Executive summary: SEI/SSLE committee, Spring 2025

In November 2023, in response to recommendations from prior working groups, Vice Provost Malone charged the SEI Subcommittee of the Council on Academic Affairs to identify a new instrument and/or strategy for gathering student feedback on courses and instructors and present a draft recommendation to Helen Malone and Randy Smith, and then to the Committee on Academic Affairs.

The SEI subcommittee of CAA met regularly from SP2024 through SP2025 to:

- Review existing literature and prior OSU reports,
- Conduct a review of instruments and best practices developed by our peer institutions,
- Seek input from faculty and students
- Meet with representatives of Explorance (the company that provides Blue; the platform used for SEI).

The charge to the committee included the following Guiding Principles:
- Leverage best practices developed and implemented by our peers rather than writing and testing new questions.
- Ensure compatibility of the approach with Blue, the software tool used to administer the SEI.
- Include a project plan for updating language on the Registrar's website as well as the SEI Handbook.
- Develop and share guidance on interpretation of the new tool relative to the current tool and its appropriate use going forward, especially for summative review of faculty.

In early meetings, the committee added these guiding principles for their work:
- Design should minimize bias to the extent possible
- Design should be appropriate for coursework taught in a range of modalities
- Design should maximize useful information for formative and summative evaluation

Data gathering and research by the committee included:
- Review of the research literature on student feedback
- Identification of best practices (including exploring systems in use at peer institutions)
- Survey Ohio State faculty (almost 450 responses)

Overarching decisions made by the committee were:
1. The instrument should focus on elements that students directly observe or that directly impact their experience of learning.
2. Which elements to assess should be informed by existing literature, feedback from the faculty survey, and tools used by peer institutions.
3. The instrument should be renamed to clarify what the tool does and does not do ("Survey of Student Learning Experience" (SSLE) or similar).
4. No questions should address the "overall" quality of the course or instructor, as these questions and scores are most prone to bias and misuse.
5. The value of narrative responses should be increased by use of specific prompts.
6. The instrument should provide the ability to add 2-4 additional questions from a pre-approved question bank.
   a. These questions might address specific course attributes (*e.g.* online, laboratory etc.).
   b. The results from these additional questions should be used for formative feedback only, unless this is not possible in Explorance Blue.
7. There should be a justification process that engages CAA and the SEI subcommittee for units that wish to use additional or alternative instruments.

An initial draft was shared with Faculty Council, with CAA, and with other constituencies. Specific input on the draft was collected from students via focus groups run in Spring 2024. After this input the draft was further refined resulting in The Student Survey of the Learning Experience draft tool (items and student instructions are here). The SSLE was used in all the 14-week GE Bookends in an AU24 pilot and is being used in a larger opt-in pilot (>900 sections across all colleges) this Spring (SP25).

Assessment of the AU24 pilot was done through instructor focus groups and analysis of narrative responses. Instructors in focus groups gave positive feedback, indicating that they appreciate that the questions center on the educational experience and elevate teaching and learning over customer satisfaction. The SSLE also increased the rate of narrative responses (In AU23 only 20% of GE launch students responded to the prompt "Comments" while in the AU24 SSLE pilot 54% responded to the first prompt and 48% responded to the second prompt). Finally text responses to the SSLE prompts were more meaningful. In the AU23 SEI dataset only 35% of responses reflect a specific aspect of the course that was effective, compared to 64% of responses to SSLE prompt 1. In the AU23 SEI dataset only 18% of responses identify a challenge and suggest improvements, compared to 35% of the responses to SSLE prompt 2. Finally, in the AU23 SEI dataset 38% of responses were coded as vague or superficial, while only 7% of the responses to SSLE prompt 1 were vague, and when responses to SSLE prompt 2 were coded as vague they generally were the word "none" in response to a question asking what changes were needed in the future.

The committee is currently
- Overseeing the Spring 2025 pilot, with plans to tweak the final tool in response to our findings or to new legislative requirements
- Working with OAA and OTDI to purchase a machine learning tool to assist with analyses of text responses (ideally MLY, an AI-assisted tool trained by Explorance to summarize qualitative student feedback)
- Developing a bank of approved questions that address specific course attributes
- Developing transition and training plans and policies for units/ committee members/chairs in use of the new tool including best practices for implementation and use in summative review, as well as recommendations for use of student feedback in combination with other assessment tools, including peer evaluation and teaching dossiers.

Current plans are for full implementation in Autumn of 2025

Proposed Survey of Student Learning Experience (SSLE)

Instructions to students

The Survey of Student Learning Experience is now open. Complete yours today!

While completing each course survey, remember that:

- ***It's confidential.*** *Your instructor will not know which students gave which responses. Instructors do not have access to SSLE reports until grades are posted.*
- ***Focus on your own experience.*** *Think about instructor behaviors and course design elements that affected your own learning and experience in the course.*
- ***Try to be unbiased and constructive.*** *Ohio State recognizes that student feedback may be influenced by students' unconscious and unintentional biases. Approach this feedback the same way you would expect your own work to be reviewed.*

Thank you for providing this important feedback!

Seven Standard Items

1. The instructor was available to answer questions and provide help if/when needed (in class, in person, by email, office hours, etc.)

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

2. The instructor provided constructive feedback (during class meetings, in person, on my work, etc.) that helped me to learn.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

3. The instructor used teaching methods (such as class activities, discussions, group work, projects, lecture) in ways that encouraged my learning.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

4. This course design and instruction helped me actively engage in my own learning.

   - o Strongly disagree
   - o Disagree
   - o Neutral
   - o Agree
   - o Strongly agree

5. The instructor demonstrated genuine interest in teaching.

   - o Strongly disagree
   - o Disagree
   - o Neutral
   - o Agree
   - o Strongly agree

6. I felt welcomed in this course (for example, instructor expressed interest in students' well-being, welcomed students' perspectives).

   - o Strongly disagree
   - o Disagree
   - o Neutral
   - o Agree
   - o Strongly agree

7. The instructor created an environment that valued diverse perspectives and experiences.

   - o Strongly disagree
   - o Disagree
   - o Neutral
   - o Agree
   - o Strongly agree

Two open ended items
Instructions to students before open-ended questions

If you have additional information or examples to help explain any of your ratings of the items above, please feel free to provide them in your final comments below.

When providing comments:
   - o ***Focus on your own experience.*** *Think about instructor behaviors and course design elements that affected your own learning and experience in the course.*
   - o ***Be thorough, respectful, and constructive.*** *Comments in the form of insults or based on stereotypes, personal appearance, or personal characteristics are not appropriate.*

1.   What specific aspects of this course were effective in promoting your learning (for example, teaching practices, assignments, class material, class structure)?

2.   What changes, if any, could be made to improve the learning experience for future students (for example teaching practices, assignments, class material, class structure)?