

Original Approval Date: March 25, 2022 (Effective Date: July 1, 2022)

Most Recent Approval Date: March 25, 2022

Parent Policy: [Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy](#)

Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure

Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Approver:	Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)
Scope:	Compliance with this University policy extends to all Academic Staff and Colleagues and Support Staff as outlined and defined in Recruitment Policy (Appendix A and Appendix B: Definitions and Categories) in addition to visiting speakers, professor emeriti, and undergraduate and graduate students.

Overview

Evaluation of teaching and learning at the University of Alberta will be multifaceted. Evidence to support a multifaceted approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning will include input from students on **courses**, **instructors**, and the **learning environment** through surveys and commentary.

Student input will be received through a standardized University survey approved by General Faculties Council that will be designed to obtain the students' perspectives on their experiences of teaching. Additional input may be received through customized surveys designed by the University, individual instructors, Departments, and/or Faculties.

Purpose

The following establishes the procedures for the collection and appropriate dissemination of student input to the multifaceted evaluation of teaching and learning at the University.

PROCEDURE

1. Student contributions to the evaluation of teaching and learning at the University will be obtained through the following systems administered electronically by the University's Test Scoring & Questionnaire Services unit ([TSQS](#)):
 - a. The University course survey system, known as the Student Perspectives of Teaching ([SPOT](#)), that will be comprised of:
 - i. A set of standard questions as determined by the Committee on the Learning Environment and published in the [Teaching and Learning Evaluation Policy \(Appendix A\) SPOT Questions](#); and,
 - ii. For each standard question, a text field to allow students to provide focused, written comments to explain their selection.

- b. Within the SPOT system, there will be a set of standard questions as determined by the Committee on the Learning Environment to obtain input from those students who have withdrawn from the course.
 - c. Within the SPOT system, Instructors, Departments and/or Faculties are strongly encouraged to supplement these standard questions with customized questions of their own choosing.
 - d. Utilizing the systems administered by TSQS, Instructors, Departments and/or Faculties may supplement the SPOT survey with additional surveys using questions designed or chosen from available TSQS option:
 - i. [Midterm Course and Instruction Feedback Survey](#) (midterm survey) that allows for customized forms seeking midterm course and instructional feedback from students; and/or,
 - ii. Additional customized surveys as appropriate.
2. The SPOT survey will use the following 5 response categories:
- a. *I strongly disagree (SD);*
 - b. *I disagree (D);*
 - c. *I neither agree nor disagree (N);*
 - d. *I agree (A); and*
 - e. *I strongly agree (SA).*
3. The SPOT survey will be used each time that a course is offered, but will be modified in the following circumstances:
- a. When there are multiple instructors;
 - b. When there are fewer than 10 registered students; or,
 - c. When there is an individual/independent nature such as independent study courses, special research projects, the culminating exercise for a program, music studios, etc.
4. Courses with multiple instructors will use a modified set of SPOT survey questions that will include:
- a. One set of questions related to course design and instructional practice for the entire course; and,
 - b. One set of questions related to each instructor who has taught the equivalent of 20% or more of the course. If no instructor is responsible for at least 20% of the course, only entire course-related questions will be used on the survey.
5. Methods of obtaining student input for courses with fewer than 10 registered students may include, but are not limited to:
- a. The use of surveys with non-scored questions, such as:
 - i. *Which aspects of the course do you like the best?*
 - ii. *Which aspects of the course do you like the least?*
 - iii. *How can I (the instructor) improve the teaching of this course?*
 - b. Combinations of several courses with fewer than 10 registered students taught by the same instructor and/or courses in one classroom but with multiple section numbers taught by the same instructor;
 - c. Interviews of students by the Chair or delegate; and,
 - d. Interviews of the instructor by the Chair or a delegate.
6. Subject to section 8 below, the anonymity of student responses in the SPOT survey is of fundamental importance in maintaining student confidentiality and encouraging the free expression of views in accordance with the University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#).
7. In order to maintain anonymity, TSQS ensures that:
- a. Students cannot be identified through the survey methods unless they self-identify;
 - b. ID/usernames are not included on the survey results; and,
 - c. Students must log in for verification that they have taken, partially taken or not taken some or all of the survey, and answers are completely separate from this verification.

8. Under normal circumstances, the anonymity of students will be protected. The SPOT and optional midterm and other surveys offer avenues of feedback, including that which may be critical of instructors. A potential feature of criticism may be comments that could be perceived as offensive and/or unjustified. Such comments would not justify a departure from the normal rules pertaining to confidentiality and anonymity.

However, the University has a parallel duty to protect the safety (physical or mental) of members of the University community. If a Department Chair, or Associate Dean, has concerns for the safety of instructors, staff or students, arising from statements that are part of SPOT or the optional survey responses, they will consult with the Dean of the Faculty. If the Dean believes that there is a valid concern for safety, they may recommend to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) that the identity of the author of the statements be sought out and disclosed to the appropriate University officials. At any time during this process, the Chair or Dean may invoke:

- Procedures within the [Code of Student Behaviour](#) (the Code) and/or,
- The [Protocol for Urgent Cases of Disruptive, Threatening or Violent Conduct](#) (the Protocol)

On receiving such a request from a Dean, the Provost will follow the terms of the Code and/or the Protocol in determining whether there is: i.) reasonable cause to believe that the safety or security (including significant psychological harm) of persons may be threatened and ii.) that under existing University policies, the statements are grounds for disciplinary action and hence whether the confidentiality of SPOT or the optional survey responses should be breached and the provisions of the Code and/or the Protocol invoked.

If the identity of the author is disclosed, the Provost will notify the author of the statements. The Provost will also notify any individuals mentioned in the statements. Timelines will be determined following the assessment of the nature of the statements and the potential threat, immediate or otherwise, to the individuals involved.

9. Communications to inform and encourage completion of the SPOT, withdrawn students, and optional surveys will include statements as illustrated below:
1. *YOUR VOICE MATTERS - For this survey to be as comprehensive as possible, the University of Alberta would appreciate receiving your input. The results are used as one component of a multi-faceted approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning, therefore, they contribute to your instructor's self-reflection and evaluation. They also help initiate change in curriculum and instruction.*
 2. *CIVILITY AND RESPECT - These are shared norms in our work and learning environment and we encourage a healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives. Feedback should be provided in a manner that reflects our commitment to collegiality and inclusivity, while acknowledging that we all have unique and particular needs within this environment.*
 3. *BIAS AWARENESS - Please be aware of biases that you may hold and make an effort to resist stereotypes about particular identities and groups of people (related to perceived race, gender, age, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and/or ethnicity of the instructor).*
 4. *WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR - Please provide specific feedback on your experience in the comment section as appropriate for each question. The most helpful feedback is actionable, thoughtful, and concrete. Focus on your experiences with assignments, textbooks, and other instructional materials and not on personal characteristics such as the course instructor's appearance or speaking style.*
 5. *ANONYMITY - The survey will be accessible only by CCID and students' anonymity will be protected. Summary results will be made available to instructors only after grades are finalized. If you are concerned about the anonymity of any typewritten comments, those may be provided directly to the Chair, Director or Dean noting the course number, section and name of the instructor. Please be aware, however, that the University may be required to intervene based upon assessment of potentially threatening or harmful comments.*

6. **ABOUT THE RESULTS** - The numerical SPOT Report for the standard questions listed below will be available to you as well as the Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association for the sole purpose of providing information for future course selections.
7. **QUESTIONS** - Should be addressed to students@ualberta.ca.
10. Access to the SPOT survey and the withdrawn students survey, along with any supplemental instructor and/or Department/Faculty questions will normally be available beginning two weeks prior to the last day of classes until 2 days past the last day of classes providing there are no final examinations scheduled in this 2-day period.
11. The instructor will provide at least 15 minutes of class time for completion of the SPOT survey during the 2-week period prior to the last day of classes, and:
 - a. Will not be present during the provided class timed.
12. Methods to increase the response rates of the SPOT survey may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Internal communications from Deans and Chairs to Instructors and Students in addition to the University communications;
 - b. Instructors may include the completion of the SPOT survey as a course activity or objective;
 - c. Instructors may inform students of the formative nature of their perspectives on teaching by:
 - i. Discussing the importance of student input; and by
 - ii. Providing examples to students of how they have responded to previous student input.
13. SPOT survey results are compiled using Tukey's box-and-whisker plot analysis (John W. Tukey, Exploratory Data Analysis, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. 1977) and [statistical treatments](#) are chosen to achieve two main objectives:
 - a. To summarize skewed distributions of data; and,
 - b. To identify outliers from the general population, if they exist.
14. The [SPOT Survey Report](#) consists of one page generated for each course from which students' surveys have been collected and contains:
 - a. The text of each question;
 - b. For each question, the number of student responses in each of the 5 categories, presented in a table and graphical format;
 - c. The [median of the responses](#) to one decimal point for the question; and,
 - d. Numerical values ([reference data](#)) from Tukey's box-and-whisker statistics to describe the distribution of scores in the Faculty/Department, including the:
 - i. lower cut-off for outlier scores;
 - ii. lower hinge (25th percentile);
 - iii. median; and,
 - iv. upper hinge (75th percentile).
15. Distribution of the SPOT Survey Results:

Who Receives⁽¹⁾ ⇒	Dean & Director or Chair (and delegates)	Instructor ⁽²⁾	Students Registered in the Course Students' Union ⁽³⁾ Graduate Students' Association ⁽²⁾	Faculty Evaluation Committee, Academic Teaching Staff Evaluation Committee & GFC Secretary
What/When Received ↓				
SPOT Survey Report	yes	yes	yes	yes

and Withdrawn Students Survey Report	Within 20 working days of course completion	Within 20 working days of course completion, once the Dean, Director or Chair has signed the grade sheet	At least 10 days after the date that the instructor has received	In accordance with Faculty FEC timelines and upon request by GFC Secretary
SPOT Survey Comments	yes	yes	no	yes
Supplemental Department/Faculty Questions & Comments	yes	yes	no	no
Supplemental Instructor Questions & Comments	no, unless provided by instructor	yes	no	no, unless provided by instructor
Midterm Instructor Questions & Comments	no, unless provided by instructor	yes	no	no, unless provided by instructor

- (1) Survey Results are included for all courses taught by the Instructor, whether the course was taught within the home Faculty or in another Faculty or Department.
- (2) Instructors may check the response rate during the 2-week SPOT survey period, by [logging into the SPOT system](#) and their homepage will provide a status overview and the current response rates for their courses.
- (3) Access to online SPOT survey data is provided to the SU and the GSA only for the purpose of assisting with the selection of courses. Neither the SU or the GSA will undertake analysis of SPOT data available to members of those organizations.

17. The SPOT survey results will include the following statement:

Student surveys are an important part of providing feedback about their perspectives of teaching, but cannot be taken in isolation as a complete evaluation of a course or instructor. Factors outside of an instructor's control may influence the results. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- a. *completion rate of the survey;*
- b. *class size, class level, the Faculty and program in which the course is developed, timing of the class, delivery mode, required versus optional course, accredited program requirements, practicum or clinical contexts, grade expectations, student GPA, age of both students and instructors; and,*
- c. *perceived race, gender, age, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and/or ethnicity of the instructor.*

Small differences in results should not be considered meaningful. Results will be interpreted using the defined scale: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD); 2=Disagree (D); 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree (N); 4=Agree (A); and, 5=Strongly Agree (SA).

DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use. [▲Top]	
Instructors	Includes Academic Faculty, Faculty Service Officers, Academic Teaching Staff and Excluded Academic Administrators. When their responsibilities include teaching, also includes Academic Colleagues, Postdoctoral Fellows and Graduate Students.
Course	Includes undergraduate and graduate courses, laboratory courses, non-degree courses, seminars, clinical supervision courses, and reading or directed study courses.
Learning Environment	Physical and virtual support systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. suitability of physical and virtual environments and use of education technology; b. availability of teaching assistants, accessibility accommodations and other supports; and, c. scheduling of course meeting times and/or online module availability.

FORMS

Should a link fail, please contact uappol@ualberta.ca. [[▲Top](#)]

No Forms for this Procedure.

RELATED LINKS

Should a link fail, please contact uappol@ualberta.ca. [[▲Top](#)]

Related Links for this Procedure are within the document.