

# Joint Committee on the Administration of the Agreement

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## *Sub-committee on Course Evaluations (Article 7.10)*

### *Executive Summary of the Final Report, April 2014*

Under the terms of Article 7.10 of the 2012-2015 Collective Agreement between the York University Faculty Association and the York University Board of Governors, the parties created a joint sub-committee on student course evaluations. The committee met from April 2013-January 2014 “to develop a common set of questions, the results of which will be made available to students.”

Members: Markus Biehl, Simone Bohn, Paul Grayson, Tamara Kelly, Susan Murtha, Alice Pitt, Duff Waring and Diane Woody.

The joint-subcommittee has concluded its work and is pleased to provide the parties with a report that documents our process, provides a set of common questions and methods used to arrive at these, and identifies implementation issues for consideration by appropriate collegial governance bodies.

1. **Introduction:** This section describes early stage of our work, the research literature we reviewed, the principles we developed to guide our work, the core constructs we used to draft questions, and the development of a focus group to test the draft questions to ensure a satisfactory level of reliability and validity.
2. **Summary of Literature Consulted:** In this section we discuss the research literature we consulted in order to develop a theoretical framework and a common knowledge base to guide the development of a questionnaire. Evaluation instruments used at other universities were consulted, particularly those that had been validated by psychometric testing.
3. **Overview of Policy Guidelines and Course Evaluations at York University:** The committee reviewed existing policy on course evaluations at York University as well as paper evaluations and a bank of on-line questions currently in use at York University.
4. **Development of Questions for Course Evaluations:** We describe the process for developing questions, a focus group study and a pilot test that allowed the committee to determine the overall reliability and validity of the questionnaire and to identify and eliminate redundant questions.
5. **Recommended Survey:**

*Dear Student,*

*York University uses a common set of course evaluation questions that is used across all its Faculties and courses. The means of the answers to the seven course evaluation questions below will be made public.*

*Thank you for this important feedback!*

1.1 A comprehensive roadmap of the course (i.e., a syllabus or course outline, a breakdown with topics, assignments and exams etc.) was provided.

Scale for question sets 1 and 2:

- Strongly agree (7)
- Agree (6)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Not applicable (9)

1.2 The roadmap provided was mostly followed.

1.3 Important policies and procedures (e.g., attendance, participation, missed tests, late assignments, contacting instructors, etc.) were stated in the course outline.

2.1 The course materials (e.g., course kits, textbooks, readings, audio visual materials, lab manuals, websites, etc.) helped me achieve the course objectives.

2.2 The course activities (e.g., lectures, discussions, simulations, assignments, exercises and presentations, etc.) helped me achieve the course objectives.

2.3 The course tests/exams or final paper/essay were directly related to the course objectives.

2.4 The course helped me grow intellectually.

3.0 Was this course mandatory for you?

- Yes (1)
- Yes, as a choice from a list of required courses (.5)
- No (0)

4.0 Approximately how many lectures/seminars/sessions of this course did you attend (physically or online)?

- All of them(1)
- Almost all of them(0.9)
- More than half(0.7)
- About half of them (0.5)
- Fewer than half of them (0.25)

6. Next Steps and Future Considerations: In conclusion, the committee provides observations gleaned from our review of the research literature and aspects of our discussions that informed the work as it unfolded. We note that existing questionnaires will need to be reviewed with a view to eliminating those questions that overlap with the set of common questions. The committee recommends that the common set of questions precede faculty-based questions to prevent question order effects from taking place.

Our review of the literature suggests the need to address the following issues:

- Provision of information to students describing processes and timelines for making results available and ensuring student anonymity;
- Decisions and communication about courses for which results will not be made available (due to small enrolments or other considerations), and the possible provision of a disclaimer for results that are based on a low response rate;
- Decisions about where to post results and how to determine access to results;
- Decision about the period of time during which results will be available.

Appendix A: List of Sources Consulted and Discussed

Appendix B: List of Course Evaluations from York University that Were Reviewed

Appendix C: Focus Group Study Plan and Report

Appendix D: Psychometric Testing