![Dalhousie University - Inspiring Minds] **Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy**	*Policy Sponsor:* Senate	*Approval Date:* June 13, 2011
	Responsible Unit: Centre for Learning and Teaching	*Revisions:* Senate: April 11, 2016; June 12, 2017; April 26, 2021; October 23, 2023 Board of Governors: June 22, 2016; June 27, 2017, June 22, 2021; November 17, 2023

A. Background & Purpose

The Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy is intended to guide the process at Dalhousie for the systematic gathering of student feedback on their learning experiences within credit courses taken as Dalhousie students through the Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ). The policy is grounded in three principles:

1. That the student voice is important to understanding (and evaluating) their learning experiences on campus;
2. That the student voice should never be the sole source of evidence about the effectiveness of teaching and learning; and
3. That teaching and learning is a complex social activity that must be understood contextually (with the full understanding of how those various contexts influence the evaluation of teaching and learning).

The SLEQ is part of a broad strategy for continuous improvement in learning and teaching at Dalhousie University, as articulated in the Dalhousie Framework for the Holistic Evaluation of Teaching. The primary purpose for gathering student feedback is to support the development of Dalhousie instructors with respect to effective teaching and learning practices. The SLEQ process is also intended to provide 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' learning experiences. The Student Learning Experience Questionnaire is undertaken through a systematic electronic process of evaluation for all credit courses. Aggregate summary data provided from SLEQ provides accountability to the University and to students on the quality of teaching and learning at Dalhousie.

SLEQ 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 SLEQ's intended uses when offering their responses; as such, SLEQ 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 SLEQ data to other institutional ends not explicitly named in the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy and on the instrument must be approved by Senate.

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

B. <u>Application</u>

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

C. <u>Definitions</u>

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 Program Head (for programs that are independently responsible for the assignment of teaching duties), Department Head, Department Chair, School Director or, for Faculties without Departments or Schools, the Dean (or their approved designates);

c. "Anomalous courses" means those courses where the SLEQ process is not appropriate, or courses where the SLEQ system is technically unable to accommodate the requirements;

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. "Data Verification Process" is the process by which the academic units verify whether a course should be evaluated (as per the terms of this policy), and confirms that the assigned instructor(s) and course start and end dates are accurate.

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 SLEQ by both the instructor (Section C) and 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. "SLEQ Administrator" means the individual responsible for coordinating the SLEQ process, as described more fully in section E.2;

k. "SLEQ Data Custodian" is the person responsible for custody of institutional data and is currently the Executive Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

l. "SLEQ Liaison" means the person within each Academic Unit assigned to perform course verification as more fully described in section E.3;

m. "SLEQ Portal" means the secure on-line portal through which the SLEQ Administrator providesaccess to the SLEQ;

n.   "Student" means an individual registered in one or more credit courses at the University;

o.   "Student Learning Experience Questionnaire" or "SLEQ" 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.

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D. Policy

1. Student Learning Experience Questionnaire 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 SLEQ Administrator.

2. Deans and Academic Unit Heads will strive to ensure that the SLEQ process is administered consistently within their unit. They are also expected to counsel and mentor Instructors about their participation in the SLEQ 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 SLEQ process and for ensuring that student feedback mechanisms, of which the SLEQ is one, are built into their courses. Instructors have a responsibility to convey to students the importance of their participation in the SLEQ 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. SLEQ responses are subject to the university's policies on harassment, discrimination, sexualized violence, the student code of conduct and/or the use of computing and communication infrastructure. The feedback provided by students is confidential, and all reporting to instructors and academic leaders will be anonymized except as indicated in this policy.

5. The quantitative results of the core instrument on the SLEQ will be made available to all students. Every instructor shall have the opportunity to opt out of this process on a course by course basis whether or not they will make their results available to students (opt-out).

6. Except as set out in section F3.4 and F3.5, the identities of students providing feedback in the SLEQ process shall be kept confidential.

7. Aggregate data from SLEQ 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 (unless an instructor has opted out or the course does not meet the response threshold for inclusion – see F.3.2.c below);

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 Instructors, Academic Units, Faculties and the University with data to support the evaluation of courses, programs, academic units and the institution.

8. Instructions for completing the SLEQ must include a clear statement on the purposes for which the SLEQ results may be used, which must be consistent with section D.7, and in accordance with Senate principles.

9. Dissemination of SLEQ 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 SLEQ process, there shall be ongoing education of the university community concerning the purpose of the SLEQ, the Procedures, the interpretation and dissemination of the SLEQ results, and the place of the SLEQ 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 SLEQ program, including this Policy and Procedures.

2. SLEQ Administrator. The Executive Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching or designate shall be the SLEQ Administrator who:

   a. is the technical administrator of the software used for the SLEQ process;
   b. is responsible for coordinating the SLEQ 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 SLEQ results.

3. SLEQ Liaison. Each Academic Unit Head shall appoint an individual within the academic unit to be the SLEQ Liaison who is responsible for verifying course and Instructor information in

accordance with the Procedures, including cross-listed courses with other academic units.

4. <u>Data Storage.</u> The Executive Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching shall be the SLEQ Data Custodian, and shall be responsible for the custody, storage and access to the SLEQ data which will be housed on a secure server with appropriate back-up. Academic Unit Heads who choose to store the SLEQ reports locally must ensure that they are stored securely and that any access to such reports is compliant with this Policy and Procedures.

5. <u>Reporting by Centre for Learning and Teaching.</u> The Executive Director for the Centre for Learning and Teaching shall report annually to the Provost and Vice-President Academic and to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee on the following metrics:
   a. Number of courses where the SLEQ instrument is used;
   b. Percentage of students responding;
   c. The proportion of courses achieving an acceptable response rate for statistical reliability;
   d. Number of courses that have SLEQ results available to students;
   e. Aggregated summary statistics for all courses; and
   f. Emerging issues.

6. <u>Reporting by Provost</u>. 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. <u>Review:</u> 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 SLEQ Administrator or the Provost, as appropriate, in relation to any emerging issues or suggested refinements to the instrument to improve content or processes.

F. <u>Procedures</u>

F.1 <u>Procedures -- Structure of the SLEQ</u>

The SLEQ will have five sections:

Section A contains a set of common questions that are asked across all courses for which SLEQ 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 5-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, and 5 – strongly agree) with a Not Applicable option, 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.

In addition, each Instructor shall receive a composite mean of their scores across the 7 dimensions of teaching explored in Section A.

Section B contains up to six optional customized course level questions chosen by the offering academic unit for purposes of program or course improvement, with the results being provided to both the Instructor and the academic unit head;

Section C contains up to six optional customized questions chosen by the instructor for purposes of receiving formative feedback for their course, with results provided only to the Instructor; and,

Section D collects qualitative textual data in the form of student comments. This section provides students the opportunity to respond to two open-ended questions.

The following questions will be asked for each course:

A. What are one or more specific things about the course design or instruction that especially helped to support your learning?
B. What are one or more specific things about the course design or instruction that could be improved to better support your learning?

All students will be instructed that these comments will be submitted for promotion and tenure purposes, and other human resources decisions, and provided a link to the Guidelines to Providing Constructive Feedback available at: https://www.dal.ca/SLEQ.

Section E contains a set of common questions referred to as the Student Ratings of Course Content (SRCC) that are asked across all courses for which SLEQ data are collected confidentially with the aim of identifying the levels of content that address equity and inclusion in Dalhousie course curriculums for educational and nonpunitive purposes. The SRCC responses will be visible solely to course instructors. The questions presented as a series of statements about course content to which the students are asked the degree to which they agree or disagree using a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, and 5 – strongly agree) with a No Answer (N/A) option, are listed below.

1. Course materials and instructional resources reflected a variety of diverse perspectives on the course topic(s).

2. The instructor did not include materials that contained offensive or discriminatory ideas except to educate students about discrimination, oppression, or other existing perspectives.

These course content questions were created by the Dalhousie Student Union. The purpose of these questions is to give students an opportunity to identify racist, sexist, homophobic, and any other oppressive content[1] in course curricula and literature and share that feedback anonymously with their professors. These questions will also support course instructors in developing innovative curricula to support diversity, developing cross-cultural competencies, and fostering safer spaces by identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in existing course content. Making course content changes will be solely at the discretion of the course instructor.

In addition, the following questions will be asked about course content as part of the SRCC:

A. What are one or more specific things about the course content that helped create an inclusive learning environment?
B. What are one or more specific things about the course content that could be improved to create a more inclusive learning environment?

All students will be instructed that the SRCC comments will not be used for tenure and promotion. Deans, Department Heads, and Chairs of Faculty Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) committees will receive anonymized aggregate data for quantitative questions 1-3 for their academic unit. Open-ended questions will not be shared with anyone other than the course instructor. The intention is that recipients of the data can use it to inform faculty and departmental EDI initiatives, education, and conversations.

F.2 Procedures – Collection of SLEQ Data

1. Data Verification Process. Each academic term, the SLEQ 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 SCF Liaison. The SLEQ Liaison shall verify the accuracy of the information to the SLEQ Administrator, making changes as required, within the deadline established by the SLEQ Administrator. The SLEQ Liaison may select anomalous courses in their academic unit for which SCFs will not be conducted. In the case of cross-listed courses, the liaisons in each department shall be responsible for verifying and publishing all cross-listed courses that are included in their list, even if that course is also cross-listed in another academic unit. For all courses, the SLEQ Liaison shall also confirm the start and end dates for the course so that the system can calculate the evaluation timing, which is administered after 80% of the course is completed (with a minimum evaluation window of two days and maximum of two weeks). SLEQ liaisons shall also verify and add missing instructors to each course before publishing

2. Instructor Opt-Out. Each academic term, the SLEQ Administrator shall ask each Instructor whether or not they would like to opt-out, on a course-by-course basis, to the aggregate results of Section A being shared with students in accordance with these Procedures.

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[1] Oppressive Content: Material that causes discomfort, harm, and targets designated groups without the intention of educating the audience about racial discrimination, sexism, history, prejudice, homophobia, ableism, or social and cultural contexts.

3. Question Personalization. The SLEQ Administrator shall send each Instructor, Academic Unit Head and SLEQ Liaison a link to the SLEQ portal to permit specific questions to be added to sections B and C of the SLEQ. This link will be available for between 1 and 2 weeks before the earliest possible opening of the student evaluations for any specific course, depending on the length of the course and the proposed timing of the evaluations. Academic Unit Heads shall encourage Instructors to use Section B.

4. Evaluation Period. Evaluations for all courses offered shall open when the course is at 80% completion (with a minimum of two days and a maximum of two weeks). The evaluation period shall close on 11:59 p.m. on the day prior to the first day of regularly scheduled final exams, or on the day after the course ends if the course is offered during the Spring and Summer terms, or ends outside of the regular semester dates in the Fall and Winter terms and where there is no final exam during the exam period.

5. Completion of SLEQ. Instructors are encouraged to use class time to allow the students to complete the SLEQ; in such event, Instructors should advise the students at least one week in advance to ensure that students have access to an electronic device in class to use for the evaluation process. SLEQ forms require the student to submit their responses before they are considered. Their responses remain editable by students until the close of the evaluation period. Once the evaluation period ends for any course closes, the forms will not be deleted nor reopened for any reason, unless a comment isdeemed to constitute discrimination or harassment (see F 3.4 below). Students should refrain from including any identifying information in section D and E responses. Students must submit the evaluation by pressing the submit button for the data to be considered.

6. 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 encourage students to complete the SLEQ if necessary.

F.3 Procedures – Dissemination of SLEQ Results

1. Sorting the results. Following completion of the SLEQ evaluation process, the SLEQ Administrator shall Identify which courses the Instructors have provided consent to make summary data available to students.
2. Release of SLEQ results. The SLEQ Administrator shall release the SLEQ results no sooner than ten working days after the deadline established by the Registrar for grade submission for each term, as follows:

    a. To the Instructors: all sections of the SLEQ for their courses. SRCC results from Section E will be sent to instructors separately from the rest of the SLEQ results.

    b. To the Academic Unit Head where the course was taught: Sections A, B, and D

    c. To students: Section A, except where the Instructor has opted out of sharing the results or where the response rate does not meet acceptable reliability - a minimum of 40% response rate, a minimum of ten student responses, and that the software's

reliability assessment determines is sufficiently reliable. Section A results shall be made available only to currently registered Dalhousie students through a secure on-line portal.

   d.   To Deans: a summary of Section A results for each Instructor in their Faculty

3. <u>Release of SRCC results</u>. The SLEQ Administrator shall release the SRCC results (Section E) subsequent to receiving all SLEQ data, including those courses that fall outside of the regular SLEQ schedule, as follows:

   a.   Deans, Department Heads will receive anonymized aggregate data from Section E for quantitative questions 1 and 2 for their Academic Unit.

   b.   Chairs of Faculty Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) committees will receive anonymized aggregate data from Section E for quantitative questions 1 and 2 via the Vice-Provost Equity and Inclusion (VPEI) who will send this data for each respective academic unit (in this case Faculties) to each Chair. The SLEQ Administrator will provide the data to the VPEI.

   c.   The Chair of the Pan University EDI Committee (Curriculum, Teaching & Learning) will receive anonymized aggregate data for Section E for quantitative questions 1 and 2 for all academic units (in this case Faculties). The SLEQ Administrator will provide that data to the Chair.

4. <u>Method of sharing results</u>. Results shall be made available under section 2 by means of the SCF portal. Email notification of their availability shall be provided to dal.ca email accounts of Instructors and to the general administrative email or personal dal.ca email accounts for Academic Unit Heads.

5. <u>Deletion of Discriminatory or Harassing Comments.</u> When the Instructors receive their reports, if they believe that they received a comment in Section D that constitutes either harassment or discrimination, then they may request that it be removed from their report. Once such a request is submitted to the SLEQ Data Custodian, the complaint is then reviewed by a review committee comprising the Vice-Provost Equity and Inclusion, the Vice-Provost Student Affairs, the Associate Vice-President Human Resources, the Chair of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee, and the University General Counsel (or their designates). If the comment is deemed to constitute discrimination or harassment, then the review committee may request that the comment be deleted from the Instructor's data along with all of the other responses submitted by that student across all sections of the SLEQ form completed for that course. In addition, if the comment is deemed to have violated the university's policies on harassment, discrimination, sexualized violence, the student code of conduct and/or the use of computing and communication infrastructure, then the review committee may ask for the identity of the student to be revealed forthe purposes of a complaint under the relevant policy.

6. <u>Alerts.</u> The SLEQ Administrator will use the Text Analytics tool in the SLEQ software to run a report each semester looking for threats of violence or threats of self-harm. These will be reviewed by the SLEQ Data Custodian and, where there are comments of concern, forwarded to either the Vice- Provost Student Affairs or the Director of Campus Security to assess whether or not intervention is required under Dalhousie's crisis intervention processes. If intervention is required, then the identity of the student who completed that evaluation may be identified for purposes of intervention.

7. <u>Teaching Dossiers.</u> Aggregate results from Section A and Section D shall be included in tenure and promotion considerations as per the processes developed by each Faculty under the Holistic Evaluation

of Teaching Policy. Instructors may also include formative feedback from any other Sections of the SLEQ in their teaching dossiers.

8. <u>Other Requests for SLEQ Reports.</u> The SLEQ Administrator shall provide other SLEQ 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 (or their designate): aggregate results of Section A and D 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). Aggregate results of Section E relating to 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, uponreasonable notice (minimum two weeks, depending upon the complexity of the request);

9. <u>Access to results where courses are outside home Faculty.</u> Where Instructors teach courses in an Academic Unit outside their home Faculty, the SLEQ Administrator will provide summary results of Section A and D for those courses to the Academic Unit Head of the home department when requested.