

Student Course Evaluations—Principles and Procedures

The proposed revised Course Evaluation Principles and Procedures document was drafted to ensure it reflects the TRU Governance approval process, as well as incorporating issues identified by faculty members and operational services.

Background

Regular student feedback is important to ensure an effective student learning experience. As such, Senate adopted: “that student course evaluations will be carried out for all courses every time a course is offered” (December 16, 2013). The evaluation tool will consist of items that allow students to provide faculty members and Chairs with insight into their learning in individual courses. On March 23, 2015, the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) presented the February 3, 2015 draft of the Principles and Procedures document to Senate for information. This document included a proposed evaluation instrument. It was adopted that the evaluation instrument would include the four Senate-approved questions (February 22, 2016). In addition, at this meeting, was advised of the four bullet points below as part of the *Principles & Procedures* document regarding course evaluations:

- The administration of course evaluations will be undertaken by Institutional Planning and Analysis [now Integrated Planning and Effectiveness (IPE)] in conjunction with IT Services, and the distribution of reports to faculty and Chairs will be undertaken by Centre for Student Engagement and Learning Innovation [now Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)];
- The instructions for administering course evaluations will note the need for students to fill out the evaluation individually;
- Support will be provided for the education of all campus stakeholders on the appropriate use of formative course evaluations as one source of data for the formative evaluation of teaching effectiveness;
- Support will be provided for ongoing research into the process and products of course evaluation such that TRU can ensure that the process is fair and equitable for all faculty and students.

Last updated: January 23, 2019

Memorandum of Settlement

In addition to the governance approval process noted above, a memorandum of settlement between TRU and the TRU Faculty Association (TRUFA) (July 21, 2015) outlines several procedural terms in regards to course evaluations, including:

- The Instructional Development and Support Committee (IDSC, *now called the Teaching and Learning Committee*) will provide departments with another opportunity to contribute questions to be considered in the development of a bank of questions, should they wish to do so. The IDSC will develop the final bank of core questions for use in the second section of the student evaluation questionnaire.
- The student evaluation questionnaire resulting from this process satisfies Article 7.3.7.2 (b) and Letter of Understanding No. 31.
- The collective agreement will apply in determining whether a student evaluation is formative or summative.
- Individual formative evaluation results will be provided to individual faculty members and their department Chair.
- Aggregate evaluation results will be provided to the University community.
- Deans may obtain the individual evaluation results for a specific faculty member.
- Student evaluation questionnaires are to be administered in class and the University will ensure that students have the necessary tools to complete the questionnaire.
- This settlement is without prejudice and without precedent.
- Nothing herein overrides the jurisdiction of Senate.

Principles and Procedures

Goals of Student Course Evaluations

1. To provide data to continuously improve student learning
2. To provide faculty members with information on their performance to enhance their effectiveness and instructional development
3. To provide data to assess program and course learning outcomes
4. To provide faculty members, departments, faculties, and the university with a source of data regarding students' course and learning experiences.

Principles of Student Course Evaluations

Course evaluations instruments and procedures should:

1. Provide information that is student-centred
2. Provide information that is learning centred
3. Provide formative and continuous feedback to faculty members
4. Reflect the diversity of programs, course content, and course delivery
5. Provide data to assist in assessing program learning outcomes and useful aggregate data to the department, faculty, and institution.

1. *Student Centred*

Course evaluations are an important mechanism for students to provide feedback on their experience of learning in a course. They also provide students with an opportunity to summarize their experiences at the end of a course that can be used by faculty members to maximize the learning and success for their students in future offerings.

2. *Learning-Centred*

Student course evaluations should be viewed as learning-centred for the student and the faculty member. In other words, the procedures should enable a continuous learning model on the part of both students and faculty. For students, providing feedback develops the abilities to effectively reflect on and constructively comment on their experience in a course. For faculty, receiving feedback assists them to effectively reflect on and constructively respond to students' experiences and to provide space for them to situate their own teaching experiences of a course within the feedback from learners.

3. *Formative and Continuous Feedback*

TRU is committed to increasing student success (TRU Strategic Priorities 2009-2014). Student course evaluations are one important source of evidence for continuous improvement of teaching to increase student success. Others include, but are not limited to, course learning outcomes, peer review of teaching, receipt of teaching awards, scholarly studies of teaching practices, the scholarship of teaching and

learning, letters from students and colleagues, etc. (Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008). The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching will provide support for TRU in moving toward a continuous improvement model of teaching that includes resources, workshops and events for departments and individual faculty.

TRU Senate believes it is important for faculty to receive regular feedback from students on their experience of learning in TRU courses so has adopted: "student course evaluations will be carried out for all courses every time a course is offered."

4. Course Evaluation Instrument: Reflecting the Diversity of Programs

The course evaluation instrument (see Appendix A) will include the four Senate approved questions (Part I) and discipline specific questions (Part II). The discipline specific questions (normally, no more than 16, including two to three open-ended questions) provide departments with the opportunity to customize the instrument to reflect their discipline and/or course format/delivery.

Custom Questions Approval Process

Approval process for discipline specific custom questions:

1. Discuss custom questions as a department
2. Provide custom questions to the CELT for feedback
3. Submit custom questions to Faculty Council for approval
4. Provide approved custom questions to the CELT to distribute to IPE

Senate approved questions may only be modified in very specific circumstances. These modifications must retain intent and meaning of the original questions.

Approval process for changing four Senate approved questions:

1. Senate must submit request to Teaching and Learning Committee with recommended changes to senate-approved questions and rationale.
2. Teaching and Learning Committee will work with CELT to develop new or change current questions.
3. Teaching and learning committee will submit questions to APPC of Senate for approval
4. CELT will provide Senate approved questions to IPE

5. Data Use and Reporting

Student responses will be kept confidential. Course evaluation data will be stored on a secure server in Canada. This raw data is accessible only by some IPE staff. The course evaluation data will be analysed by Integrated Planning and Effectiveness (IPE) at the end of each administration cycle.

Individual faculty members will receive their course results (including both quantitative data and the comments provided by students) electronically and confidentially. Chairs will receive a copy of the results for each faculty member in their Schools/Departments.

Deans and Chairs receive an overall report on their Faculty. Upon request, Deans may obtain the individual evaluation results for a specific faculty member.

In addition to the Faculty-level reports, CELT, with the assistance of IPE, will report annually on institution level achievements and areas for improvement and provide Senate with institutional strategies co-developed with Deans for improvement (note: the course evaluation results will be considered along with other sources of student feedback like responses to National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) surveys and Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) surveys).

Procedures

Administering the Evaluation Instrument

Integrated Planning & Effectiveness (IPE) will administer the surveys and will place the links to course-specific surveys in students' MyTRU accounts.

Every faculty/school will receive a proposed list of course sections for evaluation from IPE prior to each administration cycle. Deans and Chairs will be asked to review and confirm the course lists, course instructors, and scheduled course dates prior to the specified due date. IPE will use the validated lists to administer the surveys and place the links to course-specific surveys in students' MyTRU accounts. This validation process is also important in disseminating reports to the faculty members.

For semester-based courses, the evaluations will be administered to students in the last three weeks of each term. Faculty members will build in time during a class within this period for students to complete the evaluations. Faculty members will decide and coordinate the exact date within this three-week period for the student course evaluation to occur. In cases where a course does not follow the typical semester format, this timeline can be altered, but only insofar as evaluations are meant to be completed toward the end of a course.

Faculty members will be provided with a password to unlock the link for the on-line surveys, which they will provide their students. They will also be provided with instructions for administering the evaluations. Communications with faculty members will occur through their individual TRU email accounts.

Course evaluation survey links for regular semester-based courses will be available via students' MyTRU accounts. For exceptions and courses that do not follow the semester schedule, survey links will be distributed to the faculty member's TRU email account.

Faculty members should ensure that students are aware of the evaluation date. Students will complete the surveys individually, online, using an appropriate electronic device (e.g., laptop, tablets, Smart phone, etc.). Student devices do not require a data plan, but the device must have Wi-Fi capabilities.

Faculty members should:

- Inquire if students have access to such a device and request they bring it to class on the day of the Student Course Evaluation.
- Inform students that electronic devices can be signed out from the TRU library for use.

Faculty members may also consider:

- Signing out devices from CELT for student use. These will need to be booked in advance and returned promptly.
- Booking time in a computer lab – this may be worth considering if there are a large number of students without in-class access to a device.

On the day of the evaluation:

1. Students should be informed of the importance of course evaluations and that their feedback allows faculty members to continuously improve their teaching to support the learning for future students.
2. Faculty members administering the evaluation will provide instructions to students. Please note, these instructions are guidelines –language can be modified to suit the teaching style/philosophy and course context.
3. Students should be informed that they have at least 10 minutes to complete the survey
4. Students should be reminded, as per the instructions, to complete the survey independently. Students are encouraged to submit feedback on their own learning experience when completing the Student Course Evaluation.
5. Students should be provided with the password which was sent to faculty members, to open the survey.
6. Faculty should remain unobtrusive during the completion of the evaluations.

Students who are absent from class will have the opportunity to complete the Student Course Evaluation within 48 hours from the time it is first administered in class (“unlocked”), and will need to obtain the necessary password from the faculty member. The first valid response received starts this 48 hour period. Responses will only be included in reporting if submitted within this 48-hour period.

Students with disabilities will be accommodated in compliance with BRD 10-0.

Faculty members may administer the Student Course Evaluation themselves or choose to have a colleague administer it.

Course Evaluation Data

Evaluation data will not be available until final grades are submitted, typically within three weeks of the grade due date.

Data from courses receiving less than five validated evaluations will not be released.

In cases where course sections are regularly scheduled with fewer than 10 students, if requested by the Dean's office, the results of multiple sections (for the same faculty member and course) may be combined to allow for a report to be produced.

Written comments on course evaluations will be screened electronically, and removed, if they contain harassing or defamatory language as defined by the BC Human Rights Code and the Human Resources Policy 11 – [Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace](#). Evaluation data will be compiled by IPE and provided to faculty members electronically and confidentially.

Data will be retained in a secure electronic form by the university for seven years before being deleted. Faculty who wish to keep their data for more than seven years must make a local electronic or paper copy (See Record Retention Schedule).

Faculty Assistance

Questions regarding the administration of the survey can be addressed to IPE at crsevaladmin@tru.ca. Questions regarding the student course evaluation process, the survey instrument or the instructions can be addressed to the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at celt@tru.ca. CELT also provides constructive feedback to faculty members about their reports at their request and offers a full range of consultative supports for teaching.

<http://www.tru.ca/celt/faculty-learning/Consultations/feedback-practice.html>

Ongoing Review

To ensure that the implementation of student course evaluations effectively addresses the principles set forth in this document, the procedures outlined here will be revisited every 3 years by the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and necessary adjustments made in consultation with TRU stakeholders.