University of Alberta 2017 Teaching Practices and Support Survey: Highlights

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In November and December 2017, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the University of Alberta surveyed instructors about their teaching practices and perceptions about University support for teaching. The purpose of our survey was to understand the following at the University of Alberta:

1. How do instructors describe their teaching and learning practice and environment?
2. How do instructors perceive their faculties and departments regarding support for those who want to improve or change their teaching practices?

Our survey was adapted from one developed at the University of British Columbia, which has been used by several institutions in the Bay View Alliance [http://bayviewalliance.org/], as well as the American Association of Universities. Some questions were removed to suit our context or because we did not expect much variation in the data, while a few from another survey related to scholarship of teaching and learning were added (Wuetherick and Yu, 2016). These changes were minimal in order to keep the survey as short as possible while still informing CTL programming and enabling us to compare our results to UBC’s (Bates et al. 2015; Briseño-Garzón et al. 2016). We also offered to provide Faculty-specific reports to all Faculties; Arts, Engineering, and Science expressed interest and have received confidential reports.

The survey asked instructors to describe their teaching practices, attitudes, and perceptions of support at the university. For questions related to teaching practices and attitudes, we asked instructors to respond by thinking of their largest class (in terms of enrolment) taught in the previous three years. Survey questions were a mix of multiple-choice, agree-disagree, and short-answer questions.

The survey was sent to all employees who had an academic-related job code in November 2017 (3621 individuals). A total of 559 instructors responded to the survey, but due to survey logic, most questions were answered by less than 559 respondents. All percentages outlined in this report are based on the number of respondents per question. Since the sample in our survey was not a random sample, results are not generalizable. We would guess that individuals who identify themselves as dedicated to quality teaching were more likely to respond to the survey.
INSTRUCTOR AND COURSE PROFILES

Figure 1. Percentage of respondents by appointment.

26% Assistant Professor
28% Associate Professor
12% Professor
7% Sessional Instructor
21% Instructor
7% Other

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents by Faculty.

23% ALES
19% Arts
10% Augustana
7% Education
7% Engineering
8% Medicine & Dentistry
6% Nursing
8% Science
6% Other

Figure 3. Class levels taught (respondents’ largest class in last 3 years).

3% 100-level
23% 200-level
18% 300-level
19% 400-level
12% 500-level
22% 600-level

TECHNOLOGY USED IN COURSES

Figure 4. How Technology was Used in Class.

57% Little or no tech used
32% Course was online only
9% Tech was used, class time the same
2% Tech was used, class time reduced
Hardware and software used (in addition to basics such as eClass, email, PowerPoint, videos):

**3D Printers**
- Used to print physical objects that were part of assignments

**Teleconferencing***
- Respondents who indicated they used teleconferencing technology tended to be instructors who taught the same class on multiple campuses, at the same time

**DropBox**
- Online file sharing platform, used mainly for online assignment submission

**Kaltura**
- Online video platform used for communicating and collaborating

**Padlet**
- Online application for building collaborative websites

**Document Camera***
- Used for viewing hard copies or physical items on the presentation screen

**Prezi and Keynote**
- Presentation software

**TopHat**
- Classroom engagement tools, including real-time polls and discussion software

**Padlet**
- Online application for building collaborative websites

**Kahoot**
- Game-based educational software

**Smart hardware and software***
- Interactive displays, whiteboards, and collaboration tools

**Poll Everywhere**
- Online, real-time poll software

**Tablets**
- Used for interactivity between the presentation slides and class discussion

**Podcasts**
- Audio recordings, usually with multiple episodes about a specific topic

**Teleconferencing***
- Respondents who indicated they used teleconferencing technology tended to be instructors who taught the same class on multiple campuses, at the same time

**Socrative**
- Classroom engagement tools, including online quizzes and discussion rooms

**High Fidelity Patient Simulation**
- Computerized mannequins used in nursing and medical school to practice procedures

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3D printers can be found in the U of A Library and can be used by students and faculty.

*These technologies must be installed in the classroom.
IN-CLASS TEACHING ACTIVITIES

For in-class teaching activities, respondents ranked activities in the following order, from most time spent to least time spent\(^2\).

\(^2\)In addition to ranking each activity between 1 and 9, respondents also had an N/A option. When calculating the total ranking for all respondents, the counts associated with the N/A option were removed.
EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT PREPARATION BEFORE CLASS

Expectations ranked from most expected to least expected:

1. Review course material, but no assessments
2. Work collaboratively on group assignments
3. Review course material and complete assessments
4. Write short papers or other brief assignments
5. Write research papers or conduct major projects
6. Work on problems or worksheets that do not contribute to a grade
7. Work on reflective assignments like discussion boards, blogs, learning portfolios, etc.
8. Participate in experiential learning activities
9. Work on problems or worksheets that contribute to a grade
10. Design experiments, projects, assessment questions, presentations, etc.
11. Peer-review work and provide feedback
12. Other activities

EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Figure 6. Type of activities performed by TAs [49% of the respondents, N=317].

- Marked homework and/or practice problems
- Marked exams and/or papers
- Facilitated instructional activities
- Delivered some course instruction
- Supported students outside of class time
- Provided feedback to me about instructional decisions
TEACHING-RELATED RESEARCH (SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING, SOTL)

Interest in SoTL:

- I have researched questions about teaching and learning within my own classroom: 58%
- I have worked with colleagues at the U of A to research questions about teaching and learning: 51%
- I would like to connect my interests in teaching and learning to a recognized body of research: 39%
- I have worked with colleagues outside of the U of A to research questions about teaching and learning: 28%
- I would like to find new colleagues at the U of A with whom I can pursue my interests in teaching and learning: 36%
- I have questions about my students’ learning that I want to explore: 66%

SOTL RESEARCH, BY APPOINTMENT

- I would like to find new colleagues at the U of A with whom I can pursue my interests
- I have worked with colleagues outside of the U of A to research questions about T&L

SOTL RESEARCH, BY YEARS TEACHING

- I would like to find new colleagues at the U of A with whom I can pursue my interest in T&L
- I have worked with colleagues outside of the U of A to research questions about T&L

INTEREST IN COLLABORATING

Figure 7. Responses to collaborating with colleagues on questions about teaching and learning, by appointment.
TEACHING SUPPORT

Figure 8. Awareness of and participation in various teaching support activities.

Figure 9: Perceptions of teaching support across the University.

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The full report, including survey questions and a relevant bibliography, can be found at: https://doi.org/10.7939/R33T9DN8T