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# The University of Hong Kong

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## Operational Guide for Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning



Social Sciences Research Centre  
The University of Hong Kong

**(Fourth Edition, September 2020)**

## I. Introduction

The Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) is commissioned by the University to assist departments, schools, centres and faculties to evaluate the student ratings of all undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses. This guide focuses on the policy, guidelines and operational aspects of student feedback on such courses. There is useful detailed background about SFTL in [Appendix A](#).

The SSRC is happy to provide student feedback on teaching and learning for other courses, but this will be charged to recover costs. Data collection for other surveys, non-standard reporting requests and processing of open-ended comments can also be arranged at a very reasonable cost.

This guide provides information on the service and samples of questionnaires for reference.

### **This centrally funded service includes the following:**

- ✦ Design of online survey questionnaires
- ✦ Design and printing of paper survey questionnaires
- ✦ Processing and reporting of all survey questionnaires using the standard reports
- ✦ Standard summaries of the overall course and teacher effectiveness for departments and faculties

## II. Teaching and Learning Quality Committee

The Teaching and Learning Quality Committee (TLQC) is a Senate committee responsible for overseeing teaching and learning quality at the University. It ensures that appropriate quality assurance processes and mechanisms are in place for monitoring, evaluating and enhancing teaching and learning quality. SFTL is one of the key quality assurance mechanisms.

More information can be found on the HKU Teaching and Learning website at <http://tl.hku.hk> and specifically about SFTL here:

<https://tl.hku.hk/tl/student-feedback-on-teaching-and-learning-sftl/>

## III. Senate policy

### **1. Teaching should be evaluated using TLQC guidelines**

All undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses should normally undergo evaluation each time they are taught, following guidelines laid down by the TLQC. Central processing is available via the SSRC at no cost to departments for these courses. If courses are very short (less than 8 hours), less formal methods of evaluation can be considered or alternatively aggregate evaluation across more than one course or more than one group of students as appropriate. For paper evaluations, the evaluation forms should be collected by administrative staff, not teaching staff, to avoid any distrust of the process.

### **2. Course evaluation results must be shared with students**

Department and other teaching centres must share the course evaluation results with students by disseminating and publishing course evaluation summaries through one or more channels as summarised in the table in Section V. A clear statement must accompany the reports to ensure that the objectives for sharing the results are clearly understood by students and staff and that the legal position of the departments, faculties and the University is not jeopardised, given that the evaluation results may contain personal data relating to individual teachers.

To help students understand how the SFTL results will be used, a standard statement should be included in the SFTL questionnaire to advise that the SFTL results will be used for improvement of teaching and learning. Students should also be informed, through Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) as well as other channels, how courses have been enhanced as a result of evaluations provided by the previous cohort(s) and how evaluations they provide will be used to improve teaching and learning for either themselves and/or for the following cohort. Faculties and teachers should carefully consult with students about the SFTL results, and subsequent follow-up discussions of the results should be held at the SSCCs, or any student focus group discussions which may be organised.

### **3. Student evaluation is one of the established components of the University's quality assurance system**

Student evaluation of courses and teaching is one of the established components of the University's quality assurance framework rather than a short-term project. However, it is important that the student evaluation of teaching is recognised as just one component of the evaluation of teaching that needs to be given the context of the teaching environment and that there is continuing development of the evaluation instruments to maximise reliability and validity.

### **4. Teaching evaluation results should be treated by the SSRC as confidential and returned only to teachers and their head of department/centre. Reviewers should have online access to the overall teacher effectiveness scores of all courses taught by a teacher.**

As far as the SSRC is concerned, all evaluation reports will be treated as confidential and returned only to teachers (via the Academic Portfolio of Achievements (APA) and SFTL online system) and their head of a department (or Common Core Curriculum Office for Common Core courses). Reports returned to the head should be passed on to the teachers concerned as soon as possible for consultation and deliberation of needed action. However, openness is to be encouraged and this should not be seen as restricting departments from collectively agreeing to make as much information as they wish more publicly available, in particular, the course summaries should be shared with students (see point 2 above and the table in Section V). With the introduction of the Performance Review and Development (PRD), Senate approved that the overall teacher effectiveness scores, in addition to the overall course effectiveness scores, of all courses taught by a teacher will be made available online to his/her PRD reviewers (via the APA). As teacher effectiveness scores are somewhat context-dependent, the teacher will be given the opportunity to provide an interpretation and explanation of the results, other evidence of teaching effectiveness and a statement of what he/she intends to do to improve teaching and learning.

### **5. Evaluation results must be used to improve teaching**

The teachers and department must take follow-up action with necessary improvements within a reasonable time after students have rated the courses and teaching. This should be seen as an implicit contract with students in that their role is to provide honest feedback to assist teachers in continuous quality improvement.

### **6. Students must be assured of the anonymity of results**

Students need to be assured of the anonymity of results, and that the overall summative items and the open-ended results should not be returned to the department before the end of the examination process. Besides, the SFTL questionnaire should not be administered by the course teacher, and Faculties should review their current administration of SFTL to ensure that the anonymity of students and confidentiality in the data collection process are observed. For courses with small student enrolments, online SFTL should still be conducted on the understanding that the online SFTL system is capable of safeguarding students' anonymity (unless there is only one student

enrolled in a course) whereas paper SFTL questionnaire will only be administered for courses with an enrolment of at least five students; and the SFTL questionnaires returned should still be processed even if the number of respondents is below five, with the qualification that scores with low return rates be interpreted judiciously.

#### **IV. TLQC guidelines pertaining to the administration of SFTL**

1. Evaluations should adopt the standard SFTL questionnaire (see [Appendix B](#)) or the questionnaire specifically designed for practicum/internship/fieldwork/capstone/portfolio (see [Appendix C](#)) as appropriate. In the event that it is necessary to depart from this standard practice, approval must be sought from the TLQC. There are currently separate standing online evaluation arrangements for the MBBS in Medicine and the BDS in Dentistry. While the core items approved by the TLQC are compulsory, Faculty TLQCs can introduce Faculty-specific items, if necessary. For the standard SFTL questionnaire, the parts can be combined into one form (usual for paper forms) or separated out (usual for online forms).
2. Departments which have team-taught courses may repeat the Part II teacher items for evaluations of individual teachers for a maximum of 4 teachers\*, or use one set of Part II items for an evaluation of the teachers as a group if the number of teachers involved is large and that the amount of teaching per teacher is not sufficient to provide a reliable basis for individual evaluation.

(\*Technically, SSRC can arrange for the evaluation of a maximum of 25 teachers for each course but this is not encouraged.)

3. If a course is jointly taught by a number of departments within the faculty or across faculties, the SSRC will return the evaluation results to the head of the department responsible as recorded in the Student Information System (SIS).
4. Formative evaluation, i.e. earlier evaluation at the teacher's own wish with detailed, probing questions in order to obtain more specific data to facilitate teaching improvement during the course, may be undertaken by teachers with the help of the SSRC in design, printing and processing. Note that in this case, the reports will only be sent to the teachers concerned, not to the heads of departments.
5. Evaluation, online or paper, should be planned as a class activity to ensure a higher response rate rather than asking students to do so in their spare time, which yields very low response rates in general.
6. It is the responsibility of departments to ensure that the teacher/tutor/demonstrator information is correctly entered into the SIS as the administration of all SFTL evaluations relies on this information and all SFTL reports use the course codes in the SIS. All teachers/tutors/demonstrators should be HKU staff and have a valid staff ID number input to the SIS at least 14 weeks before the start of examinations.
7. The standard reports from the SSRC to the heads of departments provide the score, the count, the mean, standard deviation and standard error, with a CD containing the reports in Word and Excel formats and the raw scanned data for department's further statistical analysis.
8. Departments are asked to submit any completed paper forms as a batch to the SSRC to allow more efficient processing that will also generate an overall summary for all courses bearing the same departmental course prefix.

9. Up to five additional items can be added to the evaluation form with at least three weeks' notice.
10. Departments must give the SSRC sufficient time to design, print and process their paper questionnaires and the print quantity estimate should be based on student enrolment. Design and printing will require a minimum of six weeks' notice, and processing during the peak periods of November to January, and April to June will require a minimum of two weeks.
11. Departments can make use of the data supplied by SSRC to conduct analysis for the purpose of teaching improvement.

## **V. Reports dissemination**

As approved by the Senate, SFTL results on course and teaching evaluation should be made accessible and disseminated as set out in the following table:

Table 1: Summary of dissemination and accessibility of SFTL results

Information	Level of Aggregation	Accessibility	Purpose
<i>Part I: Course</i>			
Part I(A): items on specific aspects of the course	Course and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>publish course evaluation summaries through one or more channels, e.g. printed reports on course effectiveness placed in Faculty / departmental offices for staff's and students' perusal; data uploaded on the Faculty / departmental Webpage; etc.</li> <li>Individual Teachers</li> <li>PRD Reviewer(s)</li> </ul>	Formative and summative
	Department or Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FTLQC</li> <li>Faculty Boards</li> <li>TLQC</li> </ul>	Formative and summative
Part I(A): Overall course effectiveness	Course and above	same as items on specific aspects of the course	Summative
	Department or Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FTQC</li> <li>Faculty Boards</li> <li>TLQC</li> </ul>	Summative
Part I(B): items on English as the Medium of Instruction	Course and above	same as items on specific aspects of the course	Formative and summative
	Department or Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FTQC</li> <li>Faculty Boards</li> <li>TLQC</li> </ul>	Formative and summative
Part I(C): Open-ended comments	Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course teachers</li> <li>Dept Head/Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)</li> </ul>	Formative
<i>Part II: Individual teacher<sup>#</sup></i>			
Part II(A): items on specific aspects of teaching	Individual teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual teacher</li> <li>Dept Head/Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)</li> <li>PRD reviewer(s)</li> </ul>	Formative and summative
	Department and Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FTLQC</li> <li>Faculty Boards</li> <li>TLQC</li> </ul>	Formative and summative
Part II(A): Overall teacher effectiveness	Individual teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual teacher</li> <li>Dept Head/Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)</li> <li>PRD reviewer(s)</li> </ul>	Summative
	Department and Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FTLQC</li> <li>Faculty Boards</li> <li>TLQC</li> </ul>	Summative
Part II(B): Open-ended comments	Individual teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual teacher</li> <li>Dept Head/Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)</li> </ul>	Formative

<sup>#</sup> Dissemination and accessibility of SFTL results on Part III (tutorials/tutors) and Part IV (laboratory sessions/demonstrators) can be referenced to Part II of the above table.

## VI. The role of the coordinators

Co-ordination between departments and the SSRC depends on the co-ordinators in departments and the SSRC team. A department head must provide the SSRC at the beginning of every academic year with the name of the co-ordinator. This coordinator will work with the SSRC team on these tasks:

- 1) ensure that the course information is all correctly input to the SIS, including names and staff ID for all teachers, tutors and demonstrators.
- 2) determine the number of paper forms (if any) required to rate courses, different types of programmes, teachers, tutors;
- 3) design these survey questionnaires;
- 4) determine the printing quantity of any paper forms;
- 5) schedule the administration of any paper forms; and
- 6) schedule the dispatch of the completed paper forms to the SSRC.

There should be only one designated coordinator for each department. There should be departmental administrative/clerical assistance for the collection and dispatch of forms between a department and the SSRC.

Despite the important contribution of the coordinator to this whole process of evaluation, the results of evaluations are treated as confidential and the reports are uploaded *only* to the online systems, including the APA, and sent to respective heads of departments.

### **Course code and student group**

For online forms, the course code appears directly using the SIS information.

Each paper form has a front page with instructions for students. On this page students are also required to write down or mark the SIS course code. This course code is used for all reports on student ratings. If there are additional identifiers to be selected, e.g. lecturer or tutor codes, or student group numbers, then the 2-digit identifier selected by students is used to produce a lecturer or tutor report, or a course report based on student group. The student group information must be included on the cover sheet pasted on each envelope of completed paper forms to be dispatched to the SSRC. A written request must also be made in advance in writing as group reporting involves more administrative monitoring and extra processing at the SSRC end.

### **Teacher/Tutor/Demonstrator questionnaire and their identification**

For online forms, the teacher/tutor/demonstrator names appear directly using the SIS information.

When there are multiple teachers teaching the same class of students, for online evaluation, students are prompted to complete Part II once for each teacher.

For paper forms, the teacher items in Part II are repeated on the questionnaire, normally for a maximum of 4 teachers. When instructing students to fill out that teacher section in paper forms, the survey administrator in the class must clearly identify to the students who are teachers A, B, C and D (this information may be incorporated in the questionnaire). Some departments may prefer to pull out the teacher items to form a separate questionnaire, letting students to mark an identifier code for their lecturer and/or tutor. In this case, the department should compile a list of all their teachers with digit identifiers against their names and send to the SSRC; this information will then be included on every printed questionnaire to guide the students and for departmental cross-checking afterwards.

For classes with multiple tutors/demonstrators, online evaluation is done for one tutor/demonstrator (selected by the student from up to twenty-five) or for the group of tutors/demonstrators collectively. For paper forms, evaluation can be done individually for multiple tutors/demonstrators.

### **Paper form printing**

In each semester the SSRC expects an academic coordinator to supply a list of courses to be evaluated using paper forms and the exact student numbers of the courses. The quantity asked for printing should not exceed the enrolment figures. Departments should *never* attempt to make copies on their own machines for SFTL purpose, as the SSRC scanner may not be able to scan such copies and departments will be responsible to process those copies.

The SSRC does not accept any printing request with short notice and a minimum of four weeks is required. If departments have courses that finish early in a semester, then those dates should be used as a reference to get all forms printed before then.

## **VII. Administering student ratings of teaching**

### **Online forms**

A list of courses in SIS with teacher/tutor/demonstrator names and indication of whether online or paper process is sent out to each department each semester, so departments can check for errors and missing information.

Online SFTL is open for 4 weeks until examinations start for that semester. CEDARS and U-Vision will publicise the QR code for the weblink (see below) before the start date and Moodle will show the weblink.

The **teacher concerned** should inform the students in advance the date of the online evaluation in class (after online process starts), and that the students are encouraged to bring a mobile internet device (such as laptop, tablet or smartphone) to class at the scheduled time.

Similar to the paper exercise, the SFTL questionnaire should **NOT** be administered by the course teacher, but Faculty/department staff. The **teacher** should briefly explain the objectives of the student evaluation and then leave the room leaving it to Faculty/department staff to oversee the process and read out: “Please go to the weblink <http://sftl.hku.hk> where you should see a list of all forms that you need to complete. Your evaluation will be saved anonymously, without any identification. There are separate forms for the course, teacher (and if appropriate) tutor and demonstrator. There are instructions, an FAQ link and a link for you to report any missing courses at the weblink.”

Students should then access the SFTL system via the weblink <http://sftl.hku.hk/> and complete the forms for the class during the 4 weeks. If they cannot find the course that they have enrolled in, they are encouraged to send an email to SSRC using the link on the page so SSRC staff can rectify this promptly. The login will only be used to track whether the student has completed the evaluation, but will not be stored in the result database. Hence, the student identity will remain anonymous.

Because of this anonymity in the SFTL process, it is not possible to amend student evaluations after submission, even if the student states that there was an error in the submission.

Results are released after examination results are confirmed.

## **Paper forms**

Department will have to inform the SSRC at least 4 weeks in advance of the number of copies required for each questionnaire, and, if possible, indicate the date when they will be able to return all the questionnaires as a single submission for processing. The SSRC will notify departments by fax or telephone (for urgent request by departments) to collect the printed questionnaires, copies of the instruction sheet and the cover sheet.

### **Teachers should supervise the evaluation by:**

- ✦ first explaining the objective of the evaluation to the students,
- ✦ reassuring students of anonymity,
- ✦ telling them how much time they will have to complete the form, and
- ✦ explaining how they should fill in the course code, teacher identity, and student group information on the front page of the questionnaire and getting them to do so immediately.

Collection of forms should be handled by a designated member of the administrative staff. The teacher is advised to leave the room while the students write out their responses. After the designated staff has collected the forms, he/she should mark the total number received on the cover sheet, and then seal the envelope containing the completed forms. If there are two forms, e.g. one for rating course, one for rating teachers, then these will be put into two different envelopes. The sealed envelope(s) and extra forms not used should then be returned directly to the department's general office.

## **Record of courses evaluated using paper forms**

Departments should count the returned envelopes and prepare a packing list of the courses evaluated, in a printout and in a soft copy on a computer disk to accompany the envelopes of questionnaires to SSRC. The SSRC will be able to use the record for its quantity checking, scanning and processing. This record is also a handy reference for the department which can then know what reports will be returned in due course and to whom the teacher reports should go.

## **Order of processing paper forms**

The order of processing is based on the sequence of submission arrivals at SSRC and SSRC cannot allow queue jumping. If a department needs the reports urgently, it must make a written request for approval well in advance and their questionnaires must reach the SSRC at least 14 working days before the date when the reports are required.

## **VIII. Reporting**

The SSRC provides department heads with a set of standard reports. It also supplies a CD containing the reports on courses and teachers in a Rich Text Format (RTF) and the scanned raw data in a comma separated values file format.

All paper forms from a department are normally processed as a batch and all at the same time based on the order of receipt.

The standard course report gives the number of responses (i.e. the count) for each item, the item response percentages, the mean score, the standard deviation of the score (larger value indicating larger spread of responses), and the standard error of the mean score (i.e. the sampling error for the mean score). In order not to make the report too long, the standard descriptors for each item are not repeated unless they are different from item to item.

Apart from individual course reports and teacher reports, the department will also get an overall summary of all the course reports and the teacher reports for each semester. As for teacher reports, suppose there are four teachers sharing the teaching of the SSRC1234 course, and these teacher's identifiers are 01, 02, 03 and 04, then there will be four teacher reports with the code SSRC123401, SSRC123402, SSRC123403, and SSRC123404. There will also be an overall department summary report for the course SSRC1234 to indicate how the four teachers have performed as a group on this course.

### **How to read a report**

Many staff have asked for help with interpreting the mean, the standard deviation and error on the standard reports sent to department). For example, how does a teacher read these lines in the report about himself?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	Count	Mean	SD	SE
100	75	50	25	0				
9%	49%	32%	10%	0%	381	64.2	19.6	1.00

First of all, they tell him that 381 students responded to this question about his overall performance (the count), 9% of these thought that he was excellent which has a score of 100 marks, 49% thought he was good, and he scored 75 marks, etc. So his average (mean) mark was 64.2, the SD (standard deviation) was 19.6 and the SE (standard error) was 1.00.

Are these responses unusual? Are they anything to be concerned about? To answer these questions we have to put the scores in some context. One of the most important questions is whether these responses are average, below average, above average, or abnormal in any way. We need to summarise this information. Two complementary types of summaries are measures of central tendency and measures of variability.

The typical score is the mean, i.e., the arithmetic average. Consider the following example, suppose you want to measure the overall effectiveness of teacher Mr. Wong in Part II: "All things considered, the overall effectiveness of the teacher in helping you learn was". There are seven anonymous student responses A to F and you want to find out the "central tendency" of the score of teacher Mr. Wong. You can calculate the mean of the data as follows:  $(81+65+81+90+70+85+67)/7 = 77$

Respondent for teacher Mr Wong	score
A	81
B	65
C	81
D	90
E	70
F	85
G	67
<i>Mean</i>	77

### **Understanding and interpreting standard deviation**

The standard deviation (SD) is a measure of the dispersion of the data around the mean within a population. In other word, it measures the variability of the data from the mean within a population. The larger the SD, the larger will be the variation of respondents around the value of the mean.

Now let us look at the mean and the SD for teachers Mr. Johnson and Miss Chan on the conclusive global item of the teacher:

	Mr. Johnson	Miss Chan
Mean	77	77
SD	15	25

For example, if you want to compare the performance of the two teachers, if the two teachers get the same mean rating of 77 but the SD of teacher Miss Chan (25) is larger than Mr. Johnson (15), then the ratings from the respondents of teacher Mr. Johnson are more consistent than those of teacher Miss Chan, i.e. there is closer agreement within the student raters regarding Mr. Johnson's teaching.

### **Understanding and interpreting standard error**

The formal definition of the standard error (SE) is the measure of the variability of the data around the mean *from sample to sample*. The formula is:

$$\frac{\text{Standard Deviation}}{\sqrt{n}}$$

where there are  $n$  respondents.

This gives an indication of how consistent we can expect the mean ratings to be from one group of students to the next group. Clearly, we expect more consistency for the mean if the number of students is larger than if it is small.

The SE is thus an indicator of how reliable the mean score is as a summary of student opinion, where the SE will be smaller when the students are more consistent in their ratings and when there are more students doing the rating. It does not take into account bias due to some students not doing the rating. A rule of thumb is that changes in the mean rating of less than twice the SE are not worthy of further consideration, as they are within the bounds of likely random variation.

## **IX. SSRC reminders**

The TLQC guidelines and the procedures described so far together with the appendices should have provided sufficient details on how student ratings should be conducted. The SSRC, in particular, wishes to draw staff attention to the following:

1. The online evaluation relies completely on accurate information about teacher, tutors and demonstrators in SIS. It is essential then that this information is carefully input and checked by departments.
2. Departments and their staff must always adhere to the time schedule as agreed with the SSRC for finalising questionnaire design, printing, and the return of paper forms for processing. If they do not, their forms will be processed only after the SSRC has finished processing the forms of other departments who handed in theirs on time.
3. If a department has some short courses which finish earlier, then this fact should be made known in writing in advance to the SSRC via the academic co-ordinator, so that the printing date for all the forms for the department can be brought forward. If this is not done in time, then the short course will have to be evaluated using the old form from the last semester.
4. All completed paper forms *must be submitted by a department as a batch* except for medical courses based on a prior arrangement with the SSRC. There should be a fully completed cover sheet for each envelope and an evaluation record sheet of all courses evaluated in soft

- and hard copies. The SSRC will not accept and process envelopes of forms directly submitted by individual teachers.
5. Forms submitted late will still be processed, but this can only be done after the SSRC has completed all the batch processing for all other departments who have already sent in their forms.
  6. Completed course forms and teacher forms must be kept in separate envelopes with the cover sheet B filled out accurately.
  7. Supervisors of a paper evaluation must endeavour to get students to complete the front page of a form with correct marking of course code and teacher identifier. Failure to fill out the teacher identifier correctly will result in reports with inadequate data for departmental use because the SSRC cannot manually verify and correct the course codes or teacher identifiers which have been incorrectly marked.
  8. The SSRC cannot process a single course to meet a special personal deadline, it must be done together with all other courses submitted by a department.
  9. If individuals from departments are unclear about the University's policy or guidelines concerning student ratings or the department's questionnaire design, they should consult their head and the authorised academic co-ordinator.
  10. If a course is co-taught by staff from a number of departments, the course and teacher reports will go only to the head of the co-ordinating department.
  11. The SSRC treats all evaluation data and reports as confidential, and is not authorised to release them to anyone other than teachers and their head. Anyone wishing to have access to evaluation data or reports must apply directly to the heads of departments.

## **X. Enquiry about the SFTL process**

SSRC runs yearly briefings for academic and administrative/clerical staff and the content of the briefings can be found on the SSRC website.

Enquiries can be directed to the SSRC: Phone :  
3917-1600

Email : [sftl@ssrc.hku.hk](mailto:sftl@ssrc.hku.hk)

Website : <http://www.ssrc.hku.hk/sftl.php>

# Appendix A

## Background for Student evaluation of teaching

### 1. An introduction

All departments at The University of Hong Kong have been using student ratings to evaluate teaching for many years, long before the University Senate reiterated its importance and recommended ten dimensions for its investigation, These dimensions were suggested by Professor Brian Cooke, the first and former Director of the Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT). These dimensions still form the basis of most items included in departmental questionnaires

Student ratings and peer review are now two major sources of evidence to evaluate teaching at The University of Hong Kong. This document deals only with student ratings of courses, administered through the Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) which has the University charter to provide a centralised academic service paid for by central funding.

The SSRC wishes to stress that although this service is usually referred to as “student evaluation” within this University, and indeed this Handbook also carries this title for the same reason, it is more useful to think of these student responses as data that needs to be interpreted. Cashin (1995) suggests using the term “student ratings” rather than “student evaluations” to help distinguish between the people who provide the information (i.e. sources of data in reports) and the people who interpret it.

Viewing student ratings as data rather than evaluations may also help to put them in proper perspective. Experts writing about teaching evaluation are almost universal in recommending the use of multiple sources of data, *as student ratings alone are not sufficiently valid for policy considerations*. No single source of data, including student rating data, provides enough information to make a valid judgement about teaching effectiveness, especially in the appraisal of teacher performance. In HKU, as in a growing number of universities overseas, the use of a “teaching portfolio” compiled by teachers themselves should provide more comprehensive evidence, for example, self assessment, peer review by colleagues, etc. Colleagues are advised to seek the assistance of staff of CAUT in their compilation of a portfolio.

### 2. Some research findings on SFTL

There are thousands of articles and books dealing with the extremely complex research on student ratings of teaching, and it is beyond the scope of a small internal publication of this operational nature to provide a bibliography or even to summarise the “for”, “against” and “cautionary” views expressed by protagonists, and certainly the SSRC is also not in a position to advise on how the ratings results are to be used as that is a policy matter for the University.

For colleagues who are interested in some of the expert writings on this difficult and controversial topic, a short list is included at the end of the chapters. The classic by Braskamp and Ory (1984), Cashin (1995) and Marsh and Dunkin’s (1997) paper on the multidimensional perspective are highly recommended for those with little time.

There is now little doubt from such research literature about the ability of student ratings to provide valid and useful information for both faculty members and administrators, and that they are statistically reliable and relatively free from bias or the need for control, *provided* that they are designed, administered and interpreted properly. An example of the common “interpretation traps” senior administrators often fall into is to compare ratings across courses, departments or faculties

without taking into consideration the difference of disciplines, teaching and learning objectives and styles, and class size.

### **Benefits of reflection**

One of the most important benefits of student ratings worth mentioning here is that the process of designing or filling out the forms encourages teachers and students to reflect on their educational experiences, and as a result, develop clearer conceptions about what efforts they must make in order to achieve better teaching and learning results.

### **Multidimensionality**

Both Braskamp and Ory (1994) and Centra (1993) identify six major aspects or dimensions often found in survey questionnaires:

- Course organisation and planning
- Clarity, communication skills
- Teacher student interaction, rapport
- Course difficulty, workload
- Grading and examinations
- Student self-rated learning

Others have added dimensions such as enthusiasm, learning value and group interaction. In general, if more dimensions are used, then more data could be obtained to improve teaching, but there are a number of concerns:

- Too many dimensions assessed usually results in a questionnaire which takes too long to complete and too frequent evaluations which may induce survey fatigue in students.
- Administrators tend to want to average responses across courses and (sometimes) departments and even faculties for reporting or personnel decisions, which is usually not appropriate or valid.
- Uncertainty about which dimensions should be used for curriculum and personnel decisions.

A few leading researchers have advocated the use of one or two summary or conclusion type items at the end of a survey to provide sufficient student rating data for such purposes. You will find such items endorsed by the TLQC for campus-wide adoption.

### **Formative versus summative, qualitative versus quantitative**

There are basically two types of evaluation: summative and formative. Summative evaluations occur usually at the end of the teaching of a course and are used to calculate a final assessment. Formative evaluations, on the other hand, are nearly always fed back immediately to bring about changes while a course is being taught.

Universities in Hong Kong and overseas routinely administer end-of-course student ratings which typically use multiple-choice items with one or two open-ended items to draw out qualitative data. These are usually referred to as “summative evaluations” with a “quantitative” bias. “Formative evaluations”, with an emphasis on open-ended qualitative comments and administered while a course is being taught, are generally considered to yield richer data and are more suitable for the purpose of continuous improvement of teaching.

Quantitative evaluations are more prevalent and popular because they are easier and simpler to administer, process and report, especially if the sample is large. Qualitative evaluations have started

to attract more practitioners with the advent of computer-aided research tools and the easy availability of Web-based survey forms that remove the chore of having to get someone to key in the hand-written responses of students, but analysing them still require much academic efforts. The SSRC will, subject to time commitments, assist with the design of formative evaluations, whether on-line or off-line. Existing summative evaluations in a paper format can also be converted easily to a Web format.

In general, the SSRC, working with the TLQC and departments, schools and teaching centres on student evaluation, has endeavoured to maintain, on the one hand, a conscious and constructive balance between university standardisation for an optimisation of efficiency in operation, and support, on the other, local academic autonomy to determine its own method of researching into its curriculum and pedagogy. “Standardisation and flexibility within reason” may be a succinct and fair summing up of the *modus operandi* of the SSRC in the shared goal and mission of this University to pursue teaching excellence. There is a large degree of flexibility and customisation available to departments in their design of questionnaires.

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Appendix B Standard SFTL questionnaire (included as pdf)

Appendix C SFTL questionnaire for practicum/internship/fieldwork/capstone/portfolio (included as pdf)

## Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning (SFTL) 2020-2021

"Course Code" - "Course title"

### Capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork Form

Many thanks for participating in the feedback process for teaching and learning. Your anonymous constructive feedback will be very helpful for improving this course, and will benefit many students. The course effectiveness summary will be shared with all students through the course enrollment system (SIS). For more detailed information, please click [here](#).

Please submit your view on items 1-9 on the 5-point scale form "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". You then have an opportunity to provide constructive feedback about the best things about the capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork, and the things that could be improved.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	No response
<b>1</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course enhanced my ability to apply my subject knowledge in the real-world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>2</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course had a workload that was manageable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>3</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course stimulated me to be creative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>4</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course encouraged me to think critically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>5</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course had clear assessment criteria.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>6</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course had assessment that helped me to learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>7</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course had suitable guidance from my supervisor in HKU.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>8</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course had suitable guidance from my supervisor outside HKU	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>9</b> The capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes. (click here to view the learning outcomes for this course)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				

### 10. What were the best thing(s) about this course?

### 11. What thing(s) about this course could be improved?

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# Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning (SFTL) 2020-2021

"Course Code" - "Course title"

## Teacher/Tutor/Demonstrator Form

Many thanks for participating in the feedback process for teaching and learning. Your anonymous constructive feedback will be very helpful for improving this course, and will benefit many students. The course effectiveness summary will be shared with all students through the course enrollment system (SIS). For more detailed information, please click [here](#).

Please submit your view on items 1-6 on the 5-point scale form "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". You then have an opportunity to provide constructive feedback about the best things about the teacher/tutor/demonstrator, and the things that could be improved.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	No response
<b>1</b> The teacher/tutor/demonstrator helped me learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>2</b> The teacher/tutor/demonstrator made the subject engaging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>3</b> The teacher/tutor/demonstrator was responsive to my learning needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>4</b> The teacher/tutor/demonstrator communicated effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>5</b> The teacher/tutor/demonstrator provided helpful feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>6</b> The teacher/tutor/demonstrator was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes (click here to view the learning outcomes for this course)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				

## 7. What were the best thing(s) about this teacher's/tutor's/demonstrator's teaching?

## 8. What thing(s) about this teacher's/tutor's/demonstrator's teaching could be improved?

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## Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning (SFTL) 2020-2021

"Course Code" - "Course title"

### Course Form

Many thanks for participating in the feedback process for teaching and learning. Your anonymous constructive feedback will be very helpful for improving this course, and will benefit many students. The course effectiveness summary will be shared with all students through the course enrollment system (SIS). For more detailed information, please click [here](#).

Please submit your view on items 1-10 on the 5-point scale form "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". You then have an opportunity to provide constructive feedback about the best things about the course, and the things that could be improved.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	No response
<b>1</b> The course deepened my understand of the subject.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>2</b> The course required my active participation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>3</b> The course had a workload that was manageable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>4</b> The course stimulated me to be creative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>5</b> The course encouraged me to think critically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>6</b> The course had clear assessment criteria.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>7</b> The course had assessment that helped me to learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>8</b> The course was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes. (click here to view the learning outcomes for this course)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>9</b> The course used English as the medium of instruction throughout the lectures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
<b>10</b> The course used English as the medium of instruction throughout the tutorials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				

### 11. What were the best thing(s) about this course?

### 12. What thing(s) about this course could be improved?

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