Supplemental, ELO-based Campus-wide Course Evaluations

A draft proposal from the UW Teaching Academy

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Process

- 1994 Faculty senate task force
- 2011-2013: Teaching Academy ad hoc assessment subcommittee (Batzli, Baum, Henke) developed and evaluated the idea of a supplemental survey
- 2015: Teaching Academy executive committee took up the proposal and drafted a white paper to present to joint governance groups

Why do we ask students to complete a course evaluation?

To help us improve that course in the future	To provide information to students deciding on what courses to take	To help "us" evaluate the course/ instructor/ program

It is hard to meet all these goals with one tool

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Every course has a personalized survey	All courses use the same survey	

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- Help students pick courses in an informed way

We should <u>not</u> replace…

- Departmental course evaluations
  - Specific questions suited to the course and student body
  - Open-ended text responses
- Other assessments of teacher quality (e.g., peer assessments)
- Other measures of student accomplishment (e.g., graduation surveys)

Could the UW Essential Learning Outcomes provide the consistency?

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Personal and Social Responsibility
- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information, media, and technology literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Integrative Learning
- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

http://www.learning.wisc.edu/welo2010.pdf

To test this idea:

- We developed initial questions based on ELO language
- UW Survey Center conducted three rounds of focus groups to sequentially improve questions (funded by University Assessment Council)
- We also evaluated student reactions to the survey mechanism

Student reactions

- The survey made them reflect on their courses in ways they hadn't before
- Students observed that you can "appreciate classes for different reasons"
- ELOs became clearer
- Would be better than "RateMyProfessor.com"
- The overall reception of the survey by students was very positive

Implication

- It is possible to develop a simple, quantitative survey that students feel able to answer for any course
- Such a survey could yield data that students and the university administration would find useful

Let's look at the survey

(Bear in mind this still needs tweaking!)

ELO questions

1. In general, how much did this course enhance your knowledge of the world, such as knowledge of human cultures, society, or science? [Not at all, A little, Somewhat, Quite a bit, A great deal]
   - *Relates to ELO #1 (Knowledge)*
2. How much did this course help you develop intellectual skills, such as critical or creative thinking, quantitative reasoning, and problem solving? [Not at all, …]
   - *Relates to ELO #2 (Skills), in part.*
4. How much did this course help you develop potential professional skills, such as written and oral communication, computer literacy, and working in teams? [Not at all, …]
   - *Relates to ELO #2 (Skills), in part*
   - We now think "workplace" is better than "professional" since intellectual skills are also helpful for professional work.

ELO questions

4. How much did this course increase your sense of social responsibility, for example by increasing your knowledge of cultures or providing you with opportunities for civic or community involvement?" [Not at all, …]
   - Relates to ELO #3 (Social responsibility).
   - Needs work. Some ideas: "Helping you develop skills for civic engagement" "Empowering you to become involved in solving societal problems" or ??
5. How much did this course improve your ability to combine knowledge or skills from different fields of study? [Not at all, …]
   - *Relates to ELO #4 (Integrated learning).*

Summative Questions

6. How would you rate the overall educational value of this course, that is the extent to which the course improved your all-around education or prepared you for the future? [Very poor, Poor, Fair, Good, Very good]
   - Maybe be better to use either "improved your all-around education" or "prepared you for the future," not both
7. How would you rate the overall quality of this course, that is the extent to which it was **structured and taught** in order to maximize its educational value?" […]

Our proposal

- Further improve upon the 7-question survey we developed
- Develop the means so that students complete this survey for each course sometime after the semester
- Develop the means to collect these raw data and present summaries to students and other stakeholders

FAQ

- Why not require all departments to include these questions on their surveys?
  - An unfunded mandate
  - Unlikely to be administered identically
  - Extracting and making data centrally available would be major burden for departments

FAQ

- Shouldn't we be evaluating what students actually gained rather than what they think they gained?
  - In the ideal world, perhaps.
- Won't all the known biases in student evaluations apply (e.g., instructor gender)?
  - It is hard to know, but perhaps having students think about what they learned in the course rather than how "good" the instructor was will lessen these biases

FAQ

- If this is an online survey, won't the response rate be very low?
  - Insofar as student make use of the data they are much more likely to buy in
  - We could seek creative ways to encourage students' participation

FAQ

- What about team-taught courses?
  - Departmental reviews could assess individual instructors' contributions
- What information would be provided to tenure committees?
  - Summary data from the ELO survey (e.g., summative scores and highest ELO score) plus supporting information from departmental course/ instructor evaluations, peer reviews, etc.

Next steps?

- Improve the tool
  - Do more focus groups to fix the poor questions
  - Explore data presentation formats and methods
- See if campus endorses this approach
  - Town hall meetings (such as this)
  - Discussions by governance groups

Thanks!

- Ad hoc Committee
  - Janet Batzli (co-chair); Jamie Henke; Jim Wollack; Brian Yandell
- UW Survey Center
  - John Stevenson; Jen Dykema; Jaime Faus; Tara Piché
- Mo Bischof; Jocelyn Milner; Steve Cramer
- UW Assessment Council

Questions? Reactions?