

Report on the Institutional Teaching Culture Perception (ITCP) Surveys

Brock University

Prepared by the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI)

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Summary:

The following report provides an overview of a preliminary analysis of the data emerging from Brock University's participation in the teaching culture survey in March 2018. The project was initiated and led by the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) at Brock and the survey was endorsed by and included in the 17/18 and 18/19 work plans of the Senate's Teaching and Learning Policy Committee. The results of the 2018 survey potentially provide an overview or benchmark for the institution should it wish to re-run the survey in a few years' time. As this project evolves in collaboration with other institutions, it is expected that resources will be available to institutions to assist them in the interpretation of the data. What follows is an executive summary; details about the survey and the data analysis can be obtained from the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation.

Project Overview

A group of educational researchers from nine institutions across Canada developed a set of three Institutional Teaching Culture Perception (ITCP) surveys designed to capture a snapshot of an institution's teaching culture at a particular point in time, gathering perceptions from staff, faculty and students. The survey measures how well an institution prioritizes, evaluates, implements, supports, engages and celebrates teaching using six predetermined levers or categories (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012; Kustra et al., 2015).

- **Lever 1: Institutional Strategic Documents and Initiatives Prioritize Effective Teaching**
- **Lever 2: Assessment of Teaching is Constructive and Flexible**
- **Lever 3: Effective Teaching is Implemented**
- **Lever 4: Infrastructure Exists to Support Teaching**
- **Lever 5: Broad Engagement Occurs Around Teaching**
- **Lever 6: Effective Teaching is Recognized and Rewarded**

The current phase of the project was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant. The survey has run at eight Canadian institutions, including Brock University in March of 2018.

Quantitative Analysis

Selected undergraduate (n=511) and graduate (n=303) students, staff (n=57) and faculty (n=121) were asked to indicate on a five point scale both how important they valued each category and to what degree each was demonstrated by the institution's teaching culture. Overall, each participant group rated the importance of each category much higher than the degree to which they thought the categories were demonstrated by Brock, suggesting that prioritizing, evaluating, implementing, supporting, engaging in, and celebrating effective teaching are important, but the institution can improve upon how it fosters each of these categories. For a graphical overview of the quantitative data, see [Appendix A](#).

Qualitative Analysis

Using one open-ended question, all participants were asked to include examples of practices from Brock University that potentially contribute to the teaching culture. Each participant group had both unique and overlapping themes, all of which aligned with the six predetermined levers. To review the comments of faculty, staff and students, contact CPI.

Lever 1 themes: institutional commitment to resource allocation; hiring and tenure practices

Although strategic plans and documents may reference teaching, both faculty and staff expressed that administrative *commitment to resource allocation* was a clearer indicator of what the true priorities are for an institution. Staff also recognized how important resource allocation is to developing a stronger teaching culture, referencing specific areas of under-resourced teaching support. In addition, faculty members expressed their concerns regarding the *hiring and tenure process*, with research accomplishments often being prioritized over teaching. Graduate students shared similar concerns over TA hiring practices that prioritize seniority over actual teaching qualifications.

Lever 2 themes: the use of the evaluation data; student voice

The Use of Student Evaluations of Teaching were concerning to some faculty, citing unreliability or bias. For others, there seemed to be inconsistencies in how, or even if, the evaluation scores are used to merit any teaching performance. With limited weight on the evaluation data, there is little incentive to achieve higher rating. Similarly, some staff members noted the use of course evaluation data was concerning, particularly for sessional hires that rely on the feedback for retaining contracts and future positions. In contrast, students valued the course evaluations, recognizing them as an opportunity to use their voice and offer both summative and formative feedback. For the latter, students expressed the importance of seeing instructors actually consider the feedback and make immediate changes where possible.

Lever 3 themes: TAs; workload/time; diverse learning opportunities; committed instructors

According to some faculty, unionized TAs can be unqualified and ineffective undermining the teaching and grading that faculty do. Interestingly, students seemed unaware of this tension and instead praised TAs for the support they offer in the learning process. Additionally, faculty members often referenced *High Workload and Limited Time* as a barrier to implementing better teaching practices and engaging in teaching development (See Lever 5). Students identified examples both inside and outside of the classroom where their instructors and TAs implemented effective teaching, contributing positively to the culture of the institution. Inside the classroom students valued having *Diversified Learning Opportunities* such as experiential learning, collaborative group work and technology-enabled learning. Staff also expressed this theme, providing similar examples. Outside the classroom, students valued having *Accessible and Committed Instructors* and *Supportive TAs* who were available during office hours and provided extra help on assignments and tests.

Lever 4 themes: availability of resource support and infrastructure; the seminar system

Instructors stated that available resource support and infrastructure is needed for teaching development to be done and be done effectively. As such, *under-resourced Teaching Supports* can make it difficult to keep up with the ever-growing demand of pedagogical innovation and can hinder instructors from implementing different teaching methods in the classroom. Similarly, staff and students also recognized the importance of having resources available to implement different pedagogies (e.g. technology-enabled), to develop teaching practices (e.g. CPI and the library), and to learn comfortably in the classroom (e.g. classroom design). Students specifically mentioned the helpfulness of the seminar system, and having classrooms, labs and other spaces that are accessible at all hours, and equipped with technology.

Lever 5 themes: teaching development opportunities; workload/time

Faculty, staff and students all identified *Teaching Development Opportunities* as a mechanism for broad engagement around teaching with specific mention of the CPI, the Library, Experiential Education, the TA workshops and ISWs (Instructional Skills Workshops). Despite having the opportunities available, many faculty expressed that they have *limited time* to actually engage and participate in these events given the *high workload* and additional demands of research and administration, which was also highlighted in Lever 3.

Lever 6 themes: undervalued teaching staff; incentives for effective teaching

Many instructors gave examples of existing *Incentives for Effective Teaching*, which were mainly awards and small grant programs. This theme was also noted by staff and students who provided similar examples of institutional incentives. Despite these incentives, there was still a notion that teaching, and teaching staff, are *undervalued* by the institution.