

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

To: Deans of Faculties

Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning

I am writing to inform you of some decisions taken by the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee (TLQC) with regard to the following aspects of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SETL) system:

- (a) posting of course effectiveness ratings on the Student Information System (SIS); and
- (b) online administration of SETL for taught postgraduate (TPg) courses.

Posting of SETL courses effectiveness ratings

2. SETL is one of the key channels for us to collect feedback from students on our courses. It is Senate policy that departments share course evaluation results with students. In my circular of September 9, 2016 (document 61/916), I informed you that the Social Science Research Centre (SSRC) and the SIS Project Office were working to develop an interface to post SETL course effectiveness ratings on SIS for access by students. The system is now ready for use. Staff may access it through this path: SIS Quick Menu → HKU Course Management → Course Effectiveness → Course Effectiveness Profile.

3. The main features of the system are set out below:

- (a) the data are generated by the SSRC, and represent the average course effectiveness rating of a course offered in different semesters, where applicable, in an academic year. Longitudinal information, including the latest three readings for each course, where available, will be posted; (Currently, the SIS database has information on course effectiveness ratings in the three years from 2013-14 to 2015-16; data for the 2012-13 academic year will also be uploaded soon.)
- (b) the course effectiveness rating of a course with five responses or fewer in an academic year will not be shown;
- (c) students (and staff) can access course effectiveness ratings of all courses, irrespective of their Faculty affiliation or major/minor studies;
- (d) course coordinators, through colleagues who have course administrator roles in SIS, may provide comments on each score, with a view to informing students about measures that have been or will be taken to address students' feedback or to explain irregularities that may have affected the rating; and
- (e) the data are downloadable by staff to facilitate further analysis.

A User Guide is available at <[http://intraweb.hku.hk/reserved_2/sis_staff/sis/reference-materials/User_Guide_on_SETL_Course_Effectiveness_Ratings_System_\(Staff\).pdf](http://intraweb.hku.hk/reserved_2/sis_staff/sis/reference-materials/User_Guide_on_SETL_Course_Effectiveness_Ratings_System_(Staff).pdf)>.

The SIS Project Office has also arranged two briefing sessions for administrative staff on May 4 and 5. Further details will be provided by the SIS Project Office in due course. Your Faculty may also approach the SIS Project Office to arrange a briefing for academic staff, for instance through a Faculty Board meeting.

4. While the system is now open for staff access only, it will be opened for student access on August 1, 2017 to facilitate course selection for the 2017-18 academic year. Departments are therefore asked to coordinate and post course coordinators' comments, if any, on SIS before the end of July, 2017. Meanwhile, please note that SETL results for courses offered in the 2016-17 academic year will be available by the end of June 2017, and departments will need to arrange to input the course coordinators' comments on these ratings in July.

5. The operation of this new system will be reviewed by TLQC three years from now.

Online administration of SETL for taught postgraduate courses

6. Online SETL for undergraduate courses has been implemented in phases since the 2012-13 academic year, and SETL for all undergraduate courses are now conducted online. The Teaching and Learning Quality Committee has agreed to extend this practice to all TPg courses with effect from the 2017-18 academic year.

7. To facilitate this arrangement, departments are required to provide on SIS information (course code, course title, student enrolment and teachers) for all TPg courses on offer in Semester 1 of 2017-18 by the end of September 2017.

8. Noting that there are a number of TPg courses that do not follow the normal semester dates, the SIS Project Office will collect from Faculties and Departments separately the first date for formal assessment or examination to enable SSRC to arrange SETL for such courses, with a view to achieving the following:

- (a) SETL should be conducted towards the end of teaching, so that students' evaluation can cover most, if not all, of the course;
- (b) students should be given sufficient time, generally four weeks but a minimum two weeks, to complete SETL; and
- (c) SETL should finish before the start of the formal examination of the course so as to avoid any possible impact arising from examinations.

9. TLQC recognizes that the response rates of online surveys are generally lower than those of paper surveys. To ensure a high response rate so that meaningful interpretation of the scores can be made, the following practice is encouraged:

- (a) to administer the online survey in class, as far as possible;

- (b) to notify students in advance of the administration so that they will attend and have their mobile devices with them; and
- (c) to inform them how past students' evaluation and comments have helped to improve the course, and how theirs would do the same.

10. Past experience has indicated that online SETL has indeed encouraged students to be more open in providing written comments, which are useful for course enhancement. However, we also note that a small number of students have given inappropriate comments, which have raised concerns among staff. TLQC will work with SSRC to include a preamble to SETL questionnaires to inform students of the need to use proper language to convey professional and constructive comments.

11. As the above changes to SETL will affect all teaching staff, I would be grateful if you would disseminate this circular widely within your Faculty. Enquiries may be directed to the following colleagues:

- for technical advice on SIS: Ms. Nicole Tang of the SIS Project Office, who can be contacted on 3921 2413 or email: nicole.tang@hku.hk ;
- for SETL administration and data: Mr. Samson Lee of the SSRC, who can be contacted on 3917 1638 or email: samson@ssrc.hku.hk .



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April 24, 2017

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