrophysicists. Being clear and plain about what you are trying to teach is the easiest way to understand.
21. I think one of the issues with professors is that they know a great deal about the topic, and sometimes they explain a topic in a way that is hard for students to grasp. It would be beneficial for the professors to put themselves in the shoes of the students and then consider if their explanation makes sense.
22. Please make lectures as simple to understand as possible; only include what beginner learners, or learners for the level of the class, should know.
23. Try doing a diagnostic test (maybe on WebCT) to judge the level of knowledge of students at the beginning of the year.
24. Do not rush through lectures just to say that you have covered the material. Actually explain the material and make sure the students understand.
25. Some professors need to SLOW DOWN or cut some material from course.
26. Keep track of time so there's no need to rush at the end.
27. Allow for more in class discussions and debates to really get our minds and thoughts going.
28. Do more interactive discussions and stimulate interest using real world examples.
29. Engage us more. We're not nearly as dumb as we seem to be made out to be, and if you give us the chance to discuss our opinions or our concerns in an environment we feel safe and comfortable in, you just might learn something from us.
30. Give students more credit and challenge them intellectually. Don't summarize readings - they did the readings. DO take the next step beyond the readings and challenge them to expand.
31. Please continue to challenge your students to think more outside the box, and to think critically. So much of the time students are looking to just take in information and spit it back out, but that does nothing in terms of actually getting students to actually learn and think about the material being presented.
32. Do more interactive things i.e. ask questions to the students, small in-class quizzes that aren't graded but give students a chance to see if they know it
33. I think lectures need to be way more interactive than they currently are; I see no point in a professor talking at a large group of kids.
34. Include more in-class interactive learning if possible. I know this can be harder in larger classes but tutorials can be helpful.
35. Never forget to check for the class' overall understanding before moving on to another topic, instead of lecturing one-way with little insight on the overall attitude of the class.
36. Just because one genius at the front of the class understands a concept doesn't mean we all understand and you shouldn't move on unless the 'average' student understands.
37. Please stop using phrases like "it's easy to see that..." because in fact NO, it is NOT easy to see.
38. Please stop asking only the kids in the front rows questions.
39. Please answer questions. Please don't be harsh when students ask questions, causing others to not want to ask. Please don't cold call. It just makes people stressed and stops a lot of them from attending class.
40. Please allow for improvement in courses by providing more frequent checks of our progress.
41. Please stop assuming we know everything. Even if it is review from high school, go over it at least once as a refresher for us. Please start to show us where you are

- getting your answers from. We like to see the process work, as sometimes we cannot all visualize it in our heads.
42. Do more problem examples in math-based classes. In essay-based classes that are more theoretical, please do more 5 minute group work activities in which students can discuss concepts among their peers.
 43. Do more examples in class, and make some attempt to assure that students actually understand said examples.
 44. Do more examples. Not only that, but in depth examples (not just the simplest example possible, maybe examples that have a chance of appearing on tests/exams.)
 45. Please start to teach more theory. Half of my lectures consisted of 50 minutes of examples. Do fewer examples and teach more of the base theory. If the theory, which is the interesting part, is taught well enough, then students should be able to learn the unit from only two or three examples.
 46. Please stop speaking so timidly. Please control the class and speak with authority when necessary. Please don't be afraid to ask students to leave if they're disrupting the class.
 47. Please do not come to class ill prepared or nervous. It is understandable that one can be nervous and that at times it is hard to prepare a lecture with so much going on, but it does really reflect poorly on the students. We can really tell when a professor is nervous and it makes the students nervous about the material and less engaged, being more focused on how nervous the professor is and less focused on the material.
 48. Please speak up during lectures in large auditoriums such as Dunning. It is really hard to hear because there is a lot of paper being moved around. Please enforce the "screens down" idea more because it is very distracting when people in front of you are playing on their computers during lectures.
 49. If there could please start a laptop ban in classes so that students could focus more on lecture and less on Facebook!
 50. Do more storytelling! It is always nice to help breathe life into a certain concept or subject through connecting it to something personal, and if the professor has a funny or interesting story to connect it to it makes the material seem relatable and familiar, even if it may be the first time we have ever heard of it! Be unafraid to show your own passion for the subject! Granted there may be some students in the class who are only there for a credit but don't be bogged down by that! There are some students who have a passion for the subject as the professor does so be enthusiastic for those students!
 51. Walk around the classroom, don't stand in one spot. Get the audience excited and engaged about the topic in your overall manner.
 52. Get into it! If you're not motivated and passionate it's difficult for us to be.
 53. Please start to be more enthusiastic about your subject material. I know you have probably been teaching it for awhile but it's new for us so get us excited about it.
 54. BE MORE ENTHUSIASTIC. I cannot stress how much this helps students learn. It gets students interested in the material and makes them want to learn it.
 55. More one-on-one time with students. Encourage students to email professors more often with questions and concerns. More non-formal settings where students can engage with professors and build more personal relationships.
 56. Please be available outside of class and happy to help and give feedback before assignments are handed in.
 57. Please try to make an effort to help students without making them feel as though they should understand everything right away.
 58. Please give your students more of an opportunity to talk with you and ask questions!

59. Please start to be a little more friendly and approachable.
60. Please stop being demeaning and disrespectful, speaking down to us. We're intellectuals and human beings, please be kind.
61. Please stop being discouraging when people ask questions in class and making them feel stupid.
62. Please stop trying to make friends with us. Please be mentors to us.
63. Make the focus of the lectures reflect the focus of the tests and assignments (sometimes I find certain things stressed in lectures and then completely different things on tests).
64. Please explain the assignment requirements instead of making us guess and then have us do badly simply because there are no given guidelines, but the format is strict.
65. Give more feedback on overall progress in the course for students, so they can gauge their standing and how to improve in a more general way.
66. Please integrate more intermediate steps into essay assignments for first year (e.g.: interview, hand in an outline).
67. Start creating standardized marking schemes for your T.A.s because they do not all mark the same. In fact, at times they mark drastically differently which affects MY grades when my T.A. marks harder or far differently than another tutorial's.
68. Do more very small assignments to let us improve a little bit at a time.
69. Do more assignments instead of loading all the marks onto tests.
70. Please start accepting more forms of assignments like homework to be graded so that the weighting may be fairer and not just based on tests.
71. Have more assignments weighted less instead of fewer assignments weighted more.
72. Do more assignments with solutions available so that we can check our work. Do less scantron and M.C. exams; they are not helpful in the learning process.
73. Give assignments where the student have more choice in what the research and write about, so that they are interested in their topics.
74. Please start to do assessments that are not just multiple-choice as I don't think that the grades received are an accurate representation of our learning.

THEMES FROM QUESTION 17:

Q17. Please describe a moment (in class or out) when your interest in what you were learning was particularly high:

Please explain why you became so interested and engaged.)

* NOTE: It was difficult to edit and summarize this question, because so many students began writing the actual material that engaged them. Responses have been edited to remove references to particular courses and faculty.

The responses illustrate how excited the students were about the courses and material that engaged them.

Aspects of the class:

- Application of the course material to every day, real world events (this was repeated A LOT)
- Positive interactions between students
- Exciting
- Having the students learn and present information
- Field trips

Teacher's characteristics:

- Knowledgeable about the subject
- Answered questions readily
- Available outside of class, in person or through email, to answer questions or to explore an idea further
- Passionate
- Enthusiastic
- Shared personal stories, or stories related to the material
- Explained personal research and its applications
- T.A.s who were available and answered lots of questions
- T.A.s who led stimulating discussions

Teaching strategies:

- Stimulating class discussions (motivated students' interest and made some want to know the material better in order to participate in discussions)
- Allowing students to discuss course material with their classmates (perhaps as a teaching strategy on its own, or before a class discussion)
- Small group discussions
- Active learning
- Demonstrations
 - if they were relevant
 - if all students can see
 - if they are surprising
 - if they are understandable
- Complex material was broken down into smaller parts and explained clearly
- Important background was explained, previous knowledge was not assumed
- Allowing students to try it themselves before giving the answer/explanation

Marking and grades:

- Fair grading system
- Several small assessments throughout the course
- Group projects
- Students had some control of how to complete assignments: choice of assignments, or choice of how to complete assignments

Technology:

- Videos
- Clickers

Course work:

- A reasonable amount of material was covered
- Interesting material
- Surprising material
- New material
- Links between material learned in different classes allowed students to form a deeper understanding
- Relevant material
- Being able to learn something challenging
- Being able to understand something really well
- Material that was interesting in and of itself
- Material that is useful for a field of study or a future career

Miscellaneous:

- The beginning of the year was especially exciting and stimulating
- Teaching other students helped with concept mastery and confidence
- It was more engaging when students weren't overburdened and stressed out about course work

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION SEVENTEEN

1. After class discussion with a professor and other students. Many opinions and applications of class material were present and I felt motivated to learn more and become more familiar in order to be able to play a bigger role in any similar discussions that may emerge. It is thrilling to see class material come to life in the real world and especially when a professor is involved.
2. I am often very interested when professors begin to talk about their personal research or about real life examples of the topic we're studying. This makes me so interested because I feel it gives me a reason to study because someday I could work on projects like the ones they speak of.
3. In class our professor gave a lecture about what he is researching. It will not be on the exam, and because I was learning simply for interest, I enjoyed the lecture very much. It was very interesting and since I was not worried about taking good notes and understanding every minute detail, I just listened and enjoyed the lecture.
4. In one of my courses, the professor took a little bit of time near the end of the lecture to go into detail of what he was researching outside of teaching. This allowed me to see what I was learning from a new perspective, one involving application rather than abstract concepts.

5. In one of our lectures our professor started talking about the stuff that he is working on right now. It was interesting because it showed a use for the things we are learning, and why it is important for us to learn these things.
6. One of my professors frequently goes off on tangents about new developments in the field we are learning. At these moments, I am completely excited and engaged to be studying the subject, since it becomes real and almost alive.
7. My interest for learning was particularly high when the topic that was being learned had direct relations to me and how I could use this knowledge in the future.
8. My interest in learning becomes particularly high whenever anyone discusses an issue that I feel strongly about or that I feel will shape my future.
9. My interest in what I was learning in a class was particularly high during a small group discussion. I felt like I was able to link class material with personal experience, and the nature of the environment was very inviting and accepting.
10. My professor was explaining the current financial crisis. I thought it was fascinating, because it was so current and important and relevant. In addition, I loved to see that I could only understand the situation now because of all I had learned at Queen's. It made my education feel necessary and useful.
11. The field study in a *particular course* was extremely interesting because it allowed me to understand *the subject in relation to* the Kingston area which greatly improved my understanding. I thought it was interesting to observe the interrelationships between the many different factors that were responsible.
12. The moment in class that my interest in the subject became very high was when we were doing a project that directly affected the Kingston community. It was very interesting because you are actually interacting with your community and you feel like you are making a difference and that you can actually apply the course concepts to real life situations.
13. The professor was very engaged as well. He knew how to balance teaching the major points with real scenarios/life stories so that it will be more applicable for us.
14. When I could see how what we were learning could actually be applied in the real world. I was interested because it was more of a possible real life situation than just theories.
15. In one class, my professor always tries to connect the theory that we are learning with current and historical events, and having these examples always engages me more in the subject matter.
16. One of my classes directly went through a series of events in the news and reviewed how these events related to our in class learning. I was engaged because I could see that what we were learning actually matters in the real world.
17. A situation/example of something was given from real life that I would previously not have understood, then the professor scientifically explained its workings... this engaged me because it applied to something I can tell other people about, and is something I felt I could apply outside of class work.
18. During a case study that was on a topic that I had heard about a lot in the media and examining it from different angles.
19. I think anytime there is interactive learning it is helpful, such as clickers or questions where we can discuss with people sitting around you.
20. I became interested in *a subject* because of the way the teacher taught the material to us using fill in the blank type lecture notes. The professor knew all of the material very well and was able to answer all questions, as well as explain the material well. The lectures said enough but weren't filled with too much information.

21. A complex concept was broken into smaller steps and became very clear. This engages my mind and lets me understand what the professor is getting at.
22. When something is explained to me in a straight forward, logical and organized fashion I tend to be more interested and engaged, than would be otherwise because I feel that I have an understanding for what is going on.
23. I am most engaged when discussing a topic I know nothing about but the professor doesn't assume knowledge about the subject. I am often least engaged when they brush over details they expect us to know about historical or current events.
24. When the professor looks up at the class, sees we are confused, and explains it differently.
25. I am most engaged when I finally begin to understand a concept that I've been having difficulty with.
26. When I was starting to understand a difficult concept, it made me feel like I was improving and actually learning something.
27. It was really heartening when I am doing example problems in especially difficult topics in our courses and I can actually get the right answer.
28. When our professor did a particular example on a projector slide. Gave us a few minutes to work out what we thought would happen, and then she went over it and explained what would happen.
29. Demonstrations are interesting and particularly engaging, although in some cases not everyone was able to see what was going on.
30. I was really interested to see the demonstrations in *a particular course*. There were some really interesting effects and examples presented and it was plain to see that the professor was really interested in what he had to show. I liked that.
31. In class I was most interested when we saw a demonstration. I was most interested because the demonstration made me think about possible hypotheses, and once the demonstration was over with, I had to apply concepts learned from other lectures to draw conclusions on the demonstration results.
32. In a class when a demo was particularly intriguing yet understandable.
33. Being asked to present a question to a tutorial class (as part of the tutorial), I got up and, after feeling nervous for a few seconds, just got into the **mode** and KNEW exactly what I was doing (and as it turned out, I actually did very well, after getting feedback from the T.A.). My interest in that course improved since that experience.
34. The professor engaged the audience, and asked the audience to explain a set of pictures. He asked the audience to 'teach' and only corrected them if they were wrong.
35. There was a moment in a *particular course* first semester when I explained a concept we were leaning in class to a classmate who was unclear about something.
36. Actually being able to get through to somebody made me realize that I was smart enough to be here, as I was having some doubts early in the year, and that I had the capability to succeed in *my chosen field*.
37. My interest was particularly high when I can have discussion with my friends in other programs about topic that I have learned in class. I can teach them what I have learnt and when they become interested I become more engaged because I want to learn more about the topic so I can tell them more about it.
38. Discussions in tutorial and applying knowledge in class helped me gain a greater understanding of class material.
39. In my one tutorial, the group always had strong, engaging conversations and the tutorial leader always sparked great debate between us. Due to her great leadership

and enthusiasm I became much more interested in the course and now want to major in it.

40. Tutorials are incredible. It is like all the smartest people in their classes joined forces to create a tutorial and share ideas. The different points of view that came out in one of my tutorials in particular are incredible. It truly did teach me a new way of thinking.
41. I became particularly engaged when the professor started a class discussion by listing discussion questions on the PowerPoint and then she encouraged us to discuss with our neighbours ideas and start to formulate conclusions. She then started a class discussion, which allowed us to all put forth our different ideas to get a fuller understanding of the topic.
42. A moment when my interest in what I was learning was particularly high was when a seminar class got really interactive and people became passionate and excited about discussing history and politics rather than talking at people or simply voicing their opinions and not bothering to consider others'.
43. During a seminar class when the professor is teaching but allows in comments from students. This is because the professor I had was amazing and made the class very comfortable and enjoyable. She did not create a class where she seemed to be judging students and she allowed students to ask questions whenever they wanted.
44. My interest was extremely high when working on a group project, in lab, and outside of class, and my group and I just got so enthusiastic about what we were doing. This is mainly due to the encouragement we received throughout the process by our T.A. as well as our Professors.
45. In a *particular* course when we were given a brief explanation of what was asked for and then allowed to do whatever we want to achieve our goal.
46. The final project for a *particular course*. It allowed me to take what I had learned and use my creativity to develop a program that was unique. It allowed me to utilize what I had learned in whatever way I saw fit.
47. The way the professor got excited about talking about a particular subject gets other students excited too.
48. In a class where the professor is so excited, so passionate about what they are teaching, it makes you want to learn and work harder.
49. The professors and T.A.s were so passionate and the work was so interesting that I could not help but fall in love with the course!
50. There was one course that I always looked forward to because the content was exactly to my interest and also because the teacher was funny, relatable, provided clear explanations, involved students in demos to teach concepts, interacted with the class, allowed us as students to get to know him as a person and not just as our professor, and showed great enthusiasm for what he was teaching which made me want to learn even more, so I could be just as enthusiastic and excited as he was.
51. A lot of my classes overlapped this year in regards to material and I found it really exciting when discussing a certain figure in history, philosophy and English, and I finally understood the point of the writer and the effects that their ideas had had. I felt like I'd come to understand something completely and be able to formulate an opinion on their ideas. I could express the point of their writing and explore the implications of it.
52. Also, grading system was VERY fair. Two tests and two papers throughout the year, which gave students a chance to show their effort and consistency THROUGHOUT the course, and not just at one exam. Very good way to motivate students.

53. I became particularly interested about an issue in *a particular* class because the professor presented his argument but I kept trying to find situations where this would not work. I emailed the professor and he provided me with a clear answer as well as links to internet sites of the examples he mentioned.
54. I liked my professor in a particular course, to go along with his attitude and outlook on life. Sometimes when you like a professor's personality it stimulates your interest in that course. We want to be a little more like the professors that we admire most, in other words.
55. I loved *a course's* field trip, where I was lucky enough to be in a small group with my professor and he went in-depth for all of the material he was highlighting. His passion shone through very well and impressed me. My experience was more enriching than that of my peers who were not in the professor's small group.
56. Talking with a professor outside of class when having problems with course material and asking questions related, but not directly related to the material.
57. When I found out certain facts and statistics that were unbelievable.
58. I learned some new information that really sparked my interest and concern for the topic.
59. The first week of school when I was in all these new classes and tons of information was being thrown at me. It was amazing.
60. In one class, we were told to write an essay in first term. I wrote about a subject that I had never really looked at before and I was super interested in learning about what was going on, as well as surprised. I now tell pretty much anyone I can about what I learned when writing that essay, just because I couldn't believe it.
61. Usually essays - when you are doing your own personal research on a topic, and you become really engaged with it, in turn, you also become really attached to the topic and you gain a certain form of respect for it.
62. We had small research assignments in one of our classes: with a partner give a brief presentation on a particular *topic*. It was research into something that I found fascinating, but as well, something that was very useful information that could be applied as inspiration in our own *work*. There was not a big paper to write and to stress about. I learned a lot and my interest was sparked by the other presentations in the class. I also became more comfortable looking at, and understanding *the subject*.
63. I frequently found *a class's* lectures to be extremely engaging and interesting. The professors often discussed topics and issues that I hadn't spent much time thinking about before. I was challenged in new and exciting ways, and really felt like I learned quite a bit from *this course*. I found one unit particularly interesting and couldn't wait to start our assignment. As soon as it was handed out I began brainstorming ideas for the assignment, was finished my assignment about a week and a half before it was due.
64. My highest points of learning come outside of class when guest lectures come to speak at Queen's. I find it very interesting when people with expertise and renowned knowledge in a certain field come to speak.
65. I presented a paper and the Inquiry @ Queen's undergrad research conference. This is a place for undergrad students to present their ideas and findings from research they have conducted. I became very engaged with other presentations because I was interacting with other students who were enthusiastic about research.

THEMES FROM QUESTION 18:

Q18. Please describe your personal commitment to learning and how it has changed during your first year at Queen's:

Commitment has increased:

- Commitment has increased throughout the year
- Commitment has increased throughout the year as students realized that hard work would result in good grades
- More motivated to do the readings, read the text book and study
- More focused here than in high school
- Work ethic has improved since high school, because standards are higher in university than they were in high school
- Motivation has increased because students are surrounded by other intelligent, motivated, passionate people
- Greater commitment to learning material related to chosen field
- Greater interest in classes that students are interested in, much less interest in other classes
- Interest in learning has improved beyond just getting good grades
- Interest in learning has improved, despite feeling that some assessment is not valid (multiple choice questions, or based on memorizing facts from the textbook)
- Interest in giving back to the community and getting involved, not just learning in class

Commitment has decreased:

- Lost interest in learning
- Less motivated to attend lectures (stopped feeling guilty about skipping classes as the year went on)
- Lost motivation to study (a lot say they have “slacked off”)
- Not interested in learning, but in getting good enough marks: for scholarship, to pass, etc.
- Not as committed as in high school because it takes a lot of work
- Not as committed as in high school because of bad marks
- Not as good as high school because in smaller classes in high school you are more accountable
- Not as committed to academics as in high school because of all the distractions: clubs, extra-curricular activities, social life, etc.
- Level of commitment has dropped since high school, but expect it to improve throughout the rest of the university degree

Commitment has remained constant:

- Commitment is strong, as always
- Commitment to learning is strong, despite general first year courses, unpleasant classroom learning, too much memorization

Learned new skills:

- Time management (e.g. begin assignments sooner, balance school work and social life)
- Organization

- Feel responsible for own learning, which increases motivation and commitment
- Become a more independent learner
- Become better at taking notes

Other changes:

- Still motivated to learn, but definition of a “good grade” has dropped

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM QUESTION EIGHTEEN

1. I think that my commitment to learning has increased in courses directly related to my course, but for those unrelated my commitment to learning has decreased and it was more of a matter of getting through it and then never doing it again.
2. Have experienced some disillusionment with learning - especially what I am truly not interested in. Complete disillusionment with possibility for professor-student relationships in some courses. The recognition that the best learning occurs when one chooses one's own topics, regardless of what the subject is.
3. I decided to learn what was important to me.
4. I have realized that I need to be 100% interested in what I am learning to apply myself to it and actually care about it. The courses in which I lost interest also ended up being the courses I applied myself least in because I didn't care about them.
5. I was fairly dedicated this year to figuring out what I do and don't like. Now that I (think) I know this, I am more focused in my learning and life.
6. My commitment to learning started out as a way to just get by and finish school so that I can get out into the work force and start making money. It has changed to me really enjoying what I am studying and wanting to stay as long as I can in school.
7. Before coming to Queen's, I really had no personal commitment to learning. In high school I did the homework and what was needed to get decent grades. But now, I realize that grades are not the only thing that matter in life. It is essentially the intangibles that you gain from your program that are what you will use.
8. I am committed to my academics and believe strongly in the importance of perpetual learning. I think that I need to focus on becoming more involved in the Queen's community and start to think about learning as something not just done inside the confines of a lecture hall.
9. I've always been nerdy. I think that my commitment to learning has just expanded - I've realized that I can learn in more places than the classroom, so I've balanced my life more to include more social time.
10. I never wanted to pursue knowledge on my own account before university but now I really just want to feel like an informed person, especially when it comes to my major. When people ask me what my major is I feel obliged to be knowledgeable in that topic, outside of the course material.
11. I want to learn so that throughout my life I can respond intelligently to the stimulus around me and react with good judgment. Before I thought of learning as a means to an end, to getting a job or the approval of those around you, but after coming to Queen's I found that learning can truly be fun. And that though learning's not always easy, I'd rather be able to see, to live fully and freely, rather than be kept in the dark and constrained by ignorance or mistaken beliefs.
12. My personal commitment to learning has not changed all that much since I have been at Queen's. I have always loved learning new things and have put a lot of effort into my studies but by being at Queen's it has taught me the importance of also being part of your community (through volunteering) and by participating in the spirit

- of Queen's (joining a few clubs). I have learned to balance academics with extra curriculars better than when I was in high school.
13. My commitment to learning is both personal and for others: I both want to be a successful person and also change the world in any way I can. Queen's has done a good job in promoting students' ability to invoke change and I believe that is largely responsible for the latter half of my learning commitment.
 14. My personal commitment to learning used to be to learn things independently and not care how they connected. Now I place a higher value on connecting ideas from various courses.
 15. Getting good grades has always come relatively easy to me. Being in classes with other individuals who are equally as smart, if not smarter than I am has really made me push myself hard to try and maintain my grades. While my grades have dropped from what they were in high school, I feel that my work ethic has increased.
 16. I have a high personal commitment to learning. Being at Queen's motivated me because I am surrounded by academic people who have achieved high levels of education and are doing things they are passionate about.
 17. I am more committed to learning now, because the marks really do not reflect my ability, and am not happy with it. But, my interests for certain subjects has increased, and how I perceive the world has expanded, and I want to learn more. However, I dislike having being assessed by numbers, like being assessed by multiple choice questions.
 18. I am motivated to do well and have found that, although grades do drop some from high school, I still strive to get high grades. I realize that it is very independent and that I am responsible for what does or doesn't get done.
 19. I actually bother to learn. I like my classes, unlike high school. I bother to do the readings, and to study. I want to go to my classes, rather than feeling I have to.
 20. I have kept on top of all my readings and I have the assigned readings for each class read before lecture. Before Queen's, I would never do work outside of class unless it was being marked.
 21. I am a more independent learner and I am proud of myself more, setting a goal with my marks and being able to achieve it in a work-intensive program (engineering).
 22. I find myself governing myself a lot. I am my own teacher and boss and coach. I can attend or not attend lectures. I can read or not read my books. And this has led to an interesting medley of good and bad. I find it very easy to attend the majority, if not all, of my lectures. I find myself working harder on essays as I care more about them as they are related to subjects I enjoy. Overall, I have been enjoying my academic life a lot more than in previous years.
 23. I have become very independent. Over the course of the year I learned that in order to stay ahead one must do readings, go over lecture notes, and take learning into their own hands. I spend many hours at the library solidifying learned knowledge and clarifying stuff I don't understand. The text book is my best friend.
 24. I now tend to be more self-reliant and independent about my studies, I know that nobody will be hounding me to hand in an assignment and that if I don't hand it in it is basically my fault. I have tried to keep up to date with homework and assignments, as well as reading.
 25. I have been forced to take learning into my own hands by reading textbooks and doing extra research online rather than regurgitating exactly what the teacher says.
 26. I have taken it more upon myself to learn the material out of the text books rather than depending on the teachers to teach it to me; I am a much better individual learner.

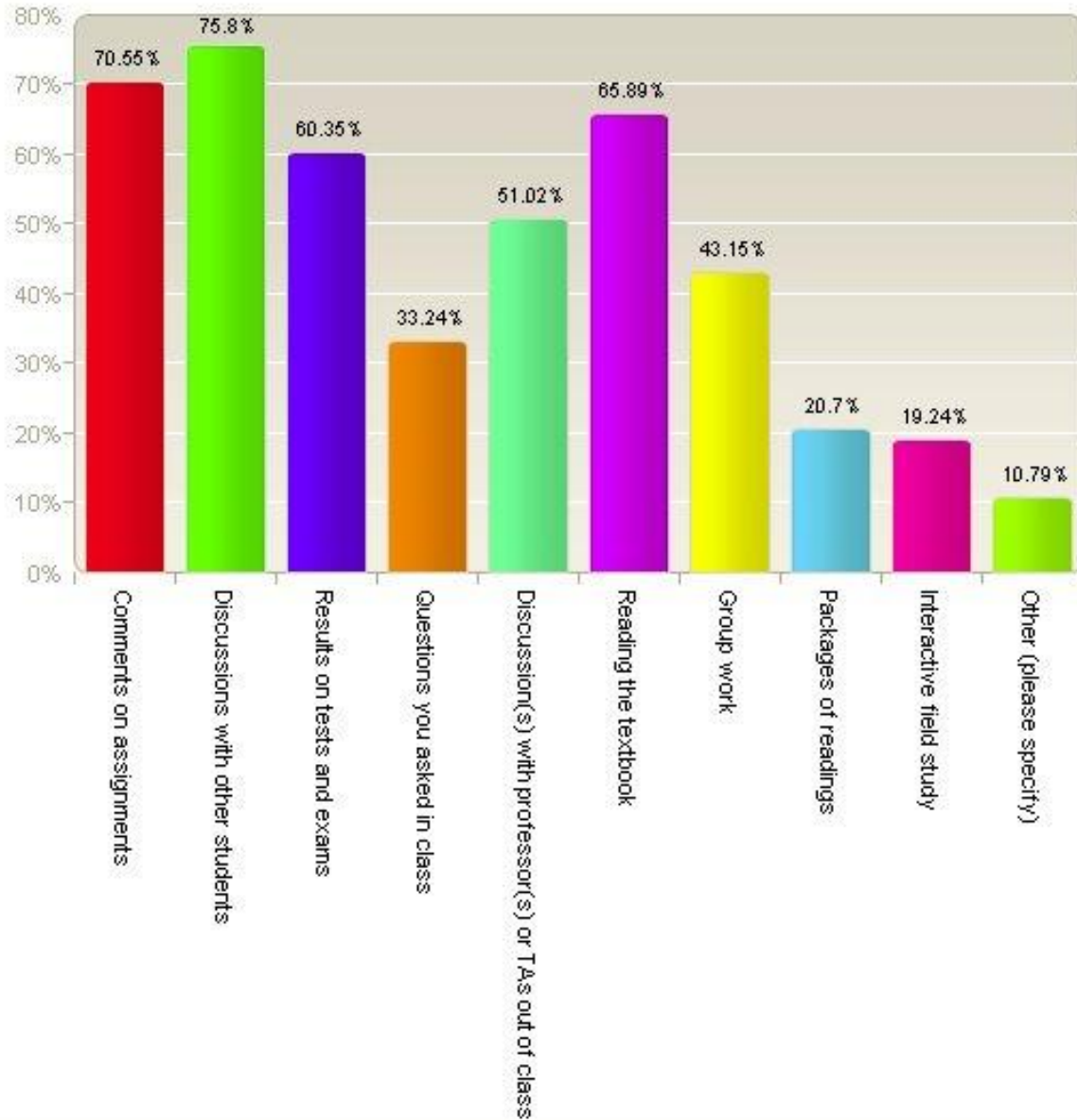
27. I am often guilty of learning information in order to get good grades, and not because I am interested in it. However, during my first year at Queen's I have become more aware of this problem and I have tried to change my learning style so that I remember some of the information after I have been tested on it. This will influence my elective choices for next year and it will hopefully allow me to succeed in the future.
28. I have realized how important it is to apply myself, to teach myself things, by reading, asking questions, etc. In high school, I was quite content to listen in class, do my work, and do well on tests with little studying. Here, I know that what I learn will be important to my future, so I am trying not to just memorize the information, but to learn the concepts, so that I can apply them.
29. I didn't go to a high school where you had to work very hard to get good grades and this was very different when I got to Queen's. I work a lot harder on essays, and I am definitely seeing the results for the most part, and because of this, I feel much better about my work ethic, as it is always satisfying to see your hard work pay off in the long run.
30. I have become more driven to do well after seeing how hard the courses are and the high standards that exist here. I work hard on all my assignments and am dedicated to completing all my readings.
31. I have found myself caring more than I have ever about meeting my full potential and utilizing my time at university.
32. Throughout the year my commitment to learning has increased greatly as I have been greatly motivated by some of my teachers.
33. I have had a very strong work ethic throughout high school and believe that I brought it to Queen's. I soon found though that here it isn't just about work ethic, it's about learning the system. I believe that I am a driven person especially when it comes to school work but I don't think that the way Queen's focus mostly on testing especially in the form of multiple choice reveals a person's knowledge on a subject.
34. I am still very committed to learning because I want to be successful and do really well. However, I think my learning has changed a bit during Queen's to be more memorization and less understanding. Which I don't like. I wish the system wasn't so focused on getting a perfect grade because it just stresses me out to memorize things, especially since a lot of professors mark the exam answers looking for definitions straight from the textbook. To me this focuses too much on memorization, when it should be a lot about learning as well.
35. I feel as though I am committed to learning and want this experience at Queen's to be a challenging one that stretches my thinking. So far at Queen's, I feel as though my thinking has been stretched quite a bit. I do look at things differently and with a new perspective, but it isn't as much as I thought it would be. I thought that my thinking would be stretched to the limit, but often I found myself just memorizing or reiterating what was taught in lecture and not really asked to engage in the material and really analyze it as much as I would have liked.
36. I decided not to worry about my grades as much as how well I felt that I understood the course material. My goal this year was to understand the subjects as well as I could - not to focus on memorization to get a high grade.
37. I seek outside of the box learning, and I rarely find this at Queen's. Queen's (in first year, anyways) is a lot of memorization and not a lot of hands on learning. I hope that Queen's will model after McMaster's innovative learning, where the instructors are responsible for cultivating a love for learning and the students are responsible for finding the knowledge themselves.

38. I love learning, however Queen's hasn't stimulated by interest in learning. Possibly because first year courses are too general.
39. During high school I was very committed to learning and always had high marks. However, something about first term seemed to change that. Something put learning on the back burner and I would no longer get flustered about poor marks. It became about just getting by instead of doing well. Now I seem to be more concerned about my marks again.
40. During this first year my level of commitment was significantly lesser than that of my last two years of high school mainly because I needed time and energy to adjust to the change. However, my first year was important in providing that stepping stone for the next few years, in which I feel I can give much fuller commitment.
41. I feel more dedicated to going to class and studying effectively to get high marks! At first all I wanted was to pass first year and now, after knowing I have that ability looking at my marks from first semester, I want to pass with high marks!
42. In high school I had very high marks, and coming here, I thought that I would be able to put the same effort into my work and achieve the same grades. Come fall final exams, I realized this was not the case. My marks had dropped significantly, in some cases up to 30% which I was NOT used to at all. Second semester came around and I knew that I had to work much harder in order to get my grades back to where they were before. Granted they aren't at the level they were in high school... they are 10-15% higher than last semester and it is all a result of me working much harder than last semester.
43. I intend to work harder next year once I'm more involved and busier. My grades dropped, but now that I am done first-year I have more of an idea of how to achieve higher grades and gain better studying habits.
44. It's challenging to be at University and not have a parent or a teacher there telling you to do your readings, homework, etc. and I found this to be a very difficult task this past year. I am now learning what work and study habits are best for me (through trial and error) so that I can learn effectively for the rest of my time at Queen's.
45. While at Queen's I have become more inclined to study and work in groups because that way someone will be able to help you out if you don't understand something and vice versa. I have played the tutor role a lot this year for my friends.
46. I need to work harder if I want to stay here.
47. I realized how much I coasted in high school and how this is actually work. Now is the time to dig in.
48. At the beginning of the year I was committed to excelling at my courses, but I soon lost interest and now I am committed to passing all of my courses.
49. I am not as committed as I was in high school. It is hard to make myself go to all my classes especially when I do not enjoy some of them. I still want good grades and study a lot. I put a lot of effort into my exams, but when I put in a huge amount of effort and only get OK results on exams, essays, labs, it is quite discouraging and makes me not study as hard in the future because I know even if I go crazy with studying I will only do OK.
50. Well, I think my commitment to learning has gone down hill since I've been at Queen's actually. In high school I was always very motivated, conscientious, and loved school. But at Queen's, I feel stressed and unmotivated due to the average to below average grades I receive, and not smart enough or as if I don't fit in. I really don't like the way I've changed my feelings about school since I arrived here at Queen's.

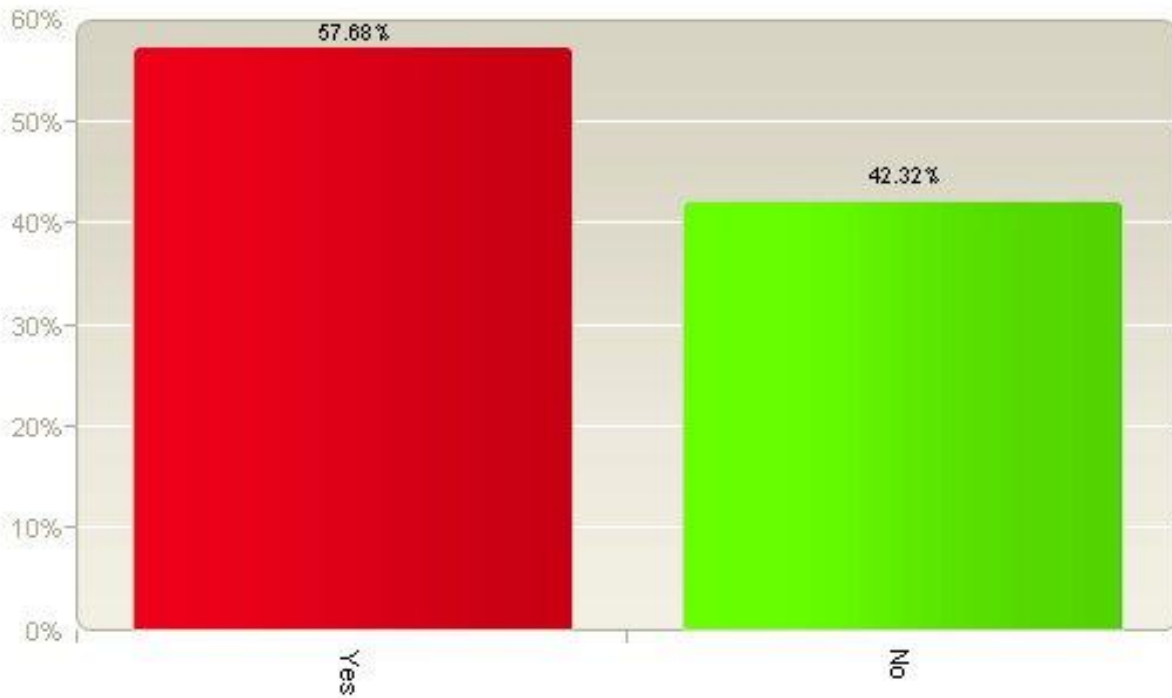
51. Honestly, I've slacked off a lot more since getting to university.
52. I enjoy being a student, and am committed to my education, however, my motivation dropped somewhat this year, mostly due to the freedom of living alone for the first time.
53. I have always been very committed to learning, but I found my first year at Queen's definitely did not support that. I never missed a class throughout high school other than due to illness, whereas I found myself almost encouraged to miss the majority of my classes here.
54. In high school, I was really dedicated to learning but since I came to Queen's, the amount of studying has decreased since there are so many other things to do here such as clubs, teams.

GRAPHS (Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 19)

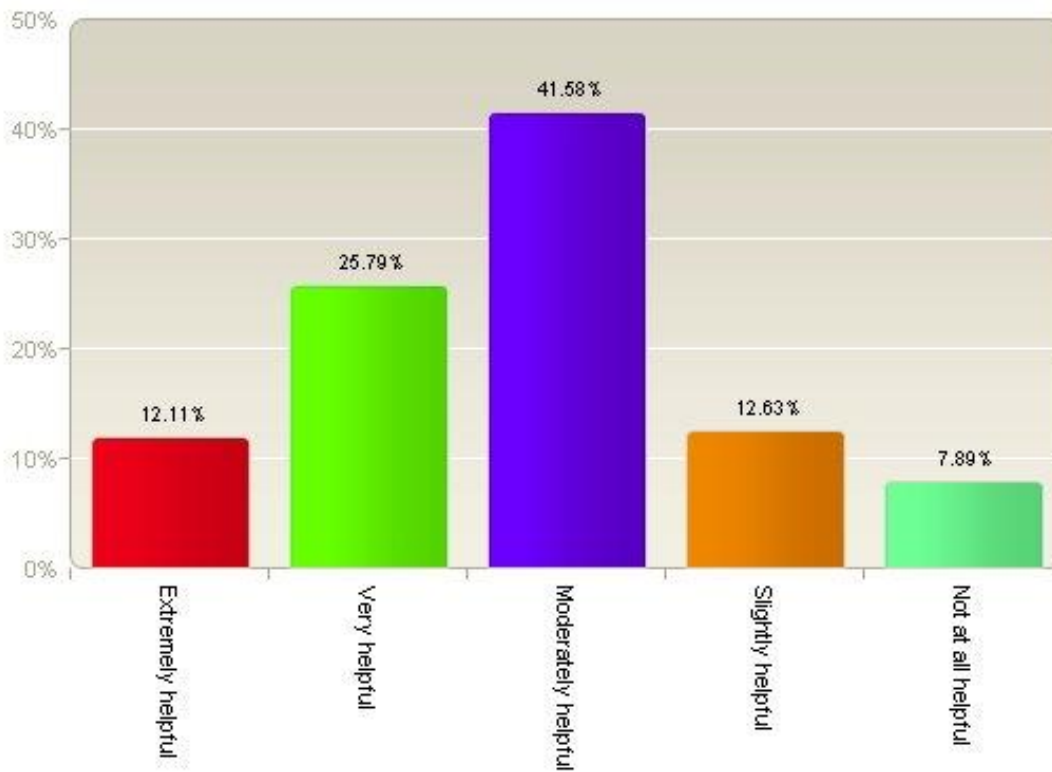
Q10. Which of the following have been helpful to you in improving your learning? (Check all that apply)



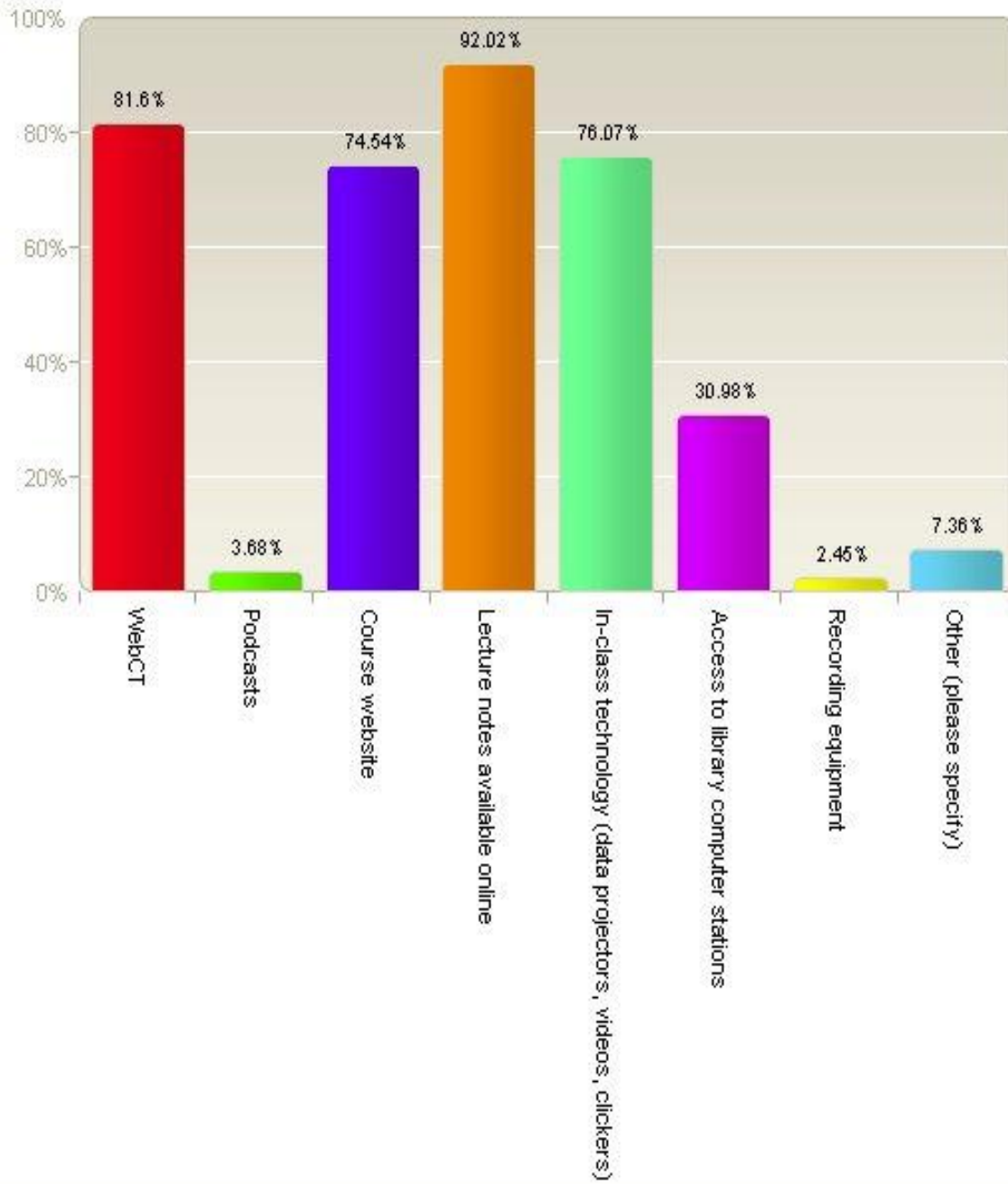
Q11. Have you used "clickers" in one or more courses this year?



Q12. Please indicate the value of "clickers" to your learning:



Q13. What forms of technology have been helpful to your learning? (Check all that apply)



Q19. How does your average this year compare to your average in your last year of high school?

