

 DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY <i>Inspiring Minds</i> Student Ratings of Instruction Policy	<i>Policy Sponsor:</i> Senate	<i>Approval Date:</i> June 13, 2011
	<i>Responsible Unit:</i> Centre for Learning and Teaching	<i>Revisions:</i> Senate: April 11, 2016; June 12, 2017 Board of Governors: June 22, 2016; June 27, 2017

A. Background & Purpose

The Student Ratings of Instruction is part of a broad strategy for continuous improvement in learning and teaching at Dalhousie University. It is intended to be only one source of evidence that contributes to a broader, holistic evaluation of faculty and instructors across campus. It recognizes that student feedback on instruction is an essential part of this strategy, and aims to engage students and instructors in the process of continuous improvement of students' educational experience. The Student Ratings of Instruction is undertaken through a systematic electronic process of evaluation for all credit courses. Aggregate summary data provided from Student Ratings of Instruction provides accountability to the University and to students.

SRI data will be used only for the purposes set out in this policy. As a general principle, students completing the questionnaires must be informed of the SRI's intended uses when offering their responses; as such, SRI data will only be used to those ends specified in the instrument and in the instructions, the text of which will reflect the uses described in this policy. Extending the uses of SRI data to other institutional ends not explicitly named in the SRI Policy and on the instrument must be approved by Senate.

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the parameters within which the Student Ratings of Instruction is implemented and how the resulting data can be used.

B. Application

This Policy applies to all credit-bearing courses at the University.

C. Definitions

1. In this Policy:
 - a. "Academic Unit" means the Department, School, or in Faculties without Departments or Schools, the Faculty;
 - b. "Academic Unit Head" means the Department Head, Department Chair, School Director or,

- for Faculties without Departments or Schools, the Dean;
- c. “Anomalous courses” means those courses where the SRI system is unable to manage the complexity of the course structure, such as courses led by different Instructors within a single Course Reference Number (CRN);
 - d. “Course” means a structured series of classes or a sustained period of instruction (traditional (face-to-face), online or blended) that is offered for credit in a particular term, as part of an undergraduate or graduate program at Dalhousie University
 - e. Course Verification Process is the process by which the course number and assigned instructor is confirmed.
 - f. “Instructor” means any faculty member (including part-time and sessional), instructor, or teaching assistant who takes on substantial responsibility for teaching a course, as determined by the Academic Unit Head;
 - g. Learning Management System (LMS) refers to the software used for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of electronic educational materials.
 - h. Question Personalization Process is the process by which customized questions can be added to the SRI by either the instructor (Section C) or the Academic Unit (Section B).
 - i. “Senior Administrator” means a person who holds a senior administrative position as defined by the Senior Administrative Appointments Policy;
 - j. “SRI Administrator” means the individual responsible for coordinating the SRI process, as described more fully in section E.2;
 - k. “SRI Data Custodian”¹ is the person responsible for custody of institutional data and is currently the Executive Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching.
 - l. “SRI Liaison” means the person within each Academic Unit assigned to perform course verification as more fully described in section E.3;
 - m. “SRI Portal” means the secure on-line portal through which the SRI Administrator provides access to the SRI;
 - n. “Student” means an individual registered in one or more credit courses at the University;
 - o. “Student Ratings of Instruction” or “SRI” means the official institutional process of systematic collection of student feedback on the quality of learning and teaching in credit courses including a set of common questions used across all teaching units as more fully described in this Policy and Procedures.

¹ The definition of these positions are currently under revision.

D. Policy

1. Student Ratings of Instruction shall be conducted in all credit courses at the University in accordance with this Policy, the Procedures and any protocols or guidelines established by the SRI Administrator.
2. Deans and Academic Unit Heads will strive to ensure that the SRI process is administered consistently within their unit. They are also expected to counsel and mentor Instructors about their participation in the SRI process, especially in their early years of teaching or those without tenure, including identifying support and access to teaching development resources.
3. Instructors are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the SRI process and for ensuring that student feedback mechanisms, of which the SRI is one, are built into their courses. Instructors have a responsibility to convey to students the importance of their participation in the SRI process.
4. Students are expected to provide constructive and honest feedback that is intended to improve the quality of instruction of an Instructor in future years. SRI responses are subject to the university's policies on using the computing and communication infrastructure. As such, comments determined unacceptable as described by the Acceptable Use Policy, along with the rest of that evaluation's data, will be deleted and the student will be subject to consequences according to that Policy.
5. All Instructors shall have the opportunity to make their summary SRI results available to students (opt-in).
6. Except as set out in section D.4, the identities of students providing feedback in the SRI process shall be kept confidential.
7. Aggregate data from SRI results shall be used solely for the purposes outlined in this section, when other uses are contemplated, Senate approval is required. Results can be used:
 - a. To provide Instructors with student feedback on their teaching;
 - b. To provide students with data about student perceptions of the quality of teaching (where the Instructor has agreed to do so);
 - c. To provide Instructors, Academic Units, Faculties and the University with data to support the nomination of Instructors for teaching awards and recognition;
 - d. To provide data on instruction for use in promotion, tenure, and other evaluation processes;
 - e. To provide Academic Units, Faculties and the University with data to support evaluation of programs, academic units and the institution.

8. Instructions for completing the SRI must include a clear statement on the purposes for which the SRI results may be used, which must be consistent with section D.7, and in accordance with Senate principles.
9. Dissemination of SRI results shall be made in accordance with the Procedures, and in a manner that is consistent with applicable collective agreements and the university's privacy obligations.
10. Any data provided to students is for the use of such students only, and is not to be shared or distributed in any manner to other individuals or organizations. Unauthorized distribution may lead to disciplinary action under approved Senate policies.
11. To ensure the effectiveness of the SRI process, there shall be ongoing education of the university community concerning the purpose of the SRI, the Procedures, the interpretation and dissemination of the SRI results, and the place of the SRI in the broader strategy to support the improvement of learning and teaching at the University.

E. Administrative Structure

1. Authority: This Policy falls under the authority of Senate. The Centre for Learning and Teaching is responsible for administering the SRI program, including this Policy and Procedures.
2. SRI Administrator. The Executive Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching or designate shall be the SRI Administrator who:
 - a. is the technical administrator of the software used for the SRI process;
 - b. is responsible for coordinating the SRI process;
 - c. is responsible for developing and communicating protocols and guidelines to support the Procedures; and
 - d. is responsible for developing the education strategy described in section D.11, including ensuring the accuracy of information pages on the University website for students, Instructors and administrators explaining the implementation and interpretation of SRI results.
3. SRI Liaison. Each Academic Unit Head shall appoint an individual within the academic unit to be the SRI Liaison who is responsible for verifying course and Instructor information in accordance with the Procedures.
4. Data Storage. The Executive Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching shall appoint an SRI Data Custodian and SRI Data Stewards who will be responsible for the custody, storage and access to the SRI data which will be housed on a secure server with appropriate back-up. Raw SRI data will be kept on the server for ten years and then destroyed. Academic Unit Heads who choose to store the SRI reports must ensure that they are stored securely and that any access to such reports is compliant with this Policy and Procedures.
5. Reporting by Centre for Learning and Teaching. The Executive Director for the Centre for Learning and Teaching shall report annually to the Provost and Vice-President Academic and to Senate on the following metrics:

- a. Number of courses where the SRI instrument is used;
 - b. Percentage of students responding;
 - c. Number of courses that have SRI results available to students;
 - d. Aggregated summary statistics for all courses; and
 - e. Emerging issues.
6. Reporting by Provost. The Provost and Vice-President Academic shall report annually to Senate on teaching quality, effectiveness and evaluation, and on the extent to which the University is meeting its learning and teaching goals.
 7. Review: This Policy and Procedures shall be reviewed a minimum of every five years to ensure that the intended outcome of the policy – to contribute to continual improvement of learning and teaching at the University – is being met. Deans and Academic Unit Heads will advise the SRI Administrator or the Provost, as appropriate, in relation to any emerging issues or suggested refinements to the instrument to improve content or processes.

F. Procedures

F.1 1 Procedures -- Structure of the SRI

The SRI will have four sections:

Section A contains a set of common questions that are asked across all courses for which SRI data are collected. The questions, presented as a series of statements to which the students are asked the degree to which they agree or disagree using a Likert scale, are listed below. They probe the student's perceptions of the effectiveness of the Instructor's teaching.

STIMULATION OF LEARNING: The Instructor conducted the class/clinical in such a way that I was stimulated to learn.

ORGANIZATION: The instructor organized the class/ clinical well.

COMMUNICATION: The instructor communicated clearly during the class/clinical.

ENTHUSIASM: The instructor showed enthusiasm for the subject matter of the class/clinical.

FAIRNESS: The instructor used fair evaluation methods to determine grades.

FEEDBACK: The instructor provided constructive feedback (considering the class/clinical size).

CONCERN FOR LEARNING: The instructor showed genuine concern for my learning.

OVERALL TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS: Overall, the instructor was an effective teacher.

Section B contains up to five optional customized program wide quantitative questions developed by the offering academic unit for purposes of program improvement, plus one optional qualitative question;

Section C contains up to five optional quantitative questions submitted by the instructor for purposes of receiving formative feedback, with results provided only to the instructor, plus one optional qualitative question; and,

Section D collects qualitative textual data in the form of student comments. This section provides students the opportunity to respond to three open-ended questions. Only comments where students explicitly give permission may be used for promotion and tenure purposes, and other human resources decisions. The instructor(s) is the only person to receive comments where students do not give permission for the comments to be used in faculty evaluation processes. It is the instructor's choice whether to use unsigned comments in the teaching dossier.

F.2.2 Procedures – Collection of SRI Data

1. **Course Verification.** Each academic term, the SRI Administrator shall obtain institutional data regarding student course registration information, courses, cross-listed courses and course Instructors, shall divide this information by academic unit, and shall send the information to the relevant SRI Liaison. The SRI Liaison shall verify the accuracy of the information to the SRI Administrator, making changes as required, within the deadline established by the SRI Administrator. For the Spring and Summer term, and in the case of anomalous courses, the SRI Liaison shall also confirm the date at which each course will be at 80% completion (with a minimum of two days).
2. **Instructor Opt-In.** Each academic term, the SRI Administrator shall provide each Instructor a link to the SRI portal for the Instructor to provide consent, on a course by course basis, to the aggregate results of Section A being shared with students in accordance with these Procedures.
3. **Question Personalization.** The SRI Administrator shall send each Instructor, Academic Unit Head and SRI Liaison a link to the SRI portal to permit specific questions to be added to sections B and C of the SRI. This link will be available for 2 weeks before the earliest possible opening of the student evaluations for any specific course. Academic Unit Heads shall encourage Instructors to use Section B.
4. **Evaluation Period – Fall and Winter terms.** Evaluations for all courses offered in the Fall and Winter terms, except anomalous courses, shall open three weeks before the first day of regularly scheduled final exams. The evaluation period shall close on 11:59 p.m. on the day prior to the first day of regularly scheduled final exams.
5. **Evaluation Period – Spring and Summer terms and anomalous courses.** Evaluations for all courses offered in the Spring and Summer term and for all anomalous courses shall open when the course is at 80% completion (with a minimum of two days). The evaluation period shall close at 11:59 p.m. on the final day of such courses, even for courses when the final exam is conducted on the final day.
6. **Completion of SRI.** Instructors may use class time to allow the students to complete the SRI; in such event they are encouraged to advise the student's at least one week in advance to ensure that students have access to an electronic device. SRI forms require the student to submit their responses before they are considered. They may save their responses during the process, allowing them to remain editable by students until the close of the evaluation period. The student must submit the evaluation by pressing the submit button for the data to be considered. Once submitted

the forms will not be deleted nor reopened for any reason. Students should refrain from including any identifying information in section D responses. Students must submit the evaluation by pressing the submit button for the data to be considered.

7. Monitoring response rates. During the evaluation period, Instructors may access the ongoing response rates for each of their courses to enable them to monitor response rates so that they can remind students to complete the SRI if necessary.

F.3 Procedures – Dissemination of SRI Results

1. Sorting the results. Following completion of the SRI evaluation process, the SRI Administrator shall:
 - a. Identify which courses the Instructors have provided consent to make summary data available to students (this is done automatically by the SRI program);
 - b. Separate out the Section D comments into two categories – those for which the student has given permission to have the comments used as part of the tenure and promotion process and those for which the student has not given such permission.
2. Release of SRI results. The SRI Administrator shall release the SRI results ten working days from the initial deadline established by the Registrar for grade submission for each term, as follows:
 - a. To the Instructors: all sections of the SRI for their courses
 - b. To the Academic Unit Head where the course was taught: Sections A and B, and Section D where the student has consented to their use in Instructor evaluation processes
 - c. To students: Section A where the Instructor has provided consent. Through the instructor opt-in process the results of the Section A shall be made available to students through a secure on-line portal. No results will be released without the consent of the instructor. Instructors will be asked to give consent on a course-by-course basis every semester.
 - d. To Deans: a summary of Section A results for each Instructor in their Faculty
3. Method of sharing results. Results shall be made available under section 2 by means of the SRI portal. Email notification of their availability shall be provided to dal.ca email accounts of Instructors and to the general administrative email accounts for Academic Unit Heads.
4. Teaching Dossiers. Aggregate results from Section A and Section D where the students have consented to their use in Instructor evaluation processes shall be included in tenure and promotion considerations. Instructors may also include results from any other Sections of the SRI in their teaching dossiers.
5. Other Requests for SRI Reports. The SRI Administrator shall provide other SRI reports only as follows:

- a. To Instructors who have left the University: through the Instructor's former Academic Unit
 - b. To Academic Unit Heads or Deans: aggregate results relating to their Academic Unit or Instructors within their Academic Unit for purposes consistent with Section D.7, upon reasonable notice (minimum two weeks, depending upon the complexity of the request);
 - c. To other Senior Administrators: aggregate results of Section A and D at the level of Academic Unit, Faculty or the university for purposes consistent with Section D.7, upon reasonable notice (minimum two weeks, depending upon the complexity of the request);
6. Access to results where courses are outside home Faculty. Where Instructors teach courses in an Academic Unit outside their home Faculty, the Academic Unit Head will provide summary results of Section B and D for those courses to the Dean of the home Faculty when requested.