

Graduate Survey Results, MS-QA

To further assess the successes, strengths and challenges for our program, we initiated a formal online survey of our current students and program alumni.

as we could locate (we collected e-addresses from current faculty, QAOM department records, the UC Alumni Affairs office, and the UC Foundation). We identified 398 unique e-addresses (only 26 bounced), and had received 79 responses by 8/30/2010.

The survey consisted of 15 questions, six with free-form text responses, and nine with “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree” check boxes. The free-form responses have provided us with some useful, albeit anecdotal, suggestions, such as: need to update/upgrade a couple of our core courses, strengthen content ties with the other functional areas of business, and revision of some course designs. Department faculty discussed these topics in depth at the August 2010 QAOM department retreat and have begun taking steps to address some common threads, discussed in more detail below. Here is the percent of responses in the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” categories for the nine check-box questions:

Question	“Strongly Agree” %	“Agree” %
The MSQA program provides the understanding and skill to apply quantitative modeling techniques to the solution of business problems.	55	41
The MSQA program affords students the opportunity to achieve depth in one or more of: probability, statistics, optimization, and simulation	51	36
In the MSQA program, students achieve the ability to design cross-functional solutions for business problems, using standard and advanced business analytics technologies and software.	32	51
The MSQA program helps students develop skill in modeling and quantifying in unstructured or new environments	44	40
The MSQA program, including the final Research Project, develops student skills to communicate findings effectively both orally and in writing	46	41
The coursework in the MSQA program adequately prepares students to complete the final Research Project successfully	44	39
The final Research Project is a useful experience in terms of preparation to address real-world problems.	46	30
The MSQA degree is valuable to my career.	60	32
Overall, the MSQA program was (or is) a valuable experience.	67	29

The first five of the above questions asked whether respondents feel that we are meeting our learning objectives 1-5 respectively, with nearly the exact language. Clearly, respondents feel that we are doing very well on meeting our learning objectives. The last four questions address overall how satisfied respondents are with the Research Project and the program overall, and here again it appears that respondents are overwhelmingly happy with our program.

While we are gratified with these responses, we can still see some areas for improvement, which agree with the anecdotal free-form responses discussed above. We need more

effectively help our students to learn how to approach unstructured, messy real-world problems and on cross-functional problems. To combat this, we are planning guest lectures from industry practitioners (e.g., dunnhumby marketing research), as well as from faculty from other college departments. We are also developing something parallel to conventional MBA case competitions, except focused on quantitative and statistical problem-solving.

We will administer this (or a similar) survey to all future graduates to create a database of comparative assessment of the program, as well as provide a tool for continual review of the program. We can then track improvement longitudinally, and detect future problems. Thus, we are making this an ongoing process of data collection to be reviewed continuously and reviewed at least annually at our fall department retreat.