Procedures for the University Council Approved
Student Learning Experience Feedback

Responsibility: Director, Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning
Authorization: Associate Provost, Teaching Innovation & Strategic Initiatives (TISI)
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Student learning experience feedback is used in place of student evaluations of teaching. This is a deliberate shift away from positioning students as evaluators of teaching quality toward student feedback positioned as a vital component of a broad suite of evidence of teaching quality (including, for example, peer feedback and self-assessment). Additionally, the word evaluation often implies that the feedback collected will largely be used to determine if teaching quality is adequate (also called summative use) rather than for development or enhancement of teaching quality (called formative use). Student learning experience feedback serves both formative and summative purposes at the University of Saskatchewan. When used formatively, educators look to this information to enhance their teaching practices, courses and programs. When used summatively, student feedback serves as one piece of information to support assessment of teaching quality through collegial and administrative processes.

Note that in this document the term "System Administrator" indicates the central staff member whose primary responsibility it is to run, maintain, and troubleshoot the system, regardless of their actual title.

1. Instrument question limit and order

The total length of the survey should be planned within each college/department such that it does not exceed 20 - 25 questions in normal circumstances. This may need to include considerations for courses with multiple educators if that is common within the college/department. The order of questions is 6 core closed-ended questions, college/department questions (inclusive of custom questions, modular questions, course-type specific questions), educator-personalized questions (up to 4), and then the 3 core open-ended questions.

2. Process for requesting a change to the core questions

University Council approved the delegation of decision-making regarding changes to the core question set to the Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee (TLARC) of Council. The following process will be used for these requests:

a. Support in creation of a request will be available from the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Lead

b. Requests should take the form of a simple overview of:
    i. The request being made (e.g., what questions will be changed, in what way, and in what circumstance, if change is requested for a subset of courses)
    ii. The rationale for the change, with clear connections to the fit of the questions with the curriculum and/or local teaching practices
    iii. The process by which the revised questions will be validated (where needed)

c. Requests will be reviewed by the Associate Provost, Teaching Innovation and Strategic Initiatives who will make a recommendation to TLARC with a rationale including the established parameters (see item e below).

d. TLARC will consider the recommendation and vote to accept or reject the request for change.

e. The request will be assessed against the following parameters:
    i. The rationale for the change is clear and aligned with the curriculum and/or teaching practices of the courses identified
    ii. Not changing the questions could cause confusion amongst students completing the instrument and/or could compromise the quality of student responses
    iii. Plans for validation of the adjusted question(s) have been made, where needed

3. Open and close dates for end of course feedback

Typical practice is to open surveys two weeks prior to the final teaching day and close it on the last teaching day during the Fall and Winter terms. For Spring and Summer, this is reduced to one week. This practice is recommended for the following reasons:

- To get the highest number of questionnaire completions possible. Making the survey available while students are still taking classes provides educators the opportunity to remind students about providing feedback and, whenever possible, provide time in class to complete it on a phone, laptop or tablet.
- To achieve greater consistency regarding when in the course students provide feedback. Restricting access to only this time means that students completing the survey are doing so at the same point in the course.
- Research evidence indicates that results are not affected based on when the surveys are administered in a course (i.e., before, during or after the final exam period).[1]

As such,

a. The system is programmed to determine the default open and close dates of the course feedback period
    i. The system default open date is the date that falls two weeks prior to the final teaching day of the regular term;
    ii. The system defaulted close date is the final teaching day of the regular term/instruction period.

b. The open date is ‘soft’, that is:
    i. It can be changed by department administrators (with approval of the department head) for individual courses or for the entire department;
    ii. It is not determined by university policy or practice;
    iii. Open dates can be set to any date between the day that the data has been imported and verified in the system and the day of the default close date. Note that there is often significant technical work required in order to have the

[1]Though there are multiple studies that could serve as examples in the literature, one of the most recent is the following: Bailey, M. R., Lane, I.F., & Biddix, P. (2023). Veterinary student evaluations of teaching: Scores and response rate when administered before or after final exams. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.3138/jvme-2023-0128

system set up to open.

c. The close date is ‘hard’, that is:
    i. It defaults to the system final close date (see a.ii);
    ii. It has been determined by university practice;
    iii. It can be changed for individual departments by the System Administrator with the approval of the department head, dean, associate dean or designate (in the case of non-departmentalized colleges). It cannot be extended beyond the due date of the final assessment in the course, which may be the final exam.

d. The system is also programmed to determine the default open and close dates of the midcourse feedback period. Mid-course feedback:
    i. is enabled by default in the system;
    ii. is typically only done in courses running 6 weeks or longer;
    iii. can be disabled for individual courses or all courses by the department administrator with the approval of the department head, dean, associate dean or designate;
    iv. can be opted out by individual instructors in the system;
    v. is purely formative with feedback going only to educators and not to department heads, deans, associate deans or designates.

Timing of open and close dates for ‘atypical’ courses will be determined on a case-by-case basis with the department head or dean, associate dean or designate.

Note: Due to the way the system is set up to send out notifications regarding course feedback, it is advisable to ensure that open and close dates do not fall on weekends.

4. Reporting instrument feedback

Frequency distributions for closed-ended Likert-type (i.e., rating scale) questions will be shown first on reports. Following the distribution, the following descriptive statistics will be provided: interpolated median, percent favourable, and dispersion index. These statistics are more appropriate for ordinal data than a mean and standard deviation, but a separate report including the mean will be available by request for historical comparisons or where an external body requires these statistics.

Additionally, aggregated comparative descriptive statistics will be shown for a minimum of five comparator courses from the college/department.

5. Changes/corrections to numeric feedback

On occasion, departmental administrators make errors in setting up surveys. For example, two sets of feedback are created for the same educator within a single course. In these instances, it may be necessary to make changes/corrections to how the data are stored in order to fix the error. When such a change/correction is required, the educator or departmental administrator will inform the System Administrator who, in turn, will consult with the Associate Provost, TISI. Any change/correction to numeric course feedback information must be authorized by the Associate Provost, TISI. Changes/corrections to numeric data for individual educators will not be made without the knowledge of the educator.

6. Concerning student comments

In certain cases, students may write comments that indicate a risk of harm to themselves or others. In the interest of safety, the plaintext of the student's comment and their identity must be disclosed to a support service who can assess the risk and follow up as they deem appropriate (e.g. Student Affairs & Outreach or Protective Services). In all cases where a safety concern is identified in a SLEQ comment, the following will occur:

a. The person who found the comment with the safety concern (i.e. educator, Department Head, etc.) will alert the System Administrator;

b. If the safety threat is imminent, the System Administrator will contact Protective Services or Student Affairs & Outreach, depending on the nature of the safety threat, and then inform the Associate Provost, TISI (or designate) of the situation;

c. If the safety threat is not imminent, the System Administrator will bring the comment to the attention of the Associate Provost, TISI (or designate), who will then advise on a follow-up plan, which may include contacting Protective Services or Student Affairs & Outreach;

d. When consulted about safety concerns in SLEQ comments, the Associate Provost, TISI (or designate) may view the concerning comment, but should not be told the student's identity;

e. The System Administrator will only disclose the student's identity (along with the plaintext comment) directly to Protective Services or Students Affairs & Outreach staff; the student's identity will not be disclosed by the System Administrator to the course instructor, department, college, or anyone else who does not need to do know the student's identity.

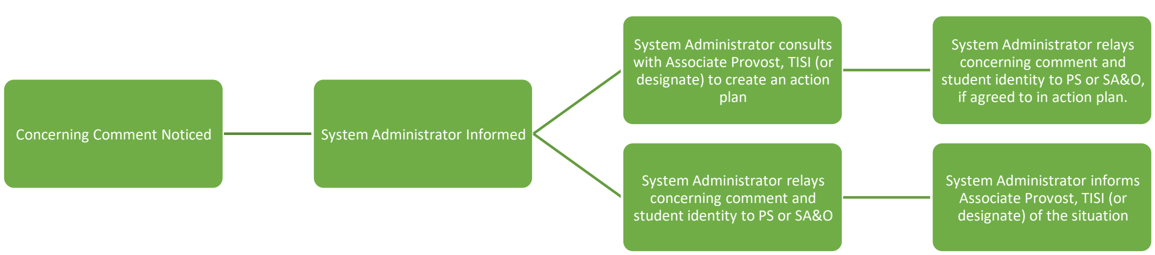

Figure 1 Overview of the process to follow up on SLEQ comments that contain potential safety concerns.

There may also be cases where other comments are concerning or inappropriate, but not for safety reasons (as detailed above) and not to the point of discrimination or harassment detailed in section 7. In such cases where the educator and department head and/or dean agree that a comment is sufficiently concerning to require follow-up, the department head or dean will contact the Associate Provost, TISI (or designate), who will then decide what follow-up should occur with the student. Note that even in this case, the educator, dean, or department head should not be told the student's identity to maintain confidentiality. Any follow-up messages will be sent to the student by a central staff member (the System Administrator or the Associate Provost, TISI) on the department's or college's behalf.

7. Removal of student comments

Comments provided by students on the survey are treated as confidential information (e.g., students' identities are traceable, but they are not disclosed). Comments will not be removed from course feedback unless they are deemed discriminatory, aggressive, or overtly hurtful and non-constructive comments , or violations of the University of Saskatchewan's policies.

a. If an educator believes that a comment should qualify for removal, the following steps must be followed:
    i. A request is made by the educator to their department head (or dean in non-departmentalized colleges, or their designate) specifying why the educator finds the comment to be highly inappropriate; and
    ii. The department head, dean, or designate agree with the request put forward by the educator; and
    iii. The Associate Provost, TISI is informed of the request by the department head, dean, or designate and agrees that the comment must be removed.
    iv. The Associate Provost, TISI has the final authority for the removal of a comment. No comment will be removed without the educator's knowledge.

b. Under normal circumstances, students will not be permitted to request a change or modification to their questionnaire responses after the end of the fill out period. Prior to submitting their responses, students will see the following: "**By clicking SUBMIT at the end, you verify that you have answered this survey to your satisfaction, for the correct instructor, and that you understand that these answers cannot be withdrawn once the fill out deadline has passed.**"

c. Students will be allowed to modify submitted responses up until the close of the fill-out period. There are occasions when a student provides feedback in error, notices prior to the feedback being released to the educator, and makes the request that the feedback be removed. If the Associate Provost, TISI views this to be a legitimate concern for the integrity of the feedback being provided, they can make the decision to remove it.

d. When a comment is removed from the system, the entirety of that student's feedback will be removed. Parts of a comment (leaving the remainder) or a comment independent of the rest of that student's feedback will not be removed and portions of a comment will not be altered.

e. Normally, students will be made aware of the removal of their comment only in the event that:
    i. The Associate Provost, TISI believes it is in the student's best interest; and/or
    ii. The nature of the comment is such that disciplinary action may be considered.

8. Comment reviews prior to report release

An educator may request that their end-of-course SLEQ report is reviewed by their department head (or dean in non-departmentalized colleges), who may then act on behalf of the educator to follow up on concerning comments in alignment with either section 6 or 7 of this document prior to the educator receiving their individual educator reports.

a. Prior to the last class date of the term, the educator should contact the System Administrator to request that their report be reviewed by an academic leader before it is released to them. In their request, they should include the subject code, course number, and CRN for all courses they would like reviewed for that term (e.g. ABC 100 CRN 12345).

b. Following the close of fill-out period, a Comment Preview Report will be issued to the department head/dean that includes all comments from each course that was requested for review by educators. The department head/dean will follow up accordingly for any inappropriate comments.

c. The department head/dean contacts the System Administrator, listing the subject code, course number, and CRN for all courses for which they have reviewed all comments and which may then be released to the educator in alignment with section 10 of this document.

Due to system limitations, requests are processed on a per-course basis, so educators teaching as a team should be aware that their request for review will be on behalf of all educators teaching the course, not just their own. It is recommended that educators confirm with other members of their teaching team prior to submitting a request to have comments reviewed.

As the intent of this section is to provide a mechanism to prevent harms to educators associated with reading highly inappropriate comments, all comments will be included in the Comment Preview Report issued to the department head/dean. This will include instructor personalized questions, which are comments that would not otherwise be seen by them. The department head/dean shall not use comments read in response to instructor personalized questions for any summative purposes, as those remain purely formative.

9. Department administrator access when a dual role exists

There are some, although rare, occasions in which the department administrator will also be the educator for a course. In order to preserve the integrity of roles and avoid any conflict of interest, a department administrator who is also an educator will not be permitted to manage the feedback for their own class(es). As such,

a. Department administrators for the course feedback system who are also educators must have a second department administrator assigned to manage their course feedback.

b. If there is not already a second administrator in the department with access to the system and the capability of creating surveys, the department head must appoint someone and have the request submitted to the System Administrator in reasonably good time.

c. If there is no one else in the department who can act as the second administrator, the department head must request that the System Administrator manage this educator's course feedback.

10. Release of results

To achieve confidentiality in student learning experience feedback and create anonymity in provision of results to educators, academic leaders and their delegates, unless the student chooses otherwise, the process for release of student learning experience feedback will adhere to the following:

a. No reports will be released where there are fewer than 5 responses to the questionnaire except where students have agreed to their feedback being shared (see next bullet).

b. To facilitate educator access to student feedback, students will be provided the option of having their qualitative/open-ended responses included in reports to educators should fewer than 5 responses be received. This choice will be available to students during questionnaire completion and it will be made clear to students that, in the case of fewer than 5 responses, there is greater potential that an educator could attribute feedback to them.

c. To avoid inappropriate interpretation of results, in courses with fewer than 5 responses, no closed-ended question results will be released.

d. To facilitate appropriate interpretation of results a qualifier will be added to reports indicating that: "Note that if this questionnaire received less than 10 responses, the results presented in this report are less stable; therefore, caution should be used in the interpretation of the results, particularly in relation to aggregate and comparative statistics."

All attempts will be made to release educator end-of-course reports within 2 - 3 business days after grades have been approved. This timeline may not be possible if the reports are custom to the college, school or department; are being constructed and produced for the first time; has been requested for review, as described in section 8 of this document; or require significant human processing.

11. Aggregate data usage by department, college, and/or the university and Custom Reporting

Beyond the use of student-based course feedback data by educators, there are times when departments, colleges and/or the university benefit from summary level information. This usage fits with the principle that student feedback is collected, in part, to improve program quality and the quality of student experience. For example, a college may use student feedback (aggregated across courses and/or educators) as one piece of information in program review or renewal or to determine the outcome of a program change. As a second example, the university may wish to cross-validate findings from other student surveys (e.g., NSSE) with student learning experience feedback.

In those instances where a department, college or other unit in the institution wishes to use aggregated anonymized student learning experience feedback, certain restrictions apply. Any summary data being used must involve a minimum of three class offerings and a minimum of three unique educators. To reach the minimum number for aggregation, it is possible to use multiple years of offerings. Although the use of five or more classes/educators would be closer to an ideal with regard to aggregating data, it may be difficult in some instances. Setting a minimum number of three courses or educators accomplishes the following:

a. Ensures that the confidentiality of scores for individual educators is protected.

b. Increases the likelihood that the stability of the scores is good (e.g., that summary scores are not overly biased by individual scores in the extreme).

c. Makes clear to programs, departments, and colleges that the purpose of using data in this way is about obtaining an aggregate of student experiences of teaching and learning within a course and is not about assessing an individual educator.

If a person requests an alternate report format for data they already have access to, the request will be reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Lead. The request will be assessed against the following criteria:

a. The administrative cost of creating the new report is reasonable for the use case proposed by the requestor;

b. The intent of the new report aligns well with the spirit and intent of these Procedures and the associated Policy;

c. And the new report should not introduce new potential for invalid or unfair conclusions about the data it includes.

An administrative unit seeking access to aggregated student learning experience data must request approval from the Associate Provost, TISI. In certain instances, the approval from the Associate Provost, TISI may also require institutional research ethics approval. If aggregating across the institution, there must be data from at least 2 different Departments included in the aggregated values.