I. STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING

BACKGROUND

In May 2006, the UBC Senate approved, in principle, recommendations regarding student evaluations of teaching that focused on a modular evaluation process designed to provide data to multiple stakeholders. The Senate charged the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Office of the Provost with developing an implementation strategy.

A policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching was approved at the May 2007 UBC Senate. This policy outlined four major goals:

1) To provide data that will be used to continuously improve the student's learning experience
2) To provide students, departments, faculties and the University with a source of data about the overall quality of teaching.
3) To provide teachers with information on their teaching performance and to assist with the further development of their teaching.
4) To provide the University with data on the quality of teaching to be used for operational purposes, including but not limited to assessment of faculty for merit and/or performance adjustment salary awards, promotion, tenure and institutional recognition.

The purpose of this report is to update the UBC Senate on the implementation of the Policy.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Policy began in the Fall 2007 with the inclusion of the University Module items (UMI) in the student evaluation of teaching process. The University Module items approved for Fall 2007 implementation were as follows:

Based on a 5-point scale, where 1= very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = adequate, 4 = good and 5 = excellent, please rate your instructor on the following:

1. The *clarity* of the instructor's expectations of learning.
2. The instructor's ability to *communicate* the course content effectively.
3. The instructor's ability to *inspire* interest in the subject.
4. The *fairness* of the instructor's assessment of learning (exams, essays, tests, etc).
5. The instructor's *concern* for students' learning.
6. The *overall quality* of the instructor's teaching.

The Provost committed to a careful psychometric analysis of the six items in order to review, and if needed, refine the questions. A comprehensive analysis was undertaken early in 2008 by Dr. Ralph Hakstian. The full report can be found at http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/.

Scope

The Policy stipulates that, with limited exceptions, Student Evaluations of Teaching should be administered in every course section (or learning experience) at UBC each time the section is offered. The exceptions are individual / independent study courses, classes with very small enrolments, as well as other specialized teaching contexts where alternative forms of obtaining student feedback are more appropriate and practical (e.g., courses taught by multiple instructors, clinical instruction).

A significant number of courses offered in the allied health disciplines contain clinical components and evaluation of instruction in those courses did not include the UMI.

As of April 15, 2008, UMI results for 2,175 instructors (representing 72,174 evaluations) in Term 1 courses had been submitted to the University (two term courses evaluated at mid-term are excluded from this report). The unit of analysis is the unique class / instructor combination (i.e., classes with multiple instructors had more than one UMI data set).

Table 1. Scope of Fall 2007 Implementation

FACULTY[1]	NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS EVALUATED					
	100 Level	200 Level	300 Level	400 Level	Grad	TOTAL
Applied Science[2]	2	1				**3**
Arts	156	159	293	174	104	**886**
Commerce		38	57	49		**144**
Dentistry[3]						**-**
Education	7	3	133	27	79	**249**
Forestry	4	11	16	16	6	**53**
College of Health Disciplines		2		2		**4**
Land & Food Systems	2	14	13	17	3	**49**
Law	6	15	33	48	2	**104**
Medicine					6	1	**7**
Pharmaceutical Sciences		12	26	34		**72**
Science	177	112	137	102	76	**604**
TOTAL	**354**	**268**	**708**	**475**	**271**	**2,175**

[1] With one exception (see next footnote), this denotes the Faculty that evaluated the course.
[2] The Faculty of Applied Science was unable to implement the UMI in Fall 2007. The three instances reported were APSC courses offered to students in other Faculties and evaluated by those Faculties.
[3] Dentistry courses evaluated were all two term courses and many may be covered under exemption.

All instructors for whom UMI data was submitted (including results for low enrolment classes) are included in this report.

Administration of Evaluations

The University did not specify a required method of data collection, except to say that the method used should be consistent for both the UMI and Faculty-specific questions, and that both sets of questions should be administered at the same time. Both online and paper-based collection mechanisms were used as follows:

Table 2. Data Collection Mechanisms

FACULTY	ONLINE	PAPER	NOTES
Applied Science	✓		
Arts		✓	
Psychology	✓		
Commerce	✓	✓	UMI items were administered online; Faculty items were administered separately on paper.
Dentistry	✓		
Education	✓	✓	UMI and Faculty items were administered on separate forms, at the same time. ETEC evaluations online.
Forestry		✓	
College of Health Disciplines	✓		
Land & Food Systems	✓		
Law	✓		
Medicine	✓		
Pharmaceutical Sciences	✓		
Science	✓		

### Effect of Online Administration

In his report, Dr. Hakstian compared response rates for online and paper-based inventories for the Department of Psychology, and the Faculties of Land and Food Systems, Law and Science. In each case, response rates from 2006 Term 1 paper-based inventories were compared to those for online inventories in 2007 Term 1. He found that response rates were comparable (65.51% vs. 66.48%) overall. Similarly, there was no evidence that this change resulted in any systematic difference in scores on Faculty-based questions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that open-ended comments from online inventories are more meaningful, as suggested in the literature. (Please see the report for a fuller discussion).

RESULTS

The initial results indicate that, in the opinion of students, teaching at UBC is generally good (4) to excellent (5).

Figure 1. The Overall Quality of Teaching
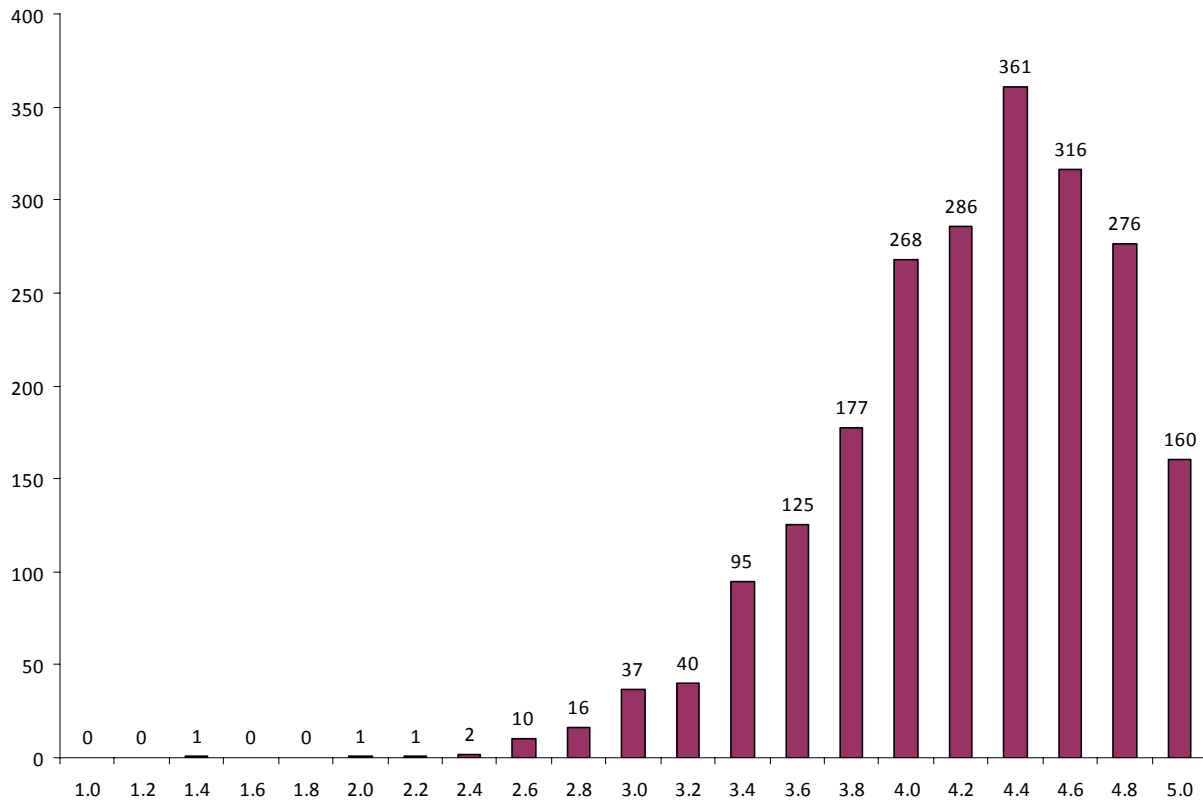
As ranked by students, the overall quality of teaching at UBC rates 4.18 (standard deviation = .52) of a five point scale. Roughly 3 percent of instructors score at adequate (3) or less; approximately 64% of instructors score good (4) or higher.

Reliability and Validity

The evidence suggests that the six University questions (UMIs) perform at least as well as previously used teaching evaluation items, although some improvement could be made for items 1 and 4. They correlate highly with similar items used in previous and current assessments, there is strong evidence of internal and inter-rater consistency and according to Dr. Hakstian's report, they "…more than adequately perform the function intended for them." (p. 27). Please see the report for a fuller discussion of these issues.

UMI Results by Year Level

As shown in the following tables, scores for each of the UMIs are routinely four or higher on a five point scale.

Table 3. Results by Year Level.

UMI	Year Levels					
	100 Level	**200 Level**	**300 Level**	**400 Level**	**Grad**	**Average**
1. The *clarity* of the instructor's expectations of learning.	4.08	4.03	4.05	4.14	4.27	**4.10**
2. The instructor's ability to *communicate* the course content effectively.	4.20	4.17	4.19	4.28	4.39	**4.23**
3. The instructor's ability to *inspire* interest in the subject.	3.95	4.03	4.08	4.21	4.29	**4.10**
4. The *fairness* of the instructor's assessment of learning (exams, essays, tests, etc.)	4.03	4.06	4.05	4.18	4.27	**4.10**
5. The instructor's *concern for* students' learning.	4.12	4.15	4.19	4.29	4.44	**4.22**
6. The *overall quality* of the instructor's teaching.	4.25	4.19	4.21	4.28	4.43	**4.25**

As expected, scores tend to increase with level of instruction, although these changes are not always consistent across Faculties. Where such effects have been observed in the literature, they have been shown to have a marginal impact.

Influence of Class Size

It is possible that an increase in scores with year-level is influenced by a corresponding decrease in class size. The UMIs show a small negative correlation with class enrolment as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Correlation between Class Enrolment and UMI Scores.**

| r_{xy}	Item
-.14	The *clarity* of the instructor's expectations of learning.
-.16	The instructor's ability to *communicate* the course content effectively.
-.21	The instructor's ability to *inspire* interest in the subject.
-.26	The *fairness* of the instructor's assessment of learning (exams, essays, tests, etc.)
-.26	The instructor's *concern for* student's learning.
-.18	The *overall quality* of the instructor's teaching.

However, the relationship between these variables appears not to be linear and accounts for very little of the variance (< 1%) as shown in the following two examples.

Figure 2. The Instructor's Concern for Learning & Class Enrolment
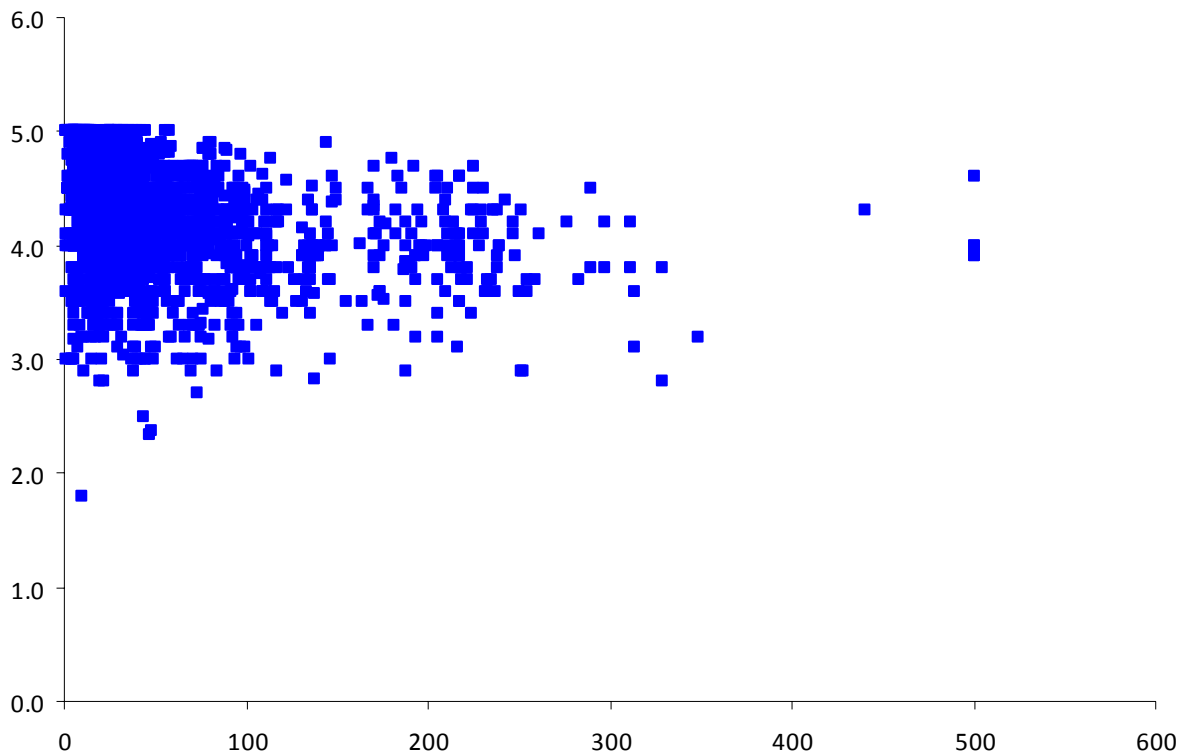
Figure 3. The Overall Quality of Teaching & Class Enrolment
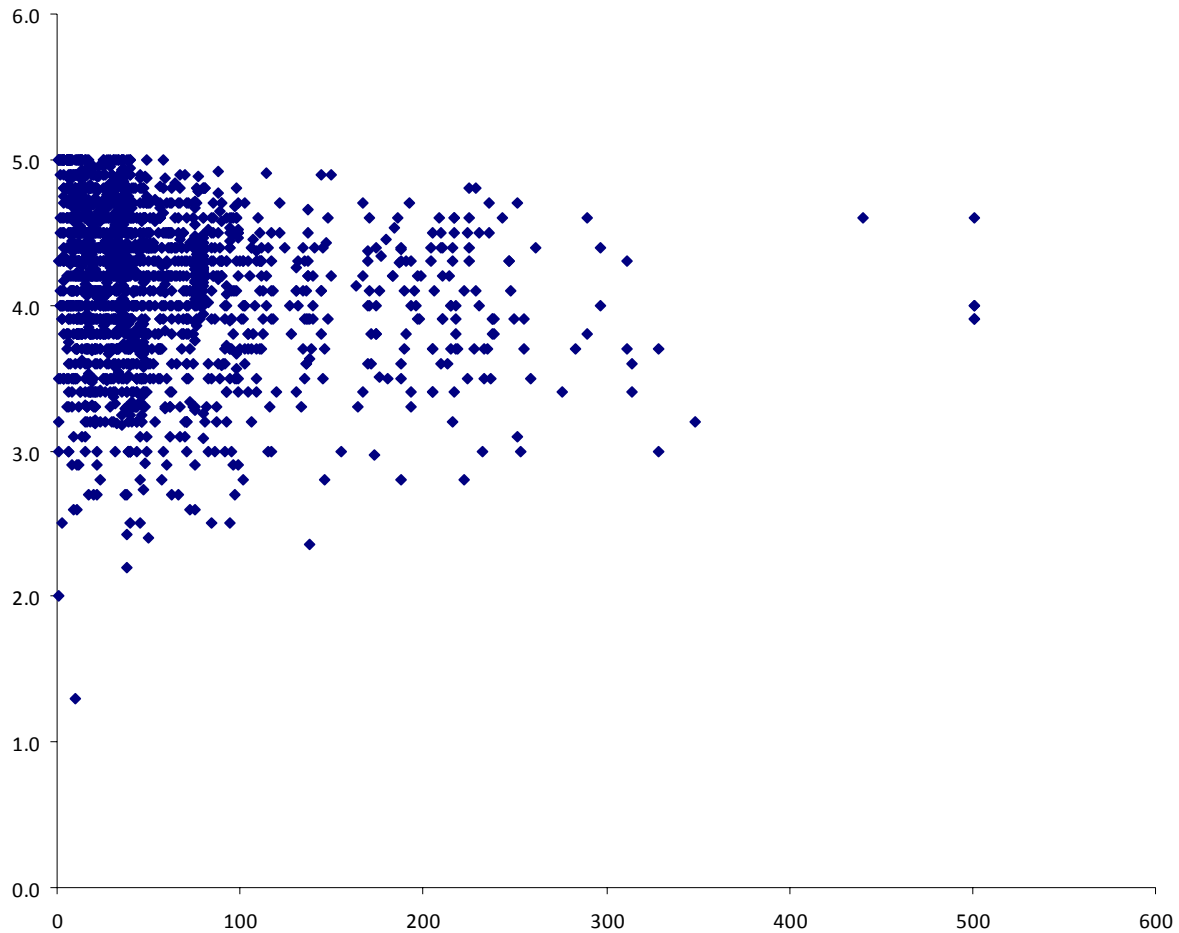
Influence of Grades

There is some suggestion that grades in a course may influence evaluations. Dr. Hakstian's report shows a small positive relationship between grades and mean UMI scores (with year of instruction partialed out), but whether this is because students who get better grades are more generous with evaluations, or whether well taught courses result in higher grades is an empirical question. Class grades do not appear to have a consistent (or in most cases statistically significant) impact on student response rates.

Summary

As indicated earlier, students perceive the quality of teaching at UBC to be good to excellent. There is a need for more empirical study, for the development of norms and finalization of university questions.

NEXT STEPS

The University is committed to exploring the recommendations made in Dr. Hakstian's report and to consider feedback on the report and the questions from faculty members and students. Priorities for the next several months include:

1. Focus groups will be conducted with faculty members and with students to gather feedback on the wording of the UMIs, and to discuss whether additional questions are needed.
2. A Standing Committee on Student Evaluation of Teaching will monitor the progress of evaluation.
3. An online tool will be made available for the systematic submission of Student Evaluation of Teaching data.
4. Feedback will be sought on the proposed procedures and mechanisms for posting results.
5. Work will commence on the implementation of the full modular approach identified in the Senate Policy (e.g., ability for instructors to add their own questions) for both normative and summative purposes.
6. TAG will continue to offer workshops to assist faculty members to interpret and reflect on the data collected through student evaluation of teaching.

Additional, longer-term development of the Student Evaluation of Teaching project will include:
1. The development of University-wide, faculty-specific and department-specific norms.
2. Empirical research on response rates and other factors thought to potentially influence student evaluations of teaching.
3. Collaboration with faculty to develop a bank of empirically sound questions for use by individual faculty members to construct their Instructor Modules.

The work identified constitutes an ambitious agenda over the next several years, and Dr. Hakstian will continue to assist us in accomplishing these goals.