

PEP 2004 – MLIS Results

August 2004

Report by Jill Teasley

The PEP survey received a total of 132 responses, 83 of which came from students enrolled in the Master of Library and Information Studies program. The responses of the seven students enrolled in Master of Children's Literature, Certificate of Advanced Studies, First Nations Concentration or PhD programs or who identified as "other" are included with the results for the MLIS students. This is to compensate for the relatively small numbers of MACL/FN/PhD/other students, and to avoid the risk of a student being identified by his or her comments. (There is an overlap of one respondent between the MLIS and other programs.)

Where applicable, the names of persons have been removed from responses, as the PEP survey is not intended to facilitate critiques or praise of specific people within SLAIS.

All percentages refer to the number of MLIS and MACL/PhD/FNC/CAS respondents measured against the number of all respondents.

Spelling errors have been corrected where noticed so as not to detract from the readability of this report.

Student Information

1. What is your program or course emphasis at SLAIS? (Check all that apply)

89 respondents (adjusted for one overlapping FNC student)

MLIS: 62.9% – 83/132

FNC: 0.8% – 1/132

MACL: 3% – 4/132

PhD: 0.8% – 1/132

Other: 0.8% – 1/132

2. If you are pursuing your MLIS, MAS or Joint degree, when did you begin your core courses at SLAIS?

82 respondents (123 total)

January 2004: 30

September 2003: 15

January 2003: 10

September 2002: 16

May 2002: 3

January 2002: 4
September 2001: 1
May 2001: 2
Before May 2001: 1

3. How many credits will you have completed by the end of April 2004?

89 respondents (132 total)

24 or fewer: 49
25-48: 29
49 or more: 10
Don't know: 1

4. Are you paying full-time or part-time tuition fees?

89 respondents (132 total)

Full-time: 81
Part-time: 7
Don't know: 1

Curriculum and Courses

5. Have the required courses you have taken met your expectations?

89 respondents (132 total)

Yes, all the required courses I have taken have met my expectations: 18
No, I have taken required courses that have not met my expectations: 66
Don't know: 5

6. If 'No', which course(s) and why?

40 students cited LIBR 540:

“Useless. Impractical. The course gave me no better understanding of the role of the reference librarian than I possessed previous to taking it. The course gave me no skills that would better suit me to undertaking the role of the reference librarian. I feel that it was a great and frustrating waste of time.”

“LIBR 540 (which I took July/August 2002) did not live up to my expectations as there was no real reference experience and very little information given that seemed relevant to the actual practice of reference services.”

“LIBR 540 - Taught by an instructor who had no reference experience”

“LIBR540 - I learned very little from this class and feel that it should be more practical.”

“LIBR 540 was a horrible experience; it needs to be taught by someone who knows and enjoys reference work and who respects the students at SLAIS. It should be hands-on, minus the three hour lectures on things that would be better explained by in-class exercises that actually USE the resources being discussed.”

“LIBR 540 -- content too superficial, lecture basically repeated what was in text, little opportunity for discussion, particularly with regards to conducting a reference interview”

“LIBR 540 - It is regrettable that our intake was required to take this course with this instructor, since administration already knew her shortcoming in teaching this subject. We have lost the opportunity for learning and developing reference skill over these few short months.”

32 students cited LIBR 510:

Overall students were dissatisfied with the format of this course, namely its web-based delivery, and with the course’s instruction.

“LIBR 510 - Same feeling as above. The online program is poorly designed and the professor spent too little time contributing to online discussion. Again with assignment online it seemed like they were poorly worded and we were constantly having to seek clarification. Again - The faculty was aware of the problems with this course and didn't right away take it off line - The system is failing the students.”

“LIBR 510 delivered through WebCT has been very disappointing. The way the course itself is written is thoroughly confusing and overly detailed. Both the modules and the assignments seems to focus on certain details rather than providing us with a general background and overview of bibliographic control. I feel like I have to be a detective to interpret the instructions on assignments.... I find it ironic that although it is a web-based course (meaning we should be able to do it all from a distance), we are required to hand in all our assignments to the office and we are required to do a major group project. I do not feel that this course has provided me with a good grounding in the subject, and my experience has discouraged me from wanting to take further courses in this subject area.”

“LIBR 510. Throughout the term, course requirements and expectations have been unclear.”

“LIBR510 - this was unnecessarily complicated and caused a lot of frustration for our intake. It does not lend itself to the web format.”

“510 (web CT, get rid of Web CT, it is a horrible way to "teach")”

“LIBR510 should not have been online. 560 would have been fine online. More than two courses online is inconsiderate course planning, as well as an imposed risk of ill health and injury: posture, ergonomics, monitor, constant noise of CPU and so on.”

8 students cited LIBR 570:

“Management - the instructor is very nice. I find, however, that as with ALL courses, the content needs to be practical. It needs to get away from turning students into corporate robots, and geared more towards practical matters such as how to develop a business plan, how prepare a staffing budget, how to prepare an acquisitions budget etc. The mistake of professional university programs is that they somehow stay in the theoretical, without allowing for a concentration on the practical. It is the practical skills that graduates leave with that will sell them into the workforce, and make good on SLAIS as a place to recommend to others.”

“Also LIBR 570 seems to me to be rather... advanced for the kind of management that most of us will be doing immediately out of the program, and even for the vast portion of our careers. Most of us will not become top-level managers, which is the information focused on by the class: instead, we will be managing/supervising staff, and thus the Human Resources Management course seems, at least at this point, to be more useful, and in many ways more basic, than this introductory one.”

“570-This course did not cover budgeting basics and basic managerial topics that will be important to my future career.”

4 students cited LIBR 560:

“I felt that LIBR 560 could and should have been an on-line course and also should have been more academically challenging.”

3 students cited LIBR 590:

“LIBR 590 is way too basic. I think soc-sci research methods should be a pre-req for this program, and then we get get into the more complex and interesting aspects of research methods. i felt like I was in first-year undergrad in this course.”

7. Have the optional courses you have taken met your expectations?

88 respondents (129 total)

Yes, all the optional courses I have taken have met my expectations: 33
No, I have taken optional courses that have not met my expectations: 25
I have not taken any optional courses yet: 29
Don't know: 1

8. If 'No', which course(s) and why?

4 students cited LIBR 554:

“554 It would be nice to know how databases work in terms of libraries in particular.”

3 students cited 538B:

“LIBR 538B Information Resources in Science and Technology

The instructor has merely presented the material and has not integrated hands-on learning, or made any effort to make the material relevant to our experiences. I don't feel that I am learning anything useful, although it has the potential to be a really interesting and relevant course.”

“LIBR 538B (Science Ref. Sources) - assignments did not relate to classroom content
-readings not integrated into course at all
-inadequate discussion of actual reference encounters”

2 students cited LIBR 522A:

“LIBR522A services for children was very poorly organized and taught. Every class was a nightmare.”

1 student cited LIBR 569:

“I was not at all satisfied with LIBR 569? [569A] (Instructional Role of the Librarian). I expected a course that dealt seriously with pedagogical issues, with teaching techniques, with educational theory, with the possible symbiosis between librarians and teaching staff. Instead, I got a course in "remedial candle-making for librarians". Assignments did not ask students to demonstrate mastery of any instructional concepts. I felt that this class was a great waste of time.”

Other comments:

“In my experience, I have found that instructors do not communicate with each other adequately to insure that the curriculum of courses in "literatures" and courses in "services" (specifically, LIBR 524, "Literature And Other Materials For Young Adults," and LIBR 542b, "Services For Youth: Young Adults") are clearly distinct from one another.”

“Several optional courses have failed to contain significant content or covered the material which their description has implied. Occasionally, the quality of instruction has been sub-par, but to be fair, often it has been excellent--it varies immensely.”

Other courses cited:

LIBR 512
LIBR 513
LIBR 517
LIBR 520
LIBR 541
LIBR 544D
LIBR 579D

9. Have you taken any required courses that you feel should be optional?

88 respondents (130 total)

Yes: 20
No: 62
Don't know: 6

10. If 'Yes', which course(s) and why?

10 students cited LIBR 590:

“LIBR 590 should be optional as students are no longer required to do research work to graduate.”

“LIBR 590 is of limited use to many of us; it would be nice to see the research component addressed in some other way, perhaps in a briefer treatment within LIBR 560, which probably could have covered more in the time allowed.”

7 students recommended that LIBR 570 be optional, and 2 recommended that LIBR 571 be a replacement requirement:

“Management. I think that Human resources should be the required course, not management, especially when it is either librarians with decades of experience, or those securing MBA's who are being hired for management positions.”

“Management 570 feels like it should be optional basically it is just organized common sense about how to treat people. Granted, some librarians could use some serious help in this department, but for others it feels yawningly redundant,”

“LIBR 570 should be optional, and LIBR 571 required....”

2 students cited LIBR 510:

“It is not that I feel that LIBR 510 should be optional. It is an important course. But I do believe that it should be treated just like LIBR 570 and 590, so that it is possible to take it later on. This would allow students to start the program taking only three courses (a more reasonable course load) and still allow them freedom to take any other courses in the

following semester. As it stands, if students do not take all four courses at once, in their first semester, their choice of classes for their second term is severely limited.”

Other comments:

“There are only 6 required courses in the MLIS program. That is, in my opinion, too few.”

“I think it might be worthwhile to have test-out options for people who have lots of experience in a particular area. Some students in 540 have many years ref desk experience ... why go through a foundational course? Some students have experience that should be formally recognized through credit-hours or exemption from a required course, or...?”

Other courses cited:

LIBR 540

LIBR 595

11. Have you taken any optional courses you feel should be required?

88 respondents (130 total)

Yes: 26

No: 31

I have not yet taken any optional courses: 26

Don't know: 5

12. If 'Yes', which course(s) and why?

12 students cited LIBR 520:

“I believe 520 should be required. It deals with the nuts and bolts of day to day librarian life. (I think some of my classmates will say that 590 should be optional: I think it is a valuable course, but I think that 520 is more important.)”

“LIBR 520 is very good and brings together a lot of issues that arise briefly in other classes; it is a very good "crystallizing" experience and is very hands-on and helpful.”

“LIBR 520: Collection Development. Most if not all librarians will have to do some collection development and management work.”

5 students cited LIBR 517:

“517 is a candidate for a required course. I have learned a great deal about organizing of information in libraries. This material may have been covered in various ways in 510 and 560, but it wasn't adequately covered for me.”

“I just wanted to write a comment. Even though I haven't taken 517, I am starting to feel as though this course would be appropriate for anyone in library school. I wish I had taken it and that it was offered more often.”

3 students cited LIBR 569J:

“LIBR 569J Issues in Intellectual Freedom and Censorship
I feel that every librarian should face and think about their stance on the issues raised in this course in order to be a responsible librarian.”

2 students cited LIBR 571:

“L571 Human Resources Mgmt should be required as well as L570 Mgmt because most graduates will need these skills upon graduation and finding employment as supervisors or middle managers.”

Other courses cited:

LIBR 512
LIBR 541
LIBR 557
LIBR 559F
LIBR 587

13. Are there courses for which you feel the pre- or co-requisite requirements (or lack thereof) should be changed?

88 respondents (130 total)

Yes: 10
No: 49
Don't know: 29

14. If 'Yes', which course(s) and why?

3 students cited LIBR 510:

“LIBR 510 because there is so much about cataloging and Marc records which has never come handy for other courses”

“I'm not sure about this, yet, but perhaps 510 is not needed as a pre-requisite for as many courses as listed in the fall 2004 schedule. Perhaps the answer is a scaled down version of

510. I think it could be split into two courses. One could be 510a for general students and 510b for those who intended to enter the cataloguing field. ??? Another suggestion: It would be great if the examples in 510 were applicable to public/school library folks. The 20 samples for Assignment 2 & 3 are all older academic books. To connect it to prior learning perhaps examples could include young adult series, some fiction, some curriculum based non-fiction, etc.”

1 student cited LIBR 590:

“590 For MACL students it is sometimes difficult b/c we don't have the same library skills as the other students.”

Other:

2 students recommended that SLAIS more carefully assess the computer skill levels of students wishing to enter courses with an emphasis on computer work.

15. Does the existing selection of courses provide an adequate opportunity to obtain a broad education in the field?

88 respondents (130 total)

Yes, the existing course selection provides adequate breadth: 49

No, the existing course selection does not provide adequate breadth: 18

Don't know: 21

16. Please elaborate:

14 students expressed concern with the scheduling of courses and/or the lack of opportunity to take all desired courses:

“Yes, as long as the courses are actually offered while one is at SLAIS!”

“I think it's really difficult in a two year program to get a truly broad education in this field. There are always more courses than one has time for.”

“Yes, but I think there should be more less mandatory courses, there are way more courses that I would prefer to take that are more applicable to my field of interest, but the mandatory courses push those other courses out of my reach.”

“Limited offerings and very little available space in what is offered. Most cut-throat registration I've ever experienced!”

3 students expressed concern that the manner in which the MLIS curriculum is presented is too rushed:

“The Core does not function to give an adequate introduction to the field, and 48 credits are insufficient to allow a student with no previous library experience to gain an adequate exposure to the field.”

“I believe the course work is quite good, although I am sometimes dubious of the quality of education some students receive when they enter the program with no previous experience in the field, rush through the program as quickly as possible, take advantage of none of the work opportunities available to us, and then graduate as "fully qualified professionals." I feel that SLAIS could recognize the potential harm they do to the profession by allowing people to pass through the program in this way.”

3 students recommended that the MLIS program place more emphasis on the acquisition of practical skills and professional experience:

“I really think that the practicum and professional experience courses should be more heavily emphasized -- the hands-on experience is what we all really need in order to put together all the things we cover in lecture classes.”

“I also feel that there should be EVEN MORE of a practical component. Perhaps two short practica, or one short and one longer, as in Education.”

3 students recommended that a 3-credit web design course be offered:

“Over time, the course selection can be adequate, but it does not always work out for people who must go through the program quickly, missing out on courses that will not be offered in a condensed time frame.

There is one major weakness in the course offerings.

Web Design has become a significant competency for librarianship. LIBR500 is a good introduction, but it is not enough. The one credit course in Dreamweaver is valuable, but insufficient. Other web courses offered are highly specialized - XML for example.

I would recommend adding a 3 credit course that covers not only Dreamweaver, but a broad range of skills needed to handle the various aspects of library web page creation, maintenance and management.

I would like to know more about cold fusion for example, or the entire process of getting a new page posted in library system. It could include an introduction to Macromedia Flash, Java, XML and so on.

Guest speakers could include systems librarians or web page design experts.

I feel I am leaving library school without enough knowledge in this area, based on the requirements listed in Librarian job postings that I have followed over the last few months.”

5 students expressed interest in learning more about government, business, and other types of special libraries (within the MLIS program):

“I believe there should be more opportunity to study special and government libraries. We really get inundated with public and academic.”

“I would liked to have had access to a class covering business librarianship.”

1 student expressed interest in having more opportunities for subject specialization (within the MLIS program):

“I would like to see more opportunity for subject specialization. For example music or fine arts are areas that require special training in bibliographic control yet no courses are offered.”

1 student recommended that the core competencies taught in the MLIS program be addressed in the form of modules:

“There should be 'modules' that force everyone to develop and build on core competencies - start with the core, although we could give or take 560. Then progress through modules that concentrate on reference services, technical services, management, and then end with some optionals.”

1 student expressed enjoyment of 1-credit courses:

“I am pleased as more and more one credit courses are added and taught by adjuncts. This makes the selection more diverse, which I like.”

17. Have all your areas of interest been satisfied by the course selection?

86 respondents (128 total)

Yes, all my areas of interest have been satisfied: 32

No, I have interests that are unsatisfied: 29

Don't know: 25

18. If 'No', what topics would you suggest?

Students suggested that more courses be offered on the following topics:

- Government librarianship
- Health sciences librarianship
- Management of electronic resources
- Business librarianship (particularly SIC codes)
- Intellectual property and legal responsibilities of librarians
- Services and collection development for ethnic and multicultural communities
- Records management
- Law librarianship
- Reference
- Rare books librarianship
- Story-telling

- Academic librarianship
- Rural librarianship
- Web design
- Adult literature and reader advisory programs for adults

4 students cited the difficulty of fitting the courses they would like to take into their degree program:

“I haven't had a chance yet to take any optional courses. The only thing I worry about in regards to course selection is that some of the courses I really want to take aren't offered regularly. For example, Facility Planning and Design, is only offered every 3rd or 4th semester.”

1 student suggested that closer links be fostered between SLAIS and the UBC library system:

“... Also, I feel there is a pitiful lack of connection between the UBC Library Technical Services and SLAIS - should be close cooperation and practical opportunities.”

Other comments:

“I would love to see courses offered in nonfiction material for children and international survey of material for children that would keep us up to date on US /European and other international trends.”

“I would like to see more courses taught in conjunction with the Teacher-Librarianship program with regards to working in K-12 libraries or in education-related libraries (i.e., UBC's Education Library) that are at the graduate level because the majority of Teacher-Librarianship courses are at the undergraduate level.”

19. Has the scheduling of courses met your expectations?

89 respondents (132 total)

Yes: 43

No: 40

Don't know: 6

20. Please elaborate:

10 students described a lack of consistency of course offerings from term to term as being problematic:

“There are a number of courses that I would have liked to taken but couldn't fit into my schedule during that particular term and haven't been offered in the terms that I could take them....”

“The same course should be repeated twice in the year. There are very few faculty around and too many courses not being taught”

“Some excellent courses seem only to be offered during the summer. I have been able to take them, but many students have to leave Vancouver for the summer.”

"My only complaint is that some summer courses are not offered during the winter session, which is annoying for those of us who want to take particular summer courses but also need to work during the summer.”

“Working full time I have found it difficult to take many classes that I am interested in, especially in the summers. It always seems like the same courses are available in the evenings and on weekends, a little variety over the course of two or three years would be helpful.”

“Sadly, there are not enough resources to offer all courses so that every student can take everything they want. Some courses are offered once every two or three years, which makes them difficult to fit into the regular two-year program.”

9 students cited a lack of summer term offerings and/or problematic course timing during the summer term:

“Although I am new to SLAIS this semester, I am disappointed in the course offerings for the summer. I knew going in that there would be less selection in the summer semester, but the way it is set up prevents me from completing four courses (there are many more courses offered in May/June than July/August - I know of at least four I'd like to take in May/June but I have to limit it to two). The one course I'm taking in July/August is condensed into three weeks, preventing me from taking another course concurrently. I know the course will be worth it, so I'm opting to go for it.”

4 students cited problems relating to the scheduling of the web-based Core courses:

“Wasn't expecting to take 3 online courses, was further surprised to discover that all three online courses are also essentially classroom courses. Found it difficult to manage time as a result.”

“"Optional" face-to-face time in 510 is, by the instructor's own admission, required. "Optional" labs in 500 are necessary to complete the assignments, even with prior knowledge of the subject matter. So there has been a lot more on-campus time than I expected when I set up my (paid) work schedule for this term.”

2 students recommended that morning classes begin later:

“9:00 classes are horrid for a lot of people. In a work schedule, one usually becomes accustomed to the routine. But coming in twice a week early and rest late, or night classes

followed by 9 am, can be tough on the system during heavy deadline season. (Keeping in mind that some of us have to work night shifts etc. to get through school). So, maybe 9:30 - 12:30, and 2 - 5.”

2 students cited a difficulty in registering for desired courses.

2 students described the scheduling of Saturday courses as being problematic:

“Well: I just don't think that there's a call for required classes on Saturdays. Neither the students nor instructors were very happy with this arrangement in the Jan. 2003 core. Further, it would be very useful if, occasionally, one-credit courses could be offered at times other than Saturdays. I cannot miss work on Saturdays, and so I have been unable to take a lot of very very interesting and valuable short courses.”

1 student suggested that LIBR 513 be offered during a term other than Winter Term 1:

“I am sorry that I was unable to take LIBR 513. It is always scheduled for the fall, and because I participated in a co-op work term, I was unable to take it. It's an important enough course that I wish it could be taught a bit more frequently. Given the existence of the co-op program, the once-a-year nature of some course offerings ensures that we will miss out on some of these important courses.”

1 student suggested that LIBR 516 be offered more frequently.

Other comments:

“when I first joined SLAIS in January of 2000 - when the part-time option was added, I was lead to believe that I could more or less complete the program part-time. A few courses were offered on Saturdays and in evenings, but many of the courses I was interested in were only offered during weekday time slots - impossible for some-one working full-time. I was disappointed. so I took an early retirement, and came to SLAIS more or less full-time in order to take these courses.”

“there aren't a lot of classes offered, we don't need to take a lot of them, they are scheduled when they are scheduled and the rest of my life takes place around them.”

“Sometimes MACL library classes over lapped with MACL classes offered in other departments.”

Other:

2 students cited irregularly meeting classes as being problematic.

21. Are there courses that you have been prevented from taking?

87 respondents (129 total)

Yes: 27
No: 57
Don't know: 3

22. If 'yes', which course(s) and why?

7 students stated that seat limits and/or course scheduling conflicts prevented them from taking courses in general:

“Many courses, simply because they were only offered once during my time here, and conflicted with other courses or would have put me over the maximum allowable.”

“There just are not enough opportunities to take everything that is of interest and relevance to my future career. If we are to get a general overview of libraries in general, as well as take the courses that specifically apply to our ambitions, we run out of credits once our required classes are out of the way.”

6 students cited a difficulty in enrolling in summer courses:

“LIBR 570 Summer Session - full within 5 minutes of registration opening.”

“All the courses offered over the summer. While convenient for those who live there, they are impossible to take if you are from somewhere else and need to go home over the summer in order to make enough money to come back. Include online, distance ed courses in the summer would thus make good sense: i have nothing against online courses per say, but they need to be used more wisely by SLAIS, and summer offerings would be a good way to do so.”

1 student cited her failed attempt to audit a course:

“I requested that I be allowed to audit LIBR 569J "Issues In Intellectual Freedom And Access," but that request was denied, despite the fact that there were plenty of remaining seats in the class. I question the legitimacy of instructors being able to make such a decision. I do not argue that full participation in classes provides us with a more meaningful experience. However, if we must take all course for full credit or not take them at all, this severely limits our range of potential experiences at SLAIS. We ought to be allowed to decide for ourselves whether or not there is still value for us in the auditing non-required courses.”

One respondent cited a lack of courses in children's literature at the graduate level:

“Only two courses at the 300 and 400 level are permitted for the MA in Children's Literature. There is only one 400 level course offered by the English Department in Children's Literature. There are numerous interesting courses offered by LLED, eg, Trends in Children's Literature, Canadian Children's Lit. in the Classroom, Multicultural

Children's Literature..... Therefore: SUGGESTION: MORE 500 GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE !!!!”

Courses cited as being difficult to get into include:

LIBR 516
LIBR 520
LIBR 538D
LIBR 587
LIBR 590

23. Is course information available online adequate? (e.g. syllabi, course web pages, assignments, etc.)

89 respondents (132 total)

Yes: 67
No: 20
Don't know: 2

24. If 'no', for which courses was online information inadequate and why?

7 students cited a need for greater consistency and depth of on-line information provided about courses:

“I'd like to see full syllabi posted online, and I haven't yet found that for Winter term courses. That would help me understand the course load, expectations, etc.”

“I sometimes wished for more one-stop shopping. I had to sometime hunt to long to find all information about a course in one place -- that is, prof email, room number, course name -- everything in one place”

2 students cited an inadequacy of on-line information about summer term courses:

“Summer classes that start in just a few months time don't all have syllabi online. The "class description" is not adequate enough for determining if a class is something I want to take. Knowing what the assignments are and stuff like that from the syllabus gives me a better idea of what a class is about.”

1 student recommended that information about web-based course formats be made clearer to incoming students:

“Also, I think you should make it MUCH more explicit (in the application package and again in the acceptance letter or shortly after) that some courses are web-based. As it is, you don't find this out until you register, which is usually well after you've accepted the

admission offer. And even then, it is only by looking at some very small print at the bottom of the timetable that you find this out.”

Other courses cited are:

500
510
516
540

25. Have you taken any web-based courses at SLAIS?

89 respondents (132 total)

Yes: 80

No: 9

Don't know:

26. If 'No', how do you feel about the idea of participating in web-based courses at SLAIS?

2 students cited their dislike of the idea of web-based course formats:

I feel that I gain much more from participating in the classroom environment. I would much prefer in-class offerings.

2 students cited the flexibility and accessibility of web-based learning:

“That would be a good idea because then people can begin to get a MLIS from UBC on-line and save money.”

“For me, I live near campus so prefer to attend in person. For others, distance courses - if designed thoughtfully using best practices and funded abundantly - might be a good way to extend learning throughout the province to people otherwise unable to pursue graduate-level education.”

Other comments:

“... You cannot require use of Marc Magician software when it is only available in the SLAIS labs - defeats the whole purpose of online, distance ed courses.”

27. If 'Yes', how was your experience of participation in the web-based course(s) at SLAIS?

Most responses to this question related to the web-based MLIS Core courses. Many respondents stated that they enjoyed LIBR 500, some stated that they enjoyed LIBR 560,

and many stated that they disliked LIBR 510. Of the respondents who cited negative experiences with web-based courses, many commented on their preference for classroom-based learning, their desire for more interaction with their instructors and peers.

28 respondents reported their dislike of the web-based format of LIBR 510; 14 of these respondents professed satisfaction with the web-based format of LIBR 500, and 6 with the web-based format of LIBR 560:

“I hated it. 500 functioned well but was heavily reliant on the faculty to do in person modules and be incredibly involved in the day-to-day discussions, etc. 560 worked OK, but there isn't much of a technical dimension to 560. I think WebCT can be done well and even function on a fully distance-ed level. But none of our courses were designed that well.”

“In general, a well-designed web-based course (such as LIBR 500) is a joy, providing schedule flexibility and added functionality to the teaching time. But if a course is not well-suited to the mode, well-designed, and well-taught, it is a horrible experience (such as LIBR 510).”

“Horrific. Glad that 510 will no longer be online.”

“510 is a disaster -- but mostly because of the way the content is presented. If it were to be redone I think it could work well as an online course”

“... I simply thought that 510 was completely inappropriate as a web based course. It's confusing, dense information to the newcomer, and there are a thousand questions. It requires heavy lab time and less lecture time. It could be a lab based course...”

“LIBR500 works well as a web based course and is well supported. However, as I have previously stated, LIBR510 should not be taught in this way. It is the most technical of the courses and there is a lot to understand in one term. It requires a lot more face to face instruction.”

“WebCT should be used for optional courses, not required courses -- this allows student to choose a course delivery method that best meets their personal learning style. There is nothing wrong with WebCT as long as the content is appropriate for the delivery method -- and not all content is appropriate (for example, 510 is definitely NOT appropriate).”

8 respondents cited isolation as being a problem with web-based courses:

“Not the greatest experience thus far, mostly due to the design of the courses and this being my introduction to library school. The core is such an important and, for many of us, completely new experience. Regular live interaction with a human being would have been helpful. Gathering a sense of community in the first term would have been easier in a face to face setting.”

“A good analogy for these courses is like sinking into quicksand. I came to SLAIS with hopes of meeting like minded people interested in being librarians and information specialists and exploring those careers and building a network. This was impossible to accomplish online. The online experience, combined with the new location and the poor level of instruction has totally drained any and all the enthusiasm I had coming into this program. I feel very disconnected from my peers and the library community in general and have no idea how I am going to build that network later on.

6 respondents cited their overall dislike of web-based courses:

“WebCT gets a big fat "F" in my book. It is impersonal, it is overly time-consuming and I feel alienated from my fellow classmates. Sitting in front of a computer for 40+ hours a week is wearing. I am developing eye strain and I hardly know my fellow students. I cannot believe I paid thousands of dollars to do this....”

“I think web-based courses are bad pedagogy and inappropriate for graduate-level coursework. SLAIS should be a place where students engage in discussion and interact in a meaningful way, and this does not happen online. Graduate school is about serious engagement in topics and with colleagues and profs- this is not accomplished online. The course I took online, 510, covered material that would be better taught in person. And given the fact that all students taking the course had to go to campus regularly anyway to meet for course-related projects, to look at LC tables, etc., it was a farce to deliver this online. It seems like a ridiculous and futile exercise to pretend to deliver a class virtually but to rely on on-site assignments and resources. What's more, the WebCT courseware is very clunky and has terrible navigation. The server it sits on is unreliable. This trial balloon should be popped.”

5 respondents suggested that optional courses be offered in web-based formats, and not the Core or other required courses:

“I did not mind it. However, I think it would be great if we had the option to take a web-based course or not. Perhaps it would be better if the web-based courses offered were electives.”

“...The core is not an appropriate time to make a strong push for web-based courses; it is when new students are trying to make connections with each other and within SLAIS, UBC, and even Vancouver, and not meeting face-to-face is detrimental to this adjustment period. Courses such as LIBR 590 and 570, however, would probably be well-received as web-based options, and the administration could still be assured high enrollment as they are required.”

2 respondents suggested that an introductory Web-CT lab session be offered at the beginning of the term:

“...I think each course should have an introductory session in a LAB where the students are introduced to the course outline on the web and how it works...”

Other comments:

“As a general rule, i don't have a problem with web based courses, although i think they are not used as well as they could be at SLAIS. To begin with, I don't think the Core should be online. When you move to a new city, start a new program, and meet new people, you really need the community and the reassurance that comes only with meeting face to face. The core is hard enough to survive as it is: online classes make it harder. That said, LIBR 500 works just fine online, although i think that is mostly a tribute to Susie. LIBR 510, on the other hand, needs to be taught face-to-face. The concepts and procedures taught in that class are so new and foreign to most students, and we need to be able to ask and answer questions when they occur, not by email sometime later. In general, then, i think online classes should only be used for optional courses, especially those relating to technology in some manner, and could be used more effectively during the summer months to ensure that even those of us who aren't from the Vancouver area could take courses during those terms (we are paying the fees, after all. we may as well get something for them).”

“Online courses are important. Adult learners need this option. However, these courses are quite different than regular classes. I think they can work, but I think really successful web-based programs need to be looked at (such as Athabasca) and perhaps consulted to determine how they overcame problems. Overall, I think all three web-based courses had too much content. In my opinion, it needs to be scaled back a bit, along with an assignment or two to allow time for the readings and online discussions. I'm not trying to get out of working (I enjoy the opportunity to learn), but I really do think these courses need to be scaled back just a bit. Another suggestion would be to link assignments, so that the goals of two courses could be served by one assignment.”

“A mixture. I liked the flexibility and the opportunity to work independently and at my own pace. On the other hand, I was really disappointed with the on-line discussion component, which rarely generated thoughtful dialogue but which more often felt contrived and obligatory.”

“Good and bad. It was nice to be able to schedule the readings online so that they fit into my schedule but at the same time, having "lectures" online means that you do a lot of reading!”

“It raises an expectation that the remainder of the SLAIS experience is unable to meet; the specific skills developed to complete online work are never employed again. I believe other concerns in this area have been reported multiple times and reiterating them now would serve little useful purpose.”

28. Which course format would you prefer?

89 respondents (132 total)

Web-based: 1

Classroom: 55

Mixed: 29

No preference: 1

Don't know: 3

29. Please elaborate:

14 respondents cited their preference for learning through human interaction:

“I prefer classroom. I refer those who want to know to the ARL's "Facts about Learning": "In general people in a learning situation retain 10% of what they read; 20% of what they hear; 50% of what they see and hear." In other words, classroom learning (see and hear) is potentially 5 times more effective than this newfangled web-learnin'. And this has certainly been my experience with WebCT.”

“I learn from my instructors as well as my fellow students. This interaction is best served in a classroom setting. The online discussion makes the interaction too formal.”

“After enough time staring at the computer, you go crazy. Being around people is much more conducive to actually learning and not losing your mind.”

“Nothing beats the discussion and interaction with other students and professor in the same room.”

“There is just more breadth of interaction and instruction available in classrooms that one cannot get either through web-based teaching.”

Ten respondents cited their interest in the possibility of taking mixed format courses:

“I do prefer classroom, mostly because interaction is really nice to have and it clarifies expectations and you get to know your classmates. I would also encourage a mixed format but with emphasis on classroom sessions. Web-ct would be a nice supplement for discussion and course specific communication of information. It would be especially good if students could choose their preference between fully web based (hence distance ed), or the classroom emphasized mixed format, so everyone could participate in discussion and info discussion.”

“Discussion takes forever on WebCT. Poorly written modules take forever to read, much longer than reading from printed course material. I would be willing to use WebCT as part of a course, but not the central vehicle for course activities or content”

“I think WebCT would be very useful in combination with a live course. Not in the way it is used now, with the full course online + required class meetings every other week.

Although I felt the in-class component was essential to attend this made these courses one and a half the size they should have been, i.e. $1(\text{online})+0.5(\text{in class})=1.5$.

WebCT would be an excellent place for instructors to post additional readings or assignment information, post individuals marks on specific assignments or to create accompanying technical modules or to have weekly pre or post lecture discussions on a guided topic.”

Other comments:

“I expect graduate school to be an opportunity for discussion and critical thinking. This just does not happen in a WebCT course, despite the best efforts of instructors grading students on their contributions to the discussion list. The discussions in WebCT are more like additional writing assignments. I found very little interactive discussion taking place -- for the most part, people just posted their answers to the questions they were directed to. This type of "discussion" is very stilted, and gives one the feeling of being overwhelmed by information. I much prefer the give and take that happens when people talk together...as well as the "ah ha" moments that happen when one is presented with a new perspective.”

“the optional labs in 500 were a big help -- I didn't know much about computer before taking the course, but did by the time I finished”

“I think all formats have their plusses and minuses. I do think that a completely web-based course in the core is probably not a good idea.”

“The entirely Web-Based courses often deal with abstract or practical concepts and as such require a lecture or lab component. Also, many purely lecture courses simply do not contain enough lecturable material to justify a 3-hour timeslot.”

“I would like the opportunity to take optional courses via the web, but the primary reason I came to live in Vancouver was so that I could attend classes with my peers. I'm not opposed to web-based learning, but I don't think it's fair to force these courses on everyone in the core.”

“Generally, I prefer a classroom format. However, due to my need to commute and demands of my family, web-based courses do offer a great deal of flexibility. Courses that offer both web-based and classroom components need to be carefully constructed e.g., required vs. optional expectations, work load, handing in assignments etc.”

“I enjoyed the experience of a web-based class and I feel that in the right hands they are a valuable learning tool. I also like not having to commute to campus for every class. But, at the same time, I am hesitant to give up the interaction that comes with classroom time. Ideally, I would like to have one class out of eight offered through web delivery. That way one class every two semesters could be online.”

“Quality of time use, determined largely by the amount of planning time, the level of experience of the teacher, and their commitment to teaching, is what matters. The format/venue/forum can be awesome or suck either way (forgive the non-scholarly language used to make a point).”

30. Has the workload for the courses that you have taken been appropriate?

89 respondents (131 total)

Yes: 41

No: 43

Don't know: 5

31. If “no,” which courses and why?

32. Does your workload affect the quality of your learning experiences at SLAIS?

88 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 57

No: 15

Don't know: 16

33. Please elaborate:

34. In what manner do you plan to complete your program requirements?

84 respondents (125 total)

Carry a full course load for consecutive winter and summer terms: 18

Carry a full course load for consecutive winter terms, and take one or more summer courses: 35

Carry a full course load for consecutive winter terms, without taking summer courses: 8

Carry a reduced course load for consecutive winter terms, but carry a full course load in consecutive summer terms: 1

Carry a reduced course load for consecutive winter and summer terms: 13

Carry a reduced course load for consecutive winter terms, without taking summer courses: 5

Don't know: 4

35. Other – please specify:

36. Why have you chosen to complete your program requirements in this manner?

37. Does the manner in which you are completing your program requirements affect your learning experience at SLAIS?

84 respondents (124 total)

Yes: 40

No: 22

Don't know: 22

38. Please elaborate:

39. Do the required texts or course materials adequately support and enhance the course curriculum?

85 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 55

No: 26

Don't know: 4

40. If 'No', which course(s) and why?

41. The panel that conducted an external review of SLAIS in the spring of 2003 suggested that there was an "artificial divide" between the MLIS and MAS programs. Do you agree with this assessment?

88 respondents (131)

Yes: 31

No: 7

Don't know: 50

42. Please elaborate:

43. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, how would you suggest that this divide be bridged?

44. Please use this space to express any additional comments, concerns or questions about SLAIS curriculum and courses:

SLAIS Facilities

45. Are you satisfied with the classroom facilities that SLAIS uses? (e.g. size, furniture, blackboards/whiteboards, computers, a/v equipment, etc.)

88 respondents (129 total)

Yes: 20

No: 67
Don't know: 1

46. Please elaborate:

47. Where do you do most of your studying on campus?

89 respondents (130 total)

SLAIS: 27
A library: 7
Other space on campus (non-library): 8
I don't study on campus: 45
Don't know: 2

48. Please elaborate:

49. Are you satisfied with the current kitchen and lounge space at SLAIS?

87 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 56
No: 25
Don't know: 6

50. Please elaborate:

51. Where have you held group meetings on campus?

“Check all that apply” (124 responses)

TEF 320: 30
SLAIS lounge: 58
SLAIS IT Lab I: 49
SLAIS IT Lab II: 44
Campus eatery or pub: 38
Library group study room: 21
Other location within library: 0
Classroom in building other than TEF: 32
Don't know: 6

52. Other – please specify:

53. A maintenance system was re-implemented in January 2004 that asks each SLAIS students to volunteer to clean the kitchen for two days each term. Are you satisfied with the current maintenance of the kitchen?

87 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 61

No: 3

Don't know: 23

54. Please elaborate:

55. Are you satisfied with the current IT Labs?

88 respondents (129 total)

Yes: 63

No: 19

Don't know: 6

56. If 'No', what could be improved or added to the SLAIS IT Labs in order to better meet your education's needs?

57. Have you been able to obtain adequate assistance while working in the IT Labs?

88 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 60

No: 2

Don't know: 26

58. Please elaborate:

59. In June of 2003, SLAIS moved to the Technology Enterprise Facility III. SLAIS will remain in this space until it moves to its permanent home in the Barber Learning Centre. Please use this space to express any comments or concerns you may have regarding SLAIS's temporary facilities:

60. Please use this space to express any additional comments, concerns, or questions about SLAIS facilities:

LASSA and Student Life

61. Does LASSA adequately represent your interests as a SLAIS student?

87 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 41

No: 5

Don't know: 41

62. If "No", please comment on areas you feel LASSA is not addressing:

63. Has SLAIS provided sufficient opportunities to participate in SLAIS student life?
(e.g. LASSA, LASSA events, student chapters of professional associations, colloquia,
etc.)

87 respondents (126 total)

Yes: 69

No: 8

Don't know: 10

64. Please elaborate:

65. Have you been able to participate to your satisfaction in SLAIS student life?

86 respondents (126 total)

Yes: 44

No: 35

Don't know: 7

66. Please elaborate:

67. Have you been able to interact to your satisfaction with students from SLAIS
programs and course concentrations other than your own? (e.g. if you are an MAS
student, have you been able to interact with MLIS or MACL students?)

82 respondents (122 total)

Yes: 28

No: 46

Don't know: 8

68. Please elaborate:

69. Are you currently in debt due to the cost of your post-secondary education and
incurred living expenses?

87 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 57

No: 30

Don't know: 0

70. Please elaborate:

71. Was the tuition consultation process satisfactory?

86 respondents (126 total)

Yes: 24

No: 20

Don't know: 42

72. Please elaborate:

73. Were you aware that there was an information session on the SLAIS tuition setting process?

86 respondents (127 total)

Yes: 66

No: 14

Don't know: 6

74. Please elaborate:

75. Have the tuition raises affected you personally?

87 respondents (128 total)

Yes: 58

No: 24

Don't know: 5

76. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, how have the tuition rises affected you?

77. Has adequate information been provided about student awards (e.g. scholarships or fellowships) and financial aid (e.g. bursaries or students loans)?

84 respondents (121 total)

Yes, adequate information has been provided about student awards and financial aid: 51

No, awards information has been adequate but financial aid information has been inadequate: 14

No, financial aid information has been adequate but awards information has not been adequate: 6

No, both awards and financial information have been inadequate: 13

78. Please elaborate:

79. Please use this space to comment on your general experience as a student at UBC:

SLAIS Administration, Faculty and Staff

80. Have SLAIS administrative processes met your expectations? (e.g. office resources, fees, application processes, etc.)

88 respondents (130 total)

Yes: 79

No: 6

Don't know: 3

81. Please elaborate:

82. Are you satisfied with the channels and the effectiveness of communication between SLAIS students and staff?

88 respondents (130 total)

Yes, I am satisfied with both the channels and the effectiveness of communication with SLAIS staff: 62

No, I am only satisfied with the channels, but not the effectiveness of communication with SLAIS staff: 5

No, I am only satisfied with the effectiveness, but not the channels of communication with SLAIS staff: 2

No, I am not satisfied with either the channels or effectiveness of communication with SLAIS staff: 4

Don't know: 15

83. Please elaborate:

84. Are you satisfied with the channels and the effectiveness of communication between SLAIS students and faculty?

84 respondents (125 total)

Yes, I am satisfied with both the channels and the effectiveness of communication with SLAIS faculty: 51

No, I am only satisfied with the channels, but not the effectiveness of communication with SLAIS faculty: 11

No, I am only satisfied with the effectiveness, but not the channels of communication with SLAIS faculty: 1

No, I am not satisfied with either the channels or the effectiveness of communication with SLAIS faculty: 8
Don't know: 13

85. Please elaborate:

86. Is your relationship with your advisor satisfactory?

85 respondents (126 total)

Yes: 51

No: 21

Don't know: 13

87. Please elaborate:

88. Are you satisfied with the number of tenured or tenure-track faculty versus the number of adjunct course instructors at SLAIS?

85 respondents (125 total)

Yes: 30

No: 23

Don't know: 32

89. Please elaborate:

90. Please use this space to express any additional comments, concerns or questions about SLAIS Administration, Faculty and Staff:

91. Please use this space to express any additional comments, concerns or questions about SLAIS Administration, Faculty and Staff: [this question was listed twice]

Additional Comments

92. What has been your most positive experience at SLAIS?

93. What has been your most negative experience at SLAIS?

94. How can the PEP Survey be improved in the future?