University of New Hampshire Policies and Procedures for the Student Experiences of Learning (SEL) Survey

Academic Affairs

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I. PURPOSE

This document sets forth policies and procedures for formal University-wide course feedback surveys, called Student Experiences of Learning (SEL) Surveys. The goals of the SEL survey include:

1. Providing instructors with formative feedback
2. Reinforcing and promoting excellence in teaching throughout the University (adhering to NECHE Standards)
3. Providing input into promotion and tenure decisions, and annual and post-tenure reviews
4. Providing feedback regarding course content and success in meeting curricular goals

Student feedback is only one of several mechanisms that faculty and administration can use to address the goals stated above. This document addresses guidelines around the use of Student Experiences of Learning responses.

II. POLICY

The University of New Hampshire's policy is to assess the quality of teaching of eligible courses as systemically and objectively as possible, in part by:

1. Obtaining student input on eligible courses and their instructor(s) by means of the University-wide Student Experiences of Learning (SEL) survey which has both numerical and narrative responses.

2. Providing the opportunity for supplemental inputs from students through additional numerical or narrative questions (instructors may add up to 5 questions and department/college may get approval to add up to 5 as well).

3. Accommodating reasonable exemptions to the SEL surveys. While consistency in approach across the institution has advantages, some programs may benefit from an alternative feedback process.

III. PROCEDURES

1. Planning and Administration of the Student Experiences of Learning Survey

a. Surveying method: Teaching & Learning Technologies (TLT) will administer SEL surveys through the web-based system, called Blue, for courses offered through UNH Durham, UNH Manchester, UNH School of Law, and UNH Online.

b. Surveying window: The timing of distributing the SEL surveys should be set to allow students to reflect on the vast majority of the course experience and material. Surveys will run from two weeks before the end of the course date (as listed in Banner) to the day before finals begin. For short duration courses, typical of summer and January terms, a modified surveying schedule may be set by TLT. Associate deans must submit requests for non-standard surveying windows to TLT. Faculty and students receive automated email notifications and reminders throughout the surveying window.

c. Exemptions: Official exemptions and low enrollment exclusions (courses with five or fewer students) will apply. It is the responsibility of the colleges/programs/departments to be sure these changes are applied to each term.

d. Data Review: Colleges/programs/departments are responsible for reviewing and verifying the accuracy of the course data in Blue (the web-based surveying system). Colleges/programs/departments are responsible for identifying a representative who has the knowledge, capability and authority to access information, review and verify course data, and make necessary changes such as, but not limited to: incorrect/missing instructor names, course cross listing, enrollments, secondary instructors, lab instructors, teaching assistants, graduate assistants, exemptions/exclusions, inquiry, writing intensive, honors, special course sections, missing courses, incorrectly named courses, etc.

2. Student Input
   Student input is to be sought by means of a standard process in all courses. The administration of the Student Experiences of Learning survey should comply with/follow these requirements and conditions:

   a. Every student in every course, except courses with an official exemption or low enrollment exclusion, should have the opportunity to complete a

SEL survey through the standard process.

b. The default course feedback survey is an established "core" set of university-wide questions. The core questions are available here. Supplemental question sets may be implemented according to the sections below.

c. Student participation in providing feedback to instructors (via the survey) must be confidential and not associated with specific responses or results provided to the instructor.

d. The timing of the survey window should be set to allow students to reflect on the vast majority of the course experience and material.

e. To ensure the highest possible response rate for web-based surveys, instructors are strongly encouraged to provide class time to complete the SEL survey.

f. The instructor is not to be present while the SEL surveys are being completed.

g. Survey responses will be released no earlier than the grade submission deadline defined by the Registrar's Office. The instructor must not view responses until after he/she has submitted the grades for that course. The dean's offices should reinforce this condition with instructors who are found to be delinquent in grade submissions.

h. The summary report of core quantitative feedback from each course is to be made available online for student use in course selection.

3. Supplemental Questions
Instructors may supplement the core SEL survey questions with additional numerical and/or narrative questions. Instructors may submit these questions in Blue (the surveying system), and they will append the core set of SEL questions.
Each college and department are permitted to develop its own questions (no more than 5 each). Where supplemental questions are desired for a college or University program (e.g., Inquiry courses, UNH Online courses), formal application is to be made to the appropriate college dean with a copy sent to

the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. The application must include: a) the supplemental questions, b) the rationale for creating a supplemental question set for this particular program, and c) a listing of course(s) for which the supplemental questions will be used. Where supplemental questions are included for a given department or university program, the questions are automatically included for courses under those organizations, i.e., a faculty member cannot opt out of an approved supplemental question set. TLT, which maintains Blue (the web-based system) should be consulted to determine how and when the supplemental questions can be incorporated into Blue. Please keep in mind that the more questions appended to a course's survey may have a negative impact on the response rate. The Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CEITL) is a resource for effective question development.

4. Exemption Procedures
   All courses are to use the core SEL survey questions, supplementing them as appropriate, unless the course is granted an exemption.

   Courses may be granted an **exemption** from the SEL survey by the college dean's office. These courses often include but are not limited to, theses, study abroad, new courses and independent studies. Any alternate or non-standard evaluation given to these courses would need to be manually executed by the department or college outside Blue (the web-based system).

   Low enrollment courses, defined as courses with five or fewer students, are **excluded** from the SEL survey in order to protect student confidentiality in their responses and faculty assessment based on a minimal class size. Colleges that choose to gather student feedback in low enrollment courses are responsible for conducting and compiling the results outside Blue (the web-based surveying tool).

   Application for an exemption must be made to the appropriate college dean for approval. The application should have the rationale for the exemption and a listing of courses to which the exemption applies.

   Dean's offices are responsible for maintaining a list of active exemptions within their respective colleges. SEL Survey coordinators (designated at the department or college level) should use this list when reviewing course data during SEL survey planning activities.

IV. FAIR USE OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING SURVEY RESPONSES

Each college should develop practices to incorporate student experiences of learning responses as a part of several methods for evaluating teaching and teaching development. This recommendation includes encouraging instructors and administrators to embrace the perspective of collecting student feedback on their experiences in courses rather than evaluating instructor(s) performance. This perspective is consistent with the research that suggests that students are best able to provide personal experiences about what supports their learning thereby helping instructors to better understand effective teaching strategies, rather than provide reliable evaluative information about individual instructors. In addition to using the proposed instrument, several additional metrics of teaching effectiveness grounded in best-practices are encouraged, including: Peer review; Early-to-mid-term student feedback for in-course adjustments (templates available through CEITL); Self-reflection on teaching philosophy; and Self-study of student performance.

When factored into reviews of teaching, SEL information should be contextualized as much as possible (e.g., by cross-referencing responses to related questions and/or considering answers to qualitative as well as quantitative questions.) As noted above, the new standardized SEL survey does not ask students to provide overall ratings of instructors, the goal being to counteract over-relying on a single question/score in isolation from others.

- Use only as part of larger, broader assessment of teaching process such as peer observation, peer review of syllabi & materials, and instructor self-reflection.
- Use only when minimum response rates have been met (literature suggests 65%), and the course enrolls a minimum of 10 students.
- Identify situations (e.g., very large course sections) in which sampling of qualitative comments from large data sets may be acceptable – sample from quartiles based on student's ratings responses. This may minimize sampling error issues.
- Provide guidance on how to responsibly interpret data.
- Use aggregate data to demonstrate college and institutional effectiveness of teaching at UNH.

V. RELATED ITEMS

1. Mid-semester Feedback

   In certain cases, some programs may establish a practice of administering soliciting feedback mid-semester, such as for new courses or new instructors. A department-chosen process for collecting feedback must be administered and managed by the college/department/program (UNH School of Law excluded).

2. Self-development

   Individual instructors are encouraged to seek additional feedback from peers and students, particularly during the semester, for their own self-development purposes and improvement of the ongoing course. Instructors may consider a variety of additional feedback methods such as inviting a peer to observe classes or making a video recording of classes. The use of information generated through individual initiative for the purpose of self-development will be controlled by the instructor, not the department chair or college dean. Faculty will be responsible for the administration of self-development questions; self-development questions are not administered by TLT or processed in Blue (the web-based course feedback tool).

3. Archives of Responses

   The University Archives has, since the early 1970's, retained the paper, and now electronic, copies of teaching feedback summary sheets and made them available as public documents. Course feedback archives are stored for a length of 25 years with approval from the Faculty Senate Library Committee.

4. Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning

   The Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning strives to promote the highest quality of student learning by providing full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and teaching graduate students with the resources they need to implement the best practices in college teaching in their classrooms. CEITL offers a variety of resources to aid in instructional development efforts, including utilization of student feedback.