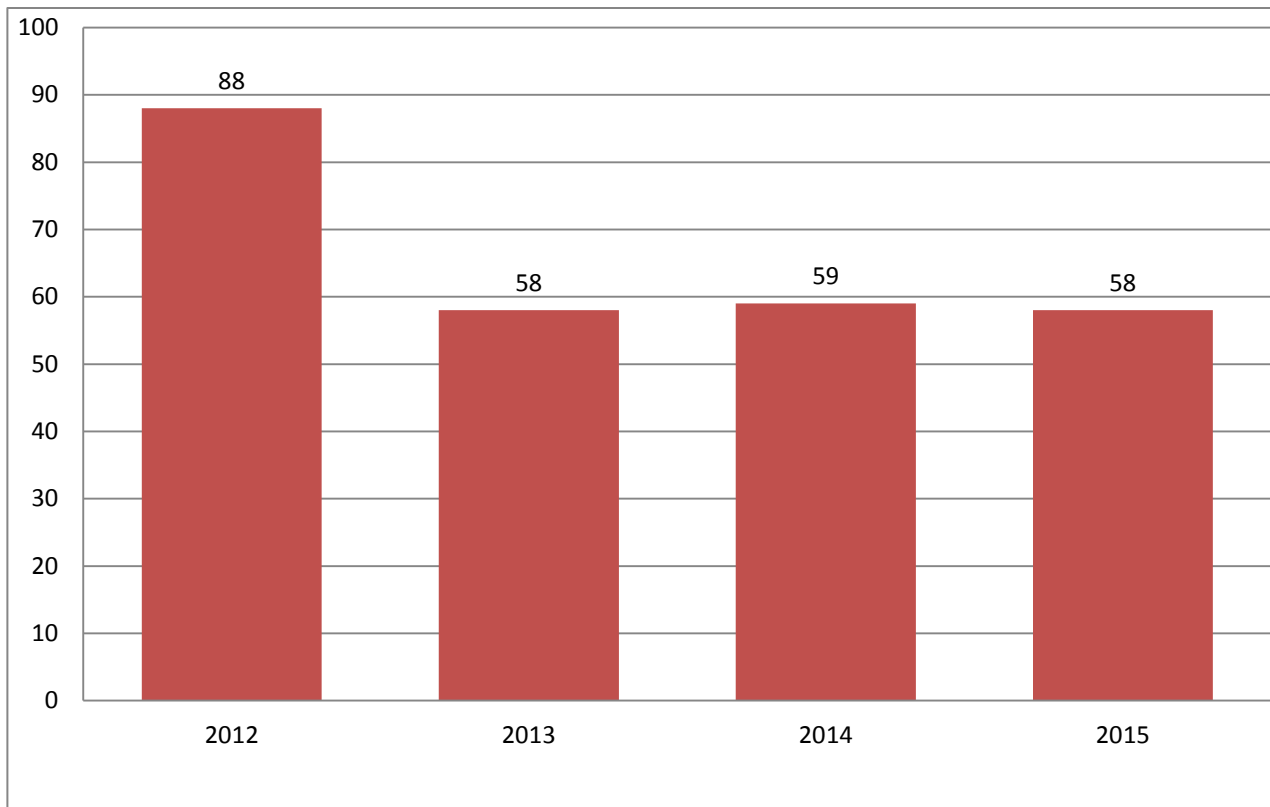# York University Senator Survey June 2015

A survey of Senators was conducted in June 2015. The results – including the number of respondents -- were broadly consistent with those of previous surveys. The academic disruption was on many Senators' minds as they completed the survey, and comments tended to be critical of the Executive Committee.

If you attended all or most (6-9) Senate meetings this year... What factor most influenced your attendance?

(Skipped question: 9)

	Per Cent	Number
Interest	44.9	22
Duty	20.4	10
Learn about University developments and directions	26.5	13
Understand impact of Senate decisions	2.1	1
Raise issues and concerns	6.1	3
Other (see comments)	-	-

Comments

- Senate is a very informative forum. I wish debate on ASCP items was less non-existent.
- Because I contracted to do so and because of all of the above and particularly because I am committed to collegial governance
- Not sure if I made it to 6 meetings. I attended whenever I didn't have competing obligations.
- Combination of duty and interest.
- Even if it were not an obligation, I would attend out of commitment to the University and active engagement in its academic self-governance.
- I also consider it my duty to represent my faculty as well as to learn about and help to shape the path(s) being developed by the University
- If possible to select multiple responses would say #2, #3 and #4

If you attend 5 or fewer meetings of Senate in 2011-2012... What factor most influenced your attendance?
(Skipped question: 45)

	Percentage	Number
Other commitments interfered	69.2	9
Reviewed documents and had no concerns	**7.7**	1
Items not always interesting or too routine	7.7	1
Items not always relevant to my unit or group	-	-
Health	7.7	1
Other (see comments)	7.7	1

Which of the following best describes your participation at Senate?
(Skipped question: 0)

	Percentage	Number
Participated in discussions	32.76	19
Followed discussions with interest but did not feel my contributions were necessary	44.83	26
Did not always feel knowledgeable enough about items	13.8	8
Did not always feel confident enough to contributed	6.9	4
Felt unsure about rules or how to get on a speaker's list	-	-
Other	1,7	1

Comments

- I was a rookie senator so my participation will likely increase. But the feeling that the true power rests with administration and a few key committees contributed to my reticence to get more active.
- Participated when I had something to add.
- I am a long-time Senator with a history of active participation.
- notes on official presentations to consider beforehand
- If multiple choice an option: #2-#5
- More preparation of items and of the senate constitution. Student senators are felt left out and unimportant. I feel a meet and greet between senators would be important and provide more comfort for student senators who are new.

Do the documents provided by Committees and others convey the necessary and appropriate information to enable good governance and decision-making? (Skipped question: 0)

	Percentage	Number
Always	15.5	9
Usually	70.7	41
Seldom	8.6	5
Never	-	-
Not sure / No opinion	5.1	3

Comments

- Need better prioritization
- usually no discussion of financial implications of academic decisions, which inhibits rational planning
- I wonder if the ordering might not be better with the reports all following the agenda, then with the often voluminous supporting documents as appendices. For example, at the June Senate, the IIRP was not mentioned until page 98! If we started with the agenda, minutes, and reports, the basic package would probably come out to 20 pages or fewer, and the key elements would all be there. Digging in for detail would be easy, but wading through it to get to the next report would not be necessary.
- the role of senate in the IIRP remains entirely unclear to me and this is important
- Sometimes it's hard to know what's going on when there's a long backstory or a detailed knowledge of the issue is necessary to comprehend what's been discussed.
- If it wouldn't look too much like prejudging an item, maybe the key issues could be highlighted.
- Senate is sometimes deprived of key information for good decision making e.g. the strike resumption plans and Markham campus plans
- The sometimes very lengthy documentation would benefit from provision of executive summaries. Letters of support from Deans, etc., could simply be noted in a list, their actual texts available on-line should anyone want to see them.
- This was a difficult year. The chaos of the Executive Committee during the CUPE 3903 strike makes an overall assessment difficult.
- It could be explained more and provide other years of discussion on the topic (such as AAPR)

I feel knowledgeable about the following
(Skipped question: 1)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure / No Opinion	Response Count
Senate's relationship to other governing bodies	42.1 (24)	49.1 (28)	8.8 (5)	-	-	57
Academic resources and allocations	21.1 (12)	50.9 (29)	26.3 (15)	1.8 (1)	-	57
Postsecondary education policy	16.1 (9)	58.9 (33)	23.2 (13)	1.8 (1)	-	56
Senate's mandates and major responsibilities	42.1 (24	49.1 (28)	7.0 (4)	1.8 (1)	-	57

Comments

In general my answers would fall between "agree" and "disagree" - "kind of" would be closer. Though certainly the resources and allocations information provided is often very detailed.

An organigram would be helpful.

Synopses are posted on Y-File shortly after meetings are held. Have you used synopses (or other Senate and committee documents) as a basis for informing others (e.g., departments, Faculties, or the campus organizations that nominated you) about major issues dealt with by Senate?
(Skipped question: 1)

	Percent	Number
Frequently	14.4	8
Occasionally	43.9	25
Never	40.4	23
N/A	1.8	1

Comments

- Not really the documents, more the discussion. Though this is changing.
- I like to check this myself to make sure I understood and am on top of what happened at Senate.
- Through our faculty council packages
- When I have informed others about issues at Senate I have always done so personally, on the basis of my immediate experience.

The University Academic Plan 2010-2015 is intended to guide academic planning and define academic priorities. How would you rate the following in terms of helping to understand and advance UAP goals and to monitor progress?
(Skipped question: 1)

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Not Sure / No Opinion	Response Count
Committee Reports	22.8 (13)	63.2 (36)	8.8 (5)	5.3 (3)	57
Faculty Planning Reports (via APPRC)	16.1 (9)	50.0 (28)	25.0 (14)	8.9 (5)	56
Vice-Presidents' Reports	29.8 (17)	54.4 (31)	7.0 (4)	8.8 (5)	57
Rationales in Support of Major Initiatives	40.4 (23)	45.6 (26)	10.5 (6)	3.5 (2)	57
Cyclical Review Summaries	38.6 (22)	43.9 (25)	12.3 (7)	5.3 (3)	57
Other					

Comments

- I have not been involved in curriculum development for a long time, but I am far from sure anything I have seen recently would be useful anyway. The exhortations for online course development does not really apply to the courses I teach.
- Most reports, and especially documents, are constructed with an eye towards making a case. They are usually useful, but they are rarely objective when dealing with established goals. The most useful reports generally are those from the VP Finance and the Provost, who both make an effort to provide across the board detail, and who rarely sugar coat the pill. This was not true historically of all VPs Academic. Those producing major committee reports and documents should more often embrace their example.
- There needs to be a Senate brief accompanying the agenda. Two pages outlining the major issues to be discussed/covered.
- Usually not enough time to adequately address bullets 2 and 3 in any depth
- Make it clear why new programs have "quality" Reports on how curriculum has evolved over time

For the last several years Senate committees have established priorities for the year and reported on progress in achieving them. Has this helped your understanding of the University's overall academic priorities and the work done by Committees? (Skipped question: 0)

	Percentage	Number of Responses
Very Helpful	27.6	16
Somewhat helpful	56.9	33
Not very helpful	10.3	6
N/A	5.2	5.2

- too few meetings to comment
- I don't necessarily think they are a bad idea, but if one is following the agendas closely one does not learn a lot from this practice.

**I feel that sufficient time has been devoted to the most important academic issues
(Skipped question: 0)**

	Percent	Number
Strongly Agree	3.5	2
Agree	53.5	31
Disagree	32.76	19
Strongly Agree	5.2	3
No Opinion / Not Sure	5.2	3

Comments

- Time has been allotted but I am concerned that so little (if any) debate ensues on ASCP motions.
- It is not that other matters need more attention, but rather the agenda can at times get rushed towards the end because of the amount of time spent at the beginning on other issues. I appreciate this is difficult to control, but needs to be flagged every once in a while.
- the IIPR seems extremely important, I remain unsure when it is going to receive thorough senate assessment
- Too many Senators seem interested in political posturing and soap box kinds of speechifying, rather than making constructive contributions that are respectful of others' work and roles. I'm not sure what can be done about this. Might it be possible to implement a process that appointed Senators based on their capacity to effectively represent their faculties?
- What to do about programs with consistently very low enrollments
- Resumption during the strike was rushed through with inadequate deliberation
- I think Senate and its committees should take more time to look into the pros and cons of the proposed 4.0 grading system. Should the new grading system take place, it would be in the best interest of both faculty, staff, and students if all the details were ironed out and that everyone is on the same page about what is happening and how the system would influence their lives.
- Research intensification Admission to Honors only with ordinary as a fall back Retention (and a "general studies" option) Maintaining our graduate size and reputation Future of LA&PS (important for whole university, not just LA&PS)
- In much the way that the SHARP budget model is a dramatic move away from the incremental budget process, in which only changes were noted, the academic governance of the university would benefit from holistic evaluation of our mission, achievements and challenges. As things stand, we consider individual changes and additions to programs and offerings without considering the whole context of what we offer and how it is structured. Not only is that broader context important in relation to making changes, it also should be subject to re-evaluation in its entirety to consider whether we actually are doing what we believe we should be doing, and whether what we provide has the most effective (and even cost-effective) form. I am not calling for shaking things up for no reason, but we do not give enough thought to whether or not there is a reason for doing things differently.
- The pace of decisions during the strike was untenable. [key members of Senate Executive] did not realize they were actually at times 'making up' policy on the floor of Senate is response to questions. This simply can't happen even in times of crisis.
- Merging and splitting up of programs to make it more efficient. Centralized policy for petitions.

We value your comments and suggestions. Please feel free to share your thoughts on any aspect of Senate and your experience as a Senator in the space below. (Skipped question: 44)

Comments

- Alas, most senators are not parsimonious in their questions and most of those who give presentations or answer questions are similarly unnecessarily verbose - there really was far too much repetition in the answers given yesterday.
- I joined Senate later in the term and I am leaving to take a sabbatical leave. I would need more experience as Senator to provide substantive comments to your questions.
- Senate used to be a forum in which real debate took place over academic matters and the university's decisions that motivated them. It has become an audience for the senior administration to give elaborate presentations on decisions that ought to be made by Senate in discussion, but essentially arrive at Senate already made. There is very little room for proper debate. If Senate is to be able to fulfill its proper mandate, we need to review the ways in which meetings are conducted and the kind of information that is given us beforehand.
- The quality and timeliness of information provided during the recent strike was poor.
- I was dismayed with the decisions Senate Executive took during the strike without consulting the whole of Senate. I was also dismayed to discover the degree to which administrators and those with an administrative perspective dominated the agenda. Many of the nominal faculty members who comprise Senate, moreover, occupy positions that require them to function as quasi-administrators. In many instances these same members also have aspirations to become YUFA-E administrators. More rank-and-file faculty members are needed to achieve real balance.
- I would like to thank--- and --- and other members of the executive, for their patience, diligence and dedication to the university, especially in seeing us through the difficult issues and stresses resulting from the strike.
- The endless speechmaking by the President and the Provost and other "top" administrators is a significant waste of time and most of the time there is nothing new in these presentations (usually it is all posted elsewhere). The senate should be a body of debate and policy development, so more focus on issues of substance and more space for participation from senators, rather than long "presentations" would be a welcome change. If one doubts this observation, look at how many laptops and phones are used during the presentations by "top" administration. Participation from senators should be encouraged, and senators should be informed of the rules of participation.
- It's unfortunate that a few Senators… dominate the floor. Would like to hear from a more diverse group representing a range of faculties/schools.
- Senate has been kept out of the loop of academic decision-making in too many ways, notably AAPR/IIRP and the new campus. Senior administrators continue to ignore Senate's legislated responsibility for major academic planning. Dense, verbose Power Point presentations (rarely circulated far enough in advance) followed by a Q&A are called "consultation," but do not amount to real decision-making. One specific reform: Senate should establish its own Budget Committee, as many other Senates across Canada have done.
- In light of this year's strike, one suggestion that I have for Senate is to, over time, review and edit Senate's rules so as to accommodate the changing times. It seemed that during the strike, numerous Senators were unsure of the proper protocol that is in place and of what rules would actually be relevant to the situation. Thus, if the protocols could be rewritten or reorganized in a manner that is much clearer and that can account for matters such as strikes in a clearer way then much dispute can be avoided. Nonetheless, I would like to commend all my fellow

Senators on a job well done for getting through such unforeseen circumstances. I am very proud to be a Senator and am humbled to be able to partake in such influential discussions.

- Discussion of grades in May was good -- keep engaging Senate when major initiatives are at an early stage. APPRC report on Faculty plans was also good -- what happens to the comments made by the Committee? Are they for the UAP? Are the Deans responsible for following up on them?
- I don't think the York community at large understands the importance of Senate. I'd like to see better information provided to faculty and students.
- On the whole, Senate is one of the things of which York can and should be proud. More non-Senators should learn about it and make an effort to contribute, though for the most part their lack of participation reflects a balance between thinking things are generally being done well enough to leave along, and thinking just the opposite, but with hopelessness. I believe that those of us who do participate undertake an important task seriously, and well -- but of course we would think that, wouldn't we?
- It is not often clear to everyone what is debatable, or at stake -- this is particularly so when the Administration presents. For example, there needs to be at Senate a clear presentation of what is at stake in the new budget model -- the ways in which it articulates policy, and what problems may arise. How is a comprehensive academic vision articulated in a budgetary model that depends so heavily on vagaries of demand. How is interdisciplinarity maintained when no program can afford to "give away" students to another department, and so on. In what contexts will Senate be helped to understand the new model and all its implications?
- Better job in keeping Order because as a result of interruptions other Senators that are on the Speaker's list, do not get an opportunity to speak.

Senate Committee Survey 2015

A survey of Senate committee members was conducted between June 21 and June 30. Twenty-eight responses were received, down from 40 in in 2014. Most responses were received from members of adjudicative committees. Just 11 surveys were completed by members of APPRC, ASCP and Senate Executive.

Number of Participants in Survey by Year
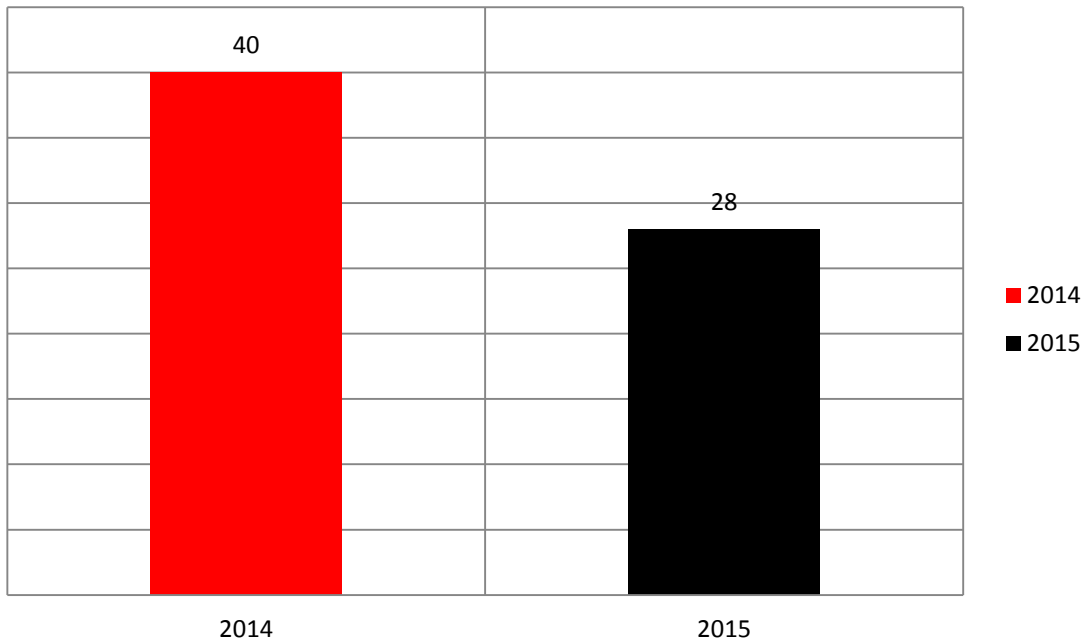
Of which Committee were you a member in 2014-2015?
(Skipped question: 0)

Table 2
Survey Participants by Committee Membership
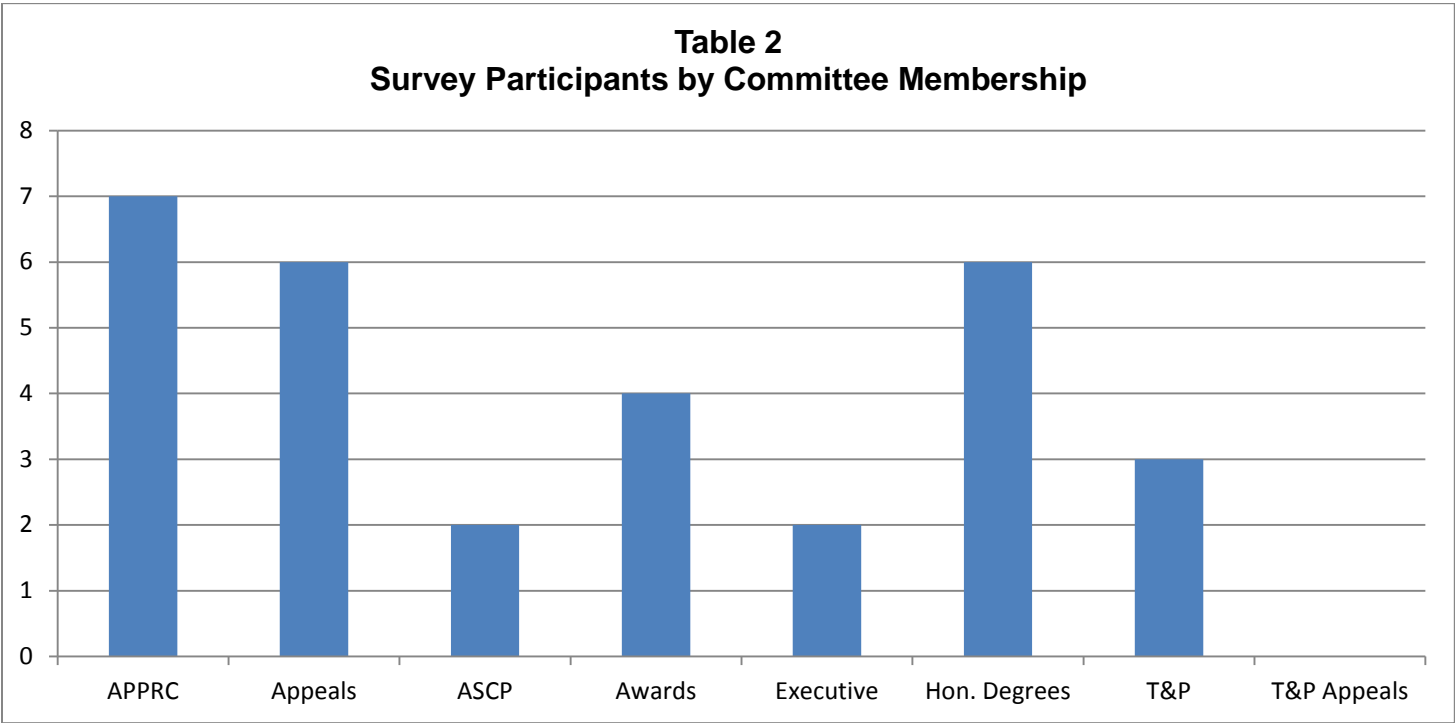
In addition to your Committee work were you also (check all that apply)
(Skipped question: 3)

Other Governance Activities of Committee Members

	Yes	No	Responding
Member of Senate	35.0 (7)	65.0 (13)	20
Member of one of the Committee's sub-committee	40.0 (6)	60 (9)	15
Member of Faculty Council committee(s)	36.8 (7)	63.2 (12)	19
University administrator	-	-	13
Faculty academic administrator	23.5 (4)	76.5 (13)	17
Department or program academic administrator	36.8 (7)	63.2 (12	19

Please comment on logistical aspects.
(Skipped question: 0)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Total
Documents were easily accessible from the Committee's Website	85.7 (24)	7.1 (2)	3.6 (1)	3.6 (1)	-	28
Documents were available with enough lead time before meetings	64.3 (18)	25.0 (7)	3.6 (1)	7.1 (2)	-	28
Documents were well-organized and clear	60.7 (17)	21.43 (6)	10.7 (3)	7.1 (2)	-	28
Items were given the appropriate amount of time	67.9 (19)	14.3 (4)	10.7 (3)	7.1 (2)	-	28
Items were considered within the Committee's mandate	71.4 (20)	17.7 (5)	7.1 (2)	3.6 (1)	-	28

Comments

- Stronger discussion would ensue if documents were introduced with checklist of issues or concerns (APPRC)
- Some students need help to prepare more coherent appeals. (Appeals)
- Documents related to the strike could have been clearer and published earlier. When a faculty member has to go to the U of T website for clarity, that says a lot about the clarity of our own communication. In meetings sometimes an item was beaten to death. Once we start revisiting the same points, it is time to move on. (Executive)
- We talked a lot about certain issues that could have been decided faster, while not spending enough time on those closer to our mandate. Shocked by some decisions, even if the majority voted in favour. (Honorary Degrees)
- I found some Senate T&P committee members had a tendency to drag out meetings by micro-managing unit standards or files, rather than sticking to our oversight role to ensure compliance with, and give guidance on, Senate policies (T&P)

I feel knowledgeable about the following:
(Skipped question: 0)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure / no opinion	Total
The Committee's mandate	57.1 (16)	35.7 (10)	7.1 (2)	-	-	28
The Committee's relationship to Senate	42.9 (12)	57.1 (16)	-	-		28
Applicable policies and procedures that are relevant to decision-making	48.2 (13)	40.7 (11)	3.7 (1)	3.7 (1)	3,7 (1)	28
The Committee's sub-committee mandates and processes	35.7 (10)	28.6 (8)	7.1 (2)	-	28.6 (8)	28
University academic trends and issues	28.6 (8)	64.3 (18)	3.6 (1)	-	3.6 (1)	28
Faculty-specific academic trends and issues	22.2 (6)	59.3 (16)	3.7 (1)	3.7 (1)	11.1 (3)	27

Comments

- The role AAPRC became less clear over time and ultimately felt somewhat redundant. Faculty-specific issues were more or less invisible (APPRC)
- Not sure why everybody else should have a say in faculty-specific choices. Vetting should not be based on ideology. (Honorary Degrees)
- We're not necessarily cognizant of all trends and issues in all faculties, nor should we be expected to be. (T&P)

**I feel well informed and prepared to participate in meetings
(Skipped question: 0)**

Strongly agree	57.1 (16)
Somewhat agree	39.3 (11)
Somewhat disagree	-
Strongly disagree	3.6 (1)
Not sure / no opinion	-
Total	28

Comments

- AAPRC did not cohere well around key issues and concerns related to university pillory, trends and issues (APPRC)
- Some of the online files were difficult to navigate (T&P)

Were your expectations met with regard to factors influencing your decision to serve as a member of the Committee?
(Skipped question: 0)

	Fulfilled	Somewhat fulfilled	Not fulfilled	Not sure / no opinion	Total
Duty	96.4 (27)	-	-	3.6 (1)	28
Interest	85.2 (23)	7.2 (2)	3.7 (1)	3.6 (1)	27
Learn about University developments and directions	80.8 (21)	11.5 (3)	-	3.7 (1)	26
Understand decision-making processes	69.2 (18)	23.1 (6)	3.9 (1)	3.9 (2)	26
Raise issues	53.9 (14)	23.1 (6)	7.7 (2)	15.4 (4)	27
Other (please specify in comments box)	20.0 (2)	-	10.0 (1)	70.0 (7)	10

- AAPRC did not really gel as a knowledgeable and influential senior university committee (APPRC)

The University Academic Plan 2010-2015 is intended to guide academic planning and define academic priorities. How would you rate the following in terms of helping to understand and advance UAP goals and to monitor progress?

(Skipped question: 0)

	Very helpful	**Helpful**	**Somewhat helpful**	**Not helpful**	**Not sure / no opinion**	**Total**
Committee orientation	14.8 (4)	37.0 (10)	7.4 (2)	-	40.7 (11)	
Committee agenda	14.8 (4)	33.3 (9)	14.8 (4)	-	37.0 (10)	
Reports by administrators	11.1 (3)	33.3 (9)	14.8 (4)	3.7 (1)	37.0 (10)	
Faculty and department proposals	14.8 (4)	29.6 (8)	14.8 (4)	3.7 (1)	37.0 (10)	
Faculty planning submissions	22.2 (6)	18.5 (5)	18.5 (5)	3.7 (1)	37.0 (10)	
Other (please use comments box to identify)	-	10.0 (1)	-	10.0 (1)	80.0 (8)	

- AAPRC did not develop a clear position on the UAP in terms of troubleshooting its application / manifestation. It did not seem to be a "living document" (APPPRC)
- Due to the strike in the winter semester, we spent a lot of time responding to issues. There was less time for reflecting and planning for the future. (Executive)
- I am not sure how the UAP was relevant to this committee (Honorary Degrees)
- Honestly, I don't know a whole lot about the UAP (T&P)

Committees establish their own priorities in the autumn or have a core work schedule. Do you feel that the Committee devoted appropriate time to priority items / core functions during the year?
(Skipped question: 1)

Always	57.1 (16)
Sometimes	25.0 (7)
Never	3.6 (1) 1
Not sure / no opinion	14.3 3
Total	27

- Difficult to answer here since in the latter part of the academic year the strike overshadowed everything else. (Executive)
- The strike consumed most of the committee's time and energy in the winter. (Executive)
- Yes, although sometimes the tendency to micromanage unit standards slowed down our work (T&P)

Are there items that should receive more attention from the Committee?
(Skipped question: 34)

- Yes, the Committee itself was never a point of discussion/reflection or development (APPRC)
- Its mandate may need some fine tuning (Awards)
- I would like to get back to facilitating and leaning more about outcomes as a result of the AAPR process. I assume planning for the new Markham Campus will also be a significant agenda item for next year. (Executive)
- Decision criteria need to be clearer, leaving it less to the personal opinions of committee members to sway decisions. (Honorary Degrees)
- It would be good if we could find a way to ensure that units benefit from the feedback they are given on individual files. (T&P)
- Can't think of anything; the core of the Committee's work is file review and review of unit standards. At some point, the Committee will want to advise Senate on the need for a revision of the Senate policy - if for no other reason than to update its language and clarify areas that have proven to be unclear or problematic in practice. (T&P)

We value your comments…
(Skipped question: 19)

- AAPRC could become a much more engaged/collegial body. At present it functions (which may be all it should be) predominantly by rote. (APPRC)
- Independent commentary on developments. (APPRC)
- I always find work on Senate committees very helpful in terms of understanding the larger issues faced by the University, as well as how my home Faculty can best participate in University initiatives. I enjoy the work and find it engaging. (Executive)
- I feel that faculty level committees do not always follow proper policies and procedures related to SAC. I think that stronger direction and leadership by the Senate would help educate the relevant committees and foster more respect for due process. (Appeals)
- Members of this committee were conscientious with their attention to details in considering decisions. I enjoyed working with faculty from across the university and learning about university policies and procedures regarding honorary doctorates and graduation. Discussions were always interesting, thoughtful and informative, such as the ones regarding how to make the graduation ceremony more inclusive, even with regard to the choice of music. (Honorary Degrees)
- The meetings gave the opportunity for every voice to be heard and relevant issues and/r concerns were raised and discussed in a systematic way. Committee leadership was great. (Honorary Degrees)