

## **Appendix A - Methodology**

This Appendix describes the manner of gathering the information—who was contacted and how.

### **A1. Identifying the Student Sample and Relevant University Personnel**

We sought to hear from students in evening and weekend courses who are restricted to those time slots, and faculty and staff of Atkinson, librarians, administrators of student services across the University, and alumni.

The wider York Community was notified of the project and similarly invited to submit comments via e-mail. Announcements of the project and invitation for comments appeared in:

- Excalibur
- YorkU
- YFile
- Arts Axis

#### **A1.1 Current Students**

Students registered in courses that begin after 6:00 pm or on weekends were invited to complete a voluntary online survey between mid November of 2007 and mid January of 2008. <http://www.yorku.ca/evening/> . The invitation asked only students restricted to evening/weekend studies to complete the survey and attend focus groups.

Student respondents to the on-line survey were invited to attend a focus group to further discuss their experiences/expectations as it relates to Evening/Weekend Education at York. They were given the option to attend one of the focus groups to be held in the last week of January/early to mid February on various days and times; i.e. 6:00 pm, on weekends, etc.

#### **A1.2 Academic and non-academic staff**

Academic and non-academic staff members were contacted by e-mail; these staff included:

A1.2a Administrative assistants within the Atkinson Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies from the Program Offices of

- School of Arts and Letters
- School of Social Sciences
- School of Social Work
- Department of Economics
- School of Information Technology

A1.2b Academic staff from

- School of Arts and Letters
- School of Administrative Studies
- School of Social Sciences

A1.2c Administrators of the following student services:

- Student Client Services,
- Office of Computing Technology and e-Learning Services,
- Student Community and Leadership Development,
- University Registrar,
- Financial Aid,
- Library and
- the Lee Wiggins Child Care Centre.

#### **A1.3 Alumni**

Seven former students.

#### **A1.4 Other**

As well as representatives from

- Associate Vice President Academic, Learning Initiatives
- President York University Mature Student Association
- Student and Alumni Relations
- Faculty of Health
- Counselling
- Atkinson Centre for Mature and Part-time Students (ACMAPS)
- Atkinson Dean's Office (Associate Deans)

#### **A2. Areas and Issues Examined**

The primary focus is on the needs of students who can only attend classes evenings and/or weekends. This focus will capture most of the issues that units would need to consider in accommodating such students.

Information on the following practices was sought:

- Academic offerings: The provision of courses and degree programs (including: course offerings, course work, exams, advising services);
- Student Support Services: The provision of services including advising (central and program), program/department workshops, University administrative support services, online information and services; and
- Campus environment: Transportation services, security/lighting, facilities.

#### **A3. Survey Instruments**

The instruments that best served our purposes of obtaining information from the students were an on-line questionnaire followed by focus group interviews for clarification and elaboration of details.

We conducted voluntary 2-hour, group interviews with York academic and non-academic staff. A set of 5 key questions were distributed in advance.

##### **A3.1. On-Line Survey Questionnaire Sampling:**

See Report, Table 1, p.3

##### **A3.2. On-Line Survey Questionnaire Design**

Experience with a variety of issues surrounding course planning, support services, campus facilities, and the like were sought. The survey and focus groups provided information on the ease with which evening/weekend students progress through their education as well as other concerns they have relating to the campus facilities available during their time on campus.

The survey comprised of a mix of questions ranging from the factual and closed ended to the interpretive perceptual and open ended type question. Participants were offered the opportunity to provide additional comments/feedback where a full set of possibilities could not be exhausted in the range of answers.

### **A3.3. On-Line Survey Questionnaire Implementation**

Students registered in courses that begin after 6:00 pm or on weekends were invited, via Passport York, to complete a voluntary online survey between mid November of 2007 and mid January of 2008. <http://www.yorku.ca/evening/> Students were asked to complete the survey only if they were restricted to evening/weekend courses. With more than 22,000 students enrolled (86,000 course enrolments), 645 students responded to the call—a response rate of 2.9 percent. However, we do not know how many of the 22,000 students are restricted to evening/weekend courses. Clearly it is a smaller group, but we have no way of finding out its size. A more accurate response rate cannot, therefore, be calculated.

Enticement: Students who chose to self-identify were entered in a draw for the cost of a 3.0 credit course, valued at \$477.00.

#### Confidentiality:

To ensure confidentiality, student identifiers were not linked to responses and students were informed of this by the following statement appearing on the description page of the survey:

“Your comments are anonymous. Self identification for the purposes of the draw is optional and not linked to your response.”

### **A3.4 Focus Group Sample and Implementation**

We held a total of 10 focus groups for students, alumni and staff (academic and non-academic). A total of 55 people participated: 25 students and 30 staff. Students for the focus group were recruited from the respondents to the on-line questionnaire. Of the 645 students responding to the survey, more than 40 expressed interest in the focus groups with 25 students or 3.9 percent attending.

### **A3.5 Focus Groups**

A total of 11 focus groups were scheduled:

1. Administrative Assistants – October 23, 2007 11:00am to 1:00pm
2. Student Service Representatives – December 17, 2007 12:00noon to 2:00pm
3. YAMS and ASA – January 25, 2008 12:00 noon to 2:00pm
4. Alumni – January 26, 2008 12:00 noon to 2:00pm
5. Student Focus Group – January 28, 2008 6:00 - 8:00 pm
6. Student Focus Group – January 29, 2008 6:00 - 8:00 pm
7. Student Focus Group January 30, 2008 6:00 - 8:00 pm
8. Student Focus Group – February 2, 2008 10:00 am. - 12:00 noon
9. Current and Retired faculty – February 6, 2008 12 to 2:00pm
10. Current and Retired faculty – February 11, 2008 10:00 to 12:00 noon
11. Administrators of Student Services – February 8, 2008 - 12:00noon to 2:00pm

### **A3.6 Focus Group Discussion Design**

The focus groups were designed to be no longer than 2 hours and were offered as an opportunity for students to clarify and elaborate on their earlier responses. To focus the students in advance, the text in Box 1 below was included at the end of the on-line survey.

### **A3.7 Other means of Contacting the Committee**

In addition to the survey and focus groups, a dedicated e-mail address was created and people were invited to submit comments to the working group directly.

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**Box 1. Text of questions indicating possible topics for discussion in the focus groups:**

***For students agreeing to participate in a focus group  
Things to think about...***

Before attending your focus group, or writing to us, please think about what would enhance your university experience academically and/or administratively.

For example:

In any given term, are enough courses required for your major offered to allow you to proceed toward degree completion? Have you ever had to skip a term because no courses you needed were offered at the time you could take them? Have you ever had to skip a term because the courses you needed were full and you could not enrol?

How do you communicate with your Course Director or Tutorial Leader, in person (during office hours, or by appointment), by phone or by email? Do you have difficulty communicating with your Course Director or Tutorial Leader?

Do you find Course Directors accommodate your work demands (e.g., travel, shift work) or family demands (e.g., childcare)?

Can you access course materials easily? Do you have trouble accessing course materials through the bookstore or the library? If so, why?

Are University services conveniently available and easily accessible? Can you get an advising appointment at a time that suits you? Is the petitions process and other Council Office services accessible? Are the on-line self help services adequate (lecture schedule, exam information, your own student information)? If not, how could they become more accessible?

**A3.6 Interviews with Academic and Non-Academic Staff**

In preparation for the 2 hour group interview, the following list of questions was sent to the respective groups.

A3.6a Questions for current academic faculty/staff:

1. How do you accommodate request for advising services (offered by faculty members or staff) for evening/weekend students? (office hours, e-mail, web)
2. What complaints do you most often hear from students?
3. Do you offer special services for students attending evenings and weekends? (including special services during peak times)
4. Are students aware of the services available?

A3.6b Questions for retired academic faculty:

1. Did you offer special services for students attending evenings and weekends? (including special services during peak times)
2. What practices would you like to see being carried over into the new faculty?
3. What complaints did you most often hear from students?

A3.6c Questions of Administrators

Participants were asked a set of question relevant to their area of expertise. Questions included: How are you serving evening students? Is your unit offering services to the evening student?, What practices do you have in place to deal with student needs – evening and weekends?, What do you think created a sense of community for evening students and how can it be carried forwards?

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