

Executive Summary of Business for Teaching and Learning Committee



Title	Report from the Student Experience Survey Working Group: Sussex Course Evaluation Questionnaires
Author	Student Experience Survey Working Group: Dr Ian Gazely (Chair) Dr John Davies (TLDU)
Type	Report for information Recommendation that the on-line CEQ is implemented across all schools and departments with effect from Autumn 2009
Date	June 2009
Summary	
Consultation	Heads of Department, Heads of School (where in post), School Administrators (consultation completed, June 1 st 2009)
Recommendation	TLC is asked to note the report and approve the recommendation that the on-line CEQ is implemented across the University with effect from 2009/10.
Contact	

Sussex Course Evaluation Questionnaires

Purpose of this document

In 2007, Professor Joanne Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education, commissioned the Student Experience Survey Working Group (SESWG)¹ to develop a new online course evaluation questionnaire (CEQ).

The Group has created a CEQ that contains a common set of quantitative questions plus space for two optional department-level questions and scope for written comments. It is administered online via Sussex Direct and was first piloted in Summer Term 2008. Six departments have participated in the pilots (Engineering and Design, History, Informatics, Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy, Psychology).

This document provides an update for schools and departments on progress to date and is divided into two main sections. Section I summarises main elements of the CEQ process that have been developed and approved by the University's Teaching and Learning Committee. These include:

- the development of a Code of Practice for CEQs;
- the creation of a CEQ with a robust structure that provides a valid measure of a student's course experience;
- a system where the management of the CEQ process is, as far as possible, the responsibility of schools/department and is as straightforward as possible to administer, having been developed and trialled in consultation with admin staff in the pilot Departments;
- the publication of results to students that are aggregated for each main CEQ heading and accompanied by a comment from the Convenor.

Section II highlights the benefits of the new process and identifies the risks – and how they will be mitigated – of moving from pilot to university-wide implementation.

In advance of UTLC, Ian Gazeley (Chair of the Working Group) circulated a copy of this paper to Heads of Department, Heads of School in post, Strategy and Operations Managers and School Administrators. This has given Schools and Departments the opportunity to raise any specific challenges they foresee may arise during the implementation of the CEQ.

It should be noted that further major developments (in terms of both the questions in the CEQ and the technical aspects) will not take place. Statistical analysis of the CEQ's structure has been undertaken and indicates that the CEQ provides a reliable and robust measure of students' course experiences. A report ('Autumn & Spring 2008/09 pilots') containing the detailed analysis can be accessed at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/tldu/ceq-outputs>

The Working Group recommends that the CEQ should be implemented across all schools and departments in Autumn 2009

¹ For membership of the SESWG go to <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/tldu/1-3-6-2-4.html>

Section I: main elements of CEQ process

1. The Code of Practice

The Working Group felt it was important to define the principles underlying course evaluation and the way in which the data will be used. It believes this will help to create an environment of trust, in which information produced by the process will be valued by both staff and students. Consequently, the Group has created a Code of Practice (CoP) that has been approved by UTLC. The CoP can be found at:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/tldu/ceq-outputs>

Key extracts from the Code

The purpose of course evaluation is threefold:

1. to provide information to assist tutors to reflect on their course design and teaching;
2. to encourage course participants to reflect on their own learning and to help inform course choice;
3. to inform monitoring of courses, particularly at departmental level, in order to guide academic developments.

The outcomes of CEQs will be used....

- to aid convenors in planning future iterations of the course
 - to provide tutors with feedback for respondents in their particular teaching group(s) within a course
 - in a developmental context to support staff in improving teaching and assessment practices
 - as part of the annual monitoring process to identify good practice that can be disseminated more widely
 - as part of the annual monitoring process to identify areas of concern that can be acted upon by the course convenor, programme convenor and Head of Department
- to support collective responsibility of schools to improve the learning experience of their students

The outcomes of CEQs will not be used....

- as evidence by promotions panels unless presented as supporting evidence by the member of staff
 - to rate individual teachers/tutors within or across Departments
 - to rate individual teachers/tutors within a course
- to support formal complaints or appeals by students

2. Structure of the CEQ

The CEQ:

- contains a core set of 17 questions plus space for two optional department-level items;
- measures responses on a 1-5 scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree;
- contains sections where students can give written responses;
- is completed online through students' Sussex Direct pages;
- has a structure that allows individual questions to be aggregated into particular headings.

Questions in the CEQ

For each item below please indicate the extent to which you AGREE or DISAGREE with the statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Teaching quality

1. Lecturers / tutors were good at explaining things
2. Lecturers / tutors made the subject interesting
3. Lecturers / tutors were up to date with, and informed about, their subject

Feedback

4. The feedback on work I submitted will be helpful for improving further assignments / course work / exams
5. I received feedback *in time* for me to prepare for further assignments / course work / exams
6. The *informal* feedback I received (*e.g., comments from teachers and fellow students, via study direct etc.*), will be beneficial for preparing for further assignments / course work / exams

Self-Development and Motivation

7. I was actively engaged in this course (*e.g., contributed towards class debate, group tasks, reading, etc*)
8. My participation in this course has enabled me to strengthen my academic skills (*e.g., analytical & critical thinking / presentation & articulation / writing & essay composition, and numerical aptitude*)
9. I took responsibility for my learning on this course

Assessment

10. The modes of assessment allow me to demonstrate my learning
11. I was always aware of the standard of work expected of me throughout this course
12. This course was well balanced in terms of assessed work load and the timing of assignments

Course organisation

13. The course was well-organised and ran smoothly
14. The course content was in line with the course description
15. I was able to contact teaching staff involved in the course when I needed to

Learning resources

16. The learning resources for this course met my needs*
* This question relates to the availability of additional/wider library and study resources & not core course texts.
17. Overall I was satisfied with the quality of this course
18. OPTIONAL DEPARTMENTAL QUESTION
19. OPTIONAL DEPARTMENTAL QUESTION

Open questions

Please now list what you perceive to be the Best Features of the course and those Features in need of improvement. You may write as much as you like.

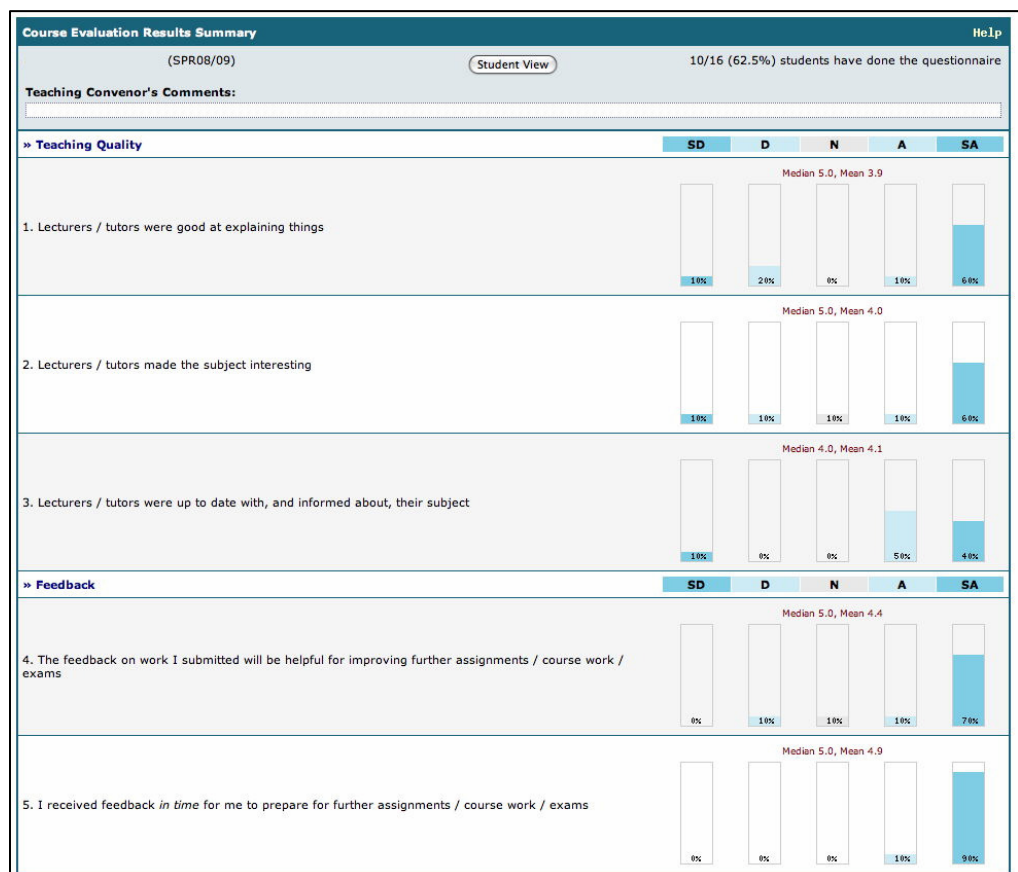
3. Management of CEQs

Departments are responsible for selecting which courses should be evaluated – the exclusions should be set by designated admin staff on a yearly basis on the central database. Departments also set the dates on which the CEQ will open and close and when the CEQ summaries will be published in Sussex Direct.

Whilst the CEQ is open, Programme coordinators (or their delegates) and Convenors can easily check how response rates are progressing through Sussex Direct.

Course Evaluation List									
Contents: Course Evaluation List									
<p>This page shows information about the Course Evaluation status of courses for which you are the convenor or tutor. If you are the convenor (shown in the Role column) you are responsible for entering Course Evaluation feedback, at the appropriate time. Click on the course title to do this. You may enter feedback from when the Course Evaluation is closed (i.e. when students are no longer permitted to respond), until the release date.</p> <p>Irrespective of whether you are the tutor or the convenor, clicking on the Course Title will take you to the Course Evaluation Results Summary page for the course, and clicking on the Status (if it is Closed or Released) will take you to the Course Evaluation Results by Teaching Group page.</p>									
Course Evaluation List: Help									
Year: 08/09									
Course	Code	Period	Role	Issue Date	Close Date	Release Date	Status	Response Rate	Comments Entered?
<i>Courses listed here</i>		SPR08/09	Convenor	23-Feb-2009	29-Mar-2009	27-Apr-2009	Released	5/5 (100.0%)	✓
		SPR08/09	Convenor	23-Feb-2009	29-Mar-2009	27-Apr-2009	Released	5/5 (100.0%)	✗
		SPR08/09	Convenor	23-Feb-2009	29-Mar-2009	27-Apr-2009	Released	6/11 (54.5%)	✓
		SPR08/09	Convenor	23-Feb-2009	29-Mar-2009	27-Apr-2009	Released	10/16 (62.5%)	✗
		UGYR08/09	Tutor	05-Jun-2009	03-Jul-2009	07-Aug-2009		0/36 (0.0%)	
		UGYR08/09	Tutor	05-Jun-2009	03-Jul-2009	07-Aug-2009		0/123 (0.0%)	

When the CEQ closes to students, Convenors can log into Sussex Direct and see a summary of the students' numeric responses (means and medians together with the response distribution) for each question.



Convenors can also view the students' numeric responses by Teaching Group (e.g. seminar, lab).

Course Evaluation Results by Teaching Group			
Contents: Course Evaluation Results by Teaching Group			
Course Evaluation Results by Teaching Group (Tutor View)			
(SPR08/09)			
Show Mean Convenor View			
Section	Course	Lecture grp 1	Seminar grp 1
1. Teaching Quality	5	5	5
2. Feedback	5	5	5
3. Self Development and Motivation	5	5	5
4. Assessment	4	4	4
5. Course Organisation	4.5	4.5	4.5
6. Learning Resources	4	4	4
7. Overall Experience	4	4	4
Departmental Questions	4	4	4

Please note that tutors will additionally be able to view students' numeric responses for the Teaching Groups with which they are associated and compare these with numeric responses for the course as a whole.

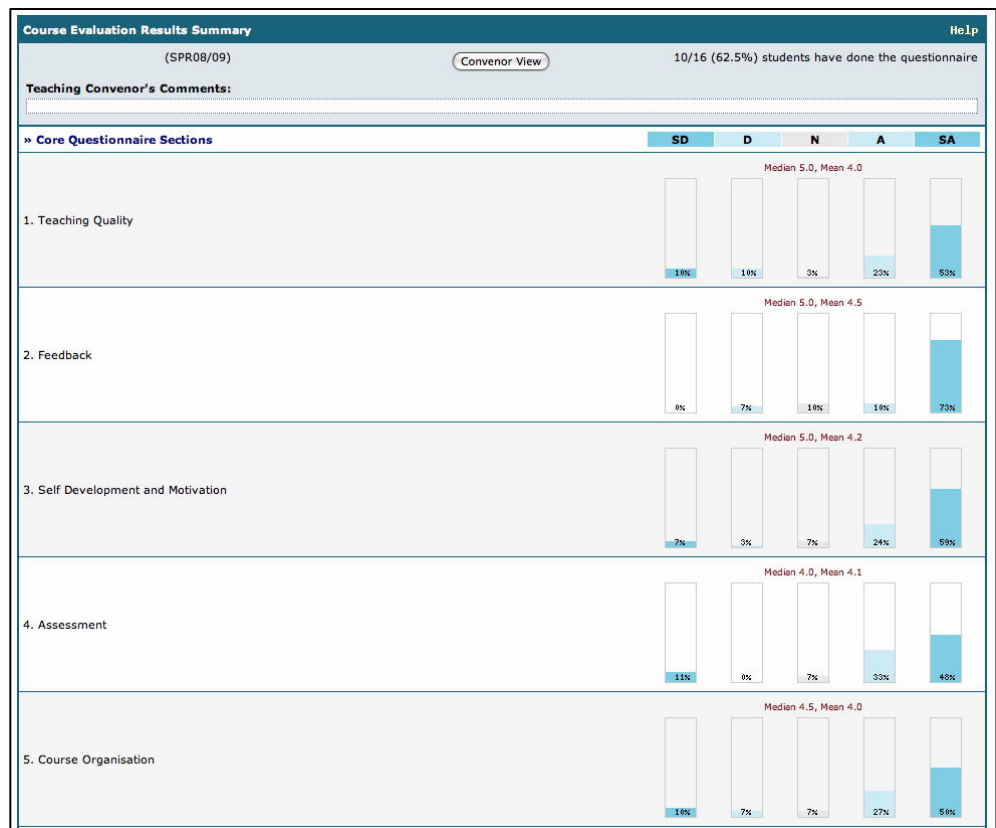
Programme Coordinators (or their delegates) will send Convenors the written responses – either in pdf format or as an excel spreadsheet. The University recommends that any written responses considered to be defamatory or inappropriate should be edited prior to receipt by the Convenor. The responses may, therefore, have been edited by the coordinator prior to receipt (with approval from the Head of Department).

Before publication, Convenors are required to input a short response to the course level feedback that will appear alongside the summary results.

4. Publication of CEQ data

Format of publication

Students will not see the cohort's responses to every item on the CEQ in Sussex Direct. Students will see a summary of the CEQ results, based on the average score and average frequency distribution for each dimension (Teaching quality; Feedback; Motivation & self-development; Assessment; Course organisation) of the CEQ plus those items that do not fit into these dimensions (learning resources, overall course rating and department-specific questions).



Sample sizes, response rates and publication of CEQ results

For cohort sizes of eight or more, the minimum number of responses required for results to be published is five. For cohorts of less than eight, a minimum of four responses is required for publication.

In terms of response *rate*, the Working Group considers that a response rate of at least 50% is desirable in terms of providing representative data. In terms of publication of results, there is no lower limit on response rate, other than that determined by the minimum number of responses required. If the response rate achieved for a particular course is lower than 50% then a message indicating that results should be treated with caution will appear alongside the CEQ summary displayed to students.

Section II: Benefits and risks

Benefits of the new CEQ process

Staff	Students
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. CEQ provides a robust measure of the students' experience of a course2. CEQ process is embedded into existing Sussex systems (Sussex Direct, Web Report, Web Forms) with which staff are familiar3. Results (summary and detailed) are available as soon as CEQ closed.4. Analysis of students' numeric responses is automated and can be viewed by the Convenor at a glance.5. No requirement for academic or administrative staff to undertake analysis of CEQ data or collate students' written responses.6. Convenors <i>and</i> tutors able to easily view CEQ results by teaching group7. Straightforward mechanism for Convenors to provide comments on the CEQ responses for a particular cohort8. Heads of Department can view overall results for courses in their department on a single web report.9. Departments determine which courses should be included, when CEQs should open and close and when results should be released.10. (Almost) paperless process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. CEQ is relatively short – only takes a few minutes to complete.2. The structure of the CEQ gives students the opportunity to comment on their overall experience of the course.3. Gives all students on a course the opportunity to complete a CEQ.4. A CEQ embedded into an existing Sussex system with which students are very familiar and use regularly.5. Automation of process means that students receive CEQ results and feedback more quickly.6. Students get to see their cohort's evaluation for all the course they take (sample size permitting).7. Students receive feedback from the Convenor on actions that may be taken as a result of the numeric responses and the students' written comments on the course.

Risks

The Working Group will propose that the CEQ should be rolled out to all Schools and Departments in Autumn Term 2009. The Group recognises that there are risks associated with scaling up a process from pilot phase. These are outlined in the below table:

Risks		Mitigation
Creation of new Schools may make it difficult to identify key personnel	Programme Coordinators (or their delegates) will be dealing with large numbers of responses immediately (pilot departments had a trial run with fewer courses in Summer 2008).	<p>Identify all Programme Coordinators /other School-based roles that require access to the CEQ admin screens as soon as possible.</p> <p>Run specific training and awareness-raising sessions for Departmental Coordinators (or their delegates).</p> <p>Prepare guidance e.g. written, screencasts to support those in this role.</p> <p>Provide additional support for those who are responsible for setting up the CEQ within departments.</p>
	Academic leadership in schools and departments may still be undecided.	Ensure that we work closely with Heads that are already in post and liaise with others when they are appointed.
Response rates may not reach a representative level (considered to be at least 50%)	Pilots have demonstrated that online CEQ response rates are generally lower than those using hard copy versions (although some departments have attained rates above 50%).	<p>Produce guidance on how to maximise response rates and provide guidance for staff, based on experiences with pilot groups.</p> <p>Ensure that links to CEQs and reminders to complete them are contained on students' Sussex Direct homepage.</p> <p>Undertake awareness-raising with student groups (working closely with USSU);</p> <p>Provide materials for staff to use to publicise CEQ process at induction events, lectures etc.</p>
May be resistance to uptake in some departments		<p>Communications should include the evidence-base for the validity of the CEQ.</p> <p>Staff and students in pilot groups should be asked to contribute their experiences of the new CEQ process.</p> <p>Communications should make it clear that wide consultation about the CEQ has taken place and much of the feedback from schools and departments has been incorporated.</p>