



Course Experience Survey (CES) Faculty Handbook

PURPOSE

The Course Experience Survey (CES) is the university's standard end-of-course student feedback instrument for credit-bearing courses. It is designed to provide structured information about the student learning experience and support instructional improvement.

This handbook establishes the policies and procedures for administering the CES, including the standard survey instrument, course eligibility guidelines, administration timelines, reporting practices, and parameters for limited unit-level customization. The aim is to ensure that evaluations are implemented consistently and equitably, with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality, while allowing clearly defined flexibility at the college and department levels.

SCOPE

This handbook applies to all colleges, departments, and academic units that participate in the CES for credit-bearing courses. It specifies which courses are included or excluded, defines the required institutional prompt set and response scale, outlines parameters, and approval processes for department-level custom prompts, and outlines the schedule and conditions under which results are reported, and exceptions may be granted.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The CES is guided by the following principles:

- **Consistency and comparability:** Standard core prompts and shared response scales allow results to be interpreted across courses, departments, and colleges.
- **Confidentiality and integrity:** Survey procedures, minimum enrollment thresholds, and reporting practices are designed to protect student confidentiality and support responsible use of results.
- **Improvement and reflection:** Results are intended to support instructor reflection and course improvement. They should not be used as the sole or primary measure of teaching effectiveness in high-stakes personnel decisions.
- **Reasonable respondent burden:** Survey length and customization are managed to reduce survey fatigue and support high-quality student responses.

STANDARD SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The standard core prompts of the CES are as follows. These core items are required for all eligible CES course sections and may not be modified.

1. The course was structured to support learning.
2. The course expectations were clear.
3. The course expanded my knowledge of this subject.

RESPONSE SCALE

All CES prompts will use the following response scale:

- 5 – Yes
- 4 – Mostly yes
- 3 – Neutral
- 2 – Mostly no
- 1 – No

Students can also select N/A (0) for each prompt. Responses marked N/A (0) are excluded from the calculation of summary statistics.

COLLEGE AND DEPARTMENT CUSTOM PROMPT POLICY

- Colleges may add up to four custom prompts, typically focused on aspects of the course and learning environment that are priorities at the college level.
- Departments may add up to six custom prompts, typically focused on instructor practice and discipline-specific expectations.
 - If a college does not use its full allotment of custom prompts, the unused prompts (up to four) may be claimed by the department, subject to department/college approval.
- College- and department-level prompts must be coordinated to avoid duplication and to maintain a reasonable overall survey length.
- As part of the approval process, the Department Chair and Associate Dean ensure that, taken together, the prompts provide a balanced view of both the course and the instructor, where appropriate.

 Instructors of Record may not add custom prompts to individual courses or sections beyond the approved university, college, and department prompt sets. Instructors seeking feedback on course-specific matters not addressed in the approved CES instrument should use a separate survey or feedback mechanism.

To reduce respondent burden and support meaningful participation, colleges and departments should use custom prompts sparingly and only when the information sought is actionable and not already captured in the standard CES instrument. Survey design guidance consistently cautions that longer surveys increase the likelihood of survey fatigue and may reduce response quality.

AD HOC PROMPT SETS

Additional institutional prompt sets are temporarily paused through Summer 2027. Beginning in Fall 2027, courses tagged in Workday as Communication-Intensive (C-I) or Service-Learning (CCELL) will include additional prompts associated with those designations.

At present:

- A C-I designation is associated with 3-5 additional prompts.
- A CCELL designation is associated with 3-5 additional prompts.

If both designations apply to a course, students will be asked to complete approximately 6-10 additional prompts beyond the CES standard core prompt set.

SURVEY LENGTH AND TEAM-TAUGHT COURSES

Survey length should be considered carefully when custom prompts and additional institutional prompt sets apply to the same course. With the current configuration:

- A course with the three (3) core institutional prompts, the maximum number of college-level custom prompts (4), and the maximum number of department-level custom prompts (6) will include 13 prompts.
- A course that also carries a C-I or CCELL designation will include approximately 16-18 prompts.
- A course that carries both C-I and CCELL designations, with all college- and department-level prompts in use, will include up to 23 prompts in a single CES survey.

In team-taught courses, department-level custom prompts related to instructor effectiveness may be presented for each Instructor of Record (IOR). As a result, the number of prompts can increase substantially in courses with multiple instructors.

For example, if a team-taught course section has eight Instructors of Record and uses the maximum number of department-level prompts (6 per IOR), students may be asked to complete:

- 13 to 23 prompts for the standard CES prompt set, including eligible institutional and unit-level prompts; plus
- Up to 48 department-level prompts (6 per IOR).

In such cases, the total number of prompts may range from approximately 55 to 65 for an 8-IOR course with maximum customization. Longer surveys may contribute to survey fatigue, lower completion rates, and less thoughtful responses; accordingly, units should exercise restraint when proposing custom prompts for courses with multiple instructors or additional institutional prompt sets.

 Units are expected to use this information to limit overall survey length by prioritizing only essential, non-duplicative prompts when proposing or revising their custom prompt sets.

COURSE ELIGIBILITY AND EXCLUSIONS

 Evaluations apply only to sections with an identified Instructor of Record (IOR) in ‘WORKDAY’.

 Teaching Assistants (TAs) will not receive a CES unless they are identified in Workday as the Instructor of Record (IOR). Faculty mentors who wish to gather feedback on TAs assigned to their course, lab, or recitation should use a separate evaluation method outside of the CES and may contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to request administration of a standardized TA survey with a common set of prompts.

Course evaluations are required for all credit-bearing courses except those specified below.

Included Courses:

- Undergraduate and graduate courses numbered below 8000 that meet the enrollment and timing criteria.
- Course Types including:
 - Lecture: Faculty-led presentations on a subject.
 - Laboratory/Studio: Active learning environments for research, experiments, or professional techniques under faculty supervision.
 - Seminar: Small group academic teaching focused on advanced critical analysis and discussion.

Excluded Courses:

- Courses numbered 8000 and 9000.
- Course Types including:
 - Recitation: Breakout sessions from a lecture course, typically in smaller groups.
 - Practicum: Supervised practical application of previously studied theory in a specialized field.
 - Clinical: Site-based learning with supervision to ensure course and program requirements are met.
 - Internship: Practical work experience in a professional setting, supervised by professionals and faculty.
 - Independent Study: Student-initiated study under faculty supervision in a specific area of interest.
 - Research Study: Student-initiated research under faculty supervision.
- The evaluation of Teaching Assistants 1 and 2.

ADMINISTRATION TIMELINE

- Notification Schedule: Changes every semester, dates to be published on the first day of classes for the semester in question.
- Opening Date: For full-semester courses, typically 2 weeks before final exams. For 7-week courses, 1 week before final exams.
- Closing Date: The day of or the day before the final exam date listed in the academic calendar.
- Faculty results will be available the day after grades are due.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Course Experience Survey results provide information about students' perceptions of their course experience and are intended to support instructional reflection, course improvement, and broader review processes. CES results constitute one source of evidence and should be interpreted in conjunction with other relevant information about teaching and course design.

CES results shall be interpreted with appropriate consideration of course context, including course level, course type, class size, instructional modality, and the extent to which a course is required or elective. Individual results should not be interpreted in isolation from these contextual factors.

Reported Results

For each individual CES item, reports shall include the mean, median, standard deviation, number of respondents, and the distribution of responses across the response options. Responses marked "N/A" shall not be included in the calculation of summary statistics.

Item-level statistics provide the most complete representation of student feedback for a given prompt because they reflect both the overall response level and the pattern of responses. Accordingly, instructors and reviewers should consider response distributions in addition to summary statistics when interpreting results.

Benchmark comparisons at the course or instructor level against department, college, or university results shall be displayed using the mean only. Because benchmark comparisons do not display the full response distribution, median, or standard deviation, they should be used as contextual reference points rather than as stand-alone indicators of instructional effectiveness.

Definitions

- The **mean** is the arithmetic average of all valid responses to an item and provides a summary measure of the overall response level. Because the mean may be influenced by unusually high or low ratings, it should be interpreted with caution, particularly when the number of responses is limited.
- The **median** is the middle value among all valid responses when those responses are arranged in order. The median may provide a useful indicator of the typical student response because it is less affected by extreme values than the mean.
- The **standard deviation** measures the degree to which responses vary around the mean. Lower standard deviation values indicate greater agreement among respondents, while higher values indicate greater variation in student responses.
- The **number of respondents** indicates how many students submitted a valid response to a given item. Results based on smaller numbers of respondents should be interpreted with added caution because individual responses have greater influence on the reported statistics.

Example of Statistical Interpretation

For illustrative purposes, assume that 7 students select "Mostly yes" (weight = 4), 3 select "Neutral" (weight = 3), 2 select "Mostly no" (weight = 2), and 2 select "N/A." In this example, the 12 valid responses yield a mean of 3.42, a median of 4.0, and a standard deviation of approximately 0.76.

In this example, the median indicates that the typical student response is positive, while the mean is somewhat lower because a smaller number of lower ratings reduce the average. The standard deviation indicates a relatively modest level of variation in responses, suggesting that student views are more consistent than widely dispersed.

Interpretation of Results

CES results should be reviewed over time and across multiple course offerings whenever possible. Patterns that recur across semesters or across sections generally provide more meaningful information than the results of a single administration.

Small differences in mean scores, particularly in courses with low response counts or greater variability in responses, may not be practically meaningful. For this reason, benchmark comparisons should be interpreted cautiously and in conjunction with item-level statistics, response distributions, and student comments.

Written comments may provide useful explanatory context for numerical ratings, particularly when consistent themes emerge across multiple respondents. Individual comments, however, should not be interpreted as representative unless they reflect broader patterns in the data.

Use of Results

CES results should be used as one component of a broader body of evidence related to teaching and course effectiveness. Appropriate interpretation of CES results includes consideration of additional sources such as peer review, self-reflection, course materials, assignments, and other indicators of instructional practice and student learning.

CES results are most appropriately used to identify strengths, detect recurring concerns, and inform continuous improvement. They should not serve as the sole basis for high-stakes personnel decisions absent additional evidence and appropriate contextual review.

MINIMUM ENROLLMENT AND REPORTING RULES

 Minimum enrollment for evaluation: To ensure both confidentiality and the reliability of results, sections with enrollment of 4 or fewer will be excluded from CES administration.

There is no response threshold. Any student providing feedback will have their responses included in the report to the Instructor of Record, subject to confidentiality protections.

MOODLE AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

- All courses, except those at the 5000, 8000, and 9000 levels, are automatically created in Moodle.
 - 8000- and 9000-level courses are automatically excluded from the course evaluation process.
 - Since 5000-level courses are not available in Moodle, students will not receive automatic notifications in Moodle; they will only receive an email.
- Since Instructors are not required to use Moodle, they could choose ‘unwanted’, which would remove the courses from Moodle, OR ‘hide from list’. If a course is unwanted or hidden, students will not receive an automatic notification within Moodle; they will only receive an email.
- Instructors cannot individually opt out of evaluations unless their section qualifies under the defined exclusion types.
- Opt-out requests for unique circumstances must be approved by the college’s academic affairs office prior to the survey window opening and communicated to the OIE from the department’s designated course evaluation liaison.

CES ADMINISTRATION AND CONTACTS

The Course Experience Survey is administered and managed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Questions about CES should be directed to cesurvey@lsu.edu or **225-578-5638**. Additional information, including current survey dates, frequently asked questions, and resources for interpreting results, is available on the [**Course Experience Survey Website**](#).