Advice to Instructors regarding keeping your response rates high with UVic’s New Course Experience Survey (CES) System
Developed by the CES Faculty Advisory Committee, February 2014

This summer (2014) UVic is converting the current mixed paper and online Course Evaluation Survey (CES) system to a completely online system. In doing so, UVic is joining other major academic institutions across North America that have already instituted such systems. These systems have a number of established advantages, including the use of effective technologies, integrated research analyses, and timely reportage of results.

As an instructor, how will you be affected by the conversion? Other than experiencing a short period of adjustment, very little. You will no longer have to bring CES forms to class, distribute them, collect them and deliver them to the department office. Even in large classes, you will no longer have to arrange for a department administrator to come on the day of the survey. You will not have to concern yourself with those students who did not attend class on that day, as all such students will receive automatic online reminders and will have the means to access the CES online.

One area of concern in which you can be efficacious is that of student response rate. Evidence from other institutions indicates that upon implementation of an online system there can be an initial minor drop in response rate, though with subsequent recovery. However, you can be of great influence in keeping response rates high in your course. How? By a number of simple initiatives:

1. In your course syllabus, have a section in which you mention the CES, indicate its importance and reveal the links required to access the CES online. (If all instructors do this, it would provide strong reinforcement for student participation in the CES process.)

2. As the end of term approaches remind students that a CES will be conducted. Refer them to the section in your course syllabus that describes the CES. Remind students to bring their electronic devices with them to class for use in completing the survey. For first year or foundation courses it is worth taking the time the week before to show students how such devices can be used. Ask if any students will have trouble accessing the system due to technology constraints. Ask them if there are options for them or alternate plans they might make.

3. On the day scheduled for the CES, allow time at the beginning for its completion. Describe again why the CES is important and how you would use the aggregate feedback. Emphasize again that individual responses are confidential and not available until after grades have been submitted. Show students how to access the relevant CES using their devices and then leave the classroom for about 15 minutes to allow for completion of the CES in your absence.

4. Remind students at the beginning of subsequent classes to complete the CES if they had not already done so or if they were not present on the day it was conducted. Indicate that the system will be sending email reminders to non-responders to complete the CES, which will stop once completed.

While these suggestions will not guarantee 100% response rates, they should generate response rates that at least compete with those of the paper versions of CES obtained in the past.