

Evaluation Report on the Winter Intersession Program

Submitted to the University Senate

By

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March 28, 2007

This report summarizes an evaluation of the Winter Intersession (WI) program, which was implemented in 2004 and continued in 2005 and 2006. The program was designed to provide students another opportunity to complete courses beyond that afforded by the fall, spring, and summer sessions. The primary objective was to enhance academic progress and degree completion; the WI was never designed as a revenue stream, but the opportunity to offer UK instructors additional compensation was a collateral benefit that encouraged then-Provost Nietzel to implement a pilot program. Several large universities, notably the University of Maryland, that have successfully implemented similar programs served as models for the UK program.

The focus of this report is on two questions: (1) Does the WI provide the kind of quality education expected by the faculty? (2) Is there evidence to support continuation, and perhaps expansion, of the WI? To address these questions, analyses were conducted of teacher/course evaluations completed by students enrolled in the three WIs, surveys presented to enrolled students in WI 2005 and 2006, grade distributions for courses in all three WIs, and a survey of WI instructors.

I. Descriptive Summary.

The course rosters for the three WIs are presented below. It can be seen that the courses were few in number, but represent several academic areas primarily within the humanities and social sciences; conspicuously absent from the offerings is a course in the natural sciences, which reflects the recognition that not all courses are appropriate for the compressed format of the WI.

Table 1.

Course Roster 2004			
Courses	Enrollment	Courses	Enrollment
A&S 300	16	FAM 475	127
CLA 131	37	PHI 100	17
COM 325	18	PHI 120	17
ENG 333	17	STA 200	17
FA 501	20	STA 291	19
FAM 252	28	SW 580	19

Table 2.

Course Roster 2005

Courses	Enrollment	Courses	Enrollment
ANT 100	13	ENG 336	12
CLA 131	19	FAM 475	62
COM 482	10	GEO 160	13
EDS/IEC 522	6	PHI 120	20
EDS/RC 558	7	STA 200	22
ENG 333	11	STA 291	21
		SW 580	14

Table 3.

Course Roster 2006

Courses	Enrollment	Courses	Enrollment
ANT 101	11	FAM 475	58
CLA 131	10	MAT 247	16
COM 591	30	PHI 100	5
EDS 522	21	PHI 120	10
EDC 730	11	STA 200	22
ENG 330	8	STA 291	18
ENG 333	12	SW 580	na

Table 4 presents student enrollment characteristics across the three WIs. Clearly, the typical participant in WI is the advanced student. Seniors represent more than half of the enrollments, followed in order of enrollment by juniors, sophomores, and first-year students, a pattern that replicates that found in the summer sessions. Note that very few first-year students enrolled in WI. Given the assumption that the less academically mature student would more challenged by the compressed schedule, the low enrollments of first-year students is a welcome finding.

Table 4.

Enrollment Status (%)			
Status	2004	2005	2006
Senior	49	45	61
Junior	25	28	19
Sophomore	12	14	9
Freshman	5	5	1
Graduate	7	7	11

Two questions included on the student survey presented in WIs 2005 and 2006 point to the conclusion that WI primarily serves to promote progress to degree, consistent with the enrollment patterns mentioned above. When students were asked why they enrolled in WI, 81% (2005) and 96% (2006) responded that it was to catch up or get ahead in making progress to graduate. Only 14% (2005) and 3% (2006) mentioned interest in a specific course or topic. Given that student interest in WI is motivated by progress to degree, the data in Table 5 suggest that an effort be made to expand WI in terms of both the number and variety of course offerings.

Table 5.

How Satisfied?				
	Number of Courses		Variety of Courses	
Dissatisfied	2005	30%	2005	31%
	2006	38%	2006	35%
Neutral	2005	41%	2005	46%
	2006	35%	2006	43%
Satisfied	2005	29%	2005	24%
	2006	27%	2006	22%

II. Educational Quality: The Student Perspective.

The critical concern of faculty is whether the WI meets expected levels of academic quality. The compressed schedule clearly demands a very different kind of learning experience than students confront in the 16-week fall and spring semesters. It is more like the four-week summer session, yet even more compressed. Concern over the quality of learning in such a compressed format is reasonable, but there is also sufficient precedent to suggest that WI *can* meet the standards of educational quality to which the University aspires.

Several measures from the student survey administered at the end of the 2005 and 2006 WIs contribute to understanding the students' perceptions of educational quality. When asked about the pace of the WI, the vast majority of students reported the pace to be just right; a small minority described it as too slow, and less than 20% regarded it to be too fast (see Table 6.). Without comparable data from other academic terms, it is difficult to interpret the response pattern, but it is at least fair to conclude that there is not a broad concern among students that the pace of the compressed term is unmanageable.

Table 6.

Too Slow		Just Right		Too Fast	
2005	8%	2005	72%	2005	20%
2006	1%	2006	81%	2006	17%

Another important consideration for evaluating the quality of the learning experience in the WI is the availability of support services, such as the library, during a period when the University is significantly less active than other periods. Table 7 describes student satisfaction with library services. That only 15% in 2005 and 29% in 2006 report dissatisfaction indicates that for the majority of students access to library services is not an issue, although the significant increase in dissatisfaction from 2005 to 2006 deserves further attention. Efforts should be made to ensure that library services and other support services (e.g., tutoring and disability accommodations) are available during the WI.

Table 7.

Satisfaction With Library Services

	Dissatisfied		Neutral		Satisfied	
	2005	15%	2005	54%	2005	32%
	2006	29%	2006	39%	2006	32%

Another meaningful measure of student perception of educational quality is how well students regard WI courses as compared to those taught in other terms. The data in Table 8 show unambiguously that students have high regard for the WI; when asked if they would enroll in WI again, responses were very positive with 80% in 2005 and 74% in 2006 reporting that they would enroll again.

Table 8.

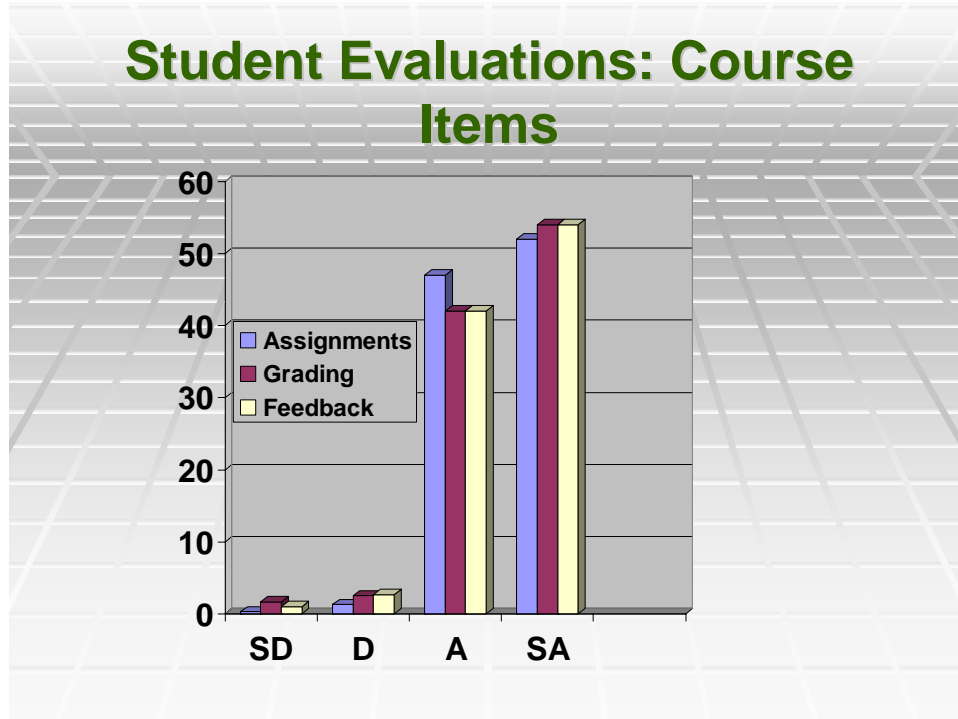
Compared To Courses In Other Terms

	Worse		Same		Better	
	2005	11%	2005	39%	2005	50%
	2006	8%	2006	41%	2006	51%

Additional data pertinent to student perceptions of the educational quality of WI can be gleaned from the teacher/course evaluations completed by students in all three WIs. Three specific questions relevant to concerns about the compressed schedule were

analyzed: (1) Were graded assignments returned promptly? (2) Was grading fair and consistent? (3) Did graded assignments include comments? To each of these questions, students responded with levels of satisfaction indicating that educational quality was not compromised by the compressed schedule of the WI as Table 9 indicates.

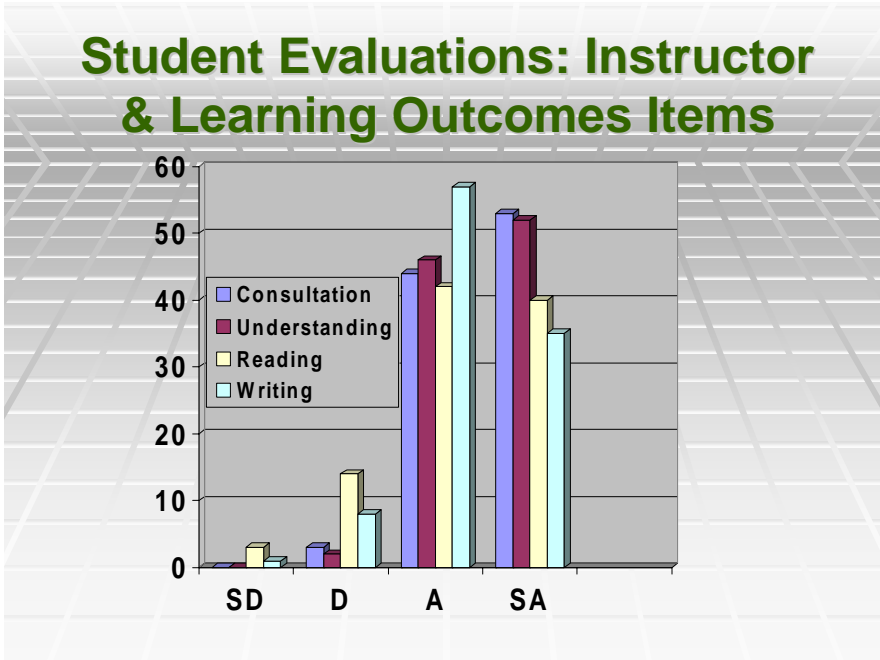
Table 9.



(SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree; SA=strongly agree)

Responses to instructor items and student learning outcome items from the questionnaire also support the conclusion that educational quality was not diminished in the WI. The pertinent questions include: (1) Was the instructor available for consultation? (2) Did you gain understanding of concepts and principles? (3) Did the course stimulate you to read further? (4) Did writing assignments help understanding of course material? If educational quality were compromised by the compressed schedule there would be some indication in student responses to these questions. As seen in Table 10, however, students appear to be quite satisfied with the various aspects of the learning experience addressed by these questions. That conclusion is further supported by responses to the overall evaluations regarding quality of the course and quality of the instructor. The composite summary for all three WIs yielded mean values of 3.4 and 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) for overall quality of the course and instructor respectively.

Table 10.



(SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; A=agree; SA=strongly agree)

Another analysis that offers some comparative insights into the perceived educational quality of the WI is summarized in Table 11, which presents mean course evaluations for some of the WI courses offered in 2004 and 2006 and the same courses taught in either the adjacent spring or fall semester. There is no indication of any pattern that differentiates WI from spring and fall semesters; some courses yielded higher evaluations in WI, some lower, and some the same as courses taught in spring or fall.

Table 11.

Quality of Course: WI Compared to Fall or Spring					
2004	WI04	SP04	2006	WI06	F06
ENG 333	3.7	3.7	ANT 101	3.4	3.1
CLA 131	3.1	3.7	GEO 160	3.1	2.8
FAM 252	3.2	3.6	SW 580	3.1	3.9
PHI 100	3.6	3.4	PHI 100	3.1	3.1
PHI 120	3.5	2.9	PHI 120	3.1	2.9

One final performance measure included in this report is grade distribution; Tables 12, 13, and 14 present grade distributions for all courses taught during the three WIs. These data are presented primarily for descriptive purposes. Although it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from these data, it is valid to assert that there is no evidence that WI courses yield to either of two possible extremes: all students receive A grades or all students receive E grades. Either of those patterns would warrant serious concern that educational quality was compromised in the WI. Beyond that conclusion, however, any additional interpretation of the data is challenged by self selection in terms of both students and instructors.

Table 12.

Grade Distribution 2004							
	A	B	C	D	E	W	P
A&S 300	2	5	9	0	0	0	0
CLA 1301	9	8	6	0	0	1	1
COM 325	6	7	1	1	0	0	0
ENG 333	14	2	0	0	0	0	0
FA 501	6	10	2	0	1	0	1
FAM 252	12	4	0	0	0	1	5
FAM 475	25	42	20	7	7	2	15
PHI 100	5	8	0	1	0	0	1
PHI120	5	6	3	2	0	0	1
STA 200	10	4	1	0	0	0	0
STA 291	12	4	1	0	0	1	0
SW 580	16	1	0	0	2	0	0

Table 13.

Grade Distribution 2005							
	A	B	C	D	E	W	P
ANT 101	7	0	0	0	0	0	3
CLA 131	3	4	3	0	1	1	1
COM 482	3	3	3	0	0	0	0
EDS/IEC 522	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
ENG 333	10	1	0	0	0	0	1
ENG 336	7	3	0	0	0	0	0
FAM 475	22	21	3	4	0	2	10
GEO 160	3	6	2	0	0	0	0
EDS/IEC 558	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
PHI 120	11	4	3	0	0	1	0
RC 558	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
STA 200	13	4	3	0	0	1	0
STA 291	14	3	2	0	0	1	0
SW 580	15	1	0	0	0	0	0

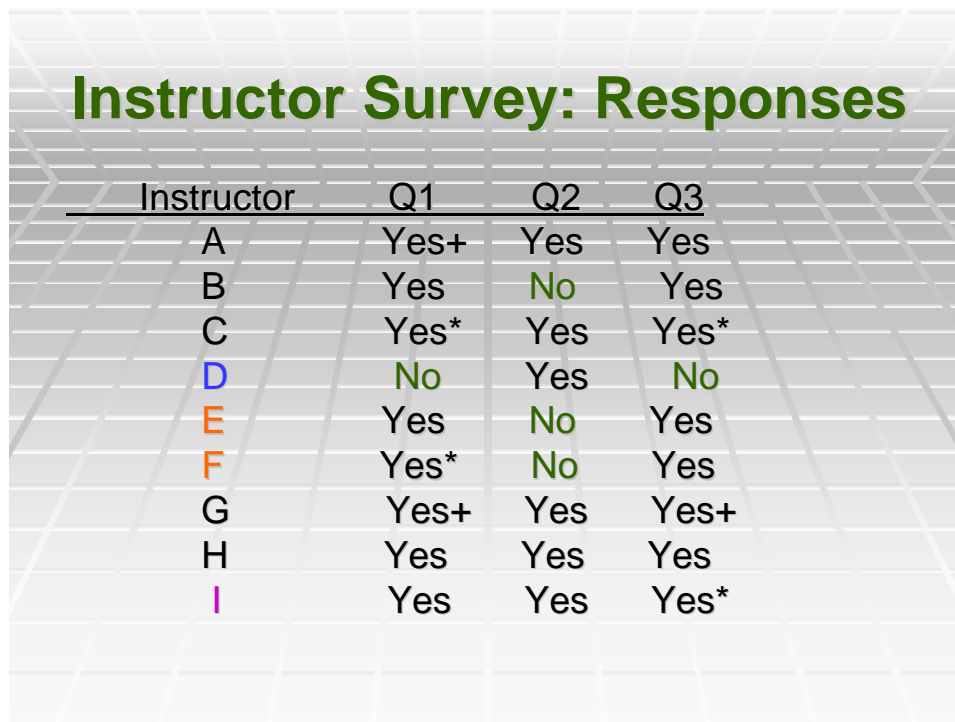
Table 14.

Grade Distribution 2006							
	A	B	C	D	E	W	P
EDS 522	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
ANT 101	3	3	1	0	0	0	2
CLA 131	2	3	1	1	1	0	1
COM 591	18	9	0	0	0	0	0
EDC 730	7	0	0	0	0	1	0
ENG 330	4	3	0	0	0	0	0
ENG 333	11	0	0	0	0	0	1
FAM 475	15	24	8	1	3	1	8
MAT 247	8	3	0	1	2	0	2
PHI 100	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
PHI 120	3	5	0	0	0	1	1
STA 200	12	2	3	0	0	0	0
STA 291	12	1	1	3	0	0	0

III. Educational Quality: The Instructor Perspective.

A recent survey administered to WI instructors asked three questions: (1) Was the WI a good education experience for students? (2) Did you cover the same amount of material during WI as a course taught during the fall or spring semester? (3) Do you recommend continuing the WI? Data from the instructors who responded to this survey are presented in Table 15. (A Yes + indicates strong agreement, and the Yes* indicates qualified agreement: Yes, but not for all courses) Simple verbal description of the pattern of results below is that (1) instructors overwhelmingly regard the WI as a good experience for students; (2) there may be some reduction in content due to the compressed schedule; and (3) the University should continue the WI with the caveat that not all courses are appropriate for the WI.

Table 15.



The image shows a table titled "Instructor Survey: Responses" with a grid background. The table has four columns: "Instructor", "Q1", "Q2", and "Q3". The rows are labeled A through I. The responses are: A (Yes+, Yes, Yes), B (Yes, No, Yes), C (Yes*, Yes, Yes*), D (No, Yes, No), E (Yes, No, Yes), F (Yes*, No, Yes), G (Yes+, Yes, Yes+), H (Yes, Yes, Yes), and I (Yes, Yes, Yes*).

Instructor	Q1	Q2	Q3
A	Yes+	Yes	Yes
B	Yes	No	Yes
C	Yes*	Yes	Yes*
D	No	Yes	No
E	Yes	No	Yes
F	Yes*	No	Yes
G	Yes+	Yes	Yes+
H	Yes	Yes	Yes
I	Yes	Yes	Yes*

IV. Conclusions

This report asserts that the WI is a productive addition to the University's academic calendar. There is no evidence that educational quality is compromised by the compressed schedule, but faculty and administrators need to recognize that not all courses are appropriate and not all instructors will be comfortable and competent teaching in the WI. Equally important, we need to advise students carefully in marketing the WI; it may not be an appropriate learning format for all students. As is true at a number of highly regarded institutions (e.g., University of Maryland, Cornell University, Ohio University, University of Delaware, University of Iowa, and University of Arizona)

a WI can offer a meaningful educational experience that affords students the opportunity to enhance progress to degree, which should remain the ultimate purpose for the WI.