

UTK SAIS Task Force 2014-2015

Executive Summary

The 2014-2015 SAIS Task Force was asked by the Provost to revise the SAIS questionnaire into a streamlined, shorter form, and to suggest revisions to the OIT-based delivery system. During fall meetings and in consultation with the Provost, it became apparent that the OIT system was no longer going to be operational. Research into the SAIS also revealed that revisions to the SAIS questionnaires (11 forms and over 100 unique questions) would not result in a useful, valid instrument.

During fall and spring, the committee did extensive literature review and utilized the expertise of faculty and staff on our committee to determine a theoretical basis for a new end-of-course survey. The committee also produced a recommended structure and several other products, including an initial draft of a core set of questions. The committee has begun the process of vetting the structure of the new survey with key groups: the Faculty Senate, the Provost's student advisory group, the Undergraduate Council, and the Teaching Council.

The report includes an overview of the committee process, the committee membership, its products, and recommendations for a second phase.

The following are the committee's recommendations:

1. That the SAIS be retired and that a new survey—included below—be tested, validated, and then implemented by the projected date of fall 2016.
2. That the Provost form a UTK research team, with a faculty project leader well-versed in survey construction and validation, to pilot and validate a new EOC (end-of-course survey), based on the committee's recommended construct and draft¹ included in the report below.
3. That the research team reports back to the Provost and the SAIS committee regarding the results of the validity and reliability study.
4. We also recommend that a software system be purchased and that the SAIS be run on this software until the new EOC is validated. (And it is recommended that the research team communicate regularly while the process is ongoing.)
5. We recommend that policies governing the SAIS/new EOC and use of EOCs be reviewed / amended regularly by an appropriate faculty committee (e.g. through the Faculty Senate). We suggest that a committee representative work with the Faculty Senate committee to help with continuity and passing on information. The policy discussions and decisions will go through the Faculty Affairs Committee and the Teaching & Learning Council, both of whom are represented on the Faculty Senate Executive

¹ Committee members interested in being part of the research team: Drs. Gary Skolitz, Jennifer Richards, and Francine Hollis; Elizabeth Pemberton (OIRA), Beth White and Karen Brinkley (TennTLC); Jennifer Gramling (Online Programs).

Council and report to the Faculty Senate for final approval.² The SAIS committee has many areas of concern with current practices and culture on campus, and asks to meet on this issue with others. Currently, the OIRA staff lack a clear line of communication to confer on policy and practice with faculty and would like to open up communication for future effectiveness.

6. We recommend that OIRA continue to maintain an information webpage (<https://oira.utk.edu/sais/task-force>) on the process of establishing a new EOC and that it gather and communicate feedback from the faculty and students and staff.

Overview

The University community has had an ongoing conversation concerning the end-of-course (EOC) student evaluation survey (currently the SAIS) as it fits with UTK faculty and student culture, practices, and needs. ([Click here for background on SAIS.](#)) In the past two years, several committees have addressed issues of course evaluation. The Task Force on Teaching, formed in 2013-2014, considered the SAIS as part of their charge to examine all aspects of the evaluation of teaching at UTK. An SAIS Task Force, formed in 2013-2014, examined the SAIS in the context of surveys used by research universities around the country and companies providing evaluation software. ([Click here for the report on the Task Force on Teaching Evaluation](#), and the [2013-14 Task Force on SAIS/End of Course Evaluation.](#))

The 2014-2015 SAIS Task Force was formed by the Provost, on recommendation from last year's committee, to revise the SAIS questionnaire and its delivery system. Specifically, this group was asked to recommend a more streamlined and customizable SAIS survey form in response to student and faculty complaints, as well as in response to findings of previous committees. The SAIS committee met in the fall on a bi-weekly basis and addressed the concerns and recommendations of the previous committees, reviewed research on EOCs (end-of-course surveys) and examined the practices of other research institutions. The committee also examined and evaluated all of the individual SAIS questions on the basis of the research on EOC questionnaires. In the spring semester, the committee met weekly, adopting a research-based model for EOCs and creating and revising questions on the basis of the research and the advice of experts in assessment, particularly our faculty experts.

The Chair wishes to extend her thank you to the committee members for their work, which was extensive, and for the commitment that they have shown on behalf of the UT community. The group has worked diligently, serving to help the university move forward to a better system of course evaluation. Much of the work of the committee has been beyond that required of typical committees—the members have worked to create a literature review, assess company software, and to create a model through their own original research. Through the committee's hard work, the process of validating a new survey is already underway (see products listed below).

The committee has produced several products, including:

² Samantha Murphy, a Senate representative, is interested in helping with communication with the Senate.

- Working assumptions regarding the needs of UT for a course evaluation system
- Literature review
- Recommendations for an evaluation software system, including items for an RFP
- Benchmarking on the practices of other research universities
- Close consideration of the forms, and all the questions within, of the SAIS survey (over 100 individual questions which were rated by committee in a Qualtrics survey on the TennTLC account). Results available on request.
- A research-based model construct for a new course evaluation
- A multi-tiered structure for core, unit, and instructor questions
- Options for scales
- Finalization—for review—of a core set of questions
- Draft proposal for a validity and reliability study (several steps already underway, given the work listed above)
- Discussion piece on policies and procedural questions
- Recommendations for, and creation of, an OIRA informational web page
- Recommendations from Dr. Skolitz and the committee regarding the piloting study

See this report and <https://oira.utk.edu/sais/task-force> for documentation.

Members:

Members of the 2014-2015 committee include tenured and tenure-track faculty, lecturers, undergraduate and graduate students as well as administrators and staff involved in overseeing and utilizing teaching evaluations.

Karen Brinkley Etzkorn – Ph.D Student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Will Freeman – Undergraduate Student, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications

Jennifer Gramling – Director of Online Programs, Provost’s Office

Robert J. Hinde – Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Francine Hollis – Assistant Professor, Food Science and Technology

Samantha Murphy – Senior Lecturer, English

Taimi Olsen – Director, Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center (committee chair)

Michael Palenchar – Associate Professor, Advertising and Public Relations

Elizabeth Pemberton – SAIS Coordinator, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

Anton Reece – Executive Director, Student Success Center

Jennifer Richards – Research Assistant Professor, Food Science and Technology

Gary Skolits – Associate Professor, Educational Psychology & Counseling

Beth White—Coordinator, Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center (recorder)

Research

The committee’s work was research-based, not only in the use of a theoretical construct by Marsh (1993, 1997) but also research into “end-of-course” evaluations, such as the recent ebook, *The Effective Evaluation of Teaching*

(<http://teachpsych.org/Resources/Documents/ebooks/evals2012.pdf>). For further references, see the bibliography at the end of the report.

SURVEY INFORMATION:

The committee uses a research construct created by Marsh and Roche that was instrumental in the development of the SEEQ: Student Evaluation of Educational Quality. The committee also reviewed the 33 question SEEQ (Student Evaluation of Educational Quality), which is posted on various sites (for instance,

http://www.usask.ca/vpteaching/documents/seeq/Standardized_SEEQ_Instrument_at_UofS.pdf)

The SEEQ is used worldwide to evaluate teaching on the university level. Because the SEEQ instrument contains the same number of questions as the current SAIS instruments, and there was a distinct charge to streamline the survey, the decision was made by the committee to use Marsh and Roche’s construct to develop a set of core questions to be used at UTK. (*For more on Marsh and Roche’s research and constructs, see The Effective Evaluation of Teaching p. 15* <http://teachpsych.org/Resources/Documents/ebooks/evals2012.pdf>).

Marsh’s 9 Factors in student evaluation of teaching	Construct
Rapport/Enthusiasm for Subject	The perceived ability of the instructor to reach out and connect with students The perceived level of availability of the instructor beyond regularly scheduled meeting times.
Breadth of Coverage	} Course dimensions – The perceived organization and effectiveness of the course as delivered.
Course Delivery	
Organization/Clarity	
Grading(feedback)	
Course Resources	
Group Interaction	The perceived opportunity for student-to-student to practice or actively engage course content.
Learning/Value	The perceived opportunity for student to practice or actively engage course content. The perceived level of value of the course experience
Workload/Difficulty	The perceived level of academic challenge the course presented to the student.

In addition to the core questions, there will also be a small subset of questions for particular types of course, e.g. labs, discussion sessions, online, studio/performance. College and departmental level questions and individual instructor questions will also be an option.

Core questions employing a likert scale, each followed by an open-ended comment box.

Additional (likert scale) questions for online courses, labs, clinical sections, discussion/recitation sessions, studio and/or performance sessions.

Optional college or departmental questions, employing likert scale or comment boxes.

Optional Instructor questions (only reported to the instructor)-- choices include the four SAIS open questions and instructor-designed questions (open or likert scale).

Background information - student level, grade expected, is course in or out of major, etc. (Similar to current SAIS questions.)

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the survey questions, the committee reviewed various vendors who offer the software and infrastructure needed to facilitate student evaluation of instruction. The committee made recommendations to the Provost's Office and OIT about which features are imperative for successful administration of the new system.

SURVEY CONSTRUCT MAP

*suggested changes and places to finish work highlighted below

SAIS Construct Map (survey draft itself follows the map)

Construct	Marsh's 9 Factors	Operational Definitions
<p><i>Enthusiasm/Rapport</i> The perceived ability of the instructor to reach out and connect with students.</p> <p><i>Availability</i> The perceived level of availability of the instructor beyond regularly scheduled</p>	Enthusiasm/Rapport	<p>To what extent did the course provide opportunities for positive interaction with the instructor?</p> <p><i>Different question on rapport? Interaction with instructor?</i></p>

meeting times.		
<p>Course Dimensions</p> <p>The perceived organization and effectiveness of the course as delivered.</p>	Breadth of Coverage	To what extent was the instruction consistent with the stated learning objectives?
	Course Delivery	To what extent did the instructor contribute to your understanding of course content?
	Organization/Clarity	To what extent were the learning objectives clearly stated? To what extent were class sessions organized?
	Grading (Feedback)	To what extent did graded assessments materials, such as examinations, quizzes, projects measure what you learned?
	Course Resources	To what extent did the course materials (readings, homework, laboratories, etc.) enhance your learning in this course?
<p>Group Interaction</p> <p>The perceived opportunity for student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction.</p>	Group Interaction	To what extent did you interact with other students in relation to this course?
<p>Active Learning</p> <p>The perceived opportunity for student to practice or actively engage course content.</p> <p>Value</p> <p>The perceived level of value of the course experience.</p>	Learning/Value	To what extent did the course provide opportunities for you to engage with the subject matter in a meaningful way? To what extent did the course challenge you to learn something new?
<p>Workload/Difficulty</p> <p>The perceived level of academic challenge the course presented to the student.</p>	Workload/Difficulty	To what extent did the course challenge you to learn something new?

SURVEY STRUCTURE:

CORE QUESTIONS (each followed by open comment box)

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

DEPARTMENTAL/COLLEGE QUESTIONS



Reported to department heads and faculty

INSTRUCTOR questions (reported to instructors only)

FINAL COMMENTS ON COURSE for instructors (open box)

INFORMATION QUESTIONS

SURVEY SCALE:

Possible response scales:

Always or almost always	More than 80% of the time
Most of the time	60% to 80% of the time
About half of the time	40% to 60% of the time
Occasionally	20% to 40% of the time
Never or almost never	Less than 20% of the time

SURVEY DRAFT CORE questions (use as a whole set and do not average all together)

A comment box follows each question.

To what extent:

1. Were the learning objectives clearly stated?

Comment:

2. Was the instruction consistent with the stated learning objectives?

Comment:

3. Were the class sessions well organized?
4. Did the course provide opportunities for positive interaction with the instructor?
5. Did the instructor contribute to your understanding of course content?
6. Did the course provide opportunities for you to engage with the subject matter in a meaningful way?
7. Did the course challenge you to learn something new?
8. Did the course provide opportunities for you to interact with other students in relation to this course?
9. Did the course provide opportunities for you to interact with the instructor in relation to this course?
10. Did the course materials (readings, homework, laboratories, etc.) enhance your learning in this course?
11. Did graded assessments, such as examinations, quizzes, projects, etc. measure what you learned?

College or Department option

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS (select for type of course):

Follow each set by an open comment box

- a. Recitation / Discussion section
- b. Lab section
- c. Online course
- d. Hybrid course (33%-79% instruction online) –can this be the same or similar to c?
- e. Studio section
- f. Performance section (individual instruction)
- g. Service Learning course

***Edit questions below with regard to construction similar to the core questions. (The committee did not spend as much time on the wording of these questions)**

Questions for Discussion/Recitation Sections

1. My instructor develops classroom discussion skillfully
2. This course provides an opportunity to learn from other students

3. There is an appropriate mix of lecture and discussion in this class
4. My instructor encourages questions and expression of ideas.
5. Class discussion is kept on track and moving forward.

Lab session questions

1. To what extent did the activities and assignments in the laboratory sessions enhance your learning in this course?
2. To what extent did the laboratory instructor create an atmosphere that invited students to seek additional help when they needed it?
3. To what extent were the laboratory instructor's explanations and directions clear?
4. To what extent did the laboratory instructor create an atmosphere that supported student learning?
5. To what extent were laboratory sessions well organized?

Online Courses

With regards to questions pertaining to fully online classes (80-100% of instruction), we need a few questions that cover the basics: prompt response to email inquiries (we can re-word), organization of course site (may want to think about this one); opportunities for interaction with instructor and peers, and then something more specific about technology support/tools for completing assignments, etc.

To what extent:

1. Did the instructor respond promptly to email inquiries?
2. Was the course site organized clearly?
3. Were there opportunities for interaction between instructor and students?
4. Were there opportunities for interaction between peers?
5. Were the technology tools appropriate for the course?

Studio section

Performance section (individual instruction—to be compiled as a group)

Service Learning course

*“The committee agrees that policies about and advice on the use of the core questions, for both faculty and administrators, will be very important for the appropriate use of EOCs and culture change surrounding EOCs.

Faculty option

A SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION for the use of the Instructor only

Guidelines for Survey Use:

The intentions of the committee's draft survey and implementation are that the core questions be used in total, and will be validated as a group (see below). In this way, the data from survey administration can be used more effectively by units, colleges, and central administration. Not only will it be important for colleges to use the core questions as a whole, but Tenn 101 should also include the core. Finally, the comparison among courses within a college should be between "like" courses (e.g. all sections or offerings of a course). Work on survey administration instructions by OIRA will be needed.

Second, instructions on use and guidelines for analysis of an EOC will be very important. These will come from OIRA, hopefully with some vetting and input—and are important for all users (faculty, administrators, and students). The assumption of the committee is that while the survey is validated, there can be a parallel process of education about the use of EOCs. For instance, the committee recommends that a message on the value and use of the new survey be added to the UT common campus syllabus, put out by the Provost's office.

Also, policy and guidelines will need the input of the Faculty Senate (as noted in the recommendations). The August DDDH retreat is another venue for discussion about the new survey and its validation and implementation.

Publicity around the new survey will be important and can be accomplished with the help of the Provost's office and Creative Communications. The committee suggests a student contest to design a new logo and name for the new survey. Students also need more information about the survey; the SGA can be an avenue for informing students.

Finally, any EOC survey must be used along with—and balanced by—other measures of faculty teaching and course effectiveness. The Peer Evaluation System is also a very important piece and should continue to be examined for effectiveness across the colleges. Other data—such as self-assessment and course materials—can be used to triangulate an evaluation of teaching effectiveness. The new survey is one pillar of a larger process.

In conclusion, it is important to:

- Build support and understanding among all (faculty, administrators, and students)
- Emphasize that the new survey offers a simple, streamlined, straight-forward method of surveying students about their courses
- Inform our community about the criteria behind the survey as important because it assures a valuable source of information from the survey results

Suggestions from Committee on Validation and Reliability Study:

Validation Considerations on the New EOC survey

Efforts are needed to achieve widely acknowledged levels of validity, including *face validity* (from the perspective of SAIS instrument users including students, faculty and academic administrators), *construct validity* (evidence that the instrument is indeed addressing student perceptions of instruction and that respondents and users of the instrument have a shared or similar definition of the question constructs), *content validity* (evidence that the revised SAIS instrument covers the essential course items of interest to students, faculty, and academic administrators), and finally *criterion validity* (assessing how well the revised SAIS results correlate with the current SAIS instrument). A newer perspective of validity - *multicultural validity* – also should be given consideration as diverse audiences should interpret the instrument the same way. The instrument should be reliable, producing consistent results.

- **Instrument Purpose.** The revised SAIS survey instrument seeks to obtain student perceptions of targeted elements of student instructional experiences.
- **Instrument Characteristics.** This revised SAIS is a brief survey; it is not a complicated measuring instrument addressing deep psychometric constructs. However, it still needs to be validated.
- **Instrument Validation.** Instrument validation should address issues of both validity and reliability.
- **Revised SAIS Instrument Validity.** Instrument validation encompasses qualitative and quantitative options:
 - **Qualitative strategies.** The validating of the revised instrument has begun from the qualitative perspective.
 1. **Face- Validity – Development Team.** The development team consists of students, faculty, and staff, and the revisions to the instrument throughout the development processes reflected team members’ assessment of face validity.
 2. **Content Validity - Literature Review.** This strategy also has been in process. Questions from the revised instrument were derived in part from a review of the literature on student assessment of instruction as well as consideration of current UTK SAIS questions, questions which had also undergone previous validation efforts. Therefore, the revised questions have their origin in a long history both at the institution as well as other institutions as represented by the literature.
 3. **Construct Validity – Broader Expert Review.** A second qualitative validation perspective is expert review. Expert review already has been central to initial instrument revisions as committee members are experts, and revisions resulted from the review of these experts. This process will now need to continue with wider campus audiences of students, faculty, and academic administrators.

4. **Construct Validity - Think-aloud (plus Retrospective) Protocols.** A Think-Aloud protocol enables researchers to assess what respondents are thinking in response to the wording of questions and instructions. This seeks to determine if the respondent interpretations are in line with that intended by the instrument developers. The Think-Aloud session can be followed by an immediate retrospective protocol probing any apparent problematic survey items or instructions. (This also supports reliability assessment in that ambiguous items and terms will be identified and flagged for revision.)
 - **Quantitative Strategies.** The streamlined design approach does not lend itself to item analysis – the instrument is not based on multiple-item scales. However, criterion validity is possible:
 1. **Criterion validity.** For criterion validity a newly developed instrument is compared to an existing instrument/ measure. The existing SAIS and the proposed SAIS could be administered in tandem, with the existing SAIS providing criterion measures for the proposed instrument. Although the current instrument is being replaced, UTK has long maintained that it is valid and reliable, and faculty and academic administrators have used current SAIS survey results for programmatic and personnel assessment purposes.
- **Revised SAIS instrument Reliability.** Reliability, consistency in survey results over time, can possibly be addressed by test-test (supported by the Talk Aloud Protocol). Internal consistency reliability is not an option (in that there are no multi-item scales in the revised instrument so far).
 1. **Test- retest.** Participants complete the revised survey on two occasions, separated by a short period of time, and the level of consistency in the results across both administrations is assessed. This would include assessing the proportion of agreement across both administrations (assuming internal, Likert-type scale responses).

Some Validation Process Considerations.

To accomplish these assessments, a validation process needs to be developed – something along the lines of the following:

Phase 1 – Initial Face Validity Validation Review with Students, Faculty, and Academic Administrators.

- **Step 1.1. Assemble Validation Team.** This team should develop a validation process, perhaps using some of the strategies suggested in this draft document.
- **Step 1.2. Establish Phase 1 Staffing and Budget.** Develop a staffing plan and budget for appropriate costs related to phase 1 validation efforts.
- **Step 1.3. Obtain Broader Student, Faculty, and Academic Administrator Review and Comment.** Broader campus review and comment regarding the revised instrument is warranted by a wider segment of students, faculty, and academic administrators.
- **Step 1.4 Conduct Student Talk-Aloud/Follow-up Protocols.** Conduct this protocol, with follow-up interviews, with a representative group of students

- **Step 1.5 Use Feedback.** Use feedback from Steps 1.1 & 1.2 to further revise the instrument.

Phase 2 – Initial Pilot Testing (summer and fall)

- **Step 2.1 Establish Phase 2 Staffing and Budget.** Develop a staffing plan and budget for appropriate costs related to phase 2 validation efforts.
- **Step 2.2 Initial Pilot Testing (possibly summer and fall).** Initial pilot testing of the revised instrument by a representative sample of sections – over the summer as well as the fall. This would include
 - *Activity 2.A.* Obtain permission for faculty volunteers to offer the revised instrument in lieu of the current instrument. (Some faculty may use both the current and the revised.)
 - *Activity 2.B.* Recruit representative faculty to use the revised SAIS instrument only – summer and fall.
 - *Activity 2.C* Recruit representative faculty to use both the current and the revised instruments for criterion validation purposes.
 - *Activity 2.D.* Conduct interviews/focus groups of faculty pilot testing the revised instrument after they have had a chance to review the results
 - *Activity 2.E.* Interview/focus group of students using the revised instrument.
 - *Activity 2.E.* Validation team to review results of initial pilot, and formulate recommendation for instrument revisions.
- **Step 2.3 Used Feedback.** Use feedback from all activities under step 2.2 to further revise the SAIS instrument.

Phase 3 – Secondary Validation Review

- **Step 3.1 Establish Phase 3 Staffing and Budget** Develop a staffing plan and budget for appropriate costs related to phase 3 validation efforts.
- **Step 3.2 Secondary Pilot Testing (fall 2015).** Secondary pilot testing of the revised instrument by a representative sample of sections.
 - *Activity 3.A.* Obtaining permission for faculty volunteers to offer the revised instrument in lieu of current instrument. (Some faculty may use both the current and the revised.)
 - *Activity 3.B.* Recruit representative faculty to use the revised SAIS instrument only – summer and fall.
 - *Activity 3.C* Recruit representative faculty to use both the current and the revised instruments for criterion validation purposes.

- *Activity 3.D.* Conduct interviews/focus groups of faculty pilot testing the revised instrument after they have had a chance to review the results
- *Activity 3.E.* Interview/focus group of students using the revised instrument.
- *Activity 2.E.* Validation team to review results of initial pilot, and formulate recommendation for instrument revisions.
- **STEP 3.2 Continued assessment until acceptable validity and reliability has been established**

Phase 4 Implementation - Implementation planning.

- **Step 4.1 Establish Phase 4 Staffing and Budget.** Develop a staffing plan and budget for appropriate costs related to phase 4 efforts.
- **Step 4.2 Technical Support.** Determine technical support for the delivery and processing of revised SAIS assessments.
- **Step 4.3 Staffing.** Determine staffing levels and assignments for the processing of revised SAIS assessments.
- **Step 4.4 Implementation Calendar and Plan.** This is the final step in the process – a clear plan for implementation of the revised SAIS.

Validation Notes from G. Skolitz

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