



Policy and Governance Unit, Academic Registrar's Division

SUBJECT EVALUATION GUIDELINES

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Approved by					
Custodian title & e-mail address	Academic Registrar David.Christie@uow.edu.au				
Responsible Division	Academic Registrar's Division				
Supporting documents, procedures forms of procedure	Subject Evaluation Form FAQ for Subject Coordinators & FAQ for Faculty Administrators & this User Access Form – Performance Indicator System (formerly COGNOS)				
References Legislation	& State Records Act 1998 (NSW) - General Retention and Disposal Authority – University records GDA23 Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)				
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1 Introduction / Background

- 1.1 In 2005 consultation was undertaken in developing the Guidelines to ensure they addressed the full scope of relevant issues. A Reference Group consisting of representatives from the Policy and Governance Unit, the former COGNOS Team, Student Administration, the Strategic Planning Unit, Chair of the Quality Assurance Subcommittee and CEDIR, provided significant input into the development of the Guidelines. In addition, advice on the statistical analysis of Subject Evaluation Survey (SES) data was sought from Professor David Steel, Associate Dean, Faculty of Informatics. Faculty Deans were also consulted on issues relevant to the Guidelines via discussions at Dean's meetings and consultation with the Academic Registrar and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and International). Since the introduction of the original Guidelines, external advice has also been sought through the University's Legal Services Unit to ensure the University is complying with the Privacy Act when managing data generated from SES responses.
- 1.2 During 2005 and 2006 the SES was administered through Student Online Services (SOLS) using an online survey instrument. Surveys were held every session for every subject at all campuses including off-shore operations. This frequency may have caused over-surveying of students, resulting in lower than expected response rates. From September 2006 to August 2007 the Student Survey Working Party revised the online process to improve response rates and avoid over-surveying. In Spring 2007 the SES was introduced as a paper-based survey administered within the subject review cycle of the Quality Review Framework. Additionally, the survey questions were revised and implemented with the changes in Spring 2007.
- 1.3 These Guidelines are evolving and will therefore be subject to review and change in the future.

2 Scope / Purpose

- 2.1 These Guidelines are intended to provide clear information as to how the SES process will be managed and clarify the responsibilities of all staff in regard to proper handling of SES information. They provide information and guidance on various aspects of information management by addressing relevant records management, privacy and confidentiality issues.
- 2.2 It is envisaged that further information will be added to these Guidelines including examples of Good Practice demonstrating how student feedback received through SES's have been utilised by faculties and examples of effective communication strategies with students.
- 2.3 While the University initiated the SES as a quality mechanism, it is also a requirement for eligibility for the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. The survey is not linked to the Teacher Evaluation Survey nor to any teaching performance processes.
- 2.4 These Guidelines apply to all Subject Evaluations administered within Australia including distance students enrolled in a UOW degree and offshore teaching locations if permission by the offshore partner was sought.
- 2.5 These Guidelines do not apply to Subject Evaluations at Dubai campus.

3 Preparation for the Survey

Subject selection

- 3.1 Faculties establish a subject review cycle best suited to its course management or other cyclic needs within the Faculty. The Subject Evaluations will be administered according to the subjects nominated for review in a given session.
- 3.2 Upon request each Faculty will be asked to identify the subjects to be
 - a. surveyed according to the subject review cycle
 - b. review the list of subjects for the forthcoming session, in consultation with decision-makers

- c. advise the affected subject coordinators/teaching teams
 - d. complete the subject evaluation information sheet (Appendix A)
 - e. send the subject information sheet to Policy and Governance, ARD.
- 3.3 The Faculty may choose the class, which provides the best opportunity to reach students. Classes may be a lecture, tutorials, labs or others if appropriate.
- 3.4 Shortly after session commences, each Faculty will be asked for additional details of each subject to be evaluated such as the date they should take place, the class location, faculty administrators etc.
- 3.5 Subject information should be collated by ARD and forwarded to CEDIR by the agreed due date.

Small Classes

- 3.6 Subjects which frequently have classes under 10 students may require different means of reviews. Survey reports are only issued with more than 6 responses per subject. Therefore any survey with a response rate of below or equal to six responses will either need conducting over two or more consecutive sessions to provide a collated report or use an alternative method for review such as focus groups. Confidentiality issues relevant to students are outlined in Clause 7.13 to 7.15.
- 3.7 The best practice for collating data over a period of time is for the subject to remain exactly the same for the duration of it being surveyed. That is no changes should be made to the objectives, assessment tasks, learning material and resources provided for this subject. Otherwise it is more likely that there are variances in the data due to the changes.

4 Delivery and collection of survey instruments

Delivery weeks and locations

- 4.1 The SES is administered between week 10 and week 13 for Autumn and Spring session, and the corresponding weeks for an Annual session. In Intakes the surveys are administered from week seven to nine.
- 4.2 Surveys are administered for each location where the subject is offered (except Dubai). For off-shore locations the permission from the relevant institution should be sought.

Delivery Process

- 4.3 The paper-based Subject Evaluation is coordinated by CEDIR using the same processes as the teacher survey.
- 4.4 CEDIR will prepare the Subject Evaluation envelopes for the faculty administrators designated as CEDIR's contact. The envelopes will contain the survey forms for the number of students expected in class, a Procedures sheet for conducting the survey and a privacy statement sheet to provide information on request.
- 4.5 For Wollongong campus, faculty administrators pick up and drop off the surveys.
- 4.6 For other locations CEDIR will mail the subject evaluation forms and information to the designated Faculty staff member, who will administer the surveys at the location in the same manner as prescribed in the Procedure for conducting the survey and arrange for their return.
- 4.7 The Subject Coordinator should liaise with the Faculty administrator about the optional questions and provide relevant material.
- 4.8 Faculty administrators are required to read out the information on the Procedure sheet for conducting the survey to students and provide the optional questions prior to handing out the Subject Evaluation form.

- 4.9 Faculty administrators may delegate the in-class administration of the surveys to others. For example, the faculty contact may take the surveys to the classroom and administer the evaluation. Alternatively, it is also acceptable to ask the teacher/subject coordinator to collect forms from the Faculty office and return the sealed envelopes, providing they leave the room while someone (eg a student) who is not part of the subject's teaching team administers the evaluation.
- 4.10 If others administer the surveys, a thorough briefing must be undertaken by the faculty administrators to ensure that they understand the importance of their role and can convey this to the students undertaking the survey.

Eligibility to complete survey

- 4.11 All students who are enrolled in the subject selected for review and who are attending class on the given day will be offered the opportunity to complete the survey. Surveys are not mailed to students unless students are in distance courses.
- 4.12 Students who have withdrawn from the subject are not surveyed using the paper-based form.

Collection Process

- 4.13 Faculty administrators return the completed forms to CEDIR. When it is impractical to return the forms to CEDIR immediately after the class, the sealed survey pack should be stored in a secure location in the Faculty for return to CEDIR the next working day
- 4.14 The completed Subject Evaluation forms will be collated by CEDIR and forwarded to the external scanning provider, Education Assessment Australia (EAA), for scanning of the ranked data and the open text responses. The ranked data will be stored in form of a CSV file, which is sent to the UOW Performance Indicator Project (PIP) Team.

5 Compilation and Distribution of Survey Data

Compilation of survey data

- 5.1 The PIP Team uploads the survey data onto the Performance Indicator reporting system. In doing so the student number is separated from the responses to ensure that individual responses are not identifiable.
- 5.2 The Performance Indicator reporting system is a data interrogation tool which allows the presentation of information from a variety of University databases.
- 5.3 Survey data will be compiled at University, faculty and Subject level by the PIP team, in consultation with ARD and the Strategic Planning Unit.
- 5.4 All reporting of SES data will be based on the calendar year, being 1 January to 31 December.

Distributing Survey Reports

- 5.5 Results for faculty subjects will be made available through the Performance Indicator reporting system or other means to Deans, relevant Senior Executive, Head of Schools, Subject Coordinators and other approved staff as soon as possible after the release of results. The PIP Team will prepare the subject reports (summaries) and distribute them as PDF reports. Subject Coordinators may discuss the report with relevant lecturers and tutors and Head of School provided the precautions stated in Clause 5.6 is adhered to.

Distributing Free Text Response Reports

- 5.6 During the survey administration students are asked to refrain from making reference to specific teachers. Nonetheless, the comments made by students in free text responses may contain comment or opinion about individual teachers, which is personal information under privacy laws. As such, the circulation of this feedback should be undertaken with careful consideration. Free text response comments should be distributed at discretion only to:-
- individuals with a professional need to know as outlined in Clause 7.16 to 7.18; or
 - the person concerned (being the person commented on in a free text response question); or
 - if all identification of individuals is removed from the responses, and the responses cannot enable the identification of an individual, to other staff members within the faculty.
- 5.7 Free text responses will be sent to the Deans and the Heads of Schools after the release of results.

6 Reporting Subject Evaluation Data

Quality Improvement

- 6.1 Subject Evaluation data will provide an important aspect to the existing level of feedback received with regards to the quality of education at the University. To ensure Subject Evaluation data is effectively used it is important that data is embedded into the [University's planning and quality processes](#).
- 6.2 Once data is released, Faculties are responsible for identifying quality issues raised by the data including particular subjects or groups of subjects potentially requiring improvement, outstanding successes and, upward or downward trends (if comparative data across years is available).
- 6.3 Subject Evaluation results will be used by each faculty to inform its annual review of performance against its learning and teaching objectives, as part of the Faculty Reporting process coordinated by the Strategic Planning Unit.
- 6.4 Faculties conducting a subject review, in accordance with the [Quality Review Framework](#) will need to use available Subject Evaluation data to inform the review .

Feedback

- 6.5 Efforts will also be made to communicate to students some of the actions which have been taken to improve individual subjects as a result of feedback provided through the Subject Evaluation. Academic staff will be required to assist and contribute to this communication process through the Subject Outline as stated in the Code of Practice Teaching and Assessment. Suggested examples¹ of feedback include
- Changing the text from that originally prescribed when the subject was first offered. The set text by ... (2004) is a better introductory text for the subject than ... (2001). Academic staff are interested in feedback on the usefulness to students of the set texts.
 - Scheduling of the mid-session quiz after the mid-session recess responds to student concern about their opportunity to prepare for this important assessment item.
 - Altering the scope of the assignment. This has been done in response to student feedback about this assessment task and staff reflection on student achievement.
- 6.6 Given its role in supporting the interpretation of educational evaluations Faculties can invite CEDIR to be involved in subject and course reviews

Data interpretation and use of the Performance Indicator reporting system

- 6.7 It is intended that information sessions will be offered in relation to the Subject Evaluation will be available for the academic community with regards on data use and access to the Performance Indicator reporting system.

¹ Examples provided by the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences

Publishing Data on the University website

- 6.8 To comply with Government requirements, results of Subject Evaluations must be displayed on the University website aggregated to faculty level. Planning Services are responsible for determining what Subject Evaluation results are displayed on the website and will work with the PIP Team and the Policy and Governance Unit, which will be responsible for loading results onto the Learning and Teaching web pages. Results will be updated on the website for Autumn and Spring sessions each year.

7 Maintaining Security, Storage and Privacy

- 7.1 It is critical that the University maintain strict procedures regarding the use of responses to Subject Evaluations to ensure legislative compliance, including maintaining the privacy of survey respondents and storage of data. Information should not be published, presented or disseminated by staff with full access to the Performance Indicator reporting system or the survey reports to other staff in any way that might enable individual students to be identified.

Security of system

- 7.2 Every year an external body reviews and tests the security of all UOW ITS systems. This is arranged through the UOW Audit Manager.

Security of data

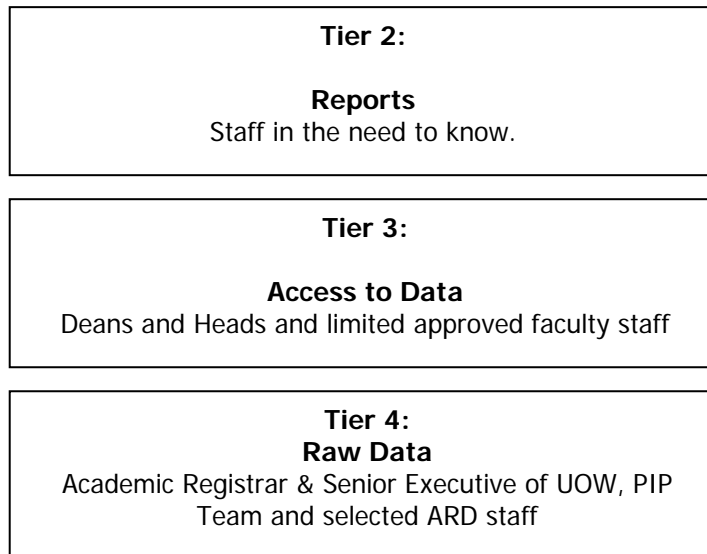
- 7.3 It is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar or his/her delegated representative, to ensure that a Custodian is appointed for the collection and handling of Subject Evaluation data within their area of responsibility, and that this is documented.
- 7.4 Data Custodians have delegated administrative responsibility for controlling data collections within their mandates. In undertaking their role, Custodians have responsibility for establishing and maintaining an acceptable level of protection for the data, for managing the disclosure of data, for ensuring that the privacy of personal information is protected, that the data is used only in accordance with the reasons for which it was collected and that the data itself complies with these guidelines.
- 7.5 The Academic Registrar has authority to approve or restrict access of individuals to specific Subject Evaluation data where required.

Access to SES data

- 7.6 Selected staff in the Academic Registrar's Division (ARD) and the PIP team will have access to the raw data. Access will be given to selected staff within the PIP team for the Performance Indicator reporting system.. All staff are bound by strict [Codes of Conduct](#) including confidentiality requirements.
- 7.7 Nominated persons of the Academic Registrar (AR) with access to Subject Evaluation data are:
- The Senior Executive of UOW
 - Assistant Director, Planning Services, Strategic Planning Unit
 - Senior Manager, Policy and Governance, Academic Registrars Division
 - Faculty Deans and Head of School
- 7.8 There are 4 distinct tiers for use of Subject Evaluation data, each with a different level of access to the data and different kinds of information provision.

Tier 1:

Public information available through the UOW web.
Analysed faculty level aggregated information.



7.9 Tier 1 Publicly available information

There is the DEST mandated need for aggregated data by faculty for public display. This reporting will be completed by the Strategic Planning Unit (in consultation with the Policy and Governance Unit) as it impacts on University external reporting under the Higher Education Support Act (HESA). Advice has been sought from Prof David Steel regarding statistical analysis of the data. The posting of information on the web will be a manually generated report that will require UOW Executive approval prior to posting to the web.

7.10 Tier 2 Reports

Detailed survey reports will be generated after each session from the Performance Indicator reporting system and prepared for staff outlined in Clause 5.5 and 5.6. These reports do not contain identifying information about teachers or students. The reports will include information for each subject by faculty, plus comparison against faculty average, population information regarding number of enrolments and withdrawals per subject (definitions of the terms which define the status of enrolments are at Appendix B).

The survey reports and the free text response reports, in form of scanned student comments, will be distributed and stored in PDF format

7.11 Tier 3 Access to Data

The data is stored in the Performance Indicator reporting system. The faculty Deans will have access to data for their faculty. They will have a need to review responses and compare results over time and subject, and interrogate the data in detail. This requires high level access, and will be limited to the Deans, Heads of School and a limited number of approved faculty support staff identified as having a professional need to know. Application for access is completing the [User Access Form](#) and access approval must be supported by the Dean and the AR.

This data set will contain aggregated data and will be separated from student numbers to ensure that student privacy is maintained and that individual students are not identified.

7.12 Tier 4 Raw Data

The Academic Registrar and Senior Executive of UOW will have full access to all available data via the Performance Indicator reporting system. In addition selected staff in ARD and the PIP team will have access to the raw data.

Ensuring student confidentiality

- 7.13 The production version of the Performance Indicator reporting system designed to report results, is based on processed data to ensure that small samples are appropriately aggregated and that individual students are not identified.
- 7.14 In instances where there are less than six responses for a particular subject, reports will not be generated by subject in order to maintain confidentiality of student responses. As a further measure to protect student confidentiality, data will be suppressed in instances where the proportion of responses in a cell exceeds 85%. This approach will be adopted because if, for example, 85% of students give a 'strongly disagree' response then the lecturer could reasonably conclude the individual student that gave this response with at least 85% accuracy.
- 7.15 All reports, including the handwritten open text responses, are released after the release of results. Reports (Tier 2) are only sent to staff in the need to know.

Staff with a need to know

- 7.16 Staff with a professional need to know include individuals connected to the continuous improvement of courses and subjects offered by the University and to assist in planning, course development and delivery.
- 7.17 The survey reports must be distributed to those staff with a need to know. In the first instance these staff are the Deans, Head of Schools, Subject Coordinators. Other staff who may need to know will be determined by Deans based on individuals roles and responsibilities. Such staff may for example include Sub Deans, Lecturers, Tutors and other approved faculty support staff.
- 7.18 Free text response reports should only be circulated beyond individuals identified as having a professional need to know or to individuals concerned once any comment or opinion about a lecturer or tutor or, any information which would enable the identity of an individual involved in the delivery of a course to be ascertained even in the absence of a name, has been completely removed.

Storage, retention and disposal of survey data

- 7.19 Retention and disposal of SES data will be in accordance with the NSW State Records Act and the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- 7.20 Entries 3.9.9, 25.4.5 and 25.4.6 of the General Retention and Disposal Authority – University Records (GDA23) cover surveys/evaluations undertaken for the purpose of improving course delivery. The identified retention period is 'until no longer required for reference or administrative use' after which their destruction is authorised.
- 7.21 25.4.5 on Quality Assurance relates to assessment of data and providing feedback on course delivery. Any findings, reporting, recommendations and actions taken should be maintained until the next subject review cycle has been completed. This will ensure continuation of quality on improvements. A record of past improvements and their rationale should be maintained by the Faculty.
- 7.22 25.4.6 of Quality Assurance related to the collection of survey data and forms. Raw data stored at UOW should be maintained at least until the next subject review cycle is complete.
- 7.23 All reports are stored on the University's records management system, ImageReal for a minimum period of 10 years. The data in the Performance Indicator reporting system will remain until it is no longer required.
- 7.24 EAA will return the completed hardcopy survey forms to UOW where they. EAA will maintain the raw data for a minimum of three years before destroying it.
- 7.25 Stored data will not be used for any purpose other than those outlined in these Guidelines.

Compliance with legislation and standards

- 7.26 Information intended for publication or presentation should comply with the requirements of:
- Relevant legislation, principles and guidelines relating to data management and the protection of privacy and confidentiality
 - Relevant standards, policies or recognised best practice for the presentation and analysis of statistical data
 - Requirements imposed by the owners of any data sets used
 - Any conditions placed on use of the data as a result of ethical or legal advice.

Freedom of Information

- 7.27 The University of Wollongong is bound by the NSW Freedom of Information Act 1989. Any Freedom of Information (FOI) applications received by the University relating to SES data will be managed by the University's FOI officer, located in the Legal Services Unit within the University.

8 Roles & Responsibilities

All Staff

- 8.1 All staff employed within the University are personally responsible, within their roles, for maintaining the privacy, integrity and security of data held and managed by their work unit, and for reporting any suspected breach of procedure. This responsibility is formally acknowledged in an undertaking to observe privacy and security procedures. [Codes of Conduct](#) also specify the responsibilities of staff regarding confidentiality, the use of information and public comment.

Academic Registrar's Division

- 8.2 The Academic Registrar nominates data custodians and gives approval for access to data on the Performance Indicator reporting system and the free text responses.
- 8.3 The Policy and Governance Unit is responsible for
- the Quality Review Framework Policy
 - collating and providing assistance to faculty staff with subject selection
 - assisting the Planning Services with loading the reports onto the UOW website
 - records management of the survey and free text response reports, and
 - maintaining the guidelines.

Performance Indicator Project Team

- 8.4 The PIP Team is responsible for
- liaising with the external scanning provider on the raw data
 - advising the external scanning provider when hardcopy surveys can be destroyed
 - uploading the raw data onto the Performance Indicator reporting system
 - ensuring data security and student privacy is maintained within the Performance Indicator system and its reporting functions
 - preparing and distributing the survey reports
 - assisting the Planning Services with compiling aggregate reports for the UOW website
 - establishing access to the Student Evaluation data on the Performance Indicator reporting system once approval is granted.

Planning Services

- 8.5 Planning Services are responsible for
- preparing the aggregate reports for the UOW website
 - enquiries on data interpretation of the reports.

Legal Services Unit (LSU)

8.6 The LSU is responsible for privacy issues/concerns and Freedom of Information.

Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (CEDIR)

8.7 CEDIR is responsible for

- a. liaising with ARD about subject evaluations selected for review
- b. preparation of subject evaluation packs for faculty contacts
- c. distribution of subject evaluation packs to satellite campuses
- d. maintain contractual agreements with external scanning provider
- e. liaison with external scanning provider as required
- f. batching of completed forms and distribution to external scanning provider
- g. assisting faculties with incorporating SES data into faculty improvement plans.

9 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
1	September 2005	Dr David Christie, Academic Registrar	Initial Guidelines.
2	April 2006	Dr David Christie, Academic Registrar	Improved clarification of the appropriate handling of responses to free text response questions.
3	May 2007	Dr David Christie, Academic Registrar	COGNOS application form had to be removed due to Quality Assurance. Point 6.5.3 was updated.
4	September 2007	Dr David Christie, Academic Registrar	Revision of Guidelines to adapt to paper-based survey administration process and associated security and data storage issues. Terminology changes from COGNOS to Performance Indicator Project or reporting system.

Appendix A

Subject Information Request Sheet

Information for the collation of the subject evaluation will be required by (Date). If you are able to complete all fields please do so or alternatively, provide in the first instance the information from point 1 to 7 and follow up by (Date) with points 8 to 15.

SURVEY INFORMATION REQUIRED BY CEDIR (in either csv or xls format):

1. Faculty
2. Department
3. Subject Code
4. Subject Name
5. Subject Coordinator(s) (title, first name, last name)
6. Session/Intake
7. Year

8. Delivery Date
9. Delivery time
10. Survey building, room
11. Survey Location
12. Type of class (lecture, tutorial, etc)
13. Number of students enrolled (provide breakdown is the survey is being conducted in tutorials)

14. Survey collector name
15. Survey collector campus
16. Survey collector Employee Card Barcode

Appendix B

Definitions of enrolment status terms

Students are permitted to undertake a SES for all subjects which they commenced in a Semester, even if they did not complete the subject.

The Following terms are used to define the status of a student's enrolment in each subject.

- *Complete* - The student has completed the subject.
- *Incomplete* - The student has not yet completed all of the subject requirements.
- *Withdrawn* - The student withdrew from the subject within the appropriate time period.
- *Withdrawn late with approval* - The student withdrew from the subject after the appropriate time period, but with approval.