STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF INSTRUCTION (SEI): REPORT ON PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

UBC Vancouver Senate, May 19, 2021
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(1) Recommendations
- From the Steering Committee to engage students on the review of the six revised questions

(2) Focus Groups
- 16 student focus groups (116 participants)
- 8 faculty focus groups (40 participants)
- 1 - 1.5 hours in length

(3) Think-Alouds
- 29 student think-aloud cognitive interviews
- 45 minutes in length

(4) Qualitative Analysis
- Thematic analysis of qualitative responses will be conducted, including identifying potentially biased questions

(5) Revised/New Questions
- Questions will be revised based on student & faculty feedback

(6) Pilot Test New Questions
- The new questions will be pilot tested with a sample of students

(7) Psychometric Analysis
- A quantitative analysis of student responses to the questions will be conducted

(8) Recommendations to Senate
- The new questions will be proposed to Senates T&L and L&R (each campus) for deployment Sept. 2021
DRAFT UMI QUESTIONS TO CONTINUE TESTING

1. Throughout the term, the instructor explained course requirements so it was clear to me what I was expected to learn.

2. The instructor conducted this course in such a way that I was motivated to learn.

3. The instructor presented the course material in a way that I could understand.
4. Considering the type of class (e.g., large lecture, seminar, studio, etc.), the instructor provided constructive and timely feedback that helped me understand how my learning progressed during this course.

5. The instructor showed genuine interest in supporting my learning throughout this course.

6. I learned a great deal from this instructor.
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO COLLECT COMMENTS

• Please identify what you consider to be the strengths of this course.

• Please provide suggestions on how this course might be improved.

• Do you have any suggestions for what your instructor could have done differently to further assist you in your learning?
FURTHER WORK ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MAY 2020
REPORT TO BOTH SENATES

Units should be supported to adopt a scholarly and integrative approach to evaluation of teaching.
• *In progress* - implementation committee has drafted an outline for a discussion paper completed early fall 2021.

Reporting of quantitative data should include an appropriate measure of centrality, distributions, response rates and sample sizes, explained in a way that is accessible to all stakeholders
• *Complete* - individual instructor reports of results have included the new metrics since 2018W1; explanation on new website: [seoi.ubc.ca](http://seoi.ubc.ca)

UBC should prioritize work to extract information from text/open comments.
• *In progress* - implementation group will pilot test one or more automated processing systems using SEI comments from faculty volunteers. Recommendations will be presented to UBCV and UBCO senates during the 2021-2022 academic year.
FURTHER WORK ON RECOMMENDATIONS, CONT'D

UBC needs additional and regularized analysis of our own data to answer questions related to potential bias, starting with instructor ethnicity, as it is frequently highlighted as a potential source of bias in the literature.

• In progress - The SEI Implementation Committee is working with the EIO and PAIR on plans for regular analyses of SEI data for bias. A new employment equity survey in the fall will provide enhanced analyses and similar work is underway with student demographics.

The Vancouver Senate should review the policy on Student Evaluations of Teaching and consider a broader policy on the evaluation of teaching writ large. The Okanagan Senate should develop a similar policy for the Okanagan campus.

• In progress - Dual campus working group to be formed during Summer 2021.
UPCOMING COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

• **Upcoming UMI changes**
  • Meetings with student leaders on both campuses & VP Student communications to discuss communications with students (early summer)
  • Emails to academic leaders to send to all faculty and others teaching courses; Newsletters on both campuses (late summer)

• **Presentations on changes and new metrics:**
  • Session on new metrics at CTLT Spring (June 2021) Institute; likely repeated later
  • Another open forum – August 2021 (earlier open forum was held March 2021)

• **Resources being developed for new seoi.ubc.ca website**
  • Advice for faculty on how to include results from previous and new SEI questions in dossiers for reappointment, tenure, promotion
  • Advice for academic leaders and reviewers on how to interpret the new metrics
  • Information for students - how SEI are used; advice on effective & constructive feedback
APPENDIX

DRAFT CORE SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR PILOT TESTING BASED ON FEEDBACK DURING FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS.
OVERALL SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

• Most participants supported writing the questions from the student perspective.
• However, the student-centeredness of the questions seemed to be inconsistently applied in the recommended questions.
• There was quite a bit of support from participants for the shorter survey length (Okanagan students and faculty).
• There were different interpretations of some of the terms used in the questions and participants suggested that some terms could lead to biased responses (e.g., use of “concern” and use of “communicated”).
• Much of the feedback suggested that more clarity and specificity was required in the statements to reduce the potential ambiguity and multiple meanings that could be inferred from certain statements.
DRAFT QUESTIONS TO PILOT
BASED ON PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK
Previous Wording from 2020 report to both Senates:
Q1. The instructor made it clear what I was expected to learn.

Needs to be more specific: Participants sometimes interpreted “what was expected to learn” thinking about how clear the syllabus and learning outcomes were communicated at the start of the term, but some also suggested it could be about tests and assignments delivered throughout the term, while others suggested it could be about the learning objectives of the course (including skills that might not be part of the learning outcomes or syllabus).

Many indicated that it would be helpful to include the timing of what is being referred to in the question, such as throughout the term, or at the start of the term. They also acknowledged that not all courses have articulated learning objectives, but all do have course requirements.

Revised Wording:
Q1. Throughout the term, the instructor explained course requirements so it was clear to me what I was expected to learn.
Previous Wording:
Q2. The instructor engaged me in the subject matter.

*Unclear what “engaged” meant:* Some participants thought this could refer to time spent participating in class, or talking with the instructor one-on-one during office hours, or in a group setting. Some participants thought they could have been engaged in a class because of the subject matter alone or due to the way in which the instructor taught the course.

*Is the focus on the subject matter or the teaching style:* A student could feel engaged because of the instructor’s teaching style but still not feel engaged with the subject matter because it is not of their interest. It was not clear in the sentence what the intention of the question was, is it about the course content or the instructor’s teaching style? Many read the question as if it should be about the way in which the course was taught but suggested we did not use the word "engaged".

Revised Wording:
Q2. The instructor conducted this course in such a way that I was motivated to learn.
Previous Wording:
Q3. I think that the instructor communicated the subject matter effectively.

Student-centered questions: Many participants said adding “I think” to the sentence makes their comments feel less important and doesn’t make it student-centred.

Course content vs subject matter: “Subject matter” was interpreted as being too broad, making participants think twice about how to answer. It was interpreted as just the course content or perhaps more than that, such as the field of study beyond the course. Also, some participants suggested using “course material” to make it clear and specific to the course.

Ambiguity with the word “communicated”: Some participants were not sure if this was referring to communication in terms of the announcements, emails, discussions, Canvas, or about course activities. Or if it referred to the communication style of the instructor. Some worried if ratings would be biased against instructors with an accent or for those where English is not their first language.

Revised Wording:
Q3. The instructor presented the course material in a way that I could understand.
Previous Wording:
Q4. I have received feedback that supported my learning.

*Quality of feedback:* Participants thought that the question should include ‘effective’, ‘good’, ‘constructive’, ‘timely’ as adjectives to describe the feedback. Sometimes feedback could be given but not necessarily in a way that informed them what they needed to improve on in the course. Some had received feedback when it was too late to improve or prepare for their next assignment/exam, or even when the course was almost over.

*Type of feedback:* As they read the question, some participants were not sure if they would interpret ‘feedback’ as referring to written/email communications, oral feedback given during class, out-of-class questions, or written feedback (e.g., from quizzes and exams). Also, some students do not actively ask for feedback, so they were unsure about "receiving" feedback if it wasn't asked.

Revised Wording:
Q4. Considering the type of class (e.g., large lecture, seminar, studio, etc.), the instructor provided constructive and timely feedback that helped me understand how my learning progressed during this course.
Previous Wording:
Q5. I think that the instructor showed concern for student learning.

Possible bias: For some of the participants, the word ‘concern’ had a negative connotation to it and could be interpreted as “worried,” "apprehensive," or "fearful". As such, it was mentioned that this could be quite confusing for certain students where English is not their first language. Participants also thought the word ‘concern’ could be associated with an emotional reaction and could result in biased responses based on instructor personality or gender.

Too Vague: Some participants thought this question needed to be more specific. For example, they were not sure about what specific actions they are being asked to associate with an instructor that shows concern for their learning. However, many liked the question as they agreed that instructors who cared for their students' learning and how well they progressed during the course, was a positive characteristic for an instructor.

Revised Wording:
Q5. The instructor showed genuine interest in supporting my learning throughout this course.
Previous Wording:
Q6. Overall, this instructor was effective in helping me learn.

Good summary question: Most participants thought this was a good closing question either to summarize what was already asked or to cover additional aspects that were not evaluated in the previous questions.

Too vague: At the same time, many participants were confused about why this question was so vague compared to the other five and so they were not sure how to respond to it (e.g., some aspect that was not covered in the other five, if the instructor is a good fit to teach the subject, or if they would recommend the instructor/course to others?). Also, some weren’t sure what criteria was being used to determine “effective”.

Overlap with other questions: Some participants felt this question was too similar to other questions, making it difficult to answer as a unique question. They suggested being more specific about what is being asked in this question about what was learned.

Revised Wording:
Q6. I learned a great deal from this instructor.
Currently, there is inconsistent wording used for questions to collect student comments. Participants want to provide feedback, but many suggested that the questions should be written in a way that would promote constructive comments intended for improvement.

- Please identify what you consider to be the strengths of this course.
- Please provide suggestions on how this course might be improved.
- Do you have any suggestions for what the instructor could have done differently to further assist you in your learning?