

**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

**STUDENT EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION (SEI)  
HANDBOOK**

<<References to paper forms removed 9/30/2009. Revision of entire document is in progress.>>

Revised September 2001

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDENT EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION**

University Rules require that students be given the opportunity to evaluate the quality of instruction provided in each of their courses (University Rule 3335-3-35). The purpose of the Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) is to provide a standardized survey instrument for the collection of student feedback on the quality of instruction. This feedback is used as one of several methods of assessing teaching effectiveness when making personnel decisions regarding promotion, tenure, and merit pay. The SEI has several characteristics that make it particularly useful for such assessment. First, it is applicable to a wide variety of instructional settings and focuses on dimensions of teaching performance that are generally acknowledged as being important. Second, the content of the questionnaire and certain aspects of its administration are standardized. Third, an instructor's scores on a global question can be compared with those of others teaching similar courses.

Despite the utility of the SEI, it is important to keep in mind several considerations:

- The SEI is not a precise instrument. Therefore, the interpretation of its results should focus on extreme patterns, not on trivial differences in mean values.
- Although student evaluation of teaching is required, departments are not required to use the SEI. Instead, each department may design and use its own instrument for collecting student feedback, provided that the department uses it in a consistent manner. Faculty & TA Development (FTAD) is available to assist in the development of alternative instruments. FTAD is now UCAT, the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Student feedback is only one source of data for assessing teaching effectiveness. SEI results should be interpreted in conjunction with data from other assessment methods, in particular peer evaluation of teaching and self-assessments.

The Office of Academic Affairs Guidelines for both student and peer evaluation of instruction are set forth in Section IV of the Office of Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures Handbook ([http://oaa.osu.edu/OAAP\\_PHandbook.php](http://oaa.osu.edu/OAAP_PHandbook.php)).

## SEI SUMMARY REPORTS

SEI Summary Reports are confidential and are sent to instructors in the fourth week of the quarter following the evaluation. In the case of departments that have adopted the SEI system as part of their official pattern of administration, a copy of each report may also be distributed to the department chair on request. The following is a description of the information included in a SEI Summary Report:

### Section I

The first table displays the percentage of students in the course that responded at each level (1-5 or Not Applicable) on each of the ten items. This table is useful for determining if there are outlier scores and may be most useful for small courses in which one student's response on an item may greatly influence the mean.

### Section II

The second table on the report displays means and standard deviations for the following categories:

Instructor: The instructor's means and standard deviations on the ten items for the course section.

Comparison Group by College: These means and standard deviations are based on all of the courses in the instructor's college from the previous four quarters that are in the same **Comparison Group** as the course being evaluated. Comparison Groups are determined according to the course electivity and size. The appropriate Comparison Group for the course being evaluated is given in the box above the second table. These groupings control for course characteristics that can affect SEI scores. For more information on Comparison Groups, email [seiaadmin@osu.edu](mailto:seiaadmin@osu.edu).

Comparison Group by University: These means and standard deviations are based on all of the course in the university from the previous four quarters that are in the same **Comparison Group** as the course being evaluated.

*Note that, in order to preserve confidentiality of other instructors' ratings and to ensure meaningful comparisons, calculations based on data from fewer than 5 instructors are not reported.*

Course-Offering Unit\*: The course-offering units are the same divisions of departments and schools that are used in the course bulletin. The means and standard deviations are calculated from the four years preceding the quarter that is being recorded. Depending on the size and duration of existence, these calculations might be based on a small amount of data or might be unavailable. *These scores are not calculated according to Comparison Groups because there is not sufficient data to do so.*

### Section III

The third section of the report is a graph showing the distribution of mean scores, for the previous four quarters, on the overall rating (item 10 on the SEI form) for all of the courses in the university that are in the same **Comparison Group** as the course being evaluated. The graph of all university ratings, included on previous reports, has been omitted. The decision that the comparison with the entire university is not valid was made by the SEI Faculty Oversight Committee and confirmed by CAA. Henceforth, that graph will not be included, and earlier university-level graphs should not be considered in the evaluation process.



DR. GENERIC

Course: PSYCH 100

Campus: COL College: ASC

Summer 1998

Call Number 00000-0

## Student Evaluation of Instruction Report

Response rate\* : 81.3% of 16 students who paid fees by the 14th day of the quarter.

Date of Report: 11/20/2001

Response scale is Likert-type with "5" being high and "1" being low.

	<u>N</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>N/A</u>
1. Well organized	13	0 %	8 %	0 %	46 %	46 %	0 %
2. Intellectually stimulating	13	0	8	0	8	85	0
3. Instructor interested in teaching	13	0	8	8	15	69	0
4. Encouraged independent thinking	13	8	0	0	31	62	0
5. Instructor well prepared	13	0	8	23	31	38	0
6. Instructor interested in helping students	13	8	0	8	31	54	0
7. Learned greatly from instructor	13	8	0	38	8	46	0
8. Created learning atmosphere	13	8	8	8	46	31	0
9. Communicated subject matter clearly	13	8	8	38	23	23	0
10. Overall rating	13	8	0	38	8	46	

Your ratings are summarized below. When sufficient data exist, summaries are also provided for up to three reference groups. Your "comparison group" is based on the size of your class and the predominant reason students indicate they enrolled. Comparison group data are reported at both the college and university levels. Over the preceding four quarters, 11 instructors and 34 course sections were in your Comparison Group by College, and 7002 instructors and 8781 course sections were in your Comparison Group by University. Across all courses using the SEI instrument since 1994, 24% of them share the characteristics listed below. The course-offering unit listing is not based on size or electivity; it is a summary of the SEI data across the previous four quarters in your department or school.

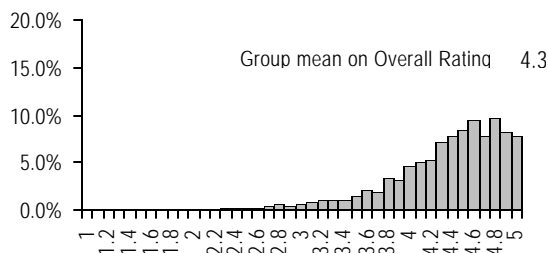
**Your comparison groups have the following qualities.**

Class size: 5 to 20

Predominant reason given for enrolling in this course: specifically required in the student's major/minor or fulfills a GEC/BER requirement

	<b>This Instructor</b>		<b>Comparison Group College</b>		<b>Comparison Group University</b>		<b>Course-Offering Unit</b>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std.Dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std.Dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std.Dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std.Dev</u>
1. Instructor well organized	4.3	0.9	4.1	0.5	4.3	0.5	4.1	0.5
2. Intellectually stimulating	4.7	0.9	3.9	0.5	4.2	0.5	3.9	0.5
3. Instructor interested in teaching	4.5	1.0	4.3	0.5	4.5	0.4	4.3	0.5
4. Encouraged independent thinking	4.4	1.1	4.2	0.4	4.4	0.4	4.2	0.5
5. Instructor well prepared	4.0	1.0	4.3	0.5	4.4	0.5	4.3	0.5
6. Instructor interested in helping students	4.2	1.2	4.3	0.5	4.5	0.5	4.3	0.5
7. Learned greatly from instructor	3.8	1.3	3.9	0.6	4.2	0.6	3.9	0.6
8. Created learning atmosphere	3.8	1.2	4.1	0.5	4.3	0.5	4.1	0.5
9. Communicated subject matter clearly	3.5	1.2	4.0	0.7	4.2	0.6	4.0	0.7
10. Overall rating	3.8	1.3	4.2	0.6	4.3	0.5	4.2	0.6

**Comparison Group by University Distribution of Mean Scores on Overall Rating (Item 10)**



## INTERPRETATION OF SEI SUMMARY REPORTS

Despite the utility and effectiveness of the SEI, please keep in mind that it is a blunt instrument and that its results should not be regarded as highly precise. Please also keep in mind that the SEI is only one source of data for assessing teaching. When interpreting results, the following advice should therefore be considered:

- Consider the results within the context of other less quantifiable information, such as the usual performance of the instructor and special circumstances surrounding the particular offering that might have influenced student opinion.
- Check response rate to determine if the scores reflect the opinion of a substantial part of the course enrollment. For small section sizes, look at frequencies as well as mean scores, since outliers can greatly influence the mean rating.
- The focus should be on patterns of responses and general comparisons rather than on trivial differences in mean values. To dwell on a trivial difference in mean values is inappropriate as a basis for comparing one instructor with another. Differences of a few tenths of a point should not be the basis for personnel decisions.
- Please keep in mind that SEI scores are generally high. Scores close to the mean of the Comparison Group indicate teaching quality that is perceived as satisfactory by the students. Scores at the extreme ends of the range provide the most significant information. Scores that are at the extreme high end are signals that students found the teaching to be extremely effective. Those at the extreme low end indicate that students perceive problems with teaching performance.
- In addition to looking at an instructor's scores on one summary report, please also look at the scores that an instructor has received over a period of time if they are available. For instance, you might want to consider patterns of improvement over time.
- The SEI is only one component of the evaluation of teaching. Data from other assessment techniques must also be taken into consideration. In particular, peer evaluation of teaching is required of all departments. Guidelines for peer evaluation are set forth in Section IV (Evaluation of Instruction) of the Office of Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures Handbook. Among other assessments of teaching effectiveness that might be also considered include student progress patterns and self-reports of the instructor.
- Faculty and TA Development is available to consult with instructors or departments regarding the interpretation of the SEI Summary Reports.

Please email [seiaadmin@osu.edu](mailto:seiaadmin@osu.edu) if you have concerns about the accuracy of the SEI Summary Report.

## **SPECIAL DATA REQUESTS**

Instructors who wish to compare their scores with comparable courses on any of the variables collected on the SEI instrument that are not included in the summary report may request specialized reports from the Office of the University Registrar ([seiadmin@osu.edu](mailto:seiadmin@osu.edu)). Requests for specialized reports require the approval of the department chair. A minimum of ten working days should be allowed for special reports. Departments may request data to perform their own analyses. However, the release of data is subject to the confidentiality policy stated above. Specialized reports on variables related to Response Information, Instructor Information, and Course Information are available.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEI**

The SEI questionnaire and procedures for its administration resulted from a thorough development effort over several years. It began with a review of the literature in several disciplines related to student evaluations of teaching and, in a more general sense, to the measurement of human attitudes, opinion, and behavior. In addition, three SEI development committees conducted approximately 60 hours of in-depth interviews with faculty, 15 hours of in-depth interviews with deans and department chairs, two waves of the OSU Poll of faculty opinion, and an OSU Poll of student opinion.

Results of the SEI have also been systematically studied on three occasions to determine if there are course characteristics not relevant to the quality of teaching that affect the scores. These studies found that two extraneous factors most directly impact the results: (1) the reason why the student enrolled in the course (with elective courses more positively evaluated than required courses) and (2) class size (with small sections producing higher scores than classes in which more than 60 students are enrolled). To offset the influence of these characteristics, the SEI Summary Reports display the scores for a given course in relationship to the average mean scores of courses that are of similar size and have a similar profile with respect to required/elective status (the “Comparison Group”).

If you are interested in learning more about the findings of the studies used to develop the SEI or other research on the student evaluation process, please contact the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching at (614) 292-3644.