

Executive summary: SEI/SSLE committee, Autumn 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 instructor.

The charge to the committee included Guiding Principles:

- Leverage best practices from 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

The committee met regularly from SP2024 through AU2024 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 including regular presentations to groups representing stakeholders
- Meet with representatives of Explorance (the company that provides Blue; the platform used for SEI).

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 learning experience.
2. The instrument should be renamed to clarify what the tool does and does not do "Survey of the Student Learning Experience"
3. No questions should address the "overall" quality of the course or instructor, as these questions and scores are most prone to bias and misuse.
4. The questions asked should be informed by existing literature, feedback from the faculty survey, and tools used by peer institutions.
5. The value of narrative responses should be increased by use of specific prompts.
6. The instrument should allow addition of 2-4 additional questions from an approved question bank.
 - a. These questions might address specific course attributes (e.g. online, laboratory etc.).
 - b. Units could propose questions that would support their goals
7. There should be a justification process that engages CAA and the SEI subcommittee for units that wish to use additional or alternative instruments.

The 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, and feedback was used to refine the proposed instrument.

SSLE pilots

- The SSLE was piloted in all sections of the 14-week GE Bookends in Autumn 24, and as an opt-in pilot (909 sections across all colleges) in Spring 2025. The pilot was assessed via focus groups with instructors and analysis of open-ended responses
- Instructors preferred the new tool to the SEI
 - Instructions and prompts guide students to think about their learning experiences and provide instructors with specific areas for improvement

- May reduce subjective bias by giving students more guidance (through parenthetical statements and better open-ended prompts)
- Higher open-ended response rates
 - Students who completed the SSLE were much more likely to provide open-ended comments than were students who completed the SEI (31% of students provided comments on the SP25 SEI, while 60% of students completing the SSLE responded to prompt 1 and 57% responded to prompt 2)
- More meaningful open-ended responses
 - The SEI open-ended prompt (“comments”) typically elicited vague and superficial responses, while the SSLE prompts typically elicited responses relevant to the specific question. For example, in response to the SSLE question regarding "specific aspects of the course that were effective in promoting learning," most responses did indeed cite specific aspects of the course.
 - SSLE comments were more likely to include relevant, thoughtful, and concrete details (53% of comments in response to prompt 1, 52% of comments in response to prompt 2) compared to SEI comments (15% of total comments).

Final Instrument ([instructions and questions here](#))

- Minor changes to wording were made based on ongoing input from stakeholders
- Three questions required by the Ohio Department of Higher Education were added to the instrument

Support for use and interpretation

- Increases in open ended response rates may produce data that requires support for interpretation and use
- The committee worked with OAA and ODTI to purchase MLY, a machine-learning tool trained on student feedback to summarize and interpret responses to open-ended questions
 - Allows automated redaction of inappropriate comments
 - Class reports will include tables with high level interpretation of comments (most common topics and most common recommendations)
 - The instructor and TIU head (or designee) will have access to the MLY dashboard and individual comments which will provide data for formative assessment
 - If units plan to use other summaries of comment-level data in P&T reviews this must be done by someone other than the instructor, and must be outlined in their governance documents

Implementation in AU 2025

- All courses/units that formerly used the SEI will begin using the SSLE in AU25 (CAA approval on 09/17/25).
 - Units may require additional methods to collect student feedback as outlined in their governance documents
- Units that have approval to use an alternative tool instead of the SEI may continue in 2025/26, with addition of the ODHE required questions. Alternative instruments will need to be reviewed by the SSLE committee, CAA, and OAA at least every five years
- The committee made (and CAA accepted) recommendations to update course detail reports which are provided each year and used in annual reviews and are included in reappointment/promotion dossiers. Based on these recommendations, course detail reports will:
 - include frequency analysis and mean/median/standard deviation for OSU-specific closed response questions but will not include comparison means to the unit/college/university.
 - include limited high-end analysis of comments from MLY including the most common topics and the most common recommendations found in the student comments
 - provide frequency analysis tables of responses to ODHE-required questions, with no further statistical analysis or comparison to other instructors
 - A mockup of what a report should look like is at the end of this document
- The SSLE committee provided input into the update of the relevant sections of the [OAA Academic Organization, Curriculum and Assessment Handbook](#). The new language is found in [Chapter 2, section](#)

[1.1.4](#) and highlights the importance of using multiple sources of data for evaluation (student feedback, peer assessment, self assessment), along with more explicit recommendations for the appropriate use of student feedback and potential mechanisms to increase response rates.

Ongoing committee work

- The proposed question bank of additional/optional questions is planned for implementation in AU2026. The committee will develop some questions, but units are welcome to submit their own questions for review (closed or open-ended questions)
- Continued work socializing the change and providing suggestions for increased response rates
- Plans for ongoing analysis of new instrument
- Fully implement MLY integration and develop support/best practices for use of dashboards

Our requests to Faculty Council:

- Share this with your constituents!
 - Faculty and students must be aware of and prepared for the change
- Urge all instructors to actively talk about this change with their students during the semester
 - Students may be less likely to complete the survey if it unexpectedly looks different from what they are used to
 - Instructors are encouraged to share the questions with students ahead of the opening date for submission
- Help us share ways to increase response rates
 - Student response rates are increased when they believe the instructor cares about and uses the data: Talk about ways you have changed courses in the past in response to student feedback or ask for feedback about a specific aspect of the course
 - Student response rates can be increased by doing a mid-semester evaluation and being responsive to student concerns (this can be as simple as acknowledging concerns and contextualizing the motivation for your class design)
 - Provide 10-15 minutes during a class and encourage students to complete the SSLE on one of their devices (The instructor should leave the room during this time)

Survey of the Student Learning Experience (SSLE)

The Survey of the 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!

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

5. The instructor demonstrated genuine interest in teaching.

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

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

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

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

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

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:

- ☐ **Focus on your own experience.** Think about instructor behaviors and course design elements that affected your own learning and experience in the course.
- ☐ **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 suggestions (if any) do you have to improve this course for future students (for example teaching practices, assignments, class material, class structure)?

The following questions are state-wide questions, asked at all public universities in the State of Ohio.

- 1) Does the faculty member create a classroom atmosphere free of political, racial, gender, and religious bias?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 2) Are students encouraged to discuss varying opinions and viewpoints in class?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not applicable

3) On a scale of 1-10, how effective are the teaching methods of this faculty member?

1. Not effective at all
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. Extremely effective

