

# Surveying to Improve Student Satisfaction and Retention

Andy Chong  
Evaluation Services Manager  
Swinburne University of Technology



# Today

Overview of the changes made to unit surveying in 2015 at Swinburne to:

- improve the quality of data used for improving unit improvement activities; and
- assist in improving student retention.



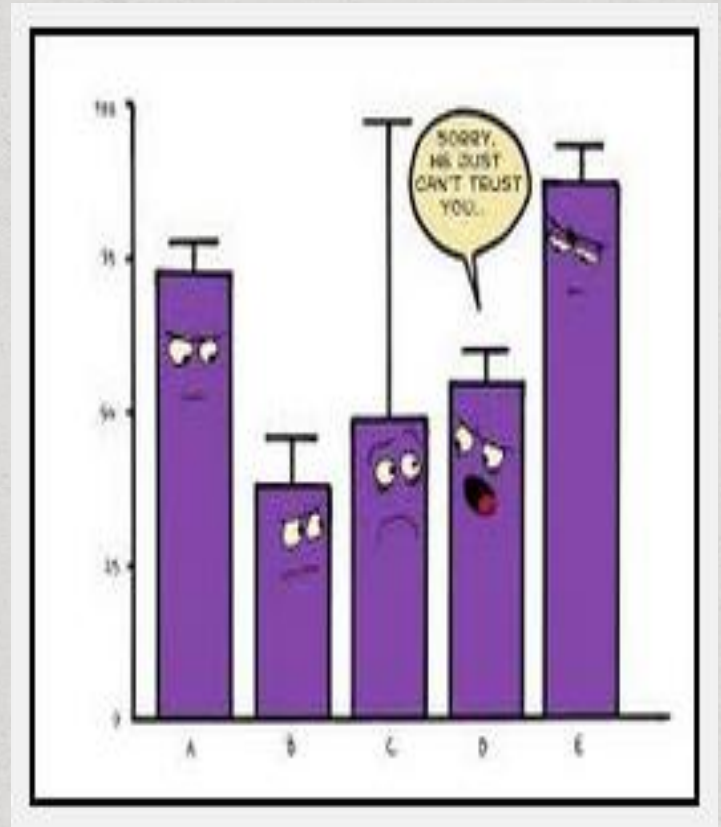
# Surveys @ Swinburne pre-2015

Minimal evidence of staff utilising survey data to improve units (why???)

1. Lack of accountability.
2. Cynicism about data quality.

“The response rates are so low that the data is meaningless.”

“Only the poor students that fill in the survey.”

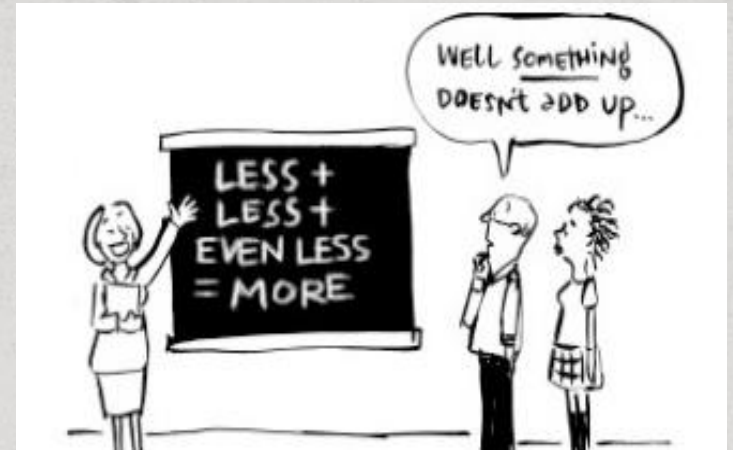




# Strategies to Improve Response Rate (1)

## Rationalised questions

- Surveys should take no more than 5 minutes (principle).
- Quantitative questions used for monitoring.
- Comments provide improvement insights.
- Removed redundant questions.
- Rotational strategic questions.



Reduced from  
19 questions  
to 10

# Student Feedback Survey (SFS)

## Unit Questions.

1. Overall, I am satisfied with this unit.
2. The unit is well organised.
3. The assessments measured what I was learning (strategic question)
4. In my opinion, aspects of this unit that could be improved were...
5. In my opinion, the best aspects of this unit were...

## Teaching Questions

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the teaching in this unit by this staff member.
2. This staff member communicates information and ideas clearly and effectively.
3. This staff member responds to questions and concerns in a helpful and timely manner.
4. This staff member teaches in a way that provides motivation and inspiration to learn.
5. Please explain your overall satisfaction with this staff member's teaching in this unit.

# Strategies to Improve Response Rate (2)

- Opened for extended period.
- Run surveys in class using smart phones.
- Coordinated communication to students, including targeted sub branding.
- Weekly response rate reports.
- Weekly prizes.
- Feedback to students on the outcomes of surveys.





# Impact of Revised SFS

- Response rate 46% in 2016 (58% improvement from 2014)

Unit Coordinator (Glen): "The response rates are so low that the data is meaningless."

Manager: "Sorry Glen but more than half of the students filled in the survey."

Glen: "Let me have a closer look and get back to you."

# Check-in Survey

- Three questions at week 4.
  - Open for 1 week
  - 1<sup>st</sup> year and PG.
  - Survey outcomes fed back to students in week 6.
  - Students with low confidence are followed up.
1. I am satisfied with this unit so far.
  2. I am confident that I can successfully manage the academic requirements of this unit.
  3. What is the one thing that Swinburne could do to improve this unit?

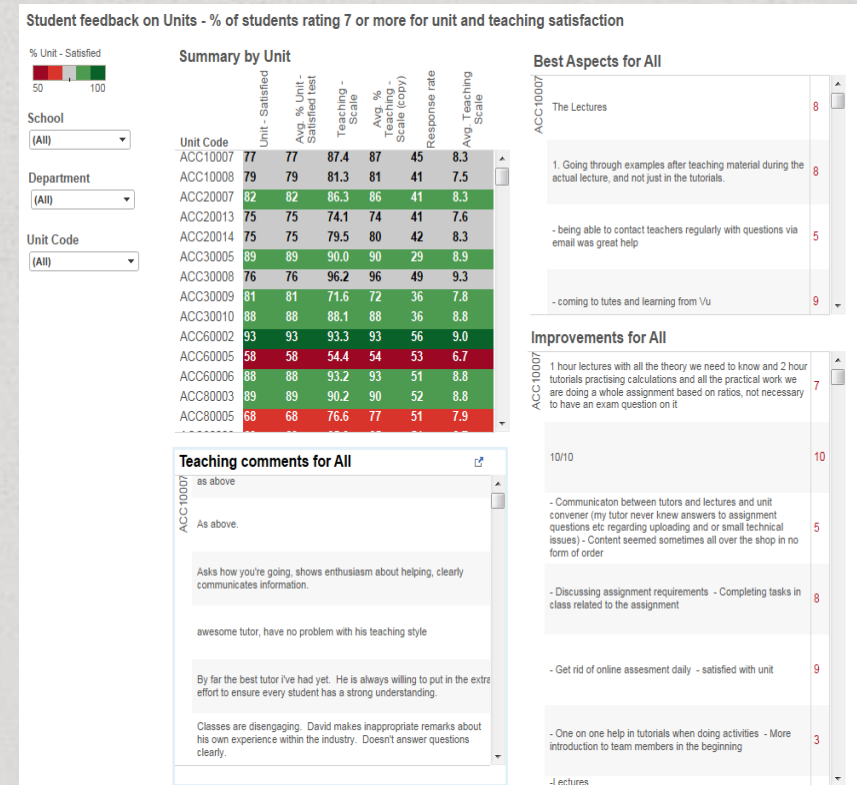


# Impact of Check-in Survey

- 30% response rate in Semester 2, 2016.
- Predicts student success in difficult units.
- Lead indicator of unit satisfaction (when outliers removed).
- Enables early intervention to improve quality of unit.
- Creates a positive survey culture.

# Reporting

- Consolidated reports for all units including comments provided to management and support areas.
- Two day turnaround in management reporting.
- Based on Tableau Business Intelligence and Analytics which enables fast turnaround of customised reports and hypothesis testing.
- Linked with other unit performance metrics e.g. success rate



# Conclusion

- Running surveys is a pointless exercise if the data isn't used.
- Less is more.
- Response rates go beyond statistics.
- Lead beats lag.

