Thematic Summary of Student Reviewer Reflections

How would you describe your recent experience as a student reviewer? What role did you play? What questions did you ask?

- Eagerness of external and internal reviewers to hear a student perspective and to include the student reviewer in all conversations.
  - Reviewer panel decided to let the student reviewer lead the questions when meeting with the student groups.

Questions asked by the student reviewers were typically about: supervision, opportunities for mentorship, feedback measures within the department, mental health and accessibility supports, experiential learning opportunities, clubs and sense of program community, common challenges experienced in the program.

Drawing from your student experience at Western, as well as this recent experience as a student reviewer, what program features and/or factors are most impactful on student learning?

- Ensuring that students have support from the department to raise concerns or issues when they do arise.
  - Ensuring that there are measures in place to monitor student achievement of milestones and support as needed.
- Atmosphere and culture within a program are important to student learning and student productivity, and if that is neglected, it is easy for students to stagnate in their programs.
- Experiential learning allows students to reinforce their classroom knowledge while also gaining new skills that will improve their employability.
- Feeling included within the classroom and feel that their institution is making an effort for inclusive and supportive learning.
- Mitigating stressors goes a long way in ensuring students have the time as well as the mental and emotional capacity to tackle challenging programs.

What do you feel are the best ways to engage students in continuous program enhancement?

- Student feedback on courses, was listed by seven student reviewers, as one of the best ways to engage students in program enhancement.
  - Instituting mid-course formative feedback opportunities for students to feel heard and be part of the conversation about course enhancements.
- Students need multiple modalities or routes to give feedback, some modalities should be anonymous.
- Inviting students to engage in, and be at the table for, program development discussions.
- Inviting students to focus groups or townhalls regarding their program/faculty that may be hosted by students from other faculty to support the sharing of experiences.

Other Comments:
- Better inform the external reviewers about the role of the student reviewers.
  - One student reviewer mentioned that they needed to actively make space for 1-2 questions throughout the process and to ensure that they jumped in before the end of the meeting.
- Inclusion of the program’s student association members in a dedicated meeting.

A Few Excerpts:

_I had a fantastic experience as a student reviewer. The team that I worked with on this review was eager to include me and to ensure that the graduate student perspective was at the forefront of the review._

_I thoroughly enjoyed this experience reviewing the_______ graduate program. I felt very well received by the people being interviewed and had the opportunity to voice my questions and discuss my opinions with other reviewers._

_Being a student reviewer for the first time, it was a great learning experience. I thoroughly enjoyed learning the process behind program reviews and the amount of effort that is put into how to make a program better for students._

_This was a wonderful experience in which I was made to feel really welcome and encouraged to offer my thoughts and discuss my experiences as a student. I would strongly urge my student peers to participate in such program reviews since it is an excellent way of learning about the work that goes into designing an academic program._

_All students_ who acted as student reviewers indicated that they would be interested in participating in future program review assignments.