THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

STUDENT EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION (SEI) HANDBOOK

Revised: August 2015

BACKGROUND

The Rules of the University Faculty[1] document stipulates that a student be given the opportunity to evaluate the quality of instruction provided in each of his or her courses. Specifically, Rule 3335-3-35(C)(14) specifies that the Chair of the Department, or Director of a School, is responsible to "promote improvement of instruction by providing for the evaluation of each course when offered, including written evaluation by students of the course and instructors, and periodic course review by the faculty". The OAA handbook[2] further requires evaluation of instruction in all courses and by all faculty members. According to the handbook, the faculty is responsible for the evaluation of instruction, to be carried out on a regular basis and in a systematic manner to be determined by each tenure-initiating unit (TIU), subject to the approval of the dean of the college. This evaluation of teaching should be a "comprehensive, integrated process that includes collection of data from students, peers, administrators, and the faculty members themselves." These data are interpreted with the understanding that both university instruction and its evaluation entail professional judgments according to expectations of the TIU. Student evaluation of instruction is focused on the students' perceptions of instruction, taking into account those factors shown by research to affect such responses, including class size and whether the course was required or an elective in the student's program. According to the OAA document, the TIU must set forth a detailed plan for obtaining student evaluation information to be used in faculty performance reviews.

The OSU Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) was developed as a way to centrally conduct this evaluation. The University Registrar is charged in University Rules to provide this mechanism for student evaluation of teaching. The purpose of the SEI, as it was designed, is to provide a standardized survey instrument for the collection of student feedback on the quality of instruction. This feedback is used as just one of several methods of assessing teaching effectiveness when making personnel decisions regarding promotion, tenure, and merit pay. The SEI has several characteristics that make it particularly useful for such assessment:
- It is applicable to a wide variety of instructional settings and focuses on dimensions of teaching performance that are generally acknowledged as being important;
- The content of the questionnaire and certain aspects of its administration are standardized;
- An instructor's scores on a global question can be compared with those of others teaching similar courses.

To be clear, faculty must use a standard, objective, TIU-approved tool for student evaluation. As noted above, the TIU's selection of an assessment tool is subject to the approval of the dean of the college. The TIU may generate its own assessment tool, use one from another source (such as UCAT), or use the University SEI. For required components and further discussion see the OAA Handbook, Chapter 2, Section 1.4.4. No unit should use the SEI as the sole instrument for the evaluation of teaching. The most common practice is that SEI summary results complement peer evaluation of teaching observations for purposes of P&T or merit recommendations (peer evaluation of teaching is required of all departments.)

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[1] http://trustees.osu.edu/assets/files/RuleBook/UniversityFacultyRules.pdf
[2] http://oaa.osu.edu/assets/files/documents/1.1HBGovDocs.pdf

SEI ADMINISTRATION|

The SEI is overseen by an ad-hoc subcommittee of the Council on Academic Affairs. The responsibilities of this subcommittee, which is made up of faculty, students, and staff, are:

- Weigh in on SEI administration (including the review of data reports, scheduling, and results distribution)
- Recommend policy changes (including policies related to the publication of results, the use of SEI in evaluations, and the administration of online SEIs)
- Recommend SEI content (including the currency of questions)
- Advocacy (including communications and messages to students/faculty)
- Other SEI related activities (including comparison with peer institutions, review of research literature, and optional approaches to evaluation)

Despite the utility of the SEI, it is important to keep in mind several considerations:

- The SEI is not a precise instrument. Therefore, the interpretation of its results should focus on extreme patterns, not on trivial differences in mean values.
- Although student evaluation of teaching is required, departments are not required to use the SEI. Instead, as stated above in OAA policies, each department may design and use its own instrument, or adopt an existing instrument for collecting student feedback, provided that the department uses it in a consistent manner. The University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT) is available to assist in the development of alternative instruments.
- Student feedback is only one source of data for assessing teaching effectiveness. SEI results should be interpreted in conjunction with data from other assessment methods, in particular peer evaluation of teaching and faculty self- assessments.

The SEI was originally developed as a paper evaluation, but after a 4-year pilot, was converted to online administration in 2009. In 2014 a mobile device app was developed to supplement the web-based form.

The SEI is activated and available for student responses at the end of the 13th week of semester classes (dates vary for split session and summer schedules.) Beginning on that date, there is a general message posted on Carmen reminding students to complete their SEIs, and a link that takes each student to his or her class schedule, the starting point for completing SEIs. In addition, the SEI administrator emails instructors a few days in advance of the date that their particular online SEIs are activated, and emails students on the morning that new SEIs are available to them. Because the activation of SEIs depends on the timeline of each class, which in a few cases may vary from the conventional start and end dates of the term, some students and instructors may receive more than one SEI email notification per term. Faculty can see dynamic response rates for a course in the Faculty Center of the Student Information System (SIS).

The activation date may be delayed at the request of the instructor. This delay must be requested by the third Friday of the semester. SEIs are deactivated for ALL students at 11:59 PM the day before the first day of final exams. If a grade is posted early, the posting immediately removes a student's access to the SEI for that class. Instructor summaries and student comments are available for download on Tuesday following commencement. In the case of departments that have adopted the SEI evaluation as part of their official pattern of administration, a copy of the summary report may also be distributed to the department chair on request if the POA allows for

this distribution. If the class is eligible for SEIs, the "SEI Options" section will allow the instructor to enable or disable a comment box for open-ended feedback that appears on the online forms. By default, the comment box does appear on SEI forms. Instructors have until the sixth Friday of the term to settle on their comment preference for each class, as long as the class is scheduled to start and end according to the university calendar. These student narrative comments (if selected) are only provided for the instructor's review through a download request, and are automatically deleted from the system after one term (instructors are advised to retain a copy of these comments for use in their P&T dossier). The results for Question 10 (*Overall, I would rate this instructor as… [excellent to poor]*) are made available for all students to review through the student BuckeyeLink.

SEI REPORTING

There are two types of numeric SEI reports available to instructors:

- Class Report (sample at https://registrar.osu.edu/faculty/sei/sampleclassreport.pdf)
    - gives a detailed account of students' evaluation ratings for a single class
    - includes detailed comparison group information for all 10 numeric SEI items
    - comparison groups are based on the size of the class and the predominant reason students enrolled in the course
    - includes a graph of the distribution of average ratings on item 10 (the "overall" rating)
    - help with interpreting the report is given at the end of this document
    - reports based on fewer than 5 student responses, or reports for classes taught before Summer 2009, are available only by contacting seiadmin@osu.edu
- Cumulative Report (sample at https://registrar.osu.edu/faculty/sei/samplecumulativereport.pdf)
    - lists the means and standard deviations of all 10 numeric SEI items
    - shows the item 10 "overall" rating for the appropriate comparison group, but no other comparison data
    - does not include an average ratings distribution graph
    - includes all classes taught by the instructor since 1994, EXCEPT those receiving fewer than 5 student responses
    - email seiadmin@osu.edu to obtain only recent SEI history in the cumulative report or to include classes with fewer than 5 student responses

SEI USAGE

Not all instructors or classes automatically qualify for using the SEI for evaluations (see https://registrar.osu.edu/faculty/sei/faqs.asp#alluse to review the current list of exclusions). Inclusion in the SEI usage list is dependent on the course scheduling information entered by departments in the SIS and on SEI policy. For example, instructors marked as graders, or instructors whose names do not print on the Schedule of Classes, will not receive SEIs, nor will independent studies courses (those with catalog number x999 or x998 or xx93, or those with class component Independent Study (IND) or Field Experience (FLD). Some departments (eg, Law, clinical departments in the Health Sciences, and some Arts and Sciences departments) use their own evaluation instrument, and therefore are excluded from the usage list.

The following page in the Appendix shows the wording used in the SEI. The online and mobile forms look slightly different. The student view of the web-based SEI can be seen at:

https://registrar.osu.edu/faculty/sei/studentonlineview.pdf

The mobile app view can be seen at:

https://registrar.osu.edu/faculty/sei/student_view_mobile_sei.pdf

The instructor view can be seen at:

https://registrar.osu.edu/faculty/sei/instructoronlineview.pdf

INTERPRETATION OF SEI SUMMARY REPORTS

Despite the utility and effectiveness of the SEI, it is important for faculty and administrators to keep in mind that it is a "blunt" instrument and that its results should not be regarded as highly precise. Also, they should remember that the SEI is only one source of data for assessing teaching. UCAT is available to consult with instructors or departments regarding the interpretation of the SEI Summary Reports. When interpreting results, the following should be considered:

- Consider the results within the context of other less quantifiable information, such as the typical representative performance of the instructor, and special circumstances surrounding the particular offering that might have influenced student opinion.
- Check response rates to determine if the scores reflect the opinion of a substantial part of the course enrollment. For small section sizes, look at frequencies as well as mean scores, since outliers can greatly influence the mean rating.
- The focus should be on patterns of responses and general comparisons rather than on trivial differences in mean values. To dwell on a trivial difference in mean values is inappropriate as a ba for comparing one instructor with another. Differences of a few tenths of a point should not be the basis for personnel decisions.
- Please note that SEI scores are generally high. Scores close to the mean of the Comparison Group indicate teaching quality that is perceived as satisfactory by the students. Scores at the extreme ends of the range provide the most significant information. Scores that are at the extreme high end are signals that students found the teaching to be extremely effective. Those at the extreme low end indicate that students perceive problems with teaching performance.
- In addition to looking at an instructor's scores on one summary report, also analyze the scores that an instructor has received over a period of time, if they are available. For instance, consider patterns of improvement over time.
- The SEI is only one component of the evaluation of teaching. Data from other assessment techniques must also be taken into account, such as review of syllabi, examination content and results, writing assignments, and external and internal peer evaluations. In particular, peer evaluation of teaching is required of all departments.

APPENDIX

CLASS	CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVG.	I ENROLLED IN THIS CLASS BECAUSE...
○ Rank 1 (Freshman)	○ 3.70 -PLUS	○ It was specifically required in my major/minor.
○ Rank 2 (Sophomore)	○ 3.30 - 3.69	○ It was one of several choices to meet a
○ Rank 3 (Junior)	○ 3.00 - 3.29	requirement in my major.
○ Rank 4 (Senior)	○ 2.70 - 2.99	○ It fulfills a GEC/BER requirement.
○ Graduate	○ 2.30 - 2.69	○ It was a free elective choice.
○ Graduate Professional	○ 2.00 - 2.29	
○ Other	○ Below 2.00	

Evaluate items 1-9 using a scale where the range is from: Agree Strongly to Disagree Strongly. Fill in "Not Applicable" to indicate an item that does not apply to this instructional setting. Evaluate item 10 using a scale where the range is from: Excellent to Poor.

Not Applicable	Agree Strongly	Neutral		Disagree Strongly		
○	○	○	○	○	○	1. The subject matter of this course was well organized.
○	○	○	○	○	○	2. This course was intellectually stimulating.
○	○	○	○	○	○	3. The instructor was genuinely interested in teaching.
○	○	○	○	○	○	4. The instructor encouraged students to think for themselves.
○	○	○	○	○	○	5. The instructor was well prepared.
○	○	○	○	○	○	6. The instructor was genuinely interested in helping students.
○	○	○	○	○	○	7. I learned a great deal from this instructor.
○	○	○	○	○	○	8. The instructor created an atmosphere conducive to learning.
○	○	○	○	○	○	9. The instructor communicated the subject matter clearly.

	Excellent			Poor		
	○	○	○	○	○	10. Overall, I would rate this instructor as . . .