



# **IBCM Freshmen Survey Winter Term 2016-2017**

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## Executive summary

The annual freshmen survey was completed in November 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.

The most commonly reported reasons for choosing IBCM were following a similar trend to the last few years. Those were 1) the international profile, accreditation and double degree, 2) coursework in the English language, 3) improved work opportunities and a better future, and 4) modern approach of academic programs and professors.

As of this year there is a total of 13 (17.11%) students out of the 76 respondents that are also attending an additional HEI, creating a very slight increase compared to last year's 16%.

The overall satisfaction rating has improved from 4.8 in 2015 to 5.12 in 2016 on a 6 point Likert scale, where 6 represents the most favorable response. When disaggregating these results by campus, it can be seen that there are moderate improvements in general satisfactions in both campuses compared to the previous years. However, it is by a slight margin that the north campus has not reached the 5.0 score target, while the south has exceeded it reaching a 5.24 mark.

However, the lowest rated aspect of this survey was the satisfaction rate of information received through the marketing campaign (4.64 out of 6.0 on the Likert scale), which will require new actions and adjustments to be made in order to make sure that this will be improved in the following year and reach the targets.

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

- Provision of information through promotional campaigns;
- Communication of course learning outcomes;
- Recommendations on additional courses that could potentially be taught in order to increase academic capacities.

Respondents also provided their feedback on areas for improvement through open-ended items. The most frequently mentioned recommendations were to 1) have a more effective Canteen Service, 2) to increase the total amount of academic support in order to enforce higher academic standards, and 3) to fix the timetable system in order to avoid confusion.

## 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 freshman survey for the winter term 2016/2017 was conducted in late November on both of the IBCM campuses during classroom visits by the quality assurance department. Whereas IBCM conducts some surveys electronically, it was decided that a hard copy alternative would be preferable in the interest of maximizing the response rate and familiarizing new students with the role of surveying at IBCM. 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 freshman survey tool was taken from the previous year and adapted slightly to collect data on specific areas. By using mostly 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 Language Courses (ELC) offered by the IBCM. If applicable, students were asked:

- At which location they participated in the English Language Courses;
- Their overall satisfaction with the English Language Courses;
- How well the English Language Courses 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;
- Satisfaction with the ICT training that was provided on induction day.

The fourth part of the freshman 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 also 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, 102 students were enrolled in the first semester at the IBCM: 41 at the north campus and 61 at the south campus. Of the entire first semester cohort at the north campus, 26 students (63.42%) responded to the survey; of the first semester cohort at the south campus 48 students (78.69%) responded. There were also 2 more students who did not indicate in their responses which campus they attended. In total 76 students (74.51%) responded to the freshmen survey. This represents a substantial improvement in response rate from the prior year for the north campus and a slight increase in the south campus. Since surveys were conducted during regular course hours and guest lectures, this improved response rate reflects the trend of improved overall attendance (See figure 1). Because surveys were conducted during classroom visits and guest lecture gatherings, the sampling method may have introduced an element of bias in that students with a higher average attendance were more apt to be selected.

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

|   | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| North campus: Percent with attendance > 50% | 52%       | 73%       |
| South campus: Percent with attendance > 70% | 72%       | 75%       |

## 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 76 respondents, 46 (61%) were male and 30 (39%) were female. As for the total amount of semester one students, both campuses are characterized by having a higher number of male students than female students. In the north the gender ratio is 32% vs. 68%, while in the south it is 43% vs. 57%. This indicates that in the south the ratio is significantly more orientated towards a gender balance.

Across both campuses, 32 (42%) indicated that they expect to study Marketing and Management, 19 (25%) selected Environmental and Agricultural Management, and 13 (17%) Public Administration. There were an additional 12 (16%) survey responses without an indication of spur selection.

Of the 76 respondents, 13 students (17.11%) report being simultaneously enrolled at another higher education institution (HEI). This represents a slight increase in total amount of students that indicated that they are also attending other HEI compared to 16% last year. Of the 13 students reporting multiple matriculations during the present year, 6 study at the south campus, which equates to 12.5 percent of south campus respondents. 6 study at the north campus, which equates to 23.0 percent of north campus respondents. Also, there is one more respondent that did not indicate whether he is attending the north or south campus accounting for 1.3% of the total respondent rate.

Of the 6 south campus respondents studying at multiple institutions, 3 are enrolled at the University of Pristina, 2 are studying concurrently at the University of Mitrovica, and one declined to indicate an institution. Of the 6 north campus respondents studying at multiple institutions, all but one student indicated that they are studying at the public university in Northern Mitrovica. The other one declined to state that information. Most north campus students voluntarily provided information about their program of study at parallel institutions. For the north campus, the programs mentioned were at the Faculty of Philosophy (1), Faculty of Technical Sciences (3), the Medical Faculty (1), and one more declined to state the institution or program of studies.

The 76 students that have responded to the freshmen survey provided a diverse range of motivating reasons as to why they chose IBCM where each of them could provide up to three reasons. Data was collected with an open answer question, allowing respondents flexibility in their response. Responses were divided into 10 general categories and coded accordingly. Across both campuses, the following categories were the mentioned in decreasing order of frequency:

- International Profile, Accreditation and Double Degree (57);

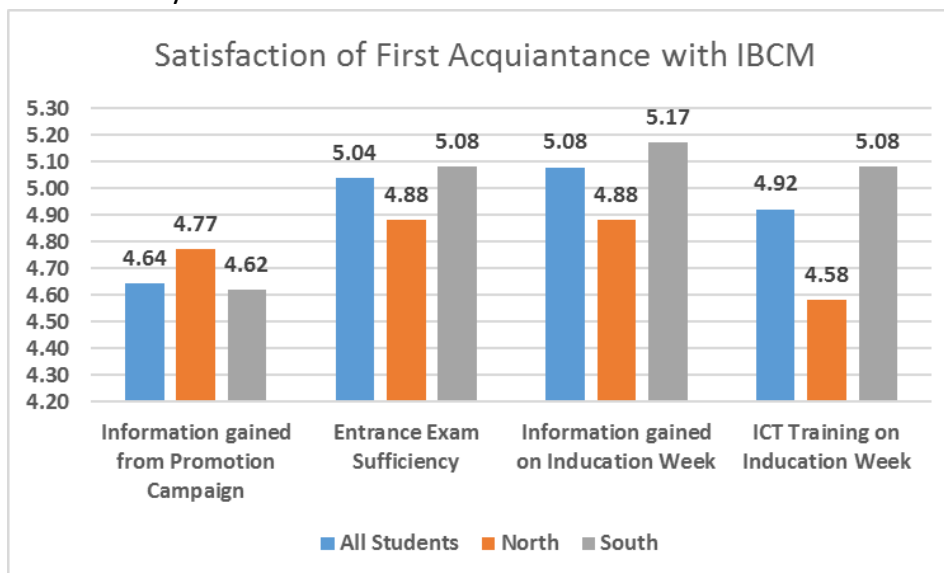
- Coursework in the English language (48);
- Improved work opportunities and a better future (24);
- Modern Approach of Academic Programs and Professors (23);
- Exchange Opportunities (17);
- Practical and Business Experience "From theory to practice" (11);
- Good Reputation and Fair Processes (7);
- Modern Campus and Services (5);
- Uniqueness (3);
- Scholarships and Financial Reasons (2).

#### 4.2 Student satisfaction with the English Language Courses (ELC)

This part of the survey was completed only by those students who completed one of the English Language Courses (ELC) at IBCM prior to starting their first semester. Across both campuses, 24 students out of the 76 respondents completed this section. The average satisfaction score was 5.12 on the 6-point scale, where 6 represents the highest degree of satisfaction. On the question asking how well the ELC prepared them for their English medium studies at IBCM, the average response was 4.46 on the same scale. There seems to be a significant difference in the impression of the ELC students between the quality of the ELC and its potential preparation for those students to study at IBCM's level.

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

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



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

- Regarding the induction day, students at the north campus were moderately less satisfied with the information they received as compared to students at the south campus. This is despite receiving the same information from the same presenters, suggesting that students at the north campus may require some additional support as they adapt to the IBCM environment. Given the vital nature of early communication and orientation for student success, future induction days should be further developed with the aim of raising this score to the 5.0 mark for both campuses. It is worth mentioning that this year in the north not a single question scored above the 5.0 mark while in the south three out of four possible marks have a received a score above 5.0.
- Regarding the suitability of the entrance exam, the combined scored slightly above the 5.0 mark, again having scored slightly higher in the south campus than in the north campus. While not overly concerning, this suggests that there is room for improving and adjusting the exam for future cohorts. A follow-up focus group with freshmen would be useful to probe exactly how they feel the exam might be improved.
- Regarding information conveyed through the promotion campaign, the results show significant room for improvement, especially compared to the other aspects of the induction week. It received a score of 4.64, which is significantly lower than the average rating of all the other aspects of induction week. Again, qualitative follow-up would be useful to help clarify and improve future promotional campaigns.

#### 4.4 Student satisfaction

This part assesses 1) the freshman 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 with a fairly strong satisfaction average of 5.12 on the 6-point scale, where 6 represents the highest possible rating. This represents a modest improvement from the prior year's result of 4.8. Disaggregating by campus, the average score for the new student intake in the north has modestly increased from 4.7 to 4.92. The improvement is a little less significant in the south, but still higher in general, where the figure has increased from 5.1 to 5.24.



#### 4.4.2 Communication and services

- The student's understanding of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester learning outcomes have been marked with a fairly strong average score of 5.12. However, in the north it does not exceed the targeted 5.0 where it scored 4.88. In the south this not the case where the score has been moderately exceed with an average score of 5.19. Further development could be recommended to make sure that next year this score can be balanced for both campuses.
- The north and the south campuses have both been marked with scores exceeding the targets about the 1<sup>st</sup> semester courses contents. There is a slight difference between the two campuses where the north campus scored a lower 5.04 compared to the south campuses 5.15.
- There is a more significant difference between the two campuses with respect to whether freshmen feel properly informed about study and exam regulations compared to the informing about the contents in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester students. However, this response also scored above the targets on both campuses, it being 5.04 in the north and 5.25 in the south.

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 two aspects of the IBCM services could be improved. This open-ended question yielded the following results in decreasing order of frequency:

- No suggestion (46);
- Canteen Service (12);
- More Academic Support to enforce Quality (9);
- Timetable issues (5)
- Student Service (3);
- Internet (3);
- Computer Labs and other Equipment (3);
- Student Life (2);
- Syllabuses (1);
- Website (1);
- Marketing (1);

- Dorms (1);
- Extra-Curricular Activities (1);

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

- No suggestion (65);
- Entertainment (2);
- Extra-Curricular Activities (2);
- Sports Events (2);
- Canteen (1);
- More Events (1);
- Printers (1);
- Quiet Spaces (1);

It should be mentioned that the total amount of responses for this question were very low, where most respondents had no suggestions.

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:

- No suggestion (53);
- German and Other Language Courses (6);
- Leadership (3);
- Computer and IT Courses (3);
- Advanced English Courses (3);
- Additional Business Practice (2);
- Sport (1);
- Guerilla Marketing (1);
- Additional Communications Classes (1);
- GRE/GMAT Courses (1).

Another question that was added to the survey was what two aspects of the marketing campaign the respondent thought were most attractive to them. However, majority of the respondents did not fill any answers in. The five most prominent were:

- English (9);
- Social Media (6);
- Street Promotion (5);
- Different Approach (4);
- Info Days (3).

## 5. Discussion and recommendations

Findings of the 2015-2016 Freshmen Survey reveal several areas for improvement despite many improvements compared to the results from last year's survey reports. Follow-up through focus groups can be conducted to explore some of these in more depth. In particular, additional qualitative feedback would be useful in determining:

- Even though the Entry Exam Sufficiency did reach the 5.0 score target, it only surpassed it slightly. Further, recommendations can be added in order to make sure that this becomes more strengthened next year;
- The questions on whether the promotional campaign provided enough useful information for students was one of the most lacking responses. New or improved tactics should be arranged in order to strengthen this aspect of the IBCM since it was not able to reach the target by a quiet significant margin;
- While the information that students gained during the induction week reached the targeted score, it was only by a slim margin, and on the other hand, the ICT training did not meet the target score. Further improvements are required in order to make sure that in the following years these targets are reached.

The semester one coordinator should also develop a plan, in conjunction with instructors teaching first semester courses, to improve communication about:

- Expectations for course assignments;
- Course learning outcomes;
- Course grade calculations.

In order for new students to take ownership of their learning process and adjust to the IBCM environment, it is important that they feel well oriented about these points.

Students also named several actionable areas for improvement that should be taken into consideration over the coming semesters. Firstly, a new timetable system should be put in place that involves fewer changes and also simpler understanding. Secondly, improved training in English for academic purposes (EAP) is required, including targeting training in the APA citation format. Although this may prove challenging given the heavy course load, it might be a means of introducing students to the fields of study on offer at IBCM. Finally, a number of students have requested additional support in the areas of mathematics and business. 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.

- The survey could also benefit from a general redesign since many students, while they do fill it out; many mistakes are made along the way due to format confusions.
- The question that requires to indicate their selected study program should be moved to the first part of the survey. It being at the end of the survey results into many respondents to skip it (This resulted into 12 surveys that had no study program selected this year).

## Appendices

### Appendix A. Summary of quantitative results: Averages and standard deviations

6 = I strongly agree, 5 = I agree, 4 = I slightly agree, 3 = I slightly disagree, 2 = I disagree, 1 = I disagree

| Question   | Average response total | Standard deviation total | Average north | Standard deviation north | Average south | Standard deviation south |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| I felt well-informed about the IBCM via its promotional campaign                                     | 4.64                   | 1.12                     | 4.77          | 0.99                     | 4.62          | 1.14                     |
| The IBCM entrance exam is sufficient to test the suitability of students                             | 5.04                   | 0.64                     | 4.88          | 0.43                     | 5.08          | 0.71                     |
| I am satisfied with the information received on induction day  | 5.08                   | 0.76                     | 4.88          | 1.07                     | 5.17          | 0.52                     |
| Overall, the IBCM has met my expectations thus far   | 4.92                   | 0.89                     | 4.58          | 1.14                     | 5.08          | 0.68                     |
| I was informed about the learning outcomes of the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester                           | 5.08                   | 0.69                     | 4.88          | 0.73                     | 5.19          | 0.67                     |
| I have been introduced to the contents of my 1 <sup>st</sup> semester courses                        | 5.11                   | 0.73                     | 5.04          | 0.73                     | 5.15          | 0.74                     |
| I was properly informed about the study and examination regulations for the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester | 5.17                   | 0.74                     | 5.04          | 0.68                     | 5.25          | 0.79                     |