COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEY (CES)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Brought for advice at the CES Advisory Committee, December 2009

Teresa Dawson, Learning and Teaching Centre

Policy and procedure FAQs:

1. **Who has access to the qualitative reports and with what timing?**
   The reports are accessed on a department/school CES SharePoint site. The individuals with access to each faculty site are the Dean and anyone appointed by the Dean. The department/school reports are accessible by the Dean of the faculty, the chair/director of the department/school and those whom the chair/director has appointed access to the site (the liaisons). The liaisons distribute the reports to the individual instructors at the same time as the dean/chair/director but ONLY after the instructor's grades are submitted.

2. **Is there a policy about who, in addition to the course instructor, reads the anonymous comments that students can write about the course?**
   Please note that the FAQs focus on the quantitative aspects of the CES. However, normally written comments are made available only to the instructor and the chair/director. Article 13.8.3 of the Framework Agreement (http://web.uvic.ca/vpac/hrissues/framework_agreement.htm) specifies how written comments may or may not be used in tenure and promotion processes.

3. **How are security and confidentiality maintained?**
   The Learning and Teaching Centre (LTC), ltc@uvic.ca, is in charge of the CES SharePoint site and will only add or delete people from this site by direct email from the Dean, Chair or Director. The specific people given access by the Dean/Chair or Director of the faculty or department/school will be the only other person/people who will have access to the particular site. Those designates (liaisons) are then responsible for maintaining confidentiality with the department/school.

4. **Is there a policy on when the blank surveys should be handed out to the students?**
   Please refer to guidelines on how forms should be administered: http://ltc.uvic.ca/initiatives/CES.php. Normally the surveys are conducted in the second-last or third-last week of the fall and spring terms. It is not recommended that the forms be handed out after a test.

5. **Do the qualitative (written) student comments have to be typed before they are given to the instructor?**
   On the advice of Bill Trott, Privacy Officer at the University of Victoria, all student hand written comments must be typed by staff ***only*** when the number of students in a course is 10 or less. There is now an official university procedure as follows:

Procedure for the Management of Personal Information, Effective Date: January 2010
http://www.uvic.ca/shared/shared_usec/docs/policies/GV0235.pdf - See page 24
27.00 Faculty access to student comments compiled as part of the Course Experience Survey (CES) is provided after the grades are finalized, and the CES ratings are available through secure online access. Transcription of handwritten comments provided as part of the CES is only required when there is reasonable assumption that an individual may be identified by their handwriting (e.g., in courses of 10 students or less). Individual instructor evaluation data from the CES is available to administrators and committees responsible for tenure, promotion, annual review, or other purposes under the Framework Agreement. Aggregate data is available through the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost for the purpose of academic program quality review and assurance.

6. **Is there a time limit for retention of the original CES evaluation forms?**
On the advice of Bill Trott, Privacy Officer at the University of Victoria, original "bubble" sheets should be stored for one year (at which time they can be shredded through confidential shredding) but not returned to, or stored by, the instructor.

7. **Are there near or long-term plans to deploy CES campus wide for Teaching Assistants?**
It is not appropriate to use the CES instrument for Teaching Assistants, since the instrument was not designed to meet their needs and has not been validated for these purposes.

8. **Will the online version of the CES pilot continue and when might it be implemented campus-wide?**
Yes. We have obtained commitment from University Systems that the online "pilot" will continue as before until such time as we have a proper program in place to do the online piece. We do understand how important this aspect is to some departments/schools and so it is essential we continue.

   If you are interested in joining the pilot, please contact the LTC. Once part of the project, please contact Arie Epstein at aepstein@uvic.ca and cc Trish Kearley at trish@uvic.ca and Carolyn Boss at ltc@uvic.ca for any support issues.

9. **How do I handle multiple instructors and or team teaching within the CES structure?**
This is an important and common question. Many departments/schools have this issue. There is a short-term and a longer term answer (the latter is better). The issues are compounded by the fact that we may want to evaluate multiple instructors but logistically the course is the unit of analysis.

   Things to think about:
   - Avoiding "student survey burn-out"—Do you need to evaluate all the instructors or just the course and maybe the primary instructor of record? If most of the instructors are "guests" and have plenty of other courses to be evaluated in, and or maybe have tenure already, then is this necessary?
   - Which unit of analysis matters most to your academic unit?—What is more important—a summary report for the course or for individual instructors with the course treated as if it were different sections? If you do evaluate all instructors in the course separately then

you will not get a summary report for the course as a whole (which is the unit of analysis that the survey is designed to address). You would get as many reports as you had instructors (and hence envelopes—each has to go in a separate envelope) and essentially they would be treated as different course sections. For this reason it is really important to consult with your chair/director (or dean if a non-departmentalized faculty) before deciding which approach to take to this issue. It depends which report outcome is most important to him/her.

- Be consistent—whichever approach your dean/director/chair decides upon it would be important to be consistent within your academic unit.
- What type of team-teaching are you referring to?—The best approach to take also depends partly on what kind of "team-teaching" we are referring to—either "sequential team-teaching" or "integrated team-teaching". Please see below:

i) Sequential Team-Teaching (most common)

If it is a situation of "serial team teaching" (i.e. Prof X teachers the first 4 weeks, Prof Y the next 4, and so on), then (if considered necessary—see above) the best approach is to have the students evaluate the course in the last week that each instructor teaches (week 4, 8 and so on in this example). Data can be collected at any time in the term and stored and they can all be run later at the end.

ii) Integrated Team-Teaching

If instructors are truly "team-teaching" (meaning all the professors are present all the time) then again it might be worth evaluating just the course. However, if it is necessary to evaluate instructors individually for personnel decision-making, then you will be asking students to complete a number of forms equal to (the number of instructors + 1). This is because you cannot evaluate one instructor on the same form as the course since there is an interrelationship between "course" and "instructor" items and so whoever is evaluated on the same form as the course would likely have their scores influenced more by the way students rated the course (either positively or negatively) than the other instructors. Logic suggests a student's poor rating of a course is likely to also connect to a poor rating of the instructor if they feel the two are connected. Thus reports for multiple instructors would not be likely to be valid if one had the course information on the same form and others did not. One would be changing the conditions of the administration of the assessment and that has to impact validity and possibly reliability. The exception to this would be where there is a course designer/coordinator and then perhaps this association would be appropriate.

iii) Can we just use the sections of the form we need and have students leave the rest blank?

Unfortunately, no. This is not possible at this time.

iv) The Future

Since team-teaching is a very positive pedagogical approach we would certainly want to have a system of evaluation that does not actively dissuade colleagues from using it! In the short term we have a system that works for processing forms accurately and

securely but it is not very flexible. Thus, currently the way to address team-teaching or multiple instructors is unfortunately rather clunky. In the longer term, as we scope out, design and implement an integrated program to run the CES (which currently does not exist) we would want to take this crucial issue of multiple instructors and team teaching into account in that system design process.

10. **How do we deal with multiple sections taught in the same room at the same time?**
See Question #8. Unless there is reason to expect different underlying characteristics in the sections we suggest processing them together (but note that the response rate will be >100%).

11. **Similarly, can/should grad and undergrad sections (combined in the same room at the same time) be evaluated together?**
See Question #9. This partly depends also on the number of students in each section. If running the two together reduces the chances of identifying individual students due to the low number of students in each section, then the sections should be combined.

12. **Do response rates matter? Do we need a flag and if so under what circumstances?**
Response rates >100% may occur for good reason (see #9 and #10). However, if multiple sections combined are not the reason, then a response rate >100% should be flagged. If response rates are <30%, reports may be hard to interpret depending on class size.

13. **How do I calculate the response rate for a course if all the sections have been scanned together?**
Typically when multiple sections (such as tutorial sections for one large lecture) are scanned together to produce data for the entire class, then the response rate is well over 100% (because all forms are scanned to one CRN number). If you are concerned to have the correct response rate, it can be hand calculated (and written in neatly on the report) in the following way.

$$\text{Response Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of students who responded (for all sections)}}{\text{Number of students enrolled in the class (from FAST)}} \times 100$$

14. **What do we do with cross listed courses and reports (across two departments/schools or across two faculties)? Do copies go to both departments/schools/faculties? Does the course get included in both department/school summaries?**
There are two possible approaches. Please discuss the following options with your chair/director before deciding how to proceed:

i) The first option is to treat the course as if it is two (or more) separate sections, one for each department/school, with a separate envelope for each and the respective liaisons responsible just for their "section." This way, the single class is treated as two separate course-sections and summary reports would be delivered to each department/school. This is easier to process but does not give the instructor an integrated "picture." On the other hand it is useful where it is suspected that the underlying characteristics or demographics of the two "sections" are very different (e.g. where it is a required course in one department/school and not in the other). Using this option the specific section

would be included in the department summary. It would be critical, in this case, for students to be able to identify which section they are in (e.g. whether they entrolled through History or Geography for a cross-listed course taught by a History professor).

ii) The second option (often preferred by instructors and their students) is to designate one department/school as the "lead" department/school and have that department's/school's liaison responsible for providing a copy of the reports to the other department(s)/school(s) liaison(s) as appropriate. This option is best used where there are very small number of students in one or more sections, making the reports for those sections hard to interpret and threatening student confidentiality (e.g. where number of students is <6). This also gives the instructor a better overall picture of the class and an integrated result set. Using this option the "lead" department would have students from both sections in its department report.

15. **How are courses at the faculty level handled (in faculties with departments/schools who otherwise administer at the department/school level) e.g. general HUMA courses?**
Interdisciplinary courses and programs have their own "box" and are treated as another "department/school" within the faculty and will have their own liaison. The liaison's job is making sure relevant departments/schools see the reports. Where there is more than one faculty involved, a decision needs to be taken as to who will be the "lead" faculty and then the relevant liaison will be responsible for distribution to the others.

16. **It is assumed the CES should be used for all undergrad courses. Should the CES also be used for all Grad courses?**
It is recommended but care should be taken for small class sizes (<6). For further details on this issue, please consult the LTC's best practices guidelines on using CES to evaluate teaching (http://ltc.uvic.ca/initiatives/documents/CES_manual_for_chairs_09_v8.pdf).

17. **Is it acceptable for faculties to request their raw data in order to be able to manipulate it for themselves?**
We regret, no. The idea of standardized reporting and data presentation is that "data selection" should not occur and that algorithms are consistently applied. Integrity of data and reports is maintained by Institutional Planning and Analysis (IPA). Exceptions might be made for research purposes under special circumstances. Please contact the LTC.

18. **Can we accommodate Continuing Studies courses?**
Yes and no. We can accommodate those courses taught in conjunction with regular academic departments/schools. Requests should be made via those departments'/schools' liaisons.

Admin FAQs:

19. **How and by whom are forms customized?**
We have a standard CES template on our website: http://ltc.uvic.ca/initiatives/CES.php. This form can be used for any new course. Forms may be "customized" by the addition of up to five questions. Please note: 1) Forms can only be customized at the department/school level,

not the individual course level. No other changes can be made. 2) Customization by adding questions can only be done by the LTC. There is a process that we must follow with Computing to customize surveys so the forms are able to be scanned properly. For this reason forms cannot be customized by other departments/schools.

20. **How do I get access on behalf of my chair/dean?**
    Adding someone or deleting someone from the CES SharePoint site for a particular department/school or faculty will only be done with an email directly from the Chair/Director of the department/school or the Dean of the Faculty to ltc@uvic.ca. Please provide the email address and name of the person you would like added or deleted from the site as your liaison.

21. **How will we know if forms or procedures change?**
    Please continue to use the same CES form that has been used for past terms unless otherwise notified by us of any changes. Memos each term will be sent out to everyone who has access to the CES SharePoint site via a CES list serve that has been set up. This memo will notify you of any changes to the forms or procedures. All of this information can also be found on our website: http://ltc.uvic.ca/initiatives/CES.php

22. **Do all of the course envelopes from one department/school have to be submitted to the Help Desk together or can they go as individual envelopes?**
    Either approach is fine. Each course has an envelope. In response to requests from departments/schools, we have implemented a new tracking system for course envelopes. If you do not wish to have your course envelopes tracked, then you may simply follow previous procedures. Your envelopes can just be hand delivered or put in the campus mail to the Help Desk.

    However, if you want your course envelopes tracked, you must hand deliver them to the Help Desk. This may be done one course at a time or as a department/school bundle as follows:

    i) Individual course envelopes – take two copies of the cover sheet to be signed (keep one for your records).
    ii) Department/school bundles – take two copies of a cover memo detailing the entire list of courses contained in the bundle, to be signed (keep one for your records).