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DOC 2023-05 Use and Administration of the Student Feeback Tool

University of Dayton. Academic Senate. Executive Committee

PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: Use and Administration of the Student Feedback Tool

SUBMITTED BY: Executive Committee of the Academic Senate

DATE: 14 April 2023

ACTION IS: Legislative Authority

REFERENCES ARE: DOC 2014-02. Proposal for a New Student Evaluation of Teaching Instrument and Delivery Method (approved February 14, 2014);DOC-2012-03 Recommendations for Revision to the Process for Student Evaluation of Teaching (approved March 16, 2012); DOC-2004-08 Use of Student Evaluations in Judging Teaching Effectiveness (approved December 3, 2004); DOC-2000-01 Directions for Completing Student Assessment of Instruction--Report of Results of Students Assessment of Instruction (February 18, 2000; Effective March 1, 2000); DOC-1999-07 Student Assessment of Instruction (December 3, 1999; Effective March 1, 2000)

RATIONALE: The 2014 SET policy was to be reviewed after a period of five years. The Academic Senate in collaboration with the Learning Teaching Center and with robust consultation with faculty and students (including the Student Government Association) reviewed the policies related to the student evaluation of teaching from 2018 through 2023. This new policy is designed to replace existing policies, establishing one comprehensive policy related to student evaluation of teaching.

The review process revealed a strong body of research concluding that SET scores historically suffer from biases, which target women and underrepresented group members, use of the SET as an evaluation tool does not promote a diverse, inclusive and equitable work environment, and may not lead to a fair assessment of a faculty member's performance in teaching. Moreover, the review established that, (1) SET is not a direct measure of student learning or teaching effectiveness, and (2) nevertheless, it can be a powerful professional development tool for faculty if used in an appropriate manner (Carpenter, Witherby and Tauber, 2020). For summary of the review and best practices see **APPENDIX A**. Accordingly, this policy renames the

measure as the Student Feedback Tool (SFT), highlighting the primary purpose of the instrument, and provides further guidance regarding usage.

I. **Student Feedback Tool (SFT)**

    a. The Student Evaluation of Teaching tool created in 2014 was designed to provide useful feedback to faculty to help them improve their teaching, and to serve as one of multiple measures in the assessment of a faculty member's teaching. The tool includes eight closed-ended questions where students can respond as one of five categories: (5) strongly agree; (4) agree; (3) neutral; (2) disagree; (1) strongly disagree. The tool also includes open ended questions and the opportunity for students to provide comments. The eight closed-ended questions were designed to allow students to share their perceptions of their classroom experience in four domains: (1) preparation and organization of their instructor; (2) the learning environment; (3) teacher student interaction; and (4) perceived outcome or impact. Even though the current tool "has been assessed for validity and reliability, and has been vetted by leading experts in the field of the student evaluation of teaching" (DOC 2014-02), its primary use is to obtain feedback from students. Since student feedback is critical to helping faculty members improve their teaching, the name of the SET tool designed in 2014 will be changed to Student Feedback Tool (SFT).

    b. The SFT shall be comprised of questions approved by the Senate (See **APPENDIX B**):

II. **Use of Student Feedback Tool (SFT)**

  1. Release of SFT Results

    a. SFT evaluation results will be reported to faculty as relative frequency distributions (e.g. Agree: 62.5% 25/40) rather than as averages. The SFT evaluation results provided to faculty and others will contain only the faculty member's relative frequencies and comments; comparative data aggregated at the department or unit level will not be included on the SFT evaluation results.

    b. SFT evaluation results (relative frequency distributions and comments) will be made available to the individual faculty member, their department chair, their dean, evaluative committees (as required by unit and departmental policies), as well as other administrators (e.g. provost, LTC staff) who need such information as part of their job function to guide the professional development of their faculty. The SFT evaluation results will be made available to the faculty member,

department chair, and other administrators 24 hours after the grading window has closed.

    c. Department chairs should review the SFT evaluation results of their faculty each semester and faculty reflections for all full-time faculty at least annually, regardless of faculty rank, level, or title. Department chairs are encouraged to meet with faculty to discuss any concerning patterns observed in the SFT evaluations.

2. **Use of SFT as a Formative Tool**

    a. The SFT tool was designed to serve primarily as a formative tool to help faculty develop and improve their teaching practices. As a formative tool, faculty will be required to reflect on their teaching, including information obtained from their SFT evaluation results, for their courses. To aid in this reflection, faculty will use a concise form designed to help them thoughtfully consider student feedback, reflect on any new or innovative pedagogical practices they implemented, connect with course learning outcomes, and promote actionable improvements in their teaching. Faculty time to fill out this form will be taken into consideration as it is developed. The LTC in consultation with ECAS will develop and maintain a common SFT faculty reflection form.   Units or departments can choose to develop their own SFT faculty reflection form. Any unit or department specific form must be approved by the unit using the approval process established within that unit for changes to the tenure and/or promotion process.   All full-time faculty members are required to complete the SFT reflection form annually and share it with their Department Chair as part of the merit review process.

3. **Use of SFT as an Evaluative Tool**

    a. As stated in Academic Senate DOC 2004-08: Use of Student Evaluations in Judging Teaching Effectiveness, "student evaluations of faculty shall not be used as the sole criterion for judging a faculty member's teaching effectiveness." As stated in Academic Senate DOC 2006-08 Evaluating Faculty Teaching for the Purposes of Tenure, chairs, deans, individual faculty, and committees tasked with providing faculty evaluations are required to use multiple measures when assessing teaching effectiveness and classroom environment. Some examples of measures of teaching effectiveness are listed above in Section I.

    b. Faculty teaching reflections must be submitted annually along with the SFTs. Both of these instruments must be included as part of the multiple measures used to assess teaching effectiveness for merit, tenure or promotion review.

III.   <u>Administration of SFT</u>

1. The SFT instrument will be delivered online.

2. The SFT survey will be made available to students ten calendar days prior to the last day of classes each semester. The survey will be closed to student access on the last day of classes for that semester. Where appropriate, department chairs may request a variation of SFT open dates to match the delivery of specific courses.

3. For all courses with in-person components, SFT must be administered in person in class at the end of each semester.
   a. In addition to providing information in their syllabi about SFT, faculty members should explain the purpose of SFT and the process that will be used to facilitate SFT well in advance of the date that the SFT is administered.   Additionally, Faculty members should inform students of the date that the SFT tool will be administered in class, and instruct them to bring their phones, laptops or tablets to class on this day.

   b. Faculty should allow a reasonable amount of time (at least 10 minutes) for students to complete their on-line SFT tool at the start of the class session. Allowing time for students to complete the survey in class can be helpful in increasing student response rate. A higher response rate provides feedback to the faculty member that is more reflective of the student experience. Facilitating the SFT tool at the beginning of class instead of at the end of class will help ensure that students take the time to complete the survey.

   c. Faculty members are expected to provide brief instructions to the students and then leave the classroom while the students complete the SFT.   A suggested script for introducing the SFT process is provided in **APPENDIX C**:

   d. Synchronous Online courses will administer SFT evaluation on-line at the beginning of the course session using a similar process to that described above. Exceptions to this process will be made for asynchronous on-line courses which do not have regularly scheduled meeting times (e.g.…hybrid courses, courses using an on-line meeting tool). Exceptions to the process described above may be made with Department Chair permission. Once the SFT survey is released, all faculty members, regardless of their course modality, are encouraged to remind

their students to complete the survey even if class time is devoted to completing it.

4. Incentives, (such as extra credit for all students if the response rate exceeds/reaches a threshold such as 85%) should not be used..

5. All course syllabi will include a descriptive statement that explains the SFT evaluation process to students. Standardized language for this statement is available on the Accessible Syllabus through the LTC.

6. A syllabus statement should be included to provide information and resources on how to report bias issues in class. Standardized language for this statement is available on the Accessible Syllabus through the LTC.

7. All faculty are expected to take time to review the SFT process with their students both at the beginning (i.e. when reviewing the syllabus with students) and at the end of the semester (i.e. a week before the SFT survey is released). During this time, faculty should explain the need for and value of constructive feedback on SFT tool. Some suggestions of what should and should not be said as a faculty member introduces the SFT is provided in **APPENDIX C**.

8. All incoming students, including international, transfer, and graduate students, will be introduced to the SFT evaluation process in orientation sessions (student affairs, graduate programs), first-year seminar courses, and/or program handbooks. These introductions will include information about processes available to students to address classroom climate issues or concerns beyond the SFT. Student groups and leaders are asked to develop programming to help their members understand how they can best engage with SFT and report classroom bias incidents.

9. All incoming faculty, including adjunct instructors and graduate teaching assistants, will be introduced to the SFT evaluation process and information concerning classroom bias incidents in orientation sessions and/or meetings with department chairs, program coordinators or third parties who on-board adjunct faculty on behalf of the University of Dayton.

10. All students and faculty will be made aware in writing or in oral presentations of the University process in place to identify and address SFT comments that violate University of Dayton policies concerning discrimination and harassment as detailed in the Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (https://udayton.edu/policies/finance/nondiscrimination-policypage.php)

11. Students in team-taught courses can evaluate both or only one of the instructors. It is strongly encouraged that instructors in team-taught courses explain this process to the students at the beginning of the semester and the week before SFT surveys are released to students.

12. The Learning Teaching Center (LTC), under the leadership of the Assistant Provost for Learning, will provide administrative support, to include:
    a. Providing a central location for students, faculty, and administrators to seek assistance regarding the SFT.
    b. Providing faculty and administrators assistance in interpreting SFT evaluation results.
    c. Providing faculty assistance for the formative development of teaching through resources directly linked to the SFT instrument's items.
    d. Providing leadership in coordinating with UDit and academic units and departments regarding the online delivery of SFT.
    e. Assurance of appropriate anonymity of SFT results.
    f. Develop and maintain Faculty Reflections on Teaching Form and seek approval from ECAS for this form.

IV. Addressing student comments that rise to the level of discrimination and/or harassment

1. Student comments on SFT that violate the Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy must be reported to the Equity Compliance office by the faculty member and/or their chair by going to go.udayton.edu/nondiscrimination or by calling 937-299-3622. Faculty and administrators must be regularly informed of the University process that is in place to identify and address comments that violate UD policies, such as the Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy https://udayton.edu/policies/finance/nondiscrimination-policypage.php.

2. All department chairs and faculty involved in the tenure and/or promotion, post-tenure, or merit review processes must receive ongoing professional development from the Provost Office in consultation with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Academic Senate in the administration and use of SFT course evaluations and in handling classroom bias incidents. This professional development will be embedded in the sessions required for any faculty member that participates in promotion and tenure review at any level identified in DOC 2021-05 (Section C7) Revisions to DOC 20016-10 University Promotion and Tenure Policy.

V. Implementation

1. This policy replaces, updates, and/or amends previous policies related to the Student Evaluation of Teaching including, but not limited to, portions of the following policies to the extent that they are inconsistent with this policy:

    DOC 2014-02. Proposal for a New Student Evaluation of Teaching Instrument and Delivery Method (approved February 14, 2014)

    DOC-2012-03 Recommendations for Revision to the Process for Student Evaluation of Teaching (approved March 16, 2012)

    DOC-2004-08 Use of Student Evaluations in Judging Teaching Effectiveness (approved December 3, 2004)

    DOC-2000-01 Directions for Completing Student Assessment of Instruction-- Report of Results of Students Assessment of Instruction (February 18, 2000; Effective March 1, 2000)

    DOC-1999-07 Student Assessment of Instruction (December 3, 1999; Effective March 1, 2000)

    DOC-1989-03 Revision of Faculty Evaluation Form

2. This policy will go into effect beginning in Fall 2024. Units and Departments policies must be in compliance with this policy by 15 August 2024.

APPENDIX A: Background and Best Practices on Using SFT

I.   Introduction and Background

As part of a broader conversation regarding the efficacy of various measures used to assess teaching effectiveness, the Academic Senate started exploring ways to address concerns around the facilitation and use of the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) tool. Since the SET is just one of multiple measures used to help faculty members improve their teaching and to evaluate a faculty member's teaching, it is understood that other commonly used measures such as peer evaluation of teaching, must also be explored. The decision to focus first on the SET is the result of several concerns such as   low student participation rates, overreliance on and inappropriate use of SET scores for the purpose of merit, tenure, and/or promotion evaluation, and well-documented bias that exists in both the scores and comments in SETs have been raised since the

new SET instrument was introduced in 2014 (Academic Senate DOC 2014-02, 2015; Heffernan, 2022). Additionally, conversations with student representatives on the Academic Senate as well as the Student Government Association (SGA) made it clear that students highly value having the opportunity to provide feedback to faculty regarding teaching effectiveness. Students also recognized that not all students use the SET tool to provide helpful and productive feedback to a faculty member, and instead use it as a means to express frustrations, retaliate against a faculty member, or make comments that are not related to the faculty member's teaching effectiveness. Motivated by these ongoing discussions, in the fall of 2021, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate (ECAS) requested that the Student Academic Policy Committee (SAPC) work with the SGA to develop recommendations to mitigate bias in the administration and use of SET, and to address virtual and physical bias related incidents occurring in courses. As such, the SET and Classroom Climate Task Force was convened to help support this work and bring more diverse student and faculty voices into the conversation.

In February of 2022, the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) was charged by ECAS to create a new holistic University policy on the facilitation and use of SET based upon the work and recommendations of the SAPC and the SET and Classroom Climate Task Force. The FAC determined that creating a holistic policy in the timeframe provided was not possible, but instead focused on providing key recommendations and considerations. Additionally, the Academic Policy Committee (APC) developed a draft policy regarding the administration of SET.

In July of 2022, the Academic Senate assembled a group of three faculty members to use the recommendations from SAPC, APC and FAC on the facilitation and use of SET to draft revisions to existing and/or develop new policies that adhere to the recommendations provided from AY21-22 Senate.

Key concerns

Students' assessment of their faculty's teaching provides critical feedback that can help a faculty member reflect upon and improve their teaching, and develop their pedagogical skills (Carpenter, Witherby and Tauber, 2020). At the University of Dayton, there are several key ways that faculty can get this critical feedback from students including using the in-person Midterm Instructional Diagnosis (MID) facilitated through the Ryan C. Harris Learning Teaching Center (LTC), the anonymous online MID tool in Isidore, the check-in feature on Isidore, and the SET. The in-person and virtual MID are both optional and are facilitated at the request of the faculty member. The SET is administered to students in all courses at the conclusion of each academic semester. The intended goal of the SET is to give students enrolled in the course the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback regarding the instructor's preparation and organization, the class learning environment, the student-teacher relationship, and class outcomes.

Although not a direct measure of student learning or teaching effectiveness, the SET can be a powerful professional development tool for faculty if used in an appropriate manner (Carpenter, Witherby and Tauber, 2020). However, use of the SET numerical responses and comments for evaluative purposes such as merit, tenure and/or promotion review can be problematic, particularly if this is the main source of information used in the evaluation of teaching effectiveness. There are several reasons for this. One key reason is low student participation in the SET. Between the years 2017 to 2022, the student participation rate for SET at the University of Dayton averaged around 50%, with significant differences in participation rate based on how the SET was administered. Other reasons that SET results can be problematic when used for evaluative purposes include the propensity for lower student evaluation of teaching scores when a faculty member employs high impact, innovative teaching, in courses that are team taught, or when the faculty member is teaching required courses (Carpenter, Witherby & Tauber, 2020; Chavez & Mitchell, 2020; Cook, Jones & Al-Twal, 2022; Heffernan, 2022). There is also a continuously accumulating body of research identifying that the scores and comments generated from these evaluation tools are biased based on the various social and cultural factors:

- Gender (Boring, 2017; MacNell et al., 2015; Mengel et al., 2019)
- Race & Ethnicity (Aruguete et al., 2017; Reid, 2010)
- Native language & Accent (Fan et al., 2019; Hamermesh & Parker, 2005)
- Age (Arbuckle & Williams, 2003; Mengel et al., 2019)

The social and cultural diversity factors that impact SET scores often coexist with other factors including intersectional identities, level and type of course, and other factors making it impossible to quantify the extent to which each factor impacts a score [Heffernan, 2022]. Based on the strong body of research that SET scores historically suffer from biases, which target women and underrepresented group members, use of the SET as an evaluation tool does not promote a diverse, inclusive and equitable work environment, and may not lead to a fair assessment of a faculty member's performance in teaching.

Charge of the committee:

The charge of the group of three faculty members that was assembled in July of 2022 was to use the recommendations from SAPC, APC and FAC on the facilitation and use of the SET tool to draft revisions to existing and/or develop new policies that adhere to the recommendations from AY21-22 Senate.

Use of this document

With the exception of the Student Evaluation of Teaching tool provided, the policies and procedures outlined in this document will supersede those outlined in Academic Senate

Document DOC 2014-02 Proposal for a New Student Evaluation of Teaching Instrument and Delivery Method and all other rel.

Measures used to assess teaching effectiveness

Student learning and success is core to the University of Dayton's mission.   Although student learning occurs both inside and outside the classroom, effective teaching in a classroom or laboratory setting is essential to student learning and success.   Since many faculty members do not receive formal training on best practices in teaching and learning, pedagogical methods, inclusive teaching strategies, and instructional design prior to taking on teaching responsibilities, it is incumbent upon the University to provide resources and experiences to help faculty develop their teaching practices. The assessment of faculty teaching practices can serve as a powerful professional development tool.   Results from these assessments can help a department chair, mentor or other trusted colleague, guide a faculty member toward appropriate support services and resources to help that faculty member advance their teaching practices (Stripling, Estepp & McClanahan, 2020, DOC 2006-08, pg 1). Furthermore, assessment of teaching practices can be used to help faculty and administrators recognize and reward excellent teaching and to make important personnel decisions regarding retention, tenure, promotion, and merit (DOC 2006-08, pg. 1).

Regardless of the purpose, faculty teaching must be evaluated holistically using multiple measures in order to ensure that the assessment is reflective of student learning and teaching effectiveness. Among some of the possible measures to assess student learning and teaching effectiveness include (Stripling, Estepp & McClanahan, 2020):

- Faculty engagement in professional learning on teaching and learning
- Faculty use of research based best pedagogical practices
- Peer evaluation of teaching
- Student interviews (individual or group)
- Pedagogical curriculum review
- Student journals
- Faculty engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning
- Faculty reflection on their teaching
- Review of faculty teaching materials (e.g., syllabi, assignments)
- Information obtained from student feedback forms.

II.   Guidelines for Interpreting SET Results

1. As mentioned above, SET results are impacted by multiple, and oftentimes confounding factors that are not related to teaching effectiveness (Heffernan, 2022; University of Connecticut, 2022). Some examples include:
    a. Required or elective course - students tend to provide lower SET ratings for required courses, compared to elective courses;
    b. Course discussions - students tend to provide lower SET ratings when they perceive that the instructor's view on controversial topics are different from their own;
    c. Student level: First year students tend to rate their instructors lower than do upper level or graduate students;
    d. Instructor race, ethnicity and primary language: Students tend to provide lower ratings for faculty that are from a minority population or who are non-native English speakers;
    e. Gender identity: Students tend to provide lower ratings for faculty that do not identify as heterosexual, cisgender, or conform to gender binary norms and tend to provide lower ratings to female identified faculty in male dominated fields (eg engineering and science), and male identified faculty in female dominated fields (eg teaching and nursing);
    f. Age: Students tend to provide lower ratings to younger instructors compared to older instructors;
    g. Discipline: Students tend to rate instructors of science and engineering courses lower, than those teaching humanities courses.
2. Factors to consider when interpreting SET results: The University of Connecticut University Senate published the following guidelines for deans, department heads and faculty regarding the interpretation of SET results and should be considered by any person at the University of Dayton who is involved in the professional development, or evaluation of faculty (University of Connecticut, 2022):
    a. Consider patterns of instructor ratings over time and seek to compare similar courses over multiple semesters without focusing on outliers;
    b. Do not compare raw SET results between instructors without understanding the context of those results (eg new prep, instructor facilitated an innovative pedagogical approach, etc);
    c. Keep in mind that the sample is not random and the results may not adequately represent the viewpoint of the entire class;
    d. Since students self-selected into completing the survey, responses may not be representative of the entire class;
    e. Consider if the SET results may be impacted by factors (see list above) that are outside of the instructor's control (eg. large class size, class level, course discussion topics, instructor race, ethnicity or gender identity, etc);

f. Consider if the SET results are consistent with other measures used to assess teaching;

g. Be sure to examine the SET results holistically, and do not focus on only one or two questions.

h. If the instructor is consistently getting better SET results for some skills than others, what professional learning might be available to help the instructor develop those skills?

References

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APPENDIX B: SFT Instrument Items (previously known as the Student Evaluation of Teaching Questions from DOC 2014-02)

Closed-ended prompts, with space for optional student comments
Anchors: Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

1.   The instructor seemed organized.
        Comments_____

2.   I knew what I was expected to accomplish in this course.
        Comments_____

3.   The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.
        Comments_____

4.   The instructor created an environment that supported my learning.
        Comments_____

5.   The instructor demonstrated a genuine interest in my success.
        Comments_____

6.   The feedback I received from the instructor improved my learning.
        Comments_____

7.   This course stimulated my interest in the subject.
        Comments_____

8.   This course increased my understanding of the subject.
        Comments_____

Open-ended prompts

9.   If you could take the course over again, is there anything YOU could have done differently in your role AS A STUDENT to improve your learning?

10.   What aspects of this course did you find MOST EFFECTIVE in helping you to learn?

11.   What aspects of this course did you find LEAST EFFECTIVE in helping you to learn, and how do you suggest they should be changed?

12.   Please provide any additional comments you may have.

APPENDIX C: Tools for the Administration of SFT

I.   Text to Introduce SFT in Class

"The University of Dayton, and I are deeply committed to developing and maintaining excellence in teaching. To get useful information to help me improve as a teacher, I am going to give you TIME minutes in class today to fill out the on-line Student Feedback Tool or SFT. Your feedback on my teaching is anonymous and very important to me. I carefully review the responses and comments provided on this feedback every semester. Additionally, my department chair, the dean and upper administration have access to the responses and to the comments you provide on these forms. I use this feedback to improve my teaching and to make changes to how I organize and facilitate my classes.. Your candid, respectful opinions and constructive feedback and suggestions have an impact. I will leave the classroom while you are completing the tool. The SFT tool contains items with both numerical ratings and open-ended questions. Please provide as much detail as you can when responding to the open-ended questions. While I hope you will answer all questions, your responses will be included even if you choose not to respond to all of the questions and prompts.

The University is committed to ensuring your privacy. To complete the SFT however, you will be required to log in before submitting your responses. Logging in is used to ensure you are responding to the correct class survey and to ensure that your response is recorded only once. The University deletes the identifying information from the survey database after the completion of the survey collection period. Prior to deletion, the identifying information is handled with the same security standards and safeguards as other confidential student information. The LTC reports the anonymous results to the department chairs and individual instructors no earlier than 24 hours after the final grade entry is closed. Instructors never have access to any identifying information. Although I know you will be respectful in your comments, it is important to note that should you choose to write a threatening comment or a comment that violates the University's anti-discrimination and harassment policy your anonymity can not be guaranteed. Thank you very much for taking the time to provide me with your honest and thoughtful feedback. It means a great deal to me."

II.   Suggested Language for Introducing SFT in Class

What to say	*What not to say*
SFTs provide feedback that is helpful to improving my teaching	SFTs are unimportant
Department Chairs review SFT responses and comments	No one will read these
I use your feedback in designing my class for next semester	Your feedback doesn't matter
You will have time in class to complete this evaluation.	You need to complete this on your own.
Comments should be constructive	
SFTs are not a place to provide inflammatory, stylistic, prejudicial feedback, and this type of feedback is not helpful or productive.	
(During the start of the semester explanation) Encourage students to give continuous feedback throughout the semester	