University of Hawai'i Course Evaluation System (CES)

Concept Paper

The University supports a course evaluation system for a number of reasons. Students have a desire to provide feedback on their experiences and expect that this input will be used for course improvement. Faculty can use this feedback to inform their teaching practices, to evaluate new teaching methods and techniques, and to demonstrate teaching effectiveness. Program directors may want to collect information about individual courses so that they can more broadly evaluate curriculum and demonstrate the effectiveness of programs. Finally, there is an increasing demand by accreditation bodies for campuses to demonstrate accountability for student success and achievement of student learning outcomes (SLOs). These issues, among others, have precipitated the need to update the current evaluation approach of the ten UH campuses.

The current online system, eCafe, evolved from earlier paper systems developed at Mānoa and other campuses. It is suboptimal for collecting data for program or assessment of learning outcomes because of the degree to which it is customizable by the individual instructor for the specific section being taught. Beyond the three common questions on the form, instructors can choose from more than 400 questions. This variability means that no one set of course evaluations is truly comparable to another, even for the same course taught by the same instructor in a subsequent semester, because a standardized common set of questions does not have to be consistently used.

The inherent problems in eCafe have led to the creation of a new system. The Course Evaluation System (CES) is the product of a system-wide and multidisciplinary committee. The goal of the CES is to provide uniformity at the department, college, and campus level while still allowing for variability in questions related to the faculty and unique to the course or section being taught. The CES will be administered electronically to all ten UH campuses by UH System ITS. Individual campuses can tailor the survey to fit their needs, but the key concept is that the CES questions will be stratified into up to four distinct tiers. For tiers 1-3, the questions on the CES will be common, while individual faculty members will retain the ability they now have to ask section-specific questions if they wish.

1. Campus: broad questions about such things as General Education requirements or Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs),
2. College/School or Department/Program: an optional layer to address specific issues related to the missions/goals of the unit; may be useful for units with professional accreditation,
3. Course/Department/Program: questions related to student and course expectations, quality of content and instruction, accessibility of the professor in office hours, SLOs,
4. Faculty Member: section-specific questions.

The new CES process will provide a transparent, consistent process to contribute to the assessment of program effectiveness and provide comparability across evaluations at the course/college/campus level.

Evaluations will be conducted for all classes and the results for tiers 1-4 will be shared with the faculty member and the department. Only aggregated data from tiers 1-3 will be shared with others outside the unit, including cognizant administrators.

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