Letter of Intent

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April 16, 2023

Ms. Sarah Knitter, Mr. Kuan Foo
Human Resources Division
UBC Centre for Accessibility
1874 East Mall #1203
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Dear Ms. Sarah Knitter Mr. Kuan Foo:

This formal report has been created to address, How to Better Support Note-takers to Improve Learning Experiences for Students with Disabilities at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The formal report examines the issues concerning improving support and resources for note-takers while enhancing learning for students with disabilities at UBC.

The formal report was developed through two surveys to assess the effectiveness of the current note-taking program and how resources can be improved to better support students and note-takers. The surveys revealed insights into the current quality of the note-taking program. While highlighting what improvements need to be made to better support note-takers, including training, compensation, and feedback.

Additionally, a number of recommendations were suggested on how to improve UBC's note-taking program. These recommendations include frequent meetings with coordinators, increasing semester-based compensation, and establishing a system for feedback from note-takers and students. I believe these recommendations can help improve the note-taking program and enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities at UBC. This formal report is intended to be informative and beneficial in developing strategies to better support note-takers and students with disabilities.

The formal report was a pleasure to work on. If there are any questions or need for additional information, please phone at 250-706-2550 or email at cheka@student.ubc.ca

Sincerely,

Cheka Duheme

Cheka Duheme

How to Better Support Note-Takers to Improve Learning Experience for Disability Students at UBC

Presented For:

Sarah Knitter & Kuan Foo

Co-Directors, UBC Centre for Accessibility

Emily Cadger

President, CUPE 2278 Labour Union

Presented By:

Cheka Duheme

English 301 Student

University of British Columbia

April, 16, 2023

Abstract

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is an institution that attracts students from different backgrounds and abilities who invest a significant amount of money in their education. As such, it is essential that all students, regardless of their disabilities, have access to the best resources to support their learning. UBC's Centre for Accessibility provides support for students with disabilities, including the note-taking program. The note-taking program features note-takers that offer a valuable service by taking clear, detailed, and complete notes. However, due to the lack of resources available in the program, note-takers are in short-supply, notes are substandard, and the program is not meeting the needs of note-takers and students.

Through a comprehensive review of the data collected, this formal report highlights the importance of the note-taking program as well as its impact on note-takers and students with disabilities. Additionally, it examines the factors contributing to the lack of resources provided to note-takers and students. To provide better support to note-takers and students, these are the following recommendations:

1. **Support Network:** Increase interaction between note-takers and coordinators with meetings to uphold program expectations.
2. **Effective Communication:** Develop a system for effectively communicating student feedback to note-takers about notes being taken.
3. **Fair Compensation:** Increase compensation for note-takers by offering a fair pay on an hourly or term-basis. This may incentivize more note-takers to join the program, reducing client stress about finding a note-taker.

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I.   Introduction

A. Background on the Centre for Accessibility

The centre facilitates "accommodations and programming initiatives designed to remove barriers for students with disabilities and medical conditions" (Note-takers Manual, 3). Providing academic accommodations helps students overcome barriers that may affect their academic success at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

B. Definition of Note-Taking

Note-taking is the practice of recording information from various sources, like in a lecture, for future studying. Note-taking methods include writing them down by hand, taking them electronically, making mind maps, and drawing diagrams. Effective note-taking involves capturing the key points, ideas, and details of the information being presented, in a structured and organized manner. Note-taking is often considered a crucial skill for students to retain and recall critical information as it facilitates comprehension and improves retention of complex subjects taught in the classroom.

C. Definition of Note-Taker

Despite advances in instructional technology, many instructors transmit knowledge through lectures (Maydosz and Raver, 177), making note-taking a crucial tool for students. While note-taking is often considered an "isolated, self-directed activity" (Peverly and Wolf, 320), the pace at which new and dense information is given can be "cognitively challenging due to the time-constraints" (Peverly and Wolf, 320) for students with disabilities. Effective note-takers are

responsible for capturing key points, ideas, and details and organizing them in a way that is easy

to understand and reference that students can use to support their learning.

D. Duties of Note-Taker

Those hired as note-takers should display "academic excellence and enthusiasm for learning"

(Note-takers Manual, 9). The training manual clearly states that they "provide a valuable

academic service" (Note-takers Manual, 4) by making notes that are clear, detailed, and complete

about the "information and discussion shared in the classroom" (Note-takers Manual, 4). Note-

takers are responsible for the following (Note-takers Manual, 4):

- The notes are emailed to the student within 48 hours.
- The notes received were accurate and readable.
- The notes received were clear and concise.

Ultimately, note-taker ensure that students have equitable access to "information and discussion

shared in the classroom" (Note-takers Manual, 4).

E. Purpose of Formal Report

The best possible resources should be available to students to facilitate their learning. There are,

however, insufficient resources to support the note-taking program. This has caused a shortage of

note-takers, low-quality notes taken, and dissatisfaction among note-takers and students. This

formal report examines current conditions and implications of available resources for note-takers

and students who utilize the note-taking program at UBC Centre for Accessibility.

F. Audience of Formal Report

Primarily, this formal report addresses the co-directors of Centre for Accessibility, Sarah Knitter and Kuan Foo, at the University of British Columbia (UBC). They provide note-takers with the appropriate training, resources, and compensation while maintaining note-taking program standards. Furthermore, they are authorized to make changes to the note-taking program.

Secondarily, this formal report addresses the labour union president of CUPE 2278, Emily Cadger. The labour union advocates and prioritizes protecting its members' workplace rights at the University of British Columbia (UBC) (About Our Union, 3). To illustrate, the labour union negotiates its members' terms like wages, benefits, conditions, and safety (About our Union, 3). The labour union should consider adding note-takers as members in the future.

G. Scope of Formal Report

To assess the current issues with resources and experiences in the note-taking program, six areas of inquiry were researched:

1. What are the current strengths and weaknesses in the Centre for Accessibility support of note-takers?
2. What are the current limitations of resources for note-takers and students in the program?
3. How do the current limitations of resources impact note-takers and students in the program?
4. How would implementing new practices improve job satisfaction for note-takers?

5. How would implementing new practices improve the accessibility of lecture material to students?

6. How does implementing new practices improve the relationship between the program, its note-takers, and its students?

E. Summary of Recommendations

Based on survey results, this formal report recommends the following changes:

1. **Support Network:** Increase interaction between note-takers and coordinators with meetings to ensure program expectations are upheld.

2. **Effective Communication:** Develop a system for effectively communicating student feedback to note-takers about notes being taken.

3. **Fair Compensation:** Increase compensation for note-takers by offering a fair pay on an hourly or term-basis. This may incentivize more note-takers to join the program, reducing client stress about finding a note-taker.

II.   Analysis

A. Data Collection Process

Primary research was conducted using two custom-made, online surveys on Qualtrics. The surveys targeted current and former note-takers and students that used the note-taking program. Participants were presented with a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions, and their responses were entirely voluntary and anonymous. A request was made to interview with a note-taker and a student. Neither note-taker or student responded.

B. Data Collection Results

Survey with Note-Takers

The survey aimed to evaluate the existing issues regarding resources and obtain insights into the experiences of note-takers in the program. The survey for note-takers consisted of ten multiple-choice questions and took about five minutes to complete. A total of 7 responses from note-takers were collected between March 21st and March 29th, 2023. The surveys were distributed on social platforms like Discord and Reddit. The surveys were distributed across two classes which are ENGL326 and ENGL393.

Survey with Students

The survey aimed to evaluate the current quality of the note-taking program and obtain insights into the students' experiences within the program. The survey for students prepared to assess the current issues and experiences in the note-taking program. The survey for students consisted of eight multiple-choice questions and took about five minutes to complete. A total of 6 responses from students were collected between March 21st and March 29th, 2023. The surveys were distributed on social platforms like Discord and Reddit. The surveys were distributed across two classes which are ENGL326 and ENGL393.

C. Data Collection Analysis

Quality Analysis

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the note-taking program, it is crucial to establish the quality of the note-taking program through benchmarks. These benchmarks will consider note-takers and students' perspectives in the program. By doing so, the program can gain insights into

its performance and whether it meets the expectations of its note-takers and students.

Furthermore, these insights can identify areas for improvement. Alternatively, these benchmarks

can be a reference point for future assessments or help track progress over-time.
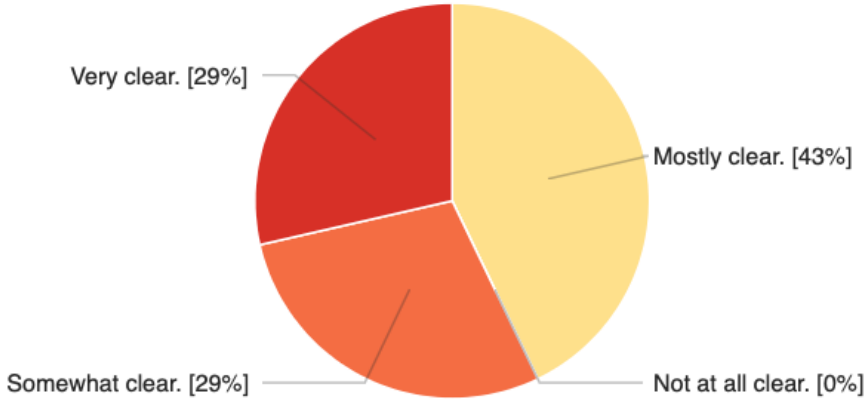
Figure 1 – Does the note-taking program provide a clear understanding of job duties?

Based on the responses, the note-taking program has provided a solid grasp of job duties to note-

takers in Figure 1. This assumption is supported by 29% of note-takers who replied, "very clear"

and another 29% who replied "mostly clear" which asserts that job duties are effectively

conveyed to note-takers. However, there is 43% of note-takers that replied "somewhat clear" in

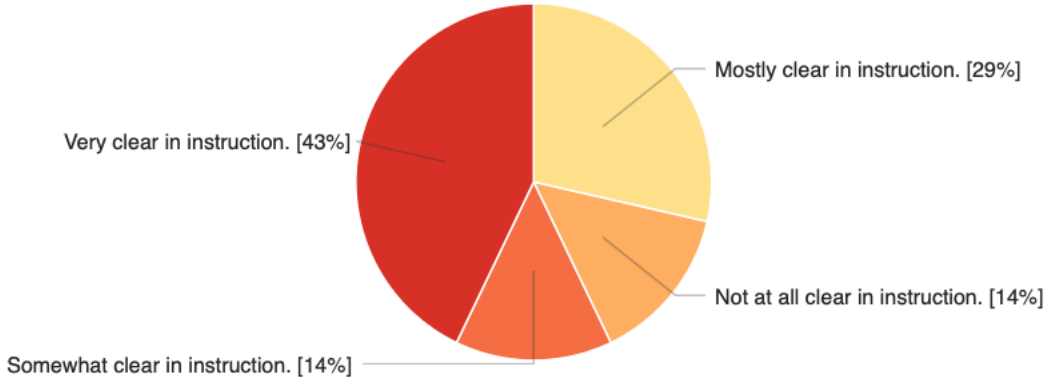instruction to the question. This implies that some aspects of job duties can be more clearly defined.

Figure 2 – Is the training manual for the note-taking program clear?

From the responses given by note-takers in Figure 2, it appears that most perceive the training manual as being clear in its instruction. Specifically, 43% of the note-takers described the instructions as "very clear" with an additional 29% stated that the instructions were "mostly clear." What can be understood is that a total of 72% of note-takers found the instructions to be clear, expressing a majority. Nevertheless, it is important to note that 14% of note-takers found the instructions to be "not at all clear," representing a minority. However, most note-takers found the instructions to be clear, which is a positive indication of the training manual's effectiveness.
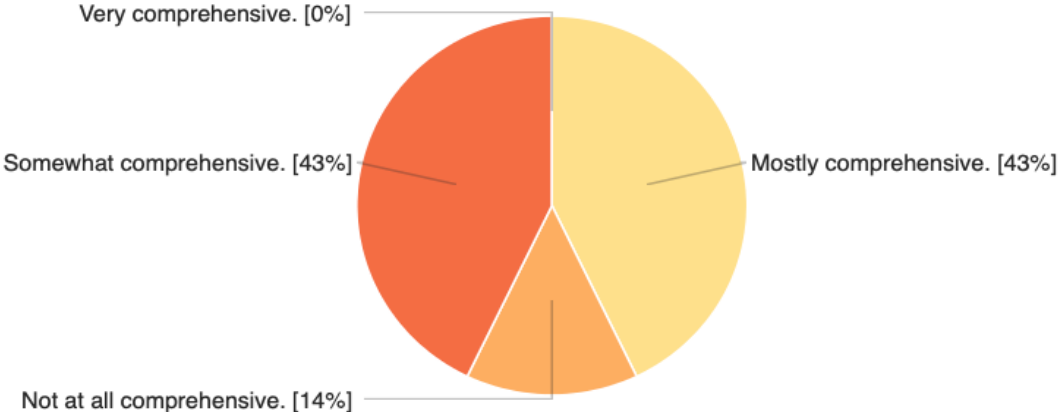
Figure 3 – Does the note-taking program provide training that is comprehensive?

According to Figure 3, most note-takers considered the note-taking program's training to be at least "somewhat comprehensive" at 43%. At the same time, an equal percentage consider that the training was "mostly comprehensive," meaning that most note-takers found the training sufficient to fulfill their job duties. However, it is concerning that 14% of note-takers rated the training as "not at all comprehensive." While the note-taking program only provides a training manual, this suggests that the materials or methods being used may not be adequate.

Figure 4 – Are the notes received well-prepared in course-content?
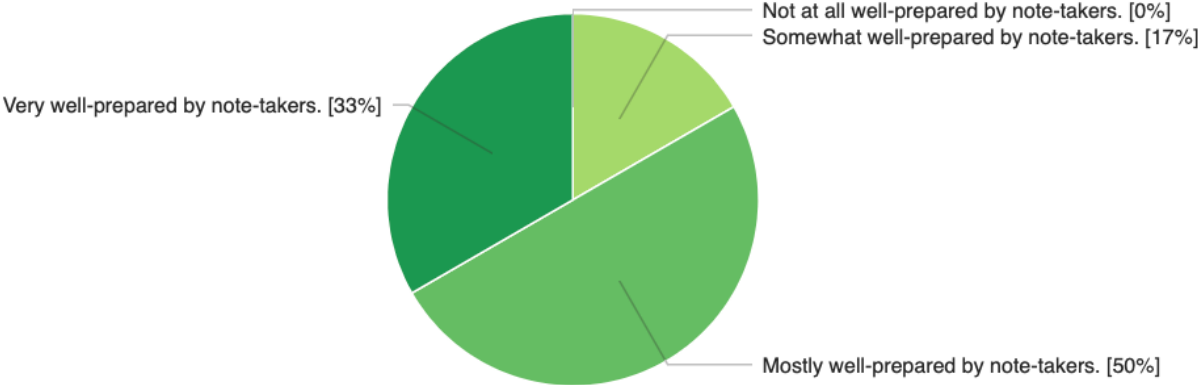
Alternatively, an overwhelming number of students responded that the notes were "mostly well-prepared" at 50% in Figure 4. Indicating they found these notes to be sufficient for learning and studying. Moreover, another 33% of students responded that the notes were "very well-prepared," which suggests that the notes being taken are well-written. Although 17% of the students responded that the notes were "somewhat well-prepared." However, there is a relatively positive perception of the notes' quality. In addition, the surveys do not ask for specific feedback on what aspects of the notes were helpful or lacking. So, it is difficult to draw more specific conclusions about improving them.
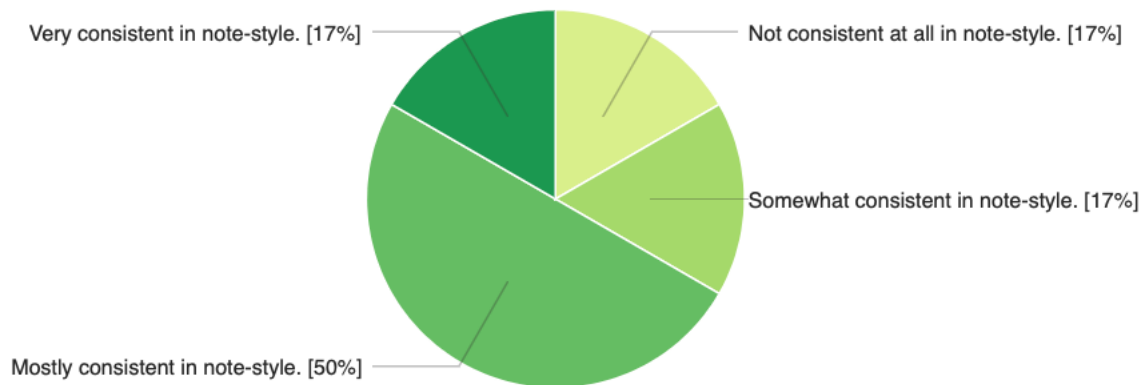

Figure 5 – Are the notes received consistent in note-style?

Based on the responses to Figure 5, it can be concluded that the notes received are generally consistent in note-style, with a total of 84% of student responses reporting some level of consistency. Among those, 17% of students found the notes to be "very consistent," indicating a high degree of uniformity in the note-taking style. Additionally, 17% of students perceived the notes to be "somewhat consistent," suggesting a moderate level of consistency in note-style. The majority of students, accounting for 50% of the total, reported that the notes were "mostly consistent," implying a generally uniform note-taking approach. While 17% of students find the notes being taken are "not at all consistent." What these findings suggest that note-takers have

maintained a relatively consistent note-taking style. There are still some issues with how notes are being taken. Further analysis may be required to determine whether any variations in note-style are causing confusion or hindering the learning process for students.

Figure 6 – Are the notes given in a timely-manner?

Very consistent in being given within 48 hours. [33%]

Somewhat consistent in being given within 48 hours. [17%]

Mostly consistent in being given within 48 hours. [50%]
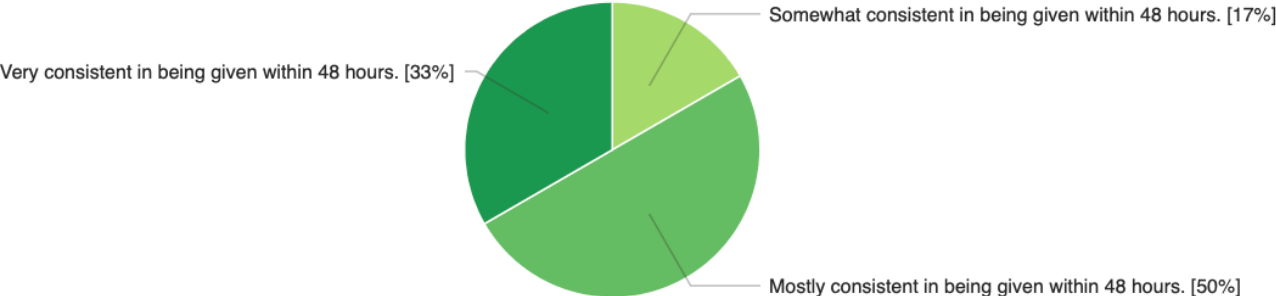
The survey results revealed that most students believe that they receive notes in a timely manner in Figure 6, with 33% indicating that the timeliness of note-takers is "very consistent." In comparison, another 17% show that the delivery of notes is "somewhat consistent." This is further supported by 50% reporting that the notes delivered are "mostly consistent" within 48 hours. These findings indicate that the note-taking program meets the needs of most students concerning the timely delivery of notes. However, the fact that only 33% of students reported that the notes are "very consistent" suggests that there is still room for improvement. It would be helpful to further investigate the reasons behind inconsistent note delivery and to identify ways to uphold the program's 48-hour delivery window. While the program seems to be performing satisfactorily in terms of timely note delivery, there is still potential for better improvement to meet students' expectations.

With the benchmarks established, we can delve further into how to improve the support given to note-takers and students. This discussion gave a clear understanding of the current quality of the note-taking program. Ultimately, leveraging the newfound insights, these can be further applied to the discussion. Leading to a more positive and rewarding learning experience for all involved.

Resources Analysis

Figure 7 – Would regular meetings between note-takers and coordinators be helpful?

Very useful to preform job duties. [14%]

Not at all helpful to preform job duties. [29%]

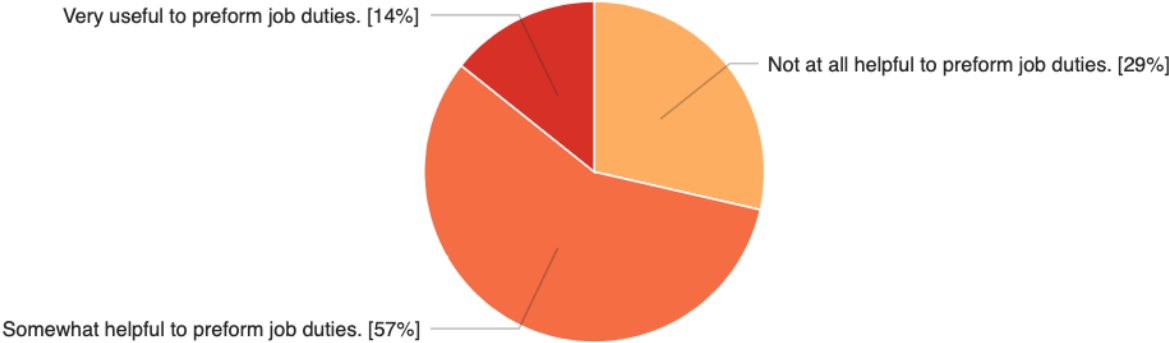Somewhat helpful to preform job duties. [57%]

Figure 7 suggests that regular meetings between note-takers and coordinators can be valuable for supporting note-takers in their job duties. While 29% of note-takers reported that such meetings would "not be helpful at all." Many responses acknowledged that regular meetings with coordinators could be at least "somewhat helpful" at 57%. Another 14% of note-takers indicated that such meetings would be "very helpful" to them. These responses show that most note-takers may value having regular communication with the centre's coordinators. By implementing regular meetings, coordinators can provide guidance and feedback to note-takers, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that note-takers meet their students' needs. Overall, the results

suggest that regular meetings between note-takers and coordinators could effectively support

note-takers in their job duties.
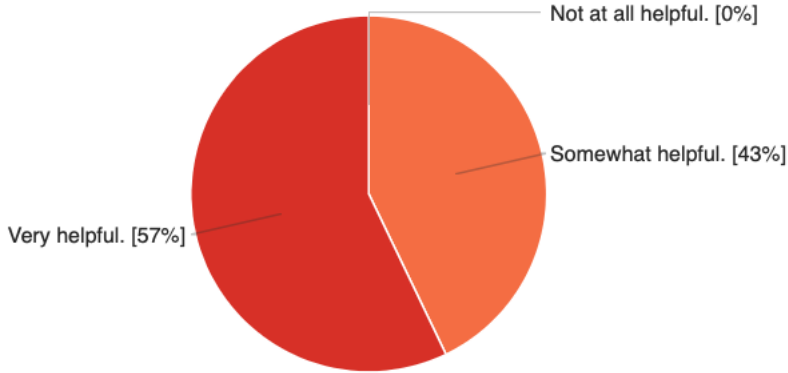
Figure 8 – Would increasing or changing the monetary aspect be helpful?

Figure 8 illustrates that 57% of note-takers believe that increasing the monetary aspect of their

compensation would be "very helpful," and 43% find it "somewhat helpful," suggesting a

significant demand among note-takers for better financial compensation. Currently, note-takers

are paid a flat-rate of $337 per three-credit course (Note-takers, 1), which may not adequately

compensate them for the time and effort they put into their note-taking duties. Increasing the

monetary incentive for note-takers could potentially attract more qualified individuals to the

program, improve the quality of the notes, and increase student engagement and academic

performance. However, it is important to note that any changes to the monetary aspect must be

carefully considered. This is to ensure that it is sustainable and feasible within the note-taking
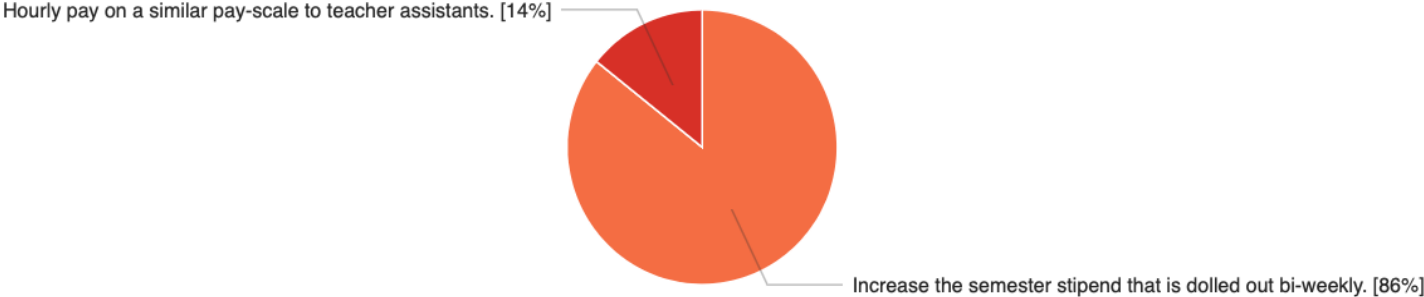
program's budget.

Figure 9 – How would changing or increasing in the monetary aspect be preferred in?

This is further reinforced by a vast majority of note-takers who prefer to increase the semester stipend they receive per semester by 86%, as shown in Figure 9. While a smaller proportion of note-takers suggest that changing the payment type to hourly pay may be a more suitable alternative, with only 14% of responses. This preference may stem from a desire for greater financial transparency and accountability, as hourly pay would allow note-takers to be compensated for the amount of time they spend providing their services. These findings highlight the importance of fair and reasonable compensation for note-takers and suggest that an increase in stipend and a change in payment type may be viable options to consider to better meet the needs of note-takers.
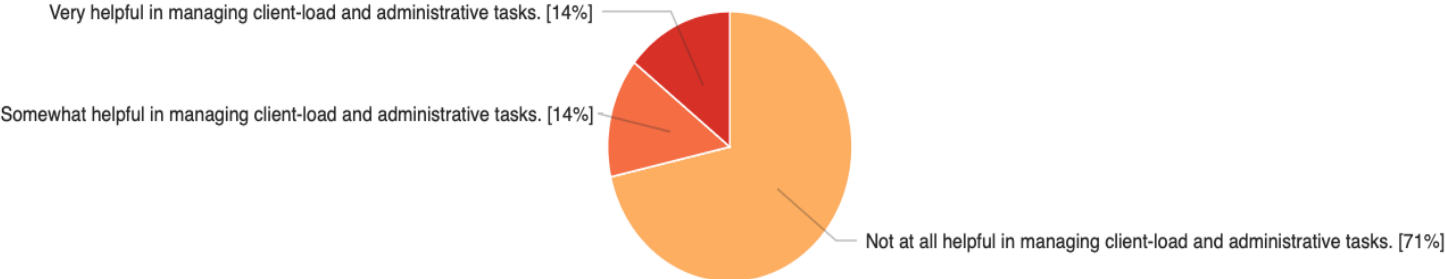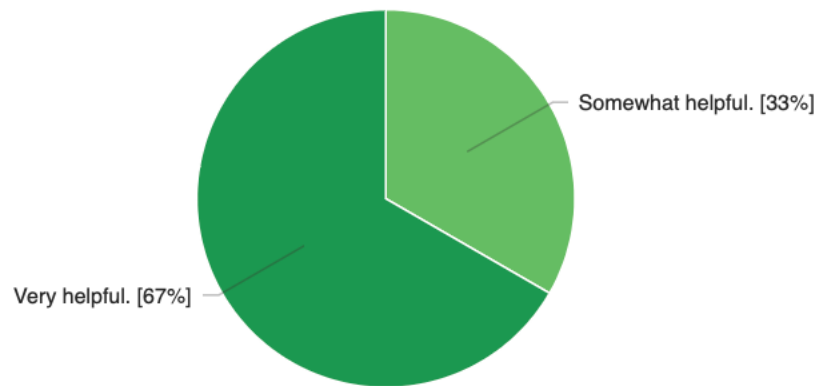

Figure 10 – Would limiting the number of clients per note-taker be helpful?

Limiting the number of students per note-taker may not be an effective strategy for managing student-load and administrative tasks, according to 71% of note-takers surveyed in Figure 10.

Figure 11 – Would increasing the number of note-takers per course be helpful?

However, there is a significant demand for increased support for students in courses with increasing note-takers in Figure 11. The graph shows that 67% of students feel that this would be "very helpful," and supported by another 33% that it would be "somewhat helpful" in increasing note-takers per course. There is a desire among students to increase the number of note-takers per course. The written responses to the survey have further reinforced this point, as many students have reported the common experience of repeatedly requesting a note-taker until the role is filled. This process can be emotionally and mentally taxing for students, adding unnecessary stress to the demanding academic workload. Furthermore, this could benefit note-takers who may miss class due to illness or other commitments.
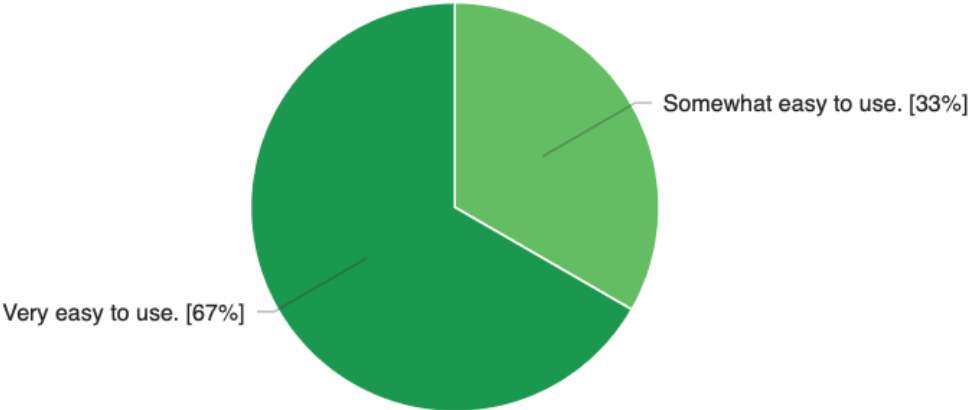
Figure 12 – Method of providing feedback to note-takers is?
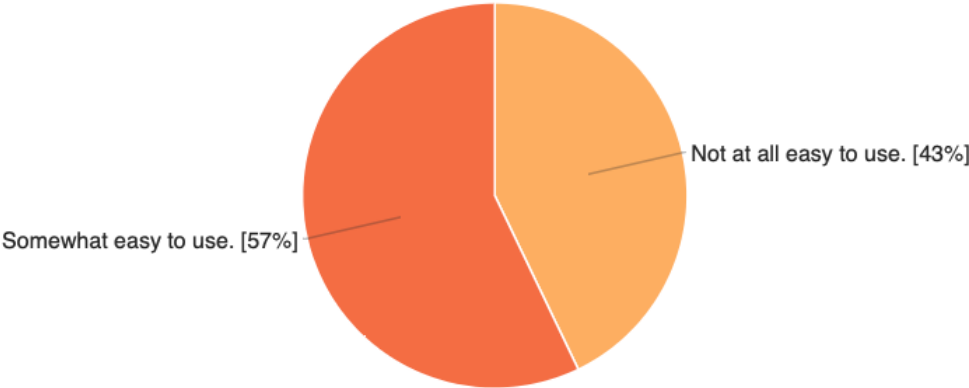
Figure 13 – Method of receiving feedback from students is?

As reported in Figures 12 and 13, the method for providing feedback to note-takers is generally

perceived as "easy to use," with the majority of responses (67%) made by students in the survey.

However, 33% of students found the method to be "somewhat easy to use," which shows there

may be some areas for improvement in terms of usability. Overall, the feedback suggests that the

method is relatively user-friendly and accessible. In comparison, note-taker responses show that

the method for receiving student feedback is "somewhat easy to use" at 57%. However, the fact

that 43% of note-takers found the method "not at all easy to use" shows that there may be

significant issues with the current system of feedback. To make the system more user-friendly

for note-takers, it may be worthwhile to examine these issues in more detail.

Perspective Analysis
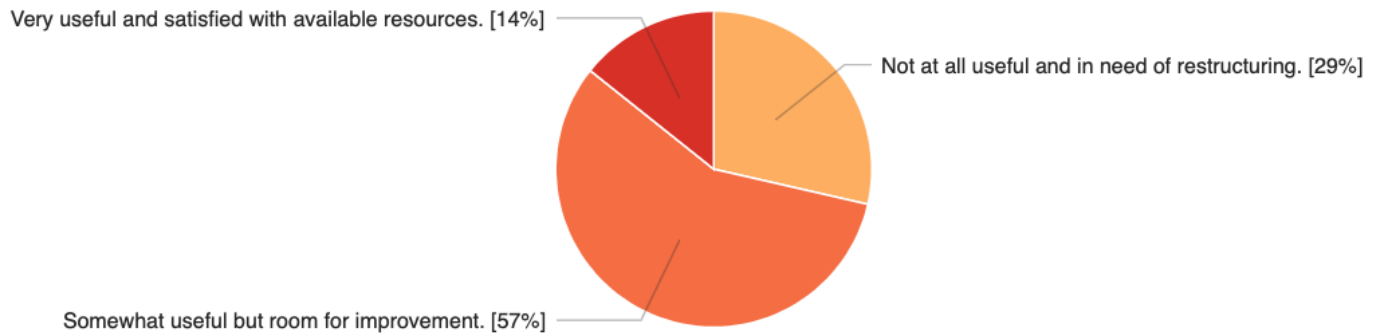
Figure 14 – The current effectiveness of available resources for note-takers is?

Considering note-taker perspectives, the survey asked if the available resources have been

helpful in performing their job duties in the program. The responses shows there are a few

inadequacies as 57% of note-takers felt they were "somewhat useful" and 29% felt that resources

were "not at all useful" to perform their job duties in Figure 14. These results indicate there are

significant issues with the current quality of resources. The current resources need to be

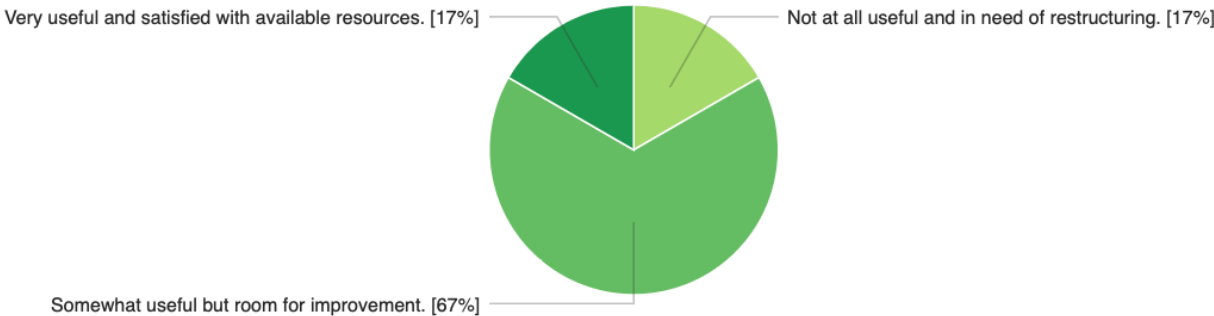reviewed and revised to better meet note-takers needs.

Very useful and satisfied with available resources. [17%]   Not at all useful and in need of restructuring. [17%]

Somewhat useful but room for improvement. [67%]

Figure 15 – The current effectiveness of available resources for students is?

While students report that available resources are "somewhat useful," with 67%. However, 17%

of students state that the resources are "not at all useful" and require restructuring in Figure 15.

The feedback from note-takers and students shows that the resources have some positive effects,

but work needs to be done to ensure that they are effective for all involved.

III.   Conclusion

A. Summary of Findings

According to the survey results, note-takers and students were "somewhat satisfied" with the

note-taking program's current quality of resources. There is a need to improve current resources

and implement new practices to meet the needs of note-takers and students, as some aspects are

effective in their current state, like the current training guide. At the same time, others should be

revisited, such as compensation to improve job satisfaction and retention among note-takers.

However, it is essential to remember that the primary goal of such a program is to support

students with disabilities and enhance their learning experiences. These students often face

significant barriers to learning due to their disabilities and note-taking programs aim to address these barriers by providing them with access to critical information related to their learning. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the program meets these students' specific needs.

Overall, a successful note-taking program should prioritize the needs of both note-takers and students. By doing so, the program can provide critical support to students who require note-taking assistance and help them achieve their academic goals. At the same time, note-takers feel fairly compensated and supported in the note-taking program.

B. Final Recommendations

Based on the data collected from the surveys, the following recommendations can be made to support note-takers better and improve the learning experience for disability students:

1. **Support Network:** Establishing clear expectations and guidelines for note-takers and coordinators is essential to ensure the program runs smoothly and effectively. One way to achieve this is to increase the level of interaction between note-takers and coordinators through regular meetings. These meetings can serve as a platform for note-takers to provide feedback on their experiences, voice any concerns, and receive support and guidance from coordinators.

2. **Effective Communication:** While the training manual seems to be straight-forward to note-takers, getting feedback is an important in making sure that notes are helpful to students. The quality of the program could still be improved with structural changes. This can be done improving the technology used to send/receive feedback

with students that use the program. Alternatively, a small team could oversee students/note-takers fostering bonds. This could help in overall communication, a unique response given by a student.

3. **Fair Compensation:** Note-takers are paid by term and earn 337 dollars per three-credit course (Notetakers, 1). As seen in the survey, an increase in the term-payment would be a lucrative for the note-taking program. This could generate more note-takers joining the program and reducing client stress about finding a note-taker for their course.

C. Limitations

There are limitations to this formal report, even though it is a valuable way to measure the quality of the note-taking program. Only 13 participants completed the surveys, limiting the reliability of the collected data due to low response rates from note-takers and students. Thus, this limited sample size cannot fully reflect the effectiveness of the note-taking program, and the student's and note-taker's perspectives may be skewed.

IV.   Work Cited

Scholarly

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Peverly, Stephen and Amie Wolf. "Note-Taking." *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognition and Education*, edited by John Dunlosky and Katherine Rawson, Cambridge University Press, 2019, PP. 320–355, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108235631.014.

Miscellaneous

CUPE 2278. "About Our Union." *CUPE 2278*, Vancouver, 2020, https://tinyurl.com/3c3t2z97.

Centre for Accessibility. "Note-takers." *Student Services,* Vancouver, 2020, https://tinyurl.com/3c2x79cv.

Centre for Accessibility. "Note-takers Manual." *Student Services,* Vancouver, 2020, https://tinyurl.com/3c2x79cv.

V.   Appendix

Student Survey for Formal Report
I am an undergraduate student at UBC engaged in a technical writing project for ENGL301 99C. The purpose of this survey is to obtain primary data to better support noter-takers and clients experience with the note-taking program provided by the Centre for Accessibility at UBC Vancouver. The final formal report will be addressed to the Centre for Accessibility and Labour Union (CUPE 2278). The data I gather from this survey will serve the ultimate purpose of providing recommendations for increasing the quality of the note-taker program. The survey contains 8 multiple-choice questions, and it should take about than 5 minutes of your time. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous.

Thank-you for your time and participation in filling out this survey.

1 - Are the notes received well-prepared in course-content:
- Very well-prepared by note-takers.
- Mostly well-prepared by note-takers.
- Somewhat well-prepared by note-takers.
- Not at all well-prepared by note-takers.

2 - Are the notes received consistent in note-style:
- Very consistent in note-style.
- Mostly consistent in note-style.
- Somewhat consistent in note-style.
- Not consistent at all in note-style.

3 - Are the notes given in a timely-manner:
- Very consistent in being given within 48 hours.
- Mostly consistent in being given within 48 hours.
- Somewhat consistent in being given within 48 hours.
- Not consistent in being given within 48 hours.

4(A) - The method (current or previous) of communication in the note-taking program is:
- Very easy to use.
- Somewhat easy to use.
- Not at all easy to use.

4(B) - If you answered, somewhat or not at all, please provide details in less than 50 words:

5(A) - The method (current or previous) of giving feedback in the note-taking program is:
- Very easy to use.
- Somewhat easy to use.
- Not at all easy to use.

5(B) - If you answered, somewhat or not at all, please provide details in less than 50 words:

6 - Would increasing the number of note-takers per course enhancing the learning experience:
- Very helpful.
- Somewhat helpful.
- Not at all helpful.

7 - The resources (current or previous) that are available in the note-taking program are:
- Very useful and satisfied with available resources.
- Somewhat useful but room for improvement.
- Not at all useful and in need of restructuring.

8 - What is the effectiveness of the note-taking program to enhance learning?
- This can be ranked from 1 (least effective) - 5 (very effective).

Optional - Are there any further comments to add about the note-taking program?

Note-Taker Survey for Formal Report
I am an undergraduate student at UBC engaged in a technical writing project for ENGL301 99C. The purpose of this survey is to obtain primary data to better support noter-takers and clients experience with the note-taking program provided by the Centre for Accessibility at UBC Vancouver. The final formal report will be addressed to the Centre for Accessibility and Labour Union (CUPE 2278). The data I gather from this survey will serve the ultimate purpose of providing recommendations for increasing the quality of the note-taker program. The survey contains 10 multiple-choice questions, and it should take about than 5 minutes of your time. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous.

Thank-you for your time and participation in filling out this survey.

1 - Does the note-taking program provide a clear understanding of job duties:
- Very clear.
- Mostly clear.
- Somewhat clear.
- Not at all clear.

2 - The training manual for the note-taking program is:
- Very clear in instruction.
- Mostly clear in instruction.
- Somewhat clear in instruction.
- Not at all clear in instruction.

3 - Overall, does the note-taking program provide training that is:
- Very comprehensive.
- Mostly comprehensive.
- Somewhat comprehensive.

- Not at all comprehensive.

4(A) - The method of (current or previous) communication in the note-taking program is:
- Very easy to use.
- Somewhat easy to use.
- Not at all easy to use.

4(B) - If you answered, somewhat or not at all, please provide details in less than 50 words:

5(A) - The method used (current or previous) to receive feedback in the note-taking program is:
- Very easy to use.
- Somewhat easy to use.
- Not at all easy to use.

5(B) - If you answered, somewhat or not at all, please provide details in less than 50 words:

6 - To better support note-takers, regular meetings between note-takers and coordinators will be:
- Very useful to preform job duties.
- Somewhat helpful to preform job duties.
- Not at all helpful to preform job duties.

7(A) - To better support note-takers, would increasing or changing the monetary aspect be:
- Very helpful.
- Somewhat helpful.
- Not at all helpful.

7(B) - Would this change or increase in the monetary aspect be preferred in:
- Hourly pay on a similar pay-scale to teacher assistants.
- Increase the semester stipend that is doled out bi-weekly.
- Remain the same. There is need to change the monetary aspect.

8 - To better support note-takers, would limiting the number of clients per note-taker would be:
- Very helpful in managing client-load and administrative tasks.
- Somewhat helpful in managing client-load and administrative tasks.
- Not at all helpful in managing client-load and administrative tasks.

9 - The resources (current or previous) that are available in the note-taking program are:
- Very useful and satisfied with available resources.
- Somewhat useful but room for improvement.
- Not at all useful and in need of restructuring.

10 - What is the effectiveness of the note-taking program in supporting note-takers?
- This can be ranked from 1 (least effective) - 5 (very effective).

Optional - Are there any further comments to add about the note-taking program?