Navigating Change: Redesigning End of Semester Student Evaluations

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100 YEARS | Office of the Provost

ZAYED UNIVERSITY

Bluenotes MENA 2019 Conference

INTRODUCING The American University in Cairo (AUC)

❖ Founded in 1919

❖ AUC is an independent , not-for-profit institution accredited in the US by the Middle States Commission for H. Ed.

❖ Among the 3-4% universities worldwide that are included in QS Global Rankings

❖ **~ 6,500** students

❖ **Five** Schools, **33** departments

❖ AUC offers **53 master programs** and **two PhD programs**, in addition to various graduate diplomas rooted in a liberal arts education

REDESIGNING Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs) – Why?

- A recommendation of a Task Force on Quality of Education (2018) *called for a more* **comprehensive evaluation** *of teaching*

  - ❖ *New format for SETs*

  - ❖ *Peer Assessment (including formative assessment)*

  - ❖ *Reflection/Teaching Portfolio*

- Problematic in-house system (2004-2018)

  - ❖ *Difficult to maintain, up-grade and support*

  - ❖ *Over-customized and not scalable*

  - ❖ *Need for change*

  - ❖ *Committee decides on BLUE*

WHY EXPLORANCE BLUE?

Powerful

Scalable

Extensive experience in the education field

Attractive portfolio

Fitting our technical and functional requirements

PERFECT FIT

THE PATH TO REDESIGN:

ROADMAP, CHALLENGES AND INSIGHTS

1. Research Phase (F2018 – S2019)

V₀ to V₁

- ❖ Provost's Working Group + Center for Learning and Teaching

- ❖ Explore question banks from other universities, Bluenotes etc.

- ❖ Design first draft of modified survey $(V_0 \longrightarrow V_1)$

2. Exploratory Exercise: Online Survey and Class Discussion – (Summer 2019)

PARTICIPANTS

145 students*

26 faculty

5 additional comments from faculty

124 responded to online survey

2. Exploratory Exercise: Online Survey and Class Discussion – (Summer 2019)

Color Coded Survey Responses

🟢 accepted by the majority > 60%

🔴 rejected by the majority > 60% (No Q in category)

🟡 Minor suggestions for language revision

🔵 Multiple suggestions for language revision

Results in second draft V_2

3. Probing Exercise: 4 Focus Groups of Faculty and Chairs – (Sept.-Oct. 2019)

PARTICIPANTS

- **11 Faculty Members**
  (8 departments, 3 Schools)

- **15 Chairs**
  (5 Schools)

- **3** additional comments from faculty via email

3. Probing Exercise: 4 Focus Groups of Faculty and Chairs - (Sept.-Oct. 2019)

Multiple Suggestions for Language Revision

Results in third draft **V₃**

What has changed?

Current Student Evaluation Form V_0

❖ **27 questions** (**19** main questions, **3** student data, **5** others)

❖ **2 sections** (Instructor, Course)

❖ **Two spaces** for adding comments or recommendations

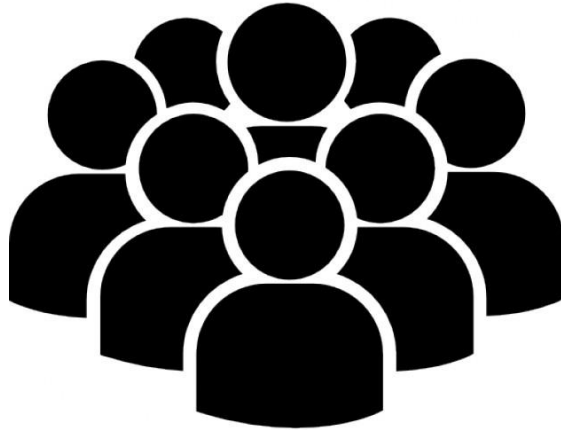❖ Provides a score for *instructor* and a score for the *course*

Proposed Student Evaluation Form V_3 (Draft)

❖ **22 questions**, (**20** main questions, **1** student data, **1** other)

❖ **3 sections** (Instructor, Course, Student Self-evaluation)

❖ **Three spaces** for **guided** comments and suggestions

❖ Provides spaces for **formative feedback** questions

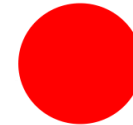❖ **Teaching Assistant** section expanded and not counted in score – only appears in relevant courses

4. SMIE* Community Survey (V_3)

*(*Strategy Management and Institutional Effectiveness Office)*

ALL FACULTY, CHAIRS and STUDENTS

accepted by the majority > 60%

rejected by the majority > 60% (No Q in category)

Additional open comments

Oct. 24th to Nov. 7th , 2019

Analysis will result in fourth draft V_4
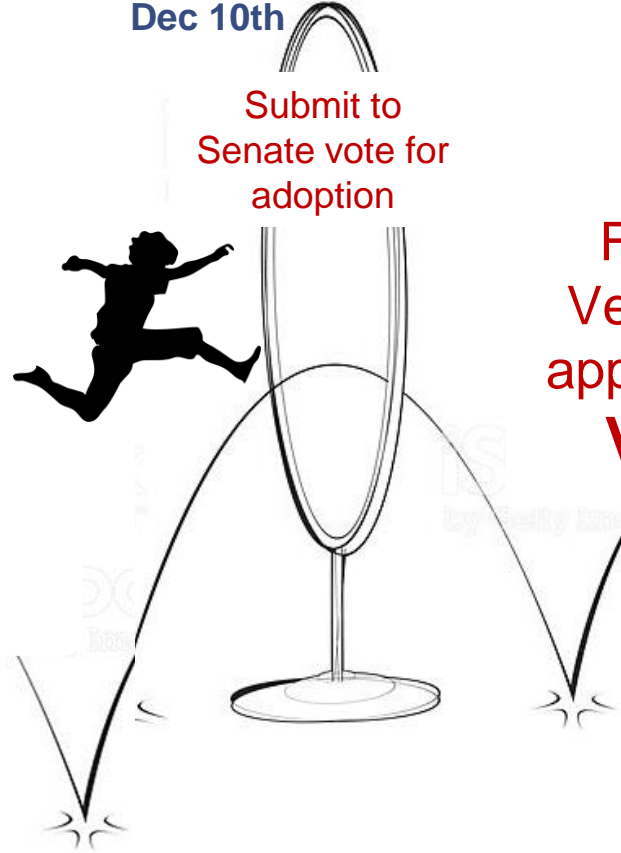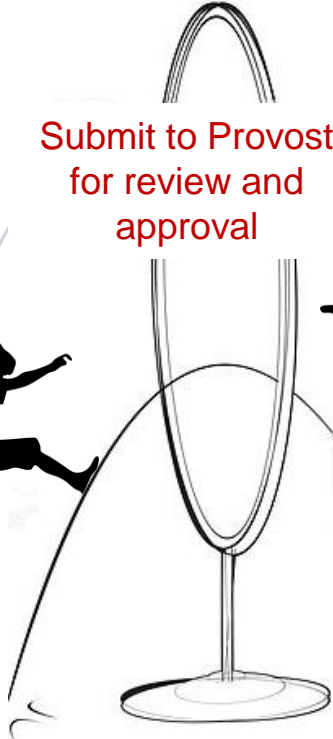
Nov 19th
Submit to Provost for review and approval

Nov. 26
Submit to Senate Academic Affairs Committee

Dec 10th
Submit to Senate vote for adoption

Final Version approved V_4+

Insights, Challenges and Recommendations

CHALLENGES

- Students

- Faculty

- Innovative Teaching

- Grade Inflation

Concerned about student response rates

Complain that SET not taken into consideration

Suspicious that faculty can see their answers

…may lead to poor student ratings

SET taken as gospel for renewal of contract and P&T leading to…

INSIGHTS

Example: …treating students with "respect and fairness"

Example: …The instructor is available for help when I need it…

Students often do not interpret questions and terminology the way faculty do

- Faculty

- Faculty vs Chairs

Different perspectives on Student *"Evaluation"*

- Language of survey

Examples of how text was changed

A question accepted by more than 60% of faculty and students in survey V$_1$

"The instructor is available for help when I need it".

Changed to:

"The instructor is available for help" **(with NA option** *for students who did not seek help***)**

In focus groups, all faculty and chairs asked that *"when I need it"* be removed. Students might *"need"* email replies/or wish to meet them at inconvenient times.

Another instructor put it in differently

"I find this [language] a clear bias and is rather disrespectful to faculty in general, and puts the student as master and faculty as slave".

RECOMMENDATIONS

❖ Implement a robust teaching assessment policy that uses SETs as only one of several tools to assess teaching

❖ Explore ways:

  o to increase student response rate (many suggestions were given)

  o communicate selected results to students to acknowledge that their feedback is taken seriously**.

** will most certainly be opposed by a majority of faculty

CREDIT/ATTRIBUTION: Free Clipart

Research phase

https://icon-library.net/icon/round-table-icon-10.html

Exploratory exercise
https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/users-group_32441

Survey https://pixy.org/1222366/

Discussion
http://www.clipartpanda.com/clipart_images/groups-for-discussion-59753047

Focus Groups faculty and Chairs

https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/network_1208280

Comment
https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/comments_25360

Jumping through hoops
http://clipart-library.com/free/jump-rope-silhouette.html

THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?