THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Operational Guide

for

Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning

Version 5

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1) <u>Introduction</u>

The University of Hong Kong establishes a quality assurance system for the University's teaching and learning. Being one of the components, the Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning (SFTL) collects students' feedback of all courses that are taught by departments. This guide focuses on the policy, guidelines and operational aspects of student feedback on such courses.

2) <u>Background and Purposes</u>

2.1 Senate Policy

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 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.

A. Course evaluation results must be shared with students

Department and other teaching centres must share the course evaluation results students by disseminating and publishing course evaluation summaries through one or more channels (Section 5.1). 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.

B. 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.

C.   Teaching evaluation results should be treated by the Survey Administrator 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.

All evaluation reports will be treated by the Survey Administrator 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 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 B above and the table in Section 5.1). 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.

D.   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.

E.   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.

2.2 Administration and Supervision

Since the 2021-22 academic year, the Teaching and Learning Evaluation and Measurement Unit (T&LEMU) is charged with the responsibility as the Survey Administrator of the SFTL, as endorsed by the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee (TLQC).

The Survey Administrator, T&LEMU, is responsible for assisting the TLQC in structuring the survey questionnaires, maintaining the online survey system, designing and printing paper forms (upon request), analyzing data, disseminating the results to departments in according to the format set out by the TLQC, uploading results for teachers to the online reporting platform https://sftl.hku.hk/report, and providing summary data for upload to the Academic Portfolio of Achievement (APA) and mean score of course effectiveness for upload to the Student Information System (SIS).

3) **The SFTL Questionnaire**

3.1 Access to the SFTL

3.1.1 Online Forms

When the administrator window is open, students could access the SFTL online forms via URL https://sftl.hku.hk/ and complete the forms. In case they cannot find their enrolled courses, they are encouraged to send an email to the Survey Administrator using the information displayed on the page for enquiry.

The login will only be used to track whether the student has completed the forms, but will not be stored in the result database. Hence, the student identity will remain anonymous. With such anonymity in the SFTL process, it is not possible to amend student feedback after submission, even if the student states that there was an error in the submission.

3.1.2 Paper Forms

Paper SFTL forms may be provided on departments' request, despite that online administration is recommended. Departments must give the Survey Administrator 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. The Survey Administrator does not accept any printing request with short notice and a minimum of six weeks is required.

3.2 Questionnaire Content

3.2.1 Questionnaire Items

The standard SFTL questionnaire (Appendix A) or the questionnaire specifically designed for practicum/ internship/ fieldwork/ capstone/ portfolio (Appendix B) should be adopted as appropriate. In the event that it is necessary to depart from this standard practice, approval must be sought from the TLQC. Currently, separate standing arrangements are approved for the MBBS in Medicine and the BDS in Dentistry.

While the core items endorsed by the TLQC are compulsory, Faculty TLQCs may introduce Faculty-specific items, if necessary. Up to five additional items can be added to the feedback form with at least three weeks' notice.

Departments with team-taught courses may repeat the teacher feedback items for individual teachers. Technically, individual feedback for up to 25 teachers in one course could be arranged, but not encouraged. It is recommended to include no more than 4 teachers in one course if individual feedback approach is adopted. Alternatively, one set of the teacher feedback items may be used for 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 feedback.

If a course is jointly taught by a number of departments within the Faculty or across Faculties, the results will be returned to the head of the department responsible as recorded in the Student Information System (SIS).

3.2.2 Course and Student Group Information

The course codes and titles, extracted from the SIS, are automatically displayed on the questionnaire page of the online SFTL system.

For paper form where course codes are unavailable, students are required to write down the SIS course code. If there are additional identifiers to be selected (e.g., lecturer or tutor codes, or student group numbers), course teachers are responsible for instructing students to put down the respective 2-digit identifiers on the form. The identifier decoding must be provided to the Survey Administrator for producing course reports.

3.2.3 Teacher/ Tutor/ Demonstrator Identification

In the online SFTL system, the teacher/ tutor/ demonstrator names are embedded on the questionnaire page automatically using the SIS information. When there are multiple teachers teaching the same class of students, students are prompted to complete the teacher feedback items individually for each teacher. For classes with multiple tutors/ demonstrators, all involved tutor/ demonstrator names will appear on the form. Students will be asked to select their respective tutor/ demonstrator and complete the tutor/ demonstrator feedback items unless different arrangements are specified by departments.

For paper forms, the department should compile a full list of teachers at the administration preparation stage for the Survey Administrator to print the teacher names on every questionnaire. In case the tutor/ demonstrator names are not pre-printed, it is the teacher's responsibility to instruct the students to mark the 2-digit identifier of their teacher/ tutor/ demonstrator during the survey administration. The identifier decoding must be provided to Survey Administrator for producing lecturer or tutor reports.

4) Survey Administration

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1.1 Survey Administrator

The responsibilities of the Survey Administrator include, but not limited to:

a. Implementing all decisions by the TLQC on SFTL arrangements;
b. scheduling the survey administration;
c. co-ordinating with Faculties/ departments and units (e.g., Information Technology Services) on the SFTL administration;
d. maintaining the online survey system for data collection and reporting;
e. providing support to Faculties/ departments and students on requests during the survey administration (e.g., enquiries, response rate progress); and
f. providing paper forms and performing data entry for paper forms, if any.

4.1.2 Course-offering Department

Department heads must nominate a coordinator from the department to co-operate the SFTL with the Survey Administrator. There should be only one designated coordinator for each department, plus departmental administrative/ clerical assistance for the collection and dispatch of forms between a department and the Survey Administrator. This coordinator will work with the Survey Administrator on:

a. Ensuring that the course information is all correctly input to the SIS, including names and staff ID for all teachers, tutors and demonstrators (details in section 4.2.2);
b. scheduling any face-to-face sessions for survey administration (details in section 4.2.3);
c. monitoring of the response rate progress;
d. designing departmental-specific questions (if any); and
e. co-ordinating with the Survey Administrator on logistics arrangement if paper forms are required.

4.1.3 Teachers

Teacher should inform their students in advance the date of feedback collection 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.

The SFTL questionnaire must NOT be administered by the course teacher, but Faculty/ department staff. The teacher should explain the objectives of the SFTL and then leave the room leaving it to Faculty/ department staff to oversee. In a feedback collection session, teachers should facilitate the process by:

a. First explaining the objective of the feedback to the students;
b. reassuring students of anonymity;
c. telling them how much time they will have to complete the form;
d. (for paper forms only) explaining how they should fill in the course code, teacher identity, and student group information on the front page of the questionnaire (details in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3); and
e. getting them to complete the form immediately.

4.2 Administration Procedures

4.2.1 Schedule

The SFTL is usually administered twice a year on semester basis. The SFTL administration window is opened for four weeks before the main assessment period. Each department will receive a course list four weeks before the start of the SFTL administration for verification. The list includes information exported from the SIS system on undergraduate, taught postgraduate, and research postgraduate courses. Besides semester courses, departments may request individual schedules for non-semester courses; Survey Administrator must be notified two weeks before administration start date.

Results are released after the examination are confirmed. For non-semester courses after the SFTL administration period in the second Semester, the results will be merged into the first Semester of the following academic year.

If paper forms are needed, department must inform the Survey Administrator at least six 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.

4.2.2 Course information in the SIS

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 analysis 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.

4.2.3 Data collection

Feedback collection, 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.

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 feedback 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 feedback will be saved anonymously, without any identification. There are instructions, an FAQ link and a link for you to report any missing courses at the weblink."

5) Reporting

Despite the important contribution of the coordinator to this whole process, the results of the SFTL are treated as confidential and the reports are uploaded only to the online systems, including the APA, and sent to respective heads of departments. As for teacher reports, suppose there are four teachers sharing the teaching of the TLEM1234 course, and these teacher's identifiers are 01, 02, 03 and 04, then there will be four teacher reports with the code TLEM123401, TLEM123402, TLEM123403, and TLEM123404. There will also be an overall department summary report for the course TLEM1234 to indicate how the four teachers have performed as a group on this course.

The SFTL data can be used as a mean of summative and formative assessment. Summative assessment occurs usually at the end of the teaching of a course and are used to calculate a final assessment. Formative assessment, with an emphasis on open-ended qualitative comments and administered while a course is being taught, is generally considered to yield rich data and is suitable for the purpose of continuous improvement of teaching.

5.1 Reports disseminations

The SFTL results on course and teaching are disseminated by the Survey Administrator as set out in Table 1. In addition to the items listed in Table 1, as set out in the Senate Policy, Faculties and departments should share the SFTL results with students by disseminating and publishing course feedback 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.

Table 1: Summary of dissemination of SFTL results by Survey Administrator

	Accessibility	Channel[*]	Purpose
Part I: Course			
Overall course effectiveness	Students	SIS	Summative
	FTQC and Faculty Boards	Department Coordinators	
	TLQC	Survey Administrator	
Items on specific aspects of the course	Individual teachers	Online report system/ APA	Formative/ Summative
	PRD Reviewer(s)	APA	
	FTQC and Faculty Boards	Department Coordinators	
	TLQC	Survey Administrator	
Items on English as the Medium of Instruction	FTQC and Faculty Boards	Department Coordinators	Formative/ Summative
	TLQC	Survey Administrator	
Open-ended comments	Course teachers	Online report system	Formative
	Department Head/ Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)	Via Department co-ordinators	
Part II: Teacher/ Tutor/ Demonstrator			
Overall teacher/ tutor/ demonstrator effectiveness	Individual teacher	Online report system/ APA	Summative
	PRD reviewer(s)	APA	
	Department Head/ Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)	Department Coordinators	
	FTLQC and Faculty Boards	Department Coordinators	
	TLQC	Survey Administrator	
Items on specific aspects of teaching	Individual teacher	Online report system/ APA	Formative/ Summative
	PRD reviewer(s)	APA	
	Department Head/ Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)	Department Coordinators	
	FTLQC and Faculty Boards	Department Coordinators	
	TLQC	Survey Administrator	
Open-ended comments	Individual teacher	Online report system/ APA	Formative
	Department Head/ Dean (in case of unitary Faculty)	Department Coordinators	

[*]SIS = Student Information System; APA = Academic Portfolio of Achievement

The standard course report to the heads of departments presents the number of responses for each item, the item response percentages, the mean score, the standard deviation of the score, and the standard error of 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, overall summary of all the course reports and the teacher reports for each semester within a department are provided to the respective departments.

5.2 Caution on sample size

Reports are automatically provided as long as the return figure was greater than one. However, results of the reports based on small returns should be interpreted with caution.

5.3 Instructions in reading reports

The following example will be used to demonstrate how readers could interpret the mean, the standard deviation, and the standard error presented on the standard reports.

Strongly disagree (0)	Disagree (25)	Neutral (50)	Agree (75)	Strongly agree (100)	Count	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Error
0%	10%	32%	49%	9%	381	64.2	19.6	1.0

According to the above report, 381 students responded to this question (the count), 9% of these were strongly positive towards the statement and rated 100 marks, 49% agreed and rated 75 marks, etc. The average (mean) mark was therefore 64.2, the SD (standard deviation) was 19.6 and the SE (standard error) was 1.00.

5.3.1 Understanding and interpreting mean

The typical score is the mean, i.e., the arithmetic average. Consider the following example, when measuring the average score to one question, there are seven anonymous student responses A to F. The "central tendency" of the score could be revisited by calculating the mean of the data: $(50+75+75+100+50+0+75)/7 = 60.7$

Respondent	Score
Student A	50
Student B	75
Student C	75
Student D	100
Student E	50
Student F	0
Student G	75
Mean	60.7

5.3.2 Understanding and interpreting standard deviation (SD)

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. For example, if you want to compare the effectiveness score of two courses below:

	Course A	Course B
Mean	60.7	60.7
SD	15	25

The two courses get the same mean of 60.7 but the SD of Course A (15) is smaller than Course B (25), then the ratings from the respondents of Course A are more consistent than those of Course B, i.e., there is closer agreement within the student respondents regarding Course A's effectiveness.

5.3.3 Understanding and interpreting standard error (SE)

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

6) Enquiry

Enquiries can be directed to the Teaching and Learning Evaluation and Measurement Unit (T&LEMU):
Phone: 3917-4787
Email: sftl@hku.hk
Website: https://tlem.hku.hk/sftl/

Appendix A: The standard SFTL questionnaire

Overall course/ teacher/ tutor/ demonstrator effectiveness

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The course was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes.	○	○	○	○	○
The teacher was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes.	○	○	○	○	○
Tutor name: [Please selete the tutor ▼]	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The tutor was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes.	○	○	○	○	○
Demonstrator name: [Please selete the demonstrator ▼]	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The demonstrator was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes.	○	○	○	○	○

Course-specific questions

The course:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
deepened my understanding of the subject	○	○	○	○	○
encouraged my active participation	○	○	○	○	○
had a manageable workload	○	○	○	○	○
stimulated me to be creative (e.g., new ideas/ concepts/ ways of thinking)	○	○	○	○	○
encouraged me to think critically	○	○	○	○	○
had assessment that helped me to learn	○	○	○	○	○

What did you like about this course?

What could be improved?

Teacher-specific questions

The teacher:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
effectively stimulated my interest	○	○	○	○	○
clearly communicated the subject matter	○	○	○	○	○
provided helpful feedback	○	○	○	○	○

What did you like about this teacher's teaching?

What could be improved?

Tutor-specific questions

The tutor:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
effectively stimulated my interest	○	○	○	○	○
clearly communicated the subject matter	○	○	○	○	○
provided helpful feedback	○	○	○	○	○

What did you like about this tutor's teaching?

What could be improved?

Demonstrator-specific questions

The demonstrator:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
effectively stimulated my interest	○	○	○	○	○
clearly communicated the subject matter	○	○	○	○	○
provided helpful feedback	○	○	○	○	○

What did you like about this demonstrator's teaching?

What could be improved?

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Appendix B: Practicum/ internship/ fieldwork/ capstone/ portfolio-specific SFTL questionnaire

Overall Capstone/Practicum/Internship/Fieldwork effectiveness					
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
The capstone/ practicum/ internship/ fieldwork was effective in helping me achieve the course learning outcomes.	○	○	●	○	○

Capstone/Practicum/Internship/Fieldwork-specific questions					
The capstone/ practicum/ internship/ fieldwork:	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
enhanced my ability to apply my subject knowledge in the real-world	○	○	○	○	○
had a manageable workload	○	○	○	○	○
stimulated me to be creative (e.g., new ideas/ concepts/ ways of thinking)	○	○	○	○	○
encouraged me to think critically	○	○	○	○	○
had assessment that helped me to learn	○	○	○	○	○
had suitable guidance from my supervisor in HKU	○	○	○	○	○
had suitable guidance from my supervisor outside HKU	○	○	○	○	○

What did you like about this capstone/practicum/internship/fieldwork course?

What could be improved?

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