

Date: March 1, 2021

To: Denis Gr  le and the Academic Policies Standing Committee

From: Student Evaluation of Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup (SWG), Alena Allen, Ryan Fisher, Eli Jones (chair), Abby Parrill-Baker, Scott Vann, Karen Weddle-West, and Mohamed Yeasin

Re: SWG Recommendations and Revisions to the SETE

Based on directions from the Academic Policies Sanding Committee, the SETE work group (SWG) has prepared this memo detailing recommendations and revisions to the current instrument. During this process, we have strived to develop recommendations and revisions based on best practice and relevant literature.

We acknowledge the valuable contributions from Bridgette Decent, Director of the Office of Institutional Research, and Robert Johnson, Associate Chief Information Officer.

We first present a summary of the main recommendations and revisions to the SETE. We then address each guideline individually with supporting details. We have also attached supporting documents including the recommended items and sections of the new instrument as well as guidelines on interpreting the current SETE boxplots.

We conclude with a suggested timeline of events leading.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The SWG has made the following recommendations to revise the SETE:

- Rename the SETE to the Student Perceptions of Instructional Quality (SPIQ)
- Modify the SETE to create items grouped around a core instructional competency.
- Revise specific items, remove obsolete items, and add additional items related to the core competencies (including diversity and inclusion).
- Include an open-ended question following each conceptual group of items.
- Pilot and validate the suggested item revisions in coordination with OIR. Specifically:
 - Pilot an expanded number of items, then select the best functioning for the SETE.
 - Conduct cognitive interviews of students to evaluate the items.
 - Develop more focused open-ended items in response to the cognitive interviews.
 - Leverage CREP to ensure high-quality data gathering and analysis (we recommend requesting funds to do so).
- Implement the revised SPIQ following the pilot.

Additionally, the SWG has researched and found the following regarding the SETE:

- Adding department-specific item sets are possible and would be straightforward based on feedback from the Web and Mobile Services team.
- Creating a separate evaluation for M50 courses is more complicated, and may not be psychometrically sound, based on discussion with WMS and OIR.
- Embedding the SPIQ into the LMS might improve student response rates and provide a more integrated reporting method and provide opportunities for customization based on department/instructional mode.

We note that all recommendations should consider the potential transition from D2L to Canvas in the future.

Detailed Findings and Recommendations

The following sections detail these recommendations as they relate to the nine guidelines from the Academic Policies Standing Committee.

Guideline 1. *Design the Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness to provide meaningful feedback to faculty for improving teaching first and foremost rather than evaluating faculty performance.*

Findings & Recommendations: The use of the instrument depends less on the included items and more on how it is used by colleges and departments. It is important to acknowledge that the SETE is currently used in a summative manner. By nature, course evaluations collected at the end of a course are summative (e.g., Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008). We believe that a revised SETE could help to foster a deeper look at critical competencies in faculty. However, shifting to a formative focus would require a wider shift in how the university approaches evaluations.

While our recommendations may direct the focus of the evaluation, transitioning the SETE to a more formative focus would require a reevaluation of the use of the SETE. For example, a more formative approach might also use multiple measures of instructional quality, such as peer observation of teaching (e.g., Donnelly, 2007), as well as additional evaluation points, such as mid-semester course evaluations (e.g., Wright 2006).

Guideline 2. *Provide explicit guidance on whether the mean score for each question for a course section is statistically significantly different from the mean of the entire set of sections, prefix, department, college means.*

Findings & Recommendations: OIR has provided an explanation of the boxplots that are reported with the current SETE. The current SETE does not flag statistically significant

deviations from course, etc. We recommend exploring how reporting options may change with the transition to Canvas and suggest that this topic as well as guidelines on how to interpret the results be explored.

We caution that statistical measures of significance may not always be appropriate, given the small sizes of some courses and the longitudinal nature of the data.

Guideline 3. *Provide a section in which every department/college has the possibility to create and ask questions related to their own field and their own assessment of learning. In this section, questions should be more specific about course objectives, feedback, structure, and organization.*

Findings & Recommendations: Including departmental/college sections appears to be a straightforward process. We suggest working with ITS and the Web and Mobile Services team to explore how this process would work and how it might change when moving to Canvas. We suggest that, if the university chooses to allow departmental sections, a standard procedure for adding and tracking items used by departments be explored. For example, the University of Michigan has an item bank of 100+ items that have been or could be used.

Guideline 4. *Provide two sets of evaluation, one for instructors teaching online (M50 courses), and one for instructors teaching face to face.*

Findings & Recommendations: According to the Web and Mobile Services team, providing two separate evaluations may not be feasible at this point. From a measurement standpoint, it is also important to keep a core set of items that is common across teaching mediums and departments. We recommend keeping a core set of items common to all courses, sections, and methods, and allow online courses to add “department” specific items. In this case, the “department” in question would be items specifically relating to online instruction.

Guideline 5. *Provide space for comments after each question.*

Findings & Recommendations: The SWG does not recommend including a space for comments after each question. One of the major biases in course evaluations is nonresponse bias, or students not responding to the evaluation (e.g., Adams & Umbach, 2012). Including large numbers of open-response items may potentially lead to increased nonresponse bias. Instead, we recommend either asking a single open-ended question at the end of each content group.

We do recommend developing more focused open-ended items as part of the pilot.

Guideline 6. *Consider renaming the Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness to emphasize that students are not evaluating teaching effectiveness but their perception of teaching effectiveness.*

Findings & Recommendations: We recommend renaming the SETE. The name we suggest is the *Student Perceptions of Instructional Quality (SPIQ)*.

Guideline 7. *Explore the feasibility of utilizing software that allows reports to be run by both instructors and administrators.*

Findings & Recommendations: With the transition to Canvas, this question should be explored, and we recommend creating a cross-departmental team to evaluate the reporting capabilities of the new LMS. We do suggest that embedding the SPIQ into the LMS might improve student response rates and provide a more integrated reporting method.

Guidelines 8 and 9. *Ask questions related to diversity and inclusion; AND remove questions that are subjective and vague; for example, the questions that ask about whether the instructor was enthusiastic and interested in teaching.*

Findings & Recommendations: We have evaluated the current SETE and propose changes both to the items that are included as well as the layout. We recommend that the items be organized into core competencies. Here, we suggest six competencies:

- **Student Engagement and Motivation**
- **Climate, Diversity, and Inclusion**
- **Organization**
- **Content Knowledge**
- **Instruction and Pedagogy**
- **Assessment and Feedback**

We have identified 5 to 7 potential items for each area to include in the pilot, with the goal of including 3 to 4 items for each selected area on the new instrument. The final SETE (SPIQ) would ideally include 12-18 items, inclusive of open-ended and summative items.

Items were selected from a review of comparative university course evaluations and relevant literature. Items we suggest originated from the current SETE, as well as items from the University of Michigan, San Francisco University, Kember & Leung, (2008), the UoM Office of Multicultural Affairs, UoM Disability Resources for Students, Colorado State University, and the University of South Carolina. We have modified the wording of many of these items to meet the mission and values of the University of Memphis.

We wish to emphasize that the revised SETE will not include all these items. However, the pilot process requires a larger number of items than will ultimately be selected.

The proposed items are as follows:

Student Engagement/Motivation

1. The instructor stimulated my interest in the subject matter.
2. The instructor helped me stay motivated.
3. The methods used to teach this course were engaging.
4. The instructor encouraged me to engage in course activities.
5. The instructor motivated me to do my best.

Diversity/Inclusion/Climate

1. Diversity, equity, and inclusion were infused into the course content.
2. The instructor accepted students with varied identities and abilities.
3. The instructor treated students with respect.
4. The instructor created a welcoming and inclusive learning environment.
5. The instructor valued contributions from all students in the class across genders, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, and cultures.
6. The instructor demonstrated respect for diversity.

Organization/Communication

1. The course was well organized.
2. I had an opportunity to ask questions in or outside of class.
3. Course materials and media were provided in a format that was accessible to me (e.g., accessible electronic documents, captioned videos, etc.) in a timely manner.
4. The instructor explained course material clearly.
5. The instructor clearly communicated course objectives to students.
6. The instructor responded to questions and concerns.

Content Knowledge

1. I have become more knowledgeable in this subject because of this course.
2. The instructor had both practical and theoretical knowledge of content covered in the course.
3. The instructor demonstrated depth of knowledge of subject matter beyond the material assigned.
4. My experience in this course has encouraged me to think critically about the subject, develop new ideas, and think more broadly.
5. Course topics, readings, and activities assigned for this course helped me understand course concepts and objectives.
6. The instructor clearly taught the learning objectives during each class.
7. The instructor's explanations helped me understand course concepts.

Instruction and Pedagogy

1. The instructor made effective use of chosen teaching methods (lecture, group work, problem-based learning, Socratic dialogue, etc.).
2. The instructor demonstrated willingness to adjust instruction to meet students' needs during the course.
3. The instructor used an appropriate mix of teaching activities to achieve course goals.
4. The instructor explained difficult terms, concepts, or problems in more than one way.
5. The instructor includes examples relevant to student experiences and course content.
6. The instructor challenged me to think critically about the course content.

Assessment/Feedback

1. The assessments and evaluation methods adequately measured my performance on the course learning objectives.
2. The feedback I received helped me learn or improve my performance.
3. The assessments (e.g. quizzes, exams, performances) in this course fairly evaluated my learning.
4. The instructor provided me with feedback on my performance before critical dates (e.g. before the drop deadline).
5. The instructor gave me quality feedback on my performance throughout the course.
6. The assessments were related closely to the expected learning outcomes.
7. The instructor used a variety of ways to evaluate my learning.

Preliminary Development and Implementation Timeline

Because of the SETE's place in faculty promotion and tenure, revisions to the SETE will require a rigorous validation prior to their implementation. The following timeline shows a preliminary sequence of tasks, based on feedback from OIR. Ideally, pending approval of the revisions, OIT would meet with Web Services in late March to develop a more detailed timeline for implementation.

The timeline also suggests potential groups or teams that should be included. This is not an exhaustive list, however. We do recommend reserving funds to engage the services of CREP in the pilot and validation process.

Timeline	Task	Key Teams
Early-Mid March 2021	Pilot Questions Approved	Faculty Senate
Late March 2021	Begin Project Planning Identify pilot sections Develop detailed timeline	OIR ITS/Web Services

Summer 2021	Prepare Pilot	OIR ITS/Web Services
Fall 2021	Pilot Revised SETE/SPIQ Cognitive Interviews	OIR CREP (request funds)
Spring 2022	Analyze Results & Revise Item Analysis Synthesize findings	OIR CREP (request funds)
Summer 2022	Develop faculty/department guides	
Fall 2022	Roll out Revised SETE/SPIQ	
Spring 2023	Plan Migration of SETE/ SPIQ to Canvas	ITS Web Services

We thank Dr. Denis Gr  l   and the Academic Policies Standing Committee for the opportunity to participate in this important task. We also thank each member of the SWG for the energy they invested into this report.

References

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