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Students’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching in Higher Education
Investigators

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Research supported by
Distance Education and Learning Technologies
Memorial University
Purpose of the Study

• Continuation of similar work completed in high school setting

• Determine students’ expectations of effective teaching

• Compare students’ expectations across modes of delivery

• Determine if items on CEQs matched student expectations
Survey

• Online survey of 49 items
• The first nine requested demographic information – respondents clicked on the appropriate choice
• The forty remaining were open-ended, asking for text-based responses
Students were asked to:

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

• Explain why the characteristic is important

• Describe the instructor behaviours that demonstrate the characteristic

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

Question 10

Characteristic

Question 11

Why this characteristic is important?

Question 12

How can an instructor demonstrate this characteristic?

Question 13

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

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
Why this approach?

- Likert scale surveys ask students to respond to preconceived concepts
- Provide a direct student voice
- Wanted students to link instructor behaviours to characteristics
- Data could be collected for both on-campus and distance instruction
Demographics

- ~17,000 students had access during the winter semester of 2008
- Over 2,500 students accessed the survey
- 330 provided usable data
- Survey demographics very similar to the university population
- 161 students provide data on distance
Marketing the Study

• Banners
• Campus newspapers
• Web site
• Offered incentives
Method of Analysis

• Data were collected in a spread sheet
• Identified 69 unique characteristics, assigning a number to each
• Manually coded the data according to the characteristics
• Correlated the data by the characteristics (unique numbers)
Method of Analysis

- Compiled descriptions of and behaviours associated with each characteristic
- Created definitions for the characteristics highlighting students’ comments
- Grouped characteristics by definitions and instructor behaviours into nine categories of behaviours that students describe as effective
On-Campus
- Respectful
- Knowledgeable
- Approachable
- Engaging
- Communicative
- Organized
- Responsive
- Professional
- Humorous

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

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

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

• Responses were framed in an online context
Respectful (On-campus and Distance)
(caring, compassionate, concerned, consistent, diplomatic, empathetic, fair, flexible, helpful, kind, open-minded, patient, reasonable, realistic, humble, sincere, trustworthy, understanding)

• Two areas of instructors’ behaviours were highlighted:
  o Personal attributes
    - Courteous to students
    - Patience with students’ questions
  o Pedagogical attributes
    - Testing what’s covered in class
    - Setting clear guidelines
Knowledgeable (On-campus and Distance)

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

• Two areas of instructors’ behaviours were highlighted:
  o Content knowledge
  o Pedagogical knowledge
  o Good understanding of technology (distance)
Approachable (On-campus and Distance)
(accessible, friendly, happy, helpful, personable, positive)

• Three main themes:
  o Positive interaction between professors and students
  o Comfortable learning environment
  o Sincere effort on the part of instructors to help students meet academic goals
Engaging (On-campus and Distance)

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

• Three main themes:
  o Passion and enthusiasm for the discipline and teaching
  o Ability to share their passion with students
  o The need for passion and enthusiasm to influence pedagogical choices
Communicative  (On-campus and Distance)
(attentive, clear, constructive, thorough, understandable)

• Five main themes
  o Coherent use of a variety of organized teaching methods
  o Clear and concise course outlines
  o Good command of the English language
  o Astute listening skills
  o Clarity in expectations
  o Prompt high quality feedback
Organized
(efficient, focused, prepared)

- Students focused on pedagogical issues pertaining to organization
  - Preparing for class
  - Using technology appropriately
  - Offering coherent lectures
  - Asking students for feedback on how the course is progressing
Responsive  (On-campus and Distance)
(accommodating, available, efficient, helpful, perceptive)

• Students focused on two attributes
  o Second most mentioned characteristic by distance students
  o Timely and constructive feedback
  o The instructor’s awareness of individual students needs by being attentive to signs that indicate that students are experiencing difficulty with content
Professional (On-campus and Distance)

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

- Students focused on two aspects of professionalism
  - The relationship with students
    - Maintain a measured presence
    - Prompt responses
  - Responsibilities to good teaching
    - Staying on track
    - Punctual
    - Maintain high expectations
Humorous  (On-campus and Distance)
(happy, pleasant)

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

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