



# IBCM FRESHMEN SURVEY 2016

Quality Assurance Office

2016

International Business College Mitrovica

Website: [www.ibcmitrovica.eu](http://www.ibcmitrovica.eu) - Mail: [info@ibcmitrovica.eu](mailto:info@ibcmitrovica.eu)

## **Executive summary**

The annual freshmen survey was completed in May 2016 to gather feedback from incoming students on the provision of services at IBCM. The regular completion of a freshmen survey gives IBCM a tool for making continual improvements as well as monitoring trends over time. This year's survey yields several key findings.

Firstly, the proportion of respondents reporting that they are simultaneously registered at another higher education institution has reduced, though not significantly (from 16.7% to 16.00%) and certainly not as much as last year, when 32.7% in the 2013 intake dropped to 16.7% a year later.

The most commonly reported reasons for choosing IBCM were 1) coursework in the English language, 2) the international profile and accreditation, and 3) quality of academics.

The overall satisfaction rating has fallen from 5.0 in 2014/15 to 4.8 in 2015/16 on a 6 point Likert scale, where 6 represents the most favorable response.

Students were asked to rate several specific areas, providing insight into areas for improvement over coming years. Areas requiring future attention include:

- Areas for sports/recreational activities
- Better learning facilities/classrooms
- Heating System
- Cafeteria

It should be noted that, of the 55 respondents, 26 either did not think anything needed improvement or could not think of anything that could be improved.

Respondents also provided their feedback on areas for improvement through open-ended items. The most frequently mentioned recommendations were to 1) activity space for sports etc., 2) to include more field trips or tours for first semester students, and 3) IT courses

## 1.0 Introduction

The International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM) constantly strives to ensure quality for its current and future students. Quality is a common objective which involves all members and internal and external stakeholders of the IBCM and is a central tool in all of our services, including teaching and learning as well as administration. With regards to our current and future students, we aim to ensure they receive a quality education and obtain learning outcomes that live up to their expectations. Therefore, the IBCM evaluates the satisfaction of its new first semester student cohort roughly one month after the start of the new academic year in order to improve the services offered to the IBCM freshmen during the first month of studies.

## 2.0 Survey design and procedure

The freshmen survey for the winter term of 2015-2016 was conducted in mid-to-late February on both of the IBCM campuses. This year, the questionnaires were filled out both online and in hard copy format and launched much later in the year. This meant that dropouts were not included and that students would have to fill out the questionnaire in their own time, which goes some way to explaining the lower response rates compared to the 2014/15 survey. Students were introduced to the purpose of the survey and encouraged to provide thoughtful answers with the goal of improving IBCM services. The anonymous nature of the survey was emphasized and no identifying information was collected. Students were provided ample time to complete the survey.

The freshmen survey tool was taken from the previous year. By using largely the same questions as prior years, we are able to draw comparisons and look for trends across time. The survey tool included a number of Likert scale questions, for which a forced response scale of 1-6 was used, as well as several open-ended items.

The survey consisted of four parts. In the first part students were asked to provide information about their profile. Question items included:

Gender of the student;

At which campus the student is currently studying;

Whether the student is studying at other institutions at the same time, and if yes, at which institution;

Their three critical reasons to study at the IBCM.

The second part of the survey was directed only at those students who participated in the English Preparatory Courses (EPC) offered by the IBCM. If applicable, students were asked:

- At which location they participated in the EPC;
- Their overall satisfaction with the EPC;
- How well the EPC prepared them for their semester 1 studies.

The third part of the survey asked students about their first interactions with, and impressions of, IBCM. Students were asked to assess:

- How well informed they felt through the IBCM promotion campaign;
- The sufficiency of the entrance exam to test suitability of applicants;
- Satisfaction with information provided on induction day.

The fourth part of the freshmen survey asked students about their impressions of the services offered to them early in their first month of studies at IBCM, again using the Likert scale format.

The fourth part included four open-ended questions eliciting feedback on:

- Things that could be improved at the IBCM;
- Additional services that might help students adjust during their first semester;
- Extra classes that should be taught at IBCM.

### **3.0 Response**

At the time of administration, 79 students were enrolled in the first semester at the IBCM: 19 at the north campus and 60 at the south campus. Of the entire first semester cohort at the north campus, 11 students 69% responded to the survey; of the first semester cohort at the south campus 44 students 73% responded. In total 55 students 70% responded to the freshmen survey. The fact that surveys were not conducted during regular course hours goes some way to explaining the drop in response rates.

**Figure 1. Attendance trends at the time of survey administration**

**International Business College Mitrovica**

Website: [www.ibcmitrovica.eu](http://www.ibcmitrovica.eu) - Mail: [info@ibcmitrovica.eu](mailto:info@ibcmitrovica.eu)

	2014-2015	2015-2016
North campus: Percent with attendance > 30%	35.84%	51.60%
South campus: Percent with attendance > 70%	77.39%	71.47%

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Profile of respondents

The answers on the questions of this part of the freshmen survey provide a snapshot of the semester one student profile. Of the 55 respondents, 23 (42%) are male and 32 (58%) are female. The survey therefore has a fairly representative gender sample, as 32 of the 55 students are female (58%), and 23 are male (42%).

Across both campuses, 28 (51%) indicated that they expect to study Marketing and Management, 13 (24%) selected Environmental and Agricultural Management, and 9 (16%) Public Administration, whereas 5 (9%) respondents left this field blank.

Of the 55 respondents, 9 students (16%) report being simultaneously enrolled at another higher education institution (HEI). This represents no further drop from the 2014-15 survey, which showed a halving of rates of students attending another HEI; down from 31.7% reporting that they concurrently attended another HEI in the 2013-14 survey. Of the 9 students reporting multiple matriculations during the present year, 6 study at the south campus, which equates to 14% of south campus respondents. 3 study at the north campus- equating to 27% of north campus respondents.

Three of the south campus respondents studying at multiple institutions are enrolled at the University of Mitrovica, and three at the University of Prishtina. Of the north campus respondents studying at multiple institutions, one declined to indicate which university, one at the University of Zurich and one at 'VTSS iz Urosevca u Leposavicu'. The one that did not indicate which institution they studied at wrote 'Faculty of Philosophy - English Language'.

The 55 students that responded to the freshmen survey displayed a diverse range of motivations for choosing IBCM. Data was collected with an open answer question, allowing respondents flexibility in their response. Responses were divided into general categories and

coded accordingly. Across both campuses, the following categories were mentioned in decreasing order of frequency:

Coursework in the English language (30);  
International profile and accreditation (28);  
Academic quality (25);  
Practice oriented learning, "From theory to practice" (3);  
Improved work opportunities and a better future (6);  
Interest in going abroad (5);  
Specific areas of academic interest (5);  
The internship program (8);  
Novelty of the IBCM approach (8);  
Reputation (1);  
Values (1);  
Modern Conditions (1);  
Community (1);  
Price (1);

#### **4.2 Student satisfaction with the English Preparatory Courses (EPC)**

This part of the survey was completed only by those students who completed the EPC course at IBCM prior to starting their first semester. Across both campuses, 15 students completed this section, which is a significant increase on the 5 students that completed this section in 2014-2015.

The average satisfaction score was 5.4 on the 6 point scale, where 6 represents the highest degree of satisfaction.

On the question item asking how well the EPC course prepared them for their English medium studies at IBCM, the average response was 5.3 on the same scale.

#### **4.3 First impressions and initial interactions with IBCM**

This part of the student freshmen survey addresses first impressions and initial interactions of new students with IBCM. The answers on this part of the freshmen survey can be used to improve IBCM's promotion strategy and ensure that students are well informed during the induction day.

**International Business College Mitrovica**

Website: [www.ibcmitrovica.eu](http://www.ibcmitrovica.eu) - Mail: [info@ibcmitrovica.eu](mailto:info@ibcmitrovica.eu)

## **Figure 2. Student assessment of initial services**

Regarding the induction day, the disparity between the quality between the two campuses that was manifest in 2014/15 report has been closed. Students at the north campus gave a rate of 4.6 and students at the south rated at 5.2, respectively). However, although the overall score (4.9) is an improvement on last year, it still falls short of the 5.0 target set in last year's survey.

Regarding suitability of the entrance exam, the combined score is 4.16. Only two people rated the IBCM entrance exam below 4 in its sufficiency, and they rated it at a 1. Ignoring these outliers would give a score of 4.9. Of course, these students may have had good reasons to score '1', so it would be helpful to identify what those reasons might be. Regarding information conveyed through the promotional campaign, the results show room for improvement, with a score of 4.5. Qualitative follow-up would be useful to help clarify and improve future promotional campaigns.

### **4.4 Student satisfaction**

This part assesses 1) the freshmen group's overall satisfaction with IBCM and 2) their familiarity with key information such as course learning outcomes, study and examination regulations, and grade calculations. This helps determine the degree to which IBCM is meeting students' expectations and also provides insight into the communication of information that is crucial for students' success. Data on student satisfaction is tracked from year to year to assess any trends. Data on communication of key information is used for a direct follow-up during the second half of the current winter semester and for the orientation of future incoming cohorts.

#### **4.4.1 Overall satisfaction with IBCM**

Having been asked to score their agreement with the statement if IBCM has met their expectations during their first month of studies, the new first semester cohort rated the IBCM as to a large extent meeting their expectations, with an average score of 4.8 on the 6 point scale, where 6 represents the highest possible rating. This represents a small decrease from last year's 5 point rating. Disaggregating by campus, the average score for the new student intake in the north remains unchanged from the 2014 freshmen survey at 4.7, as it has remained in the South campus at 5.1.

#### 4.4.2 Communication and services

##### Figure 3. Freshmen awareness of important information

Last year's survey showed that freshmen awareness of important information was below par, with all three areas scoring below 5 on the likert scale. The problems experienced by last year's freshmen have clearly been addressed and the results are encouraging. In all three areas- and in both campuses- average scores are above 5 for this year's survey.

Regarding both CAs and final grade calculation, students on the north campus report feeling more familiar with expectations and procedures. The average score for the North campus was 5.3 and the average for the South was 4.9.

The difference between the two campuses with respect to whether freshmen feel properly informed about study and exam regulations is negligible. In this regard, the South rated IBCM at 4.9; the North, at 5.4.

On both campuses, the average score for information about course learning outcomes hits and narrowly exceeds targets. North campus students rated their understanding of learning outcomes at 5.1, whilst South campus students rated theirs at 4.9.

Part 4 also contained three open-ended questions aimed at eliciting feedback on how services and courses might be improved from the perspective of first semester students. This is a valuable perspective in ensuring that our students have the tools needed to help them adjust to the IBCM environment, where the learning model may be substantially different from students' prior experience.

In the first open question, students were also asked to provide feedback on what aspects of IBCM could be improved. This open-ended question yielded the following results in decreasing order of frequency:

No Suggestions (26);

Newer / expanded facilities – Eg., more space, more classrooms, dorms and improved library facilities (8);

Improved heating system (4);

Lower fees (3);



More courses and support in the English language (10);  
Improved communication (4);  
Provision of laptops (10);  
Transport to the new campus South: (4)  
Improved Student Service/Admin (2)  
Improved Canteen (1);  
Informed too late about last exam (2);  
Better Marketing (1);

Two very encouraging upshots of this feedback are that the response with the highest frequency went from being 'Timetabling' (10) last year, to 'No Suggestions' (26) this year, with timetabling being loosely mentioned only twice (with two students feeling they were informed too late about an exam).

Regarding additional services that the IBCM should offer to help first semester students adjust, the following results were obtained:

No suggestions (7);  
Area for Sports/ Other Activities (6);  
Improvements to the Cafeteria (4);  
Teach other languages apart from English (German, Norwegian, Serbian) (3);  
Provision of laptops/ Computer study area (3);  
More opportunities for practice (e.g. visiting businesses) (2);  
More time for compulsory/course assignments (2);  
Provision of IT course (5);  
Discounts/ Scholarships (2);  
Extra classes (1);  
More advertising (1);

In addition to the points mentioned above, several students on both campuses included favorable comments on the services provided by Student Service.

Respondents were also asked what additional courses, in addition to mandatory courses already in the curriculum, should be taught at IBCM, yielding the following results:

More courses in English language (2);  
More courses in mathematics (7);  
APA referencing style (4);  
Additional courses in economics (4);  
Additional foreign languages – Eg., German, Serbian. (2);  
Information technology (4);  
More practice-oriented activities (2);  
Sport (3);  
Social media courses e-marketing (5);  
Public Speaking Course (1);  
Culture and arts (2);  
Business Course (1).

Some of the recommendations in this part of the survey were not relevant to the question asked. However, they ought not be discounted as they still important pieces of feedback regarding the IBCM experience for students. There is clearly a desire for extra-curricular activities amongst the students, which is reflected in other parts of the survey as well.

## **5. Discussion and recommendations**

Findings of the 2015-2016 Freshmen Survey reveal several areas for improvement. Follow-up through focus groups will be conducted to explore some of these in more depth. In particular, additional qualitative feedback would be useful in determining:

What information students feel was lacking in promotional campaigns;  
Why the overall meeting of expectations dropped from in the South campus since last year.

Students also named several actionable areas for improvement that should be taken into consideration over the coming semesters. Firstly, the provision of classes focusing on languages other than English. Secondly, extra-curricular activity provision is high on students' agenda, especially regarding further space for group study and an outside area to socialise and play sports. Given IBCM's orientation as a platform for inter-ethnic mingling in Mitrovica, this might be worth looking into as an effective means for integration. Thirdly, field trips and visits to successful businesses might also be incorporated into the first semester if possible, although the heavy course load might mitigate against this. Finally, a number of students have requested

additional classes in the areas of mathematics and information technology. This should be taken into consideration during the ongoing curriculum review process and also during the workload allocation in future semesters.

The survey itself would benefit from some continuing adaptations in the future. There is a benefit in not making too many changes in that continuity allows for comparison from year to year. That being said, some possible changes should be kept in mind:

Move the section on EPC courses to the end of the survey since it doesn't apply to the majority of respondents.

Adjust the wording on some questions to make them clearer. Question items 8, 10, 11, and 14 can be adjusted slightly to elicit better and more reliable responses.

Administer a hard copy version of the survey to increase response rates and produce more reliable results.