

MRFA Recommendations Regarding SEI Processes and Forms

MRFA

Review of the SEI Processes and Form

The MRFA recommends that the UTPC create a joint committee to review the SEI processes and form to ensure that the teaching performance of full-time members for tenure and promotion and of part-time members for reappointment is evaluated appropriately and to make recommendations for change to the UTPC. In determining the composition of the committee, the MRFA recommends that the UTPC include:

- ▶ one member of the MRFA Faculty Evaluation Committee appointed by the Faculty Evaluation Committee;
- ▶ two members elected by the MRFA;
- ▶ the Chair of APTC;
- ▶ a member of the Chair's Assembly appointed by the Chair's Assembly; and
- ▶ three representatives of the administration (e.g., an associate dean, someone from Institutional Analysis and Planning)

Core Principles

- ▶ evaluation of faculty be based on faculty's performance only
- ▶ evaluation of teaching performance be comprehensive
- ▶ assessment of teaching performance be reliable and valid
- ▶ processes, criteria, and standards be transparent and efficient
- ▶ processes, criteria, and standards be in writing
- ▶ evaluators be trained on processes, criteria, and standards
- ▶ evaluation be against written processes, criteria, and standards
- ▶ processes, criteria, and standards be equitable and uniformly applied across departments
- ▶ processes, criteria, and standards be periodically reviewed

Recommendations

The MRFA makes the following recommendations to the joint committee for its consideration in reviewing the SEI processes and form.

Administration: Online SEI Administration

The joint committee should investigate online administration of SEIs.

Features

- ▶ Many institutions are moving SEIs online due to substantial reduction in costs
- ▶ Online SEIs allow greater standardization (e.g., all classes can be evaluated within relatively short period of time towards the end of classes rather than over a long period of time with some courses evaluated early and other courses evaluated late)
- ▶ Online SEI administration would allow evaluation of all courses (MRU does not evaluate all courses primarily due to very high cost of in-class evaluations).
- ▶ Research review comparing online vs. in-class SEI shows the following:
 - ▶ Response rates may drop by as much as 20% in online vs. in-class SEIs
 - ▶ Central tendency measures (means, medians) are comparable between online vs. in-class SEIs
 - ▶ Reliability of individual course ratings would drop due to drop in response rates (however, this would be mitigated by having all courses evaluated)
 - ▶ Students tend to write more comments in online vs. in-class SEIs (faculty find these useful for formative purposes)

Administration: Evaluation of All Courses

If MRU moves SEI administration online, all courses should be evaluated.

Features

- ▶ MRU does not evaluate all courses primarily because of high cost of in-class evaluations
- ▶ Moving SEI administration online would allow evaluation of all courses

Confidential and Signed

SEIs should be confidential and signed.

Features

- ▶ Students should be accountable for their evaluations
- ▶ MRFA FEC Survey showed that 68% of responding faculty believe SEIs should be confidential and signed
- ▶ Easy to implement if SEIs are administered online
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Survey (p. 7)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Survey_3.pdf

Processes, Criteria, Standards: Availability to Instructors

Instructors should be provided with the processes, criteria, standards, and interpretive guide for SEI system at least two weeks in advance of teaching courses.

Features

- ▶ Evaluated faculty should know processes, criteria, and standards
- ▶ They should know how SEIs will be interpreted and used
- ▶ They should know this before the start of the evaluated period
- ▶ see MRFA FEC Review (p. 68)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Processes, Criteria, Standards: Availability to Students

Students should be fully informed about use of SEI in evaluation of faculty for summative and formative purposes, including processes, criteria, and standards used for summative decisions.

Features

- ▶ Students provide more constructive, accurate, and positive evaluations when informed about their purpose and uses
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 71)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Processes, Criteria, Standards: Training of Evaluators

Evaluators should be trained in interpreting SEIs. They should be provided with written procedures, criteria, standards, and interpretive guides.

Features

- ▶ A major problem with SEIs is that they are improperly interpreted by evaluators
- ▶ In one research study, more than half of the evaluating faculty were unable to answer basic questions about common statistics printed on SEI reports
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 69)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

SEI Form: Mandatory and Optional Questions

SEIs should consist of two parts: 1) mandatory set of questions to be used for summative purposes, and 2) optional set of questions to be used solely for formative purposes and selected by individual faculty from a wide pool of available questions.

Features

- ▶ Mandatory questions are common across all courses
 - ▶ See University of Alberta example <http://www.aict.ualberta.ca/images/stories/aict/tsqs/usri2000.pdf>
- ▶ Optional questions allow instructors to obtain specific feedback for the specific course; they support formative function of SEIs
- ▶ Optional questions summaries are provided only to the course instructor
- ▶ Optional questions can be selected from a large database of questions
 - ▶ See University of Alberta example <https://karl.srv.ualberta.ca/pls/webuser/catalog.idq>

SEI Form: Anchored Response Scale

SEIs should ask students to provide their opinions using immediately transparent, meaningful labels such as: Not Applicable, No experience/No opinion, 1=Very Poor, 2=Poor, 3=Fair, 4=Good, 5=Very Good, 6=Excellent, 7=Outstanding.

Features

- ▶ Student ratings are immediately interpretable; they describe what students thought about various aspects of instruction/courses
- ▶ Reader knows what students meant when they chose particular ratings
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 8-10)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Standards: Three Year Aggregate SEIs

Any summative evaluations of faculty should be based solely on data aggregated over the past three years or over as many SEIs as are available up to the past three years. Summative evaluations should not be based on SEIs obtained in any single course.

Features

- ▶ Single course SEI reliabilities are generally insufficient
- ▶ Single course SEI reliabilities are very low for small classes (such as MRU's)
- ▶ CAUT recommends using minimum of three years, unless the evaluation is for renewal of a contract with shorter duration
<http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=385&lang=1>
- ▶ See University of Alberta <https://www.aict.ualberta.ca/units/client-services/tsqs/idq/idq-reports>
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 62)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Standards: First Time Taught Courses/Changed Courses

Faculty should be free to experiment with new modes of instruction to enhance teaching and learning and should not be penalized if SEIs temporarily drop.

Features

- ▶ Faculty are likely to avoid teaching new courses, teaching courses after major changes, and experimenting with new modes of instruction if temporarily lowered SEIs may have negative effects on their tenure and promotion
- ▶ See American Psychological Association Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology (p. 17)
(<http://www.apa.org/education/undergrad/principles-undergrad.pdf>)
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 64)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Summarizing SEIs: Interpolated Medians

Interpolated medians should be used, rather than means or medians, to describe central tendency of the SEI ratings.

Features

- ▶ SEI distributions are highly skewed
- ▶ Means are inappropriate measures of central tendency for skewed data
- ▶ Medians are very crude measures of central tendency when used with 5-7 point SEI discrete scales
- ▶ Interpolated medians are the most appropriate measures of central tendency for skewed and discrete SEI ratings scales (see MRFA FEC Review p. 11)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf
- ▶ see University of Alberta discussion and examples
<https://www.aict.ualberta.ca/units/client-services/tsqs/idq/median>

Summarizing SEIs: Outliers

Outliers (ratings different from the ratings given by other students) should be removed from SEIs prior to summarizing the SEI ratings for summative or formative purposes.

Features

- ▶ Outliers are opinions that differ substantially from the mass of students in any given class
- ▶ Outliers are scores dissimilar from the rest of the distribution; they are identified by Tukey's analysis (see MRFA FEC Review p. 12-13)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf
- ▶ Outliers can substantially influence summary SEI scores (see MRFA FEC Review p. 14-15) http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Standard: Satisfactory SEIs Fall Within SEI Distribution

MRU faculty SEI scores (interpolated medians) vary due to instructor, students, discipline, (i.e., they form a distribution). If a specific SEI course rating falls within the distribution of ratings obtained by others in comparable (reference) courses, it should be considered satisfactory. If the specific course rating falls outside of the distribution at its low end (e.g., is identified as an outlier by Tukey's analysis), the rating may be considered unsatisfactory.

Features

- ▶ Following University of Alberta model, the standard for satisfactory SEI performance should be the lower cut-off for outlier scores (low fence) as determined by the Tukey's box-and-whisker plot analysis of appropriate comparison group of courses (accumulated across the years).
- ▶ Instructors whose SEI interpolated median scores are equal or greater than the low fence of the comparison group should be deemed to have attained satisfactory SEIs
- ▶ Instructors whose SEI interpolated median scores fall below the low fence may be considered unsatisfactory in terms of SEIs
- ▶ see University of Alberta Example of Instructor Report
<https://www.aict.ualberta.ca/units/client-services/tsqs/idq/idq-req/539-instructor-report>
- ▶ see MRFA FEC Review (p. 50)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Standards: Comparison Group

The comparison (reference) group of courses should be courses with at least similar student interest/motivation ratings for taking the courses, similar class size (1-15,16-30,31+), and the same course level (i.e., 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000).

Features

- ▶ SEIs are influenced by a variety of factors unrelated to instructor
- ▶ The influential factors include student motivation, class size, and class level.
- ▶ Student motivation and class size alone may have as large as 1.0 effect on a 5-point SEI scale
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 24-26)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Standards: Aggregate Score Across Items

Any summative evaluations of faculty should be based only on aggregate scores across all mandatory SEI items. Individual item SEI ratings should not be used in any summative evaluation of faculty but only for formative purposes.

Features

- ▶ Individual SEI item scores are much less reliable than aggregate scores across mandatory SEI items
- ▶ Individual SEI items are suitable for formative purposes but not unidimensional (e.g., satisfactory/unsatisfactory) summative purposes (e.g., Abrami, 2001; Cashin & Downey, 1992)
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 65)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Standards: Written Comments

Anonymous written comments should not be seen nor used by anyone else but the instructor.

Features

- ▶ Written comments are idiosyncratic, potentially biasing
- ▶ Evaluators may focus on a few negative comments and ignore many more positive comments
- ▶ No reasonable, reliable, and valid mechanism for summarizing written comments exists
- ▶ Should be used only for formative purposes and only by instructors themselves
- ▶ see CAUT Model Clause <http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=385&lang=1>
- ▶ see University of Alberta model <http://www.aict.ualberta.ca/units/client-services/tsqs/idq/idq-reports>
- ▶ see MRFA FEC Review (p. 66)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Evaluation of Teaching: Teaching Portfolios

Seventy or more percent of overall teaching evaluation should be based on evidence presented in teaching portfolios, excluding SEIs. SEIs should contribute at most 30% to the overall teaching evaluation.

Features

- ▶ Teaching includes a wide range of activities (see MRFA Collective Agreement)
- ▶ Teaching portfolios/dossiers summarize teaching accomplishments
- ▶ Teaching portfolios are gaining wide spread acceptance
 - ▶ e.g., University of Guelph
www.tss.uoguelph.ca/resources/idres/package/d.html
 - ▶ e.g., University of Victoria
<http://lrc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/teachingdossiers.php>
- ▶ The most recent evidence indicates SEIs are not related to learning, and dependent on a wide variety of factors unrelated to instructor including student motivation/interest, class size, course level, discipline, etc.
- ▶ See MRFA FEC Review (p. 16-17, 18-21, and 22-44)
http://mrfa.net/files/MRFA_SEI_Review_v6.pdf

Diversity Considerations

The joint committee should consider the impact of the diversity of the instructors when interpreting SEI data.

Features

- ▶ It has been shown that gender and ethnicity and other forms of diversity have an impact on SEIs.
- ▶ Gender and Student Evaluations: An Annotated Bibliography Developed at the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan.
<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multiteaching/gsebibliography.pdf>
- ▶ Bibliography on Diversity of Instructors includes section on Student Evaluations.
<http://www.denison.edu/offices/provost/feb2012bib.pdf>
- ▶ Kaschak, E. (2006). Another look at sex bias in students' evaluations of professors: Do winners get the recognition that they have been given? *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 5(5), 767-772.
- ▶ Bachen, C., McCloughlin, M., & Garcia, S. (1999).
- ▶ Assessing the role of gender in college students' evaluations of faculty. *Communication Education*, 48(3), 193-210.
- ▶ Stuber, J. M., Watson, A., Carle, A., & Staggs, K. (2009). Gender expectations and on-line evaluations of teaching: evidence from RateMyProfessors.com. *Teaching In Higher Education*, 14(4), 387-399.
doi:10.1080/13562510903050137
- ▶ Kogan, L. R., Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., & Hellyer, P. W. (2010). Student evaluations of teaching: perceptions of faculty based on gender, position, and rank. *Teaching In Higher Education*, 15(6), 623-636.
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